

## ***Papers II: MOTION VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE***

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### **Hand-sight – kinaesthetic perception beyond visual categories**

Humans relate to movement through an unsettling dichotomy of perception and sensation. On one hand, the experience of movement seems to be informed by visual perception. An example: while looking out of the window of a train, we find out it is moving when the trees and houses start to move themselves, lets us say, from left to right, being replaced by new ones which seem to follow in the same direction.

On the other hand, movement is something that happens to our body, a translation of sorts that manifests itself in more subtle ways: tension, weight shift, gravity, overall perception of our body's geometry and loss of stationary qualities. Even though this dichotomy seems to be usually tame and lacking in perplexity in our everyday experience, some particular situations seem to denounce an unfair tendency of the perception of movement being mainly understood as shifting visual categories.

Considering film as an example: a friend of mine once complained how the use of too much handheld camera in the Danish Dogma 95 films made her feel vertigo. She told me it was as if someone was rattling her head, shaking it upwards, backwards and sideways. In her account, she seemed oblivious to the fact that handheld literally means held by hand, and she spoke of her uneasiness as if it were a phenomenon that had purely to do with her eyes.

It is true that most of us, while undergoing the experience of watching a film, perceive our situation as that of characters in Kathryn Bigelow's 1995 *Strange Days*, where by using a virtual reality recorder that capture image directly from subjects' cerebral cortex, one could experience any situation through the eyes of the one living it. We usually assume that the camera's point of view is directly superimposed on our eyes. But in my friend's case, how can purely visual phenomena produce vertigo in the body? An actual and acute perception of displacement, of unwarranted movement?

By merely considering the practical names of some of the most typical camera movements (tilting, panning, travelling, steady cam, still shot, etc.) we see how visual motion is referred to by using verbs that imply the displacement of the body, or lack thereof, either as a whole or as an articulated synthesis. Beyond the scope of film we find other more radical instances (such as Stendhal Syndrome or epilepsy caused by exposure to stroboscopic lighting) of the way in

which the visual seems to feed directly into a sensation of how the body is felt, while exposed to movement.

This paper, using mostly filmic examples due to the consideration of the cinematic process as privileged instance of the referred dichotomy, focuses on how the perception of movement, mostly relying on visual categories, is in fact underlining an intense positioning of the performing, sensing body beyond visual perception as the main avatar of kinaesthetic experience.

Several aesthetic manifestations fuel this analysis: from early film chronophotographers such as Muybridge and Marey to Aleksandr Sokurov's "Russian Ark" one shot achievement, from Japanese Butoh theatre's use of microrhythms to contemporary mobile phone videography, from Maya Deren's film choreography to the moving eye-body complex in the works of Buster Keaton and Dziga Vertov.

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### **The singing body as interior movement – making audible the non-representative**

I see and hear her singing. She is standing almost still. Her mouth forms words, her arms move slightly, and her head turns as she addresses her singing to the listeners. Every now and then she shifts her weight from one foot to the other. I can see no other movement in her. As her voice reaches me I am moved by her singing. I am singing. I lean my singing against my body, sensing myself move as an integrated whole in the music, as the music. My life given to me to be lived occurs in me in a singular way one mode of which is singing. I am my singing – there is no distance between my singing and me.

The singing body is a body skilled in interior movement. The singer works with this movement and the resistance felt in her body trying to connect to the whole of her singing body, to all her experience and knowledge of this repertoire and its performing practice. Simultaneously, numerous other, maybe already forgotten things that have entered her living body during her life can become meaningful in her singing.

The voice of the singer can make audible the non-representative, hidden. The overwhelming power of life in the singer is turned into sound, thrown forward, pressed out into the open (ex-primis;) as a cultivated cry freeing the singer of the burden of the force of life. The sound of the voice in the body of the singer and of the listeners is a vibrating trace of the invisible, the immediate result of the power in the singing body.

With the French phenomenologist Michel Henry, I discuss singing so called early music using my own experience of a singer and pedagogue as my material. My focus is on the Orfeo (1607) of Claudio Monteverdi, especially on the recitative of Messaggiera, the messenger. The main characteristic of this kind of early baroque recitative is that it is sung speech rather than singing.

The singer slowly carves this sung speech into her singing body, tasting the various meanings of the text, chewing the sounds of the words, trying the resistance of her singing body, testing the sound of her voice, leaning to the dissonances in the melody, gasping for air in the agitated flood of words, sensing the silences as stopping or movement. As her body starts to move with this speech it becomes her speech making audible the invisible/inaudible movement of her life.

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### **Flying, sniffing, pecking, stinging: non-human animals in action**

The aim of this paper is to discuss movements of non-human animals from the viewpoint of Merleau-Pontian phenomenology of the body. I will argue that even though one's own body and its movements is the norm for understanding other kinds of movements, one's mode of experience is constantly put into question, and, up to a point, extended and transformed by our encounters with non-human ways of moving. In fact, there are animals, such as birds and fish that reveal whole elements to us in a way that is foreign to our own embodiment. A bird reveals air no longer as merely something that surrounds us as empty space or something that can be inhaled, but as a medium for movement, and as possible flying routes. And when we see fish in the sea, this sea is no longer only a place to dip in on a warm summer day but a place to dwell in.

Bodily understanding of non-human animals through empathy seems to depend on two things: firstly, on the type of an animal's body (for instance, whether the animal has a face or not), and secondly, on the animal's style of moving. The caressing movements of an elephant's trunk can be easily empathized with, even though we as humans do not have trunks. On the other hand, when a parrot holds a nut in his foot while eating, this movement is paired with my hand as a means of putting food into my mouth. Even though I do not have primordial experience of holding food in my hand at that moment, I may go into the flow or rhythm of the other's movements, and, consequently, feel his intentions in my own body. However, the other's bodily differences produce an experience of displacement or even collision: something familiar (a human-like way of moving)

is displaced to a different kind of context, a non-human body. In some instances, this collision is experienced as baffling, and, finally, as amusing.

I will study different ways of moving in relation to our own ways of moving, and the meaning of these movements to us. I will consider the new meanings that the movements of non-human animals reveal to us, reciprocal movements between humans and non-human animals, and, in particular, moving together with a non-human animal. In addition, I will describe perceiving a motionless animal corpse and discuss the possibility of empathy in this case. Consequently, also the general conditions of possibility for empathy will be elucidated.