

## ***Papers III: SPEED***

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### **Historicising Kinaesthesia and Perception**

*“But can it be doubted, that motors and aeroplanes do have an effect on the known changes in the entire psyche of contemporary man, that the rapid speed of technological progress in our days should answer for the kind of general nervousness, a tension in the entire cultural atmosphere that surrounds us? Is it a surprise, that the qualities of the latter should in the end resonate even in that which is farthest removed from all kinds of technology, that which is freest from the influence of the motors and aeroplanes, the strings of our souls, namely, the secret feelings of artistic creativity and perception?”* Vyacheslav Karatygin in Rech 16.2./1.3.1914.

For this conference, I propose to bring in a historian’s critical view on the centrality of motion as a discourse. As the Russian music critic Vyacheslav Karatygin commented in his review of the first Russian concert performance of Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*, contemporary physical experience of speed, of new perspectives enabled by technologies such as the aeroplane, would inevitably affect the arts as well. Based on the work of Henri Bergson and his contemporaries, I argue that during the so-called long nineteenth century, various cultural changes in industrialised Europe drew attention to the human body in motion in new and interesting ways, culminating in a new philosophy of time and perception.

As Alain Corbin has argued, what we perceive has changed how we perceive and perception cannot be equated with what of that perception is narrated for others. In my recent work on historicising perception, I have argued that realising the historical difference in how we perceive (e.g. as a short child vs. as a tall adult) is crucial to our process of analysing remembering and consequently, to the process of historiography. Without an understanding of corporeal historical differences, the materiality of experience, we cannot realise our own genealogical formation as scholars. The danger is to fall prey to the phenomenological universal, to think all people everywhere experience in the same way and articulate those experiences in the same way. Rather, I would utilise phenomenological insights to criticise disciplines such as history for forgetting the importance of corporeal experience. Perhaps, as scholars, our being-towards-death is a realisation that our work is conditioned by the past rather than the future towards which we desire to orientate it.

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## **The shadow's movement on the runway**

The shadow's movement on the runway. My topic is the double nature of technologically induced speed. My claim is that speed generally has a pregnant doubleness to it, and that this feature was not part of the design produced by creative engineering. On the contrary, the technologically designed speed, when realized, was designed to be controlled and progressive. From a phenomenological hermeneutic viewpoint I will try to make a preliminary sketch of the shadow of speed.

In the 1950s I am in the backseat of my father's Citroen growing up to admire speed. Later in life, I become in a sensible way more sensitive to the phenomenon of speed – as well as towards myself. The annoyance caused by speed which showed up as occasional carsickness in the little girl, grows into a cluster of sensations waking questions about the meaning and aim of the endlessly proliferating transport and transmission.

Heidegger states that our age of progress is an age of privation. I conceive Heidegger's use of this word, privation, as designating not a negation, but a lack of something. An ontological lack pointing at the shadow. In this view the shadow is a necessity for getting in touch with our reality in life. His audience, medically trained psychiatrists, have a difficulty understanding him because they are used to acknowledge the world's dimensions as always plain, open and accessible to the subject. They could as such not reckon that speed could produce dimensional pollution, the way Paul Virilio later, in his own manner, will assert.

But what is this dimensional pollution of speed? My view is that it goes together with a dimensional pollution of our selves. In this way we are the contemporary speed. But who are these selves? I do not think there is a good philosophical answer to this - unless philosophy dears to look at the self not as a detached something, and not as a general subject, but as the self of the philosopher who is doing the philosophising. In this case it is I writing this text now.

How does the double nature of speed come in here? It is to be touched through my own double nature as according to Merleau-Ponty can be stated as I – and not I. Bringing this notion further, Steven M. Rosen has recently asserted that through a generative holistic mode of phenomenology the individual as well as the universal self of the philosopher must step forward, if claiming a partaking in a holistic, dimensionally sensitive totality.

This can apply to anything in life – so how about speed. My claim is that technologically induced speed holds a record in widening the gap between I – and not I, a record in dimensional privation. This will draw up a equally big shadow on the polarity showing up as desensitiation, growing towards frozen helplessness – today the equivalent of depression. Will the philosopher also open up his depression to reach in to an understanding of technologically induced speed in its many facets. A phenomenology giving voice also to the shadow. I will make a try.

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## **The musicality of movement**

This paper discusses an approach towards kinaesthesia and motion from the viewpoint of the phenomenological study of music. In particular, we will relate to the experience of what is called 'tempo' and 'rhythm', two interrelated dimensions of agency and experience that have central relevance for the temporal organization of moving and movement.

(1.) In order to demonstrate the close interrelatedness of rhythm and animate motion, we will dis-tinguish two regulating principles guiding the generation of rhythmic structures. The first is based in the animate-bodily practice of walking and its different variations, resulting in a series of units of motion (also misleadingly called 'beats') being organized in patterns of two: a binary rhythm. The second is based in the experience of breathing, with tension and relaxation alternating in mostly regular, but hardly equal, intervals. The result is a ternary rhythmic structure, which may be com-posed as a result of a rhythmical grouping (like  $2 + 1$  or  $4 + 3$  or  $3 + 3 + 2$ ).

(2.) Motion essentially is qualified by being performed in a specific tempo. To approach the notion of tempo, we will discuss how tempo can be distinguished from speed. As it has often been argued, western traditions tend to think and speak about temporal phenomena in terms taken from the sphere of spatial experience. Duration is being equated with 'extension' and events are conceived as single spots, 'points in time'. In this context, tempo only can exist as 'speed', defining how fast I can get from one point in time to the next.

Whereas 'speed' is defined as independent of the experiencing subject, tempo is one of the con-cepts grounded in everyday-life, which have a phenomenological nucleus. It is based on structuring a succession due to a pace of reference, resulting in a specific modification of mood instead of being a mere matter of fast and slow.