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Image Consciousness, Movement Consciousness

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IMAGE CONSCIOUSNESS, MOVEMENT CONSCIOUSNESS

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1. INTRODUCTION

In a passage from the text *Zettel*, (Wittgenstein 1981: 40) writes:

How curious: we s

should like to explain our understanding of a gesture by means of a translation into words, and the understanding of words by translating them into a gesture. (Thus we are tossed to and fro when we try to find out where understanding properly resides). And we really shall be explaining words by gesture and gesture by words.

And in another passage from *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein continues in similar vein, suggesting that the “simplest explanation” of a musical phrase: “is sometimes a gesture; another might be a dance step, or words which describe a dance” (Wittgenstein 1980: 69). In these characteristically aphoristic passages, which come from later texts concerned with the philosophy of language and its limits, I want to highlight several themes. Most important for our purposes is the obvious connection between the ideas expressed in these passages and similar issues in aesthetics. The above quotations mark a passage in the later Wittgenstein to the idea that art, as well as a language, can have a central relationship to meaning, ensuring what we might call their mutual *intermedial interpenetration*. The way that language communicates, and the way that art forms like dance and music communicate are obviously different, but that does not entail that these ways are completely mutually exclusive either.¹

Wittgenstein is suggesting that what we commonly call “language” is not just a means of representing the world through speech and writing, but can also appear in contexts of non-discursive

¹ For more on the connection between Wittgenstein and aesthetics, see Hagberg (1995).

modes of articulation. The idea of language itself becomes extended to any form of meaningful communication that can be understood in a context, and in these later texts, various allusions to art forms like dance and music play an important role in explaining this essential plurality of language, showing how meanings and significance can be mutually interdependent, and act across blurred lines: “Language does not have definable boundaries, but is rather a term employed with regard to phenomena which gain meaning via their relationships to other contexts” (Bowie 2009: 281).

For example, the interpenetration between words and movement implied in our opening quote surely reflects a truth about the problem of the acquisition of spoken language itself. We learn to speak by using gestures, but receive no similar tuition in gesture itself; our understanding of spoken language and concepts is thereby rooted in our “animated” nature, which entails the ability to understand sense in movements, without these movements ever having the ability to replace the different word-disclosing properties of speech and writing.² A movement or gesture, for example, points toward not just a world of significant objects, but has congruence and imports to a world of affects, moods, impulses, rhythms and feelings that can be perceptually elicited in many cross-modal contexts. A movement phrase in dance, for example, can express a particular emotion, change a speed, provide the release of a build up of tension, and in ways that can be similar to the ability of a musical passage to do the same. The ability of art forms to communicate in this way reflects a “prior investment in a world where responses and actions are holistically connected to a horizon of saliences which always transcends our ability to describe it in propositions” (ibid: 288).³ The early Wittgenstein had thought that this same “horizon of saliences” could be described fully by a consideration of what

² On “animation” and its foundational significance in the phenomenology of Husserl, see Sheets-Johnstone (2011).

³ This can be read as implying an important deficiency of analytic aesthetics, which is sometimes mistaken “because it seeks to isolate phenomena whose significance cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts” (Bowie 2009: 288).

precisely connects different forms of meaningful articulation, encapsulated in the work that lead up to the *Tractatus* in the idea of “logical form”. But later, Wittgenstein came to advocate a more piecemeal approach to the problem, examining the specific contexts and practices that produce forms of meaningful articulation. Indeed, in another of the later volumes concerning aesthetics, (Wittgenstein 1966: 29) says explicitly: “what we really want, to solve aesthetic puzzlements, is certain comparisons, a grouping together of certain cases”, a process whereby a general synoptic overview of the discipline, or a theory of general aesthetics can be pieced together gradually using a series of judicious comparisons.

And in what follows I will be faithful to this methodology, pursuing an investigation into the various congruences and meaningful forms of interconnection and interpenetration between the perception of images and the perception of movement. The aim of this will be to show how the philosophy of dance and the philosophy of the visual arts are connected, and in ways that can be theoretically mutually beneficial. After all, we can certainly easily formulate, using other examples, all manner of extensions to our original scenario of the interpenetration of language and gesture. For example, if we wanted to try and explain the content of a painting without reference to the image itself, one of the simplest explanations would surely involve us attempting to convey both its content, depictions of positioning and posture, and even emotive and affective resonances through means of our own movement. We would use means of both kinetic and kinaesthetic expression, reflecting how movement both *looks* and *feels*. And in the opposite direction, if we were to attempt to similarly express the dynamics of a movement sequence within a work of dance, we might find the most natural way of doing this is to show a temporal sequence of still images of the same sequence. That this procedure works at all is evidence that the perception of images, and the perception of movement,

though obviously not identical, are not entirely separated either, and in what follows I will explore their mutual interconnections, as well as their differences.

This might seem strange given the most common intermedial linkage discussed within the philosophy of dance, namely the connection of dancing to music. Dancing is seldom done in silence, and given what has been said already about their overlapping modes of expression, perhaps with good reason. Several authors have also pointed out the difficulties inherent in providing any suitable “ontology” of dance, given its obvious status as a hybrid art form, and with a history in which music was often embedded into the constitutive nature of most its modern repertoire.⁴ And it has been additionally suggested that this problem may even be responsible for the relative neglect of dance within philosophical aesthetics more generally.⁵ Notwithstanding this, it has always struck me as curious that similar investigations into connections at a more foundational phenomenological level between images and movements, and therefore between the philosophies of visual arts and dance are relatively scarce, especially given the fact that both images and dance are approached primarily, although as we will see, not exclusively, through *visual* means.

But to continue on the trajectory started by Wittgenstein for a moment, let me give a brief account of some key ideas in phenomenological aesthetics, which will provide a theoretical context for the rest of this essay. What has been said already may be reminiscent of *expression theories*, which introduce the idea that artworks are essentially “symbolic” formalisations of the “inner life” of individuals. This formalisation can read as the appearance, in a shared public setting, of symbolisations of the feelings of subjective experience. Expressive dancing and musical performance have a “vital import”, which provides congruences with ways of everyday moving and feeling, which

⁴ On this issue, see Davies (2006).

⁵ See Carter (2005).

resists articulation in discourse. Art, seen this way, communicates meaningfully, but not via a semiotic function: art is a direct presentation of a feeling, and not a sign that points towards it. And art forms like dance and music are able to do this by presenting forms of tension and resolution, equilibria and imbalance, rhythmic coherence and incoherence that correspond to similar elements in living processes with similar dynamics, like the temporal contours of approaching and receding emotions and affects. As a consequence of this, works of art intersect and overlap in the ways that they communicate ideas and emotions, because they are different ways of expressing the same fundamental rhythms of subjective feeling.⁶

This leads naturally to other theories of art and aesthetics that find their source in phenomenology. Systems theories of art begin where Wittgenstein leaves off, providing a meta-aesthetic framework for dealing with the overlapping ways in which meaningful articulations of art appear, which links aesthetics directly to phenomenology, through the emphasis on the perceptual-communicative foundation of our experiences of works of art: "the function of art would thus consist in integrating what is in principle incommunicable, namely perception, into the communication network" (Luhmann 2000: 141). Art, seen this way, communicates (uniquely) *through* perceptions, rather than through language, and in doing so, irritates or perturbs communicative networks, forcing them to respond to the question as to what a particular perceptual event might mean. The communications embodied in artworks communicate with one another, calling for criteria of comparison and standards of judgment which gives rise to secondary communicative discourses about art from a microsocial to a societal level, that directly affect choices of how certain works of art get valued over others, and how systems of art maintain their ability to continue to disseminate.

⁶ Expression theories can be traced to Langer (1953).

This distinction between perception and communication echoes similar work in the philosophy of history, aesthetics, and art history that entails a return to a notion of arts' "presence". Such work is intended as a corrective against the tendency within the long history of hermeneutical philosophy to read the world as if it were completely composed of sign systems that demand reading, decoding or interpretation.⁷ One author refers to the "presence-effects" inherent in the experience of art that include experiences of heightened somatic intensity, formation of mental imagery and sensory *qualia* of all kinds that have, conventionally speaking at least, "no message" (Gumbrecht 2004: 98). Similarly, recent phenomenological or enacted approaches to aesthetics aim to explicate the intrinsic, intuitive and aesthetic significance of art by showing how it "aesthetically exemplifies factors which are basic to our cognitive and metaphysical inherence in the world" (Crowther 2009: 31). Both the uniqueness and interpenetrations of a particular art form are shown to inhere within certain "phenomenological depth factors", including aspects of our time consciousness, spatial positioning, faculties of imagination, intersubjectivity, empathy, and agency that are the subjects of much contemporary phenomenological research. We can stress the prereflective and preconscious nature of these phenomenological depth factors which exist without us necessarily being aware of them, as a result of their embedding in all kinds of habitual and learned cognitive skills, including our own ability to move, that are practical in nature, not linguaform or conceptual, and not based on inferential aspects of perception itself.

But with the theoretical context dealt with, let me now move to a brief description of the structure of the rest of this essay. In Section 2, I give an exposition of the two main terms of my title, largely drawing from the work of Husserl and other literature in the post-Husserlian tradition within contemporary phenomenology. The next three Sections, which form the main original import of the

⁷ See Moxey (2013), Ankersmit (2005) and Gumbrecht (2004).

essay, focus of three key foci of comparison between phenomenologies of dance and visual images, concentrating on both their “presence-effects”, and the phenomenological depth factors that these art forms aesthetically exemplify. Section 3 gives an account how the “image object”, or the object we “see-in” an image, has an important equivalent within dance aesthetics, with consequences for theories of dance ontology. Section 4 demonstrates the “phenomenological duality” between the “empathetic pairing” experienced in both dance and visual art spectatorship, and uses ideas from the phenomenology of movement to shed light on some current problems regarding pictorial depiction that have arisen recently in analytic aesthetics. An important conclusion here is that the results of Sections 3 and 4 motivate the assertion that visual art and dance, for quite different reasons, sometimes *aspire to* the expressive status of each other. Section 5 provides an extension to dance aesthetics of some key recent developments in phenomenological image theory, which concern the fleeting “pause in participation” (Wiesing 2014) implicated in image consciousness.

2. IMAGE CONSCIOUSNESSES, MOVEMENT CONSCIOUSNESS

As mentioned previously, the main aim of this essay is to provide a comparison of the intentional states of image and movement consciousness, and to draw from this conclusions about the interpenetration between our experiences of visual art and dance. Images are defined here as the class of objects comprising paintings, sculptures, photographs, but also including some artefacts and ornamentations that share a *depictive* function. If depictions involve human form, they are said to be *figurative*. As is perhaps well known, Husserl’s eidetic analysis of the perception of such objects implicates a tripartite structure of related objects and phenomena, comprising: the image carrier, the physical thing, like the wood, clay or canvas that is the material of the image; the image object, or the appearing or depicting image that we “see-in” the marks and surface of a painting, for example; the

image subject, or the depicted scene or object. But Husserl also provides a similar analysis of our ability to form *mental images*, which can exist in different sensory modalities, through a “perceptual theory of imagination”, the basis of which is the assertion that the intentionality of perceptual consciousness is the model for non-perceptual intentional acts, such as imagining a visual scene, sound, or even the spatial and qualitative dynamics or own movement. This work has received renewed of attention in recent literature in both philosophy and the cognitive sciences. For example: “In visual imaging or visualizing, we do not inspect a phenomenal mental picture; instead we mentally re-present an object by subjectively simulating or emulating a perceptual experience of that object” (Thompson: 2007: 296–297).⁸

A similar tripartite structure of image consciousness forms the cornerstone of “phenomenological image theory”, a term coined by the image theorist Lambert Wiesing (2014), who categorises image consciousness, as opposed to normal everyday perception, as concerning three paradigms concerning the *relata* of: the object of image perception; the state of image perception; the subject of image perception. Let me give a brief account here. The object of image perception, or Husserl’s “image object” is ontologically unique. It is not an extant and real object in the world; rather it *appears* to be there, rather than actually being there: “it is the intentional object that is, in image perception, conscious as the object of the perceiver’s intentional experience” (Wiesing 2014: 135). The image object is what is “seen-in” the image and is an “artificial presence” that is not present in the world of cause and effect, and is beyond physical laws.⁹ Despite the inevitable entropic degradation of the image carrier that sustains it, it is additionally something that “does not age” (ibid:

⁸ The theory of image consciousness, and related investigations into imagination, are outlined in Husserl (2005). For a good summary, including links to analytic aesthetics, see Brough (2012).

⁹ The theory of “seeing-in” comes originally from seminal work on pictorial representation by Wohlheim (1980).

136). The image object is also unique because it is created solely by the recipient of the image, who forms a constitutive act in bringing it to consciousness that differs from normal, everyday perception.

This leads to the second paradigm; the state, or particular phenomenology of image perception itself, which is construed, firstly in Husserl, as a dialectical interplay of conflicting perceptions of, and between, the image carrier and image object. This has been alternatively theorised as actually a special modality of perception, a “seeing-in”, which is a capability that is required for this unique and singular act of perception.¹⁰ The third paradigm relates to the observer of images, and hence does not concern what we see in images, or what we do when we see them, but what happens within an observer when they see an image; it is the distinctive *consequences* this mental state has for the subject and what is necessarily common to all instances of seeing an image, regardless of the identity of the observer themselves. Wiesing outlines a compelling argument regarding this third paradigm of phenomenological image theory, which he terms the “pause in participation”. Everyday perception necessarily involves this participation, which involves the irreducible duality of being both an observer, and something that is observed, because the ability to see necessarily entails being visible to others, if not directly, then potentially. In contrast, and uniquely in image perception, this duality is paused or subject to momentary cessation. Within images, something can be viewed without incurring visibility: “the perceiver does not himself turn into a visible part of a visible image world; he does not become an image object” (Wiesing 2014: 143). Image consciousness presents the human subject with a pause, or “relief” from the demands of everyday perception, albeit without these demands ever vanishing completely from the background. Wiesing also claims that this pause in participation additionally implicates a “de-individualisation of the subject of perception”, due to the fact that, spatially speaking, the image object differs from other (physical) objects in that its appearance is

¹⁰ For contemporary variants of “seeing-in” within analytic philosophy, see Hopkins (2009) and Lopes (2004).

invariant of our relative positioning towards it. The image object is *aperspectival*- it appears to different observers in the same way, regardless of whether it is viewed from a particular individual spatial position, which leads to a levelling of subjective difference, a state of de-individuation in which I distinguish myself less in relation to another perceiver. This reduction in individuation extends from a spatial context to a temporal one as well. The image object is atemporal, *anachronic*, or “out of time”. It appears in the same way over periods of time, which again differentiates it from physical objects, which can degrade or disappear. Although its image carrier may age, the image object does not, so that “my individual moment, in which I have just seen the image object, cannot be an exclusive moment” (ibid: 149). Wiesing concludes by claiming that these affordances of both pausing and de-individuation provided by images are perhaps one reason for our enduring fascination with them. We will return to these three paradigms later on.

But let me now turn to the phenomenology of movement consciousness, and give a similar brief analysis. Husserl had originally suggested an extended definition of “image object” that includes not just fixed spatiotemporal images, but other art forms as well, including theatrical performances. Insofar as dance has a theatrical and depictive function this obviously applies as well, in those cases where a narrative character, or emotion is “seen-in” the performer. But an account of movement consciousness proper really begins in other work of Husserl, which constructs another eidetic analysis, this time not just of images, but of the perception of any physical object whatsoever. The main point is that movement is always implicated in the perception of such objects, because of the way they present incomplete profiles to us; to see is to see from a certain viewpoint. In order to gain a full perception of an object, we must move in relation to it, either in reality or in imagination, correlating a series of visual appearances with a series of our movements relative to the object. The weakness is that this account only considers movement proprioceptively, as the registering of a

change in position. This ignores the felt aspect of our movement, which has a rich *qualitative dynamics*, which goes beyond mere spatial displacement. The dynamics of movement, its most prominent author claims, are grounded in its qualitative structure which has four basic qualities: tensional, linear, amplitudinal, and projectional, which are separable only reflectively (Sheets-Johnstone 2011). Experientially they all combine in a global sense to form the distinct qualitatively felt dynamic phenomenon of any particular self-movement; the forming of distinctive types of “kinetic signatures”. Linear and amplitudinal qualities clearly relate to spatial aspects of movement, to the lines and volumes that our movements create in space, or its innate contractedness or expansiveness. The tensional and projectional qualities relate to more temporal aspects, such as effort, force and energy. And it is especially important at this juncture to realise that these qualitative dynamics can also be vicariously imagined, in the animated sense of perceptual imagination we encountered earlier. We can form both *kinetic images* of the spatial qualities of a movement-as-imagined, as well as its felt qualities, forming a *kinaesthetic image*. The latter are especially important in dance performance, as they are the mechanism whereby dancers learn how to repeat certain movements through memory. They form an essential part of the cross-referencing of one fleeting movement in the present to a similar movement in the past, by a recollection or perceptual elicitation of how it *feels* to conduct a certain movement (Sheets-Johnstone 2012).

The second important aspect I want to highlight about movement consciousness is that kinaesthesia has both “inner” and “outer” components. Through kinaesthesia, we experience directly our ability both to feel and to perceive our own movement. To perceive our own movement as a three-dimensional phenomenon, as a spatial happening, is rooted in kinaesthetic experience, as when we are working to perfect certain movements in sport. And during a dance performance, we readily and easily perceive the qualitative dynamics of the movement, the dynamics that the dancers are

kinaesthetically experiencing and constituting by this same movement. The foundational qualitative dynamics of movement remain whether the movement is visually, hence kinetically perceived, or kinaesthetically felt or experienced, and it is this two-foldedness that enables the most important aspect of movement consciousness, our ability to perceive the movement of others empathetically, through acts of “empathetic pairing” (Overgaard 2003).

This happens because of another key aspect of movement consciousness, namely the linkage between emotion and movement: joy “moves” us in ways different from anger and “moves us to move” in ways different from fear, and so on. Emotions are linked to tactile-kinaesthetic bodies via a “dynamic congruency” between their qualitative aspects (Sheets-Johnstone 2011: 453-472). An on-going kinetic form has a distinctive spatial-temporal contour that matches the form of an on-going affective feeling, in a formulation that draws parallels with the central claims of expression theories. Note that “dynamic congruency” does not entail formal identity, and it is precisely because such a difference exists that we can separate out the emotion from the movement, as when we feign or imitate an emotion. We recognize the kinetics of emotion and can detect such differences on the basis of our own affective/tactile-kinaesthetic experience of our own emotions. This “pairing” with others depends on a similarity of kinetic dynamics. We see intersubjective others, as opposed to everyday objects, as animated beings, who present themselves to us as moving in dynamically similar ways to ourselves.

We can link this “affect attunement”, or the pairing to the dynamics of another’s feelings to intermodal “vitality affects” (Stern 1985) that are elicited by the shared dynamic aspects of different phenomena. A sound or a pain can burst forth with a certain distinctive activation tone and contour; a touch, gesture or aroma can be fleeting or attenuating, and so on. Vitality affects are other types of “presence effects” that resist our attempts to classify them in language, but are linked profoundly to

the tactile-kinaesthetic body: “every time one moves a vitality affect is present” (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011: 222). Movement dynamics are therefore congruent with affective dynamics; movement dynamics have the effect on cognition whereby the spatio-temporal-energetic qualities of movement are recognisable and duly recognised.

3 IMAGE OBJECTS IN VISUAL ART AND DANCE

In the next three sections, I want to take seriously Wittgenstein’s suggestion to make “certain comparisons, a grouping together of certain cases” (Section 1) as a potential way of formulating a way towards a general and interdisciplinary theory of aesthetics. As such, I will make a careful comparison between image consciousness and movement consciousness, and draw from this comparison interesting points of intersection between the philosophy of visual art and the philosophy of dance. The methodology for this comparison will follow the three paradigms of phenomenological image theory discussed in Section 2, which concern: the nature of the “image object”; the state of image/movement consciousness; the consequences of image/movement consciousness. To begin with, recall that Husserl himself extends the definition of the “image object” of a depictive artwork to theatrical performance, in which narrative characters are depicted or “seen-in” the performers. This provides an initial point of comparison between the phenomenology of visual art and that of dance. But to continue this comparison in more detail, let us recall two important properties of the “image object” from phenomenological image theory: its aperspectival status, or its invariance to viewing position; its anachronicity, or its invariance over time, subject to inevitable processes of entropic decay in its image carrier. In this Section, I want to make a comparative extension of these properties to dance performance and aesthetics, with implications for the debate surrounding any suitable ontology of dance works.

The first thing to say is that in dance the aperspectival property clearly fails. In fact it fails for an interesting reason, due to a phenomenological depth factor that is unique to dance. Normatively, although we can perceive our own movement visually, there are natural biomechanical impairments to our ability to do this, due to our own self-positioning relative to our own bodies. In dance, we can perceive the body of another visually with much greater determination than we can visually perceive our own; the occluded parts of our own bodies become, in some sense, visible, due to the fact that the “image object” of a moving body can be viewed from different perspectives, and in different ways that are contingent on our positioning in relation to this moving body.

But what I want to suggest next is that the atemporal or anachronic property of the image object in depictive art works does generalise to the art form of dance, and in ways that are interesting and illuminating in themselves. But before commencing, it is perhaps helpful to remind ourselves of an important issue in phenomenological aesthetics more generally, namely the need to be aware of the problem of making overly strong ahistorical claims about the nature of the art form under discussion, which may have its own complex historicity.¹¹ Phenomenology, by its very nature, can never be a closed discipline, and must remain alive to the fact that its object of study is constantly shifting. This is obviously a complex issue, but let me make some brief remarks on the history of modern dance. We can perhaps draw a broad historical trajectory of western dance during modernity, starting from the rigorous codification and highly stylised gestures of ballet, through to an emphasis later on individual expression and dance seen as a symbolic form, to a more contemporary move towards seeing movement for its own sake, a “movement *qua* movement” (Sheets-Johnstone 2015). We could also make a case perhaps that dance history in modernity occupies a spectrum between these extremes, with of course co-existing hybrid forms in between. The spectrum covers forms of movement that are

¹¹ As the author herself acknowledges in the most recent Preface to a new edition, this is perhaps a flaw in Sheets-Johnstone (2015).

highly *codified*, at one end, like many forms of folk and traditional dance to, at the other end, forms of movement or somatic practice that are pursued for their own sake, without the deliberate “pointing outwards” of a hermeneutic or semiotic function.¹²

What I want to suggest next is that whatever the position on this spectrum; dance faces a number of problems that are unique to its status as an appearing movement-form. This first is the well-known issue of the *ephemerality* of dance, the fact that it consists of expressive movement that appears, only to vanish again: “an event that disappears in the very act of materializing” (Siegel 1972: 1). Various authors in dance studies have commented on both the positive and negative aspects of this ephemerality. There are those who regard the current deficiency as just a temporary state of the art form, which may be solved in future by more accurate methodologies for temporal capture, like enhanced notation systems, to those that celebrate ephemerality as an irreducible feature of dance that prioritizes its “liveness”, and which provides in itself a type of critical resistance to the ubiquity of the problems and vicissitudes of capitalist reproduction.¹³ Dance therefore has to solve a specific problem; how to make something meaningful appear from ephemeral movement, and inside a fleeting and disappearing gesture, and then how simultaneously to make movements, expressions and gestures operate within a symbolic system. The latter requires *iterability* in order to stabilise both its formal properties, and additionally the temporal stability of a particular dance *work*, seen as a singular production of an artist or artists. This becomes relevant at a particular time in history in which the autonomy and singularity of dance as an art form in its own right becomes an issue; through the ways

¹² For a broader perspective, see Thomas (1995). Symbolic forms of dance are associated with the “modern dance” of choreographers like Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham; dance seen as ‘movement *qua* movement’ is associated with the Judson Dance movement in New York in the 1960s, and with forms of improvisatory and somatic practice. More contemporary developments include the deliberate deconstruction and extension of balletic forms in the work of William Forsythe and Wayne McGregor, as well as experiments into hybrids with theatre, performance art, and conceptual art, as is seen in the works of Xavier le Roy and Jérôme Bel.

¹³ See McFee (2011) and Bresnahan (2014).

dance comes to be seen as providing forms of cultural expression through its own means, generating with it new representations of subjectivity, political identity and agency.¹⁴

But what we can gain from a comparison with visual art theory and phenomenological aesthetics is the following. Other art forms can equally be seen as different types of solution to this *same* ephemerality, and on their own terms. In the systems-theoretic vocabulary developed earlier, art- or at least what we have historically come to call ‘art’ - begins with the problem of how to cross-reference what is incommunicable, namely individual perceptions, into communication networks that generate meaning with regard to these perceptions, and enable these meanings to circulate in evaluative discourses, that in many ways ensure whether particular works of art survive historically, and are conferred with cultural value. Some expressions of human life, such as gestures, facial expressions and musical sounds, vanish after being performed. Other expressions however, are committed to semipermanent material, as is the case with the expressions contained in manuscripts, books, musical scores, or works of art like paintings and sculptures. These expressions of life therefore acquire a type of “objective” status, reflecting both cultural influences, and reciprocally constituting the temporal historicities of culture itself. Such expressions thereby become visibly and intersubjectively communicable, and maintain an enduring existence in material objects that can be perceived by others in the present and future. In fact this semipermanent status, in the case of visual art in particular, can readily be seen to be grounded in the anachronic property of the image object. Picturing is arguably the most efficient way of communicating visual perceptions, which perhaps explains its ubiquity within diverse human cultures. What I want to suggest next is that dance has developed its own idiomatic mechanisms for coping with this same problem.

¹⁴ See, for example Burt (1998).

In dance, we see a necessity for something to temporally ground *both* its modes of formalisation, or what differentiates it from everyday movement, and its identity as a singular dance work, specific cultural object, or type of practice. It is self-evident that for formalisation to work at all, and for identities to be temporally stable, what is required is the key criterion of the *iterability* of its referencing mechanisms, which ground the norms, codes and contexts that provide coherence and historical perdurance within a specific aesthetic domain. Within dance, there needs to be something specifically iterative, or temporally repeating, which acts as a response to its ephemerality, and which enables it to enter and endure within cultural modes of memory and recollection. The answer that I want to propose is that this “something”, which is manifested within its material movements, is grounded phenomenologically within the way dance and movement practices utilise and exploit certain innate phenomenological depth factors, which derive from our ability to form certain types of mental imagery. Moreover, I propose that this grounding is so important, that it has the consequence that what we call a “dance work”, ontologically speaking, cannot be separated from these images.

To explain this, let me refer to some examples from either side of the spectrum of dance and movement practice that I defined earlier. Firstly, take the case of highly codified and/or symbolic forms of dance, from folk and traditional dance, through to ballet and the “modern dance” of the inter-war period. Perhaps what we can generalise here is the emergence of certain highly stylized and dynamic versions of “expression looks” and “expression gestures”, that are particularly perceptually salient, because in their modes of deliberate exaggeration, they are able to temporally cross-reference themselves, through *resemblance*, to certain affective ways of moving and feeling in everyday life.¹⁵ This “resemblance”, if we dig a little deeper, depends on the ability of these appearing movement forms to stably cross-reference themselves to prior memories and recollections that inhere in the

¹⁵ An “expression look” is defined in visual art by (Lopes 2015: 75) as a “configuration that has the function in the circumstances of indicating an emotion”.

minds and bodies of both spectators and participants, in forms of *kinetic* and *kinaesthetic imagery*.

The stylized expressive gestures of grief, for example, in Martha Graham's *Lamentation* rely on the ability of spectators to recognise these expressions of sorrow and listlessness through the instantaneous, perceptual and non-inferential cross-referencing of one type of image, the one we "see-in" both in the facial expressions and the qualitative dynamics of the movement, with kinetic and kinaesthetic images of *similar experiences* in our own historical past, as well as recollections of images deriving from other cultural objects. These perceived images are correlated with our own kinaesthetic images, so that we not only *see*, but also *feel* these expressions of sorrow and grief. The upshot is that the images we "see-in" the performance act as *analogues* to the image objects of paintings and sculptures; they are in some sense, *quasi-anachronic*, in that they are able to provide stable modes of temporal cross-reference to both an individual and collective cultural past. And, we can equally see that the identity and temporal stability of the work *Lamentation*, seen as a cultural object, vitally depends on the ability of the *performer* to actively form repeatable and iterable kinaesthetic images, which cross-reference how it *feels* to undergo the movement of the piece in the present with similar feelings that were present in performances in the past, even if these kinaesthetic-affective images do not entail that the performer feels the actual emotion being presented. They rather have to temporally cross-reference, by means of kinaesthetic *memory*, formed through imagery, to movements that correlate with kinetic mechanisms to make the emotion *seem to appear*.¹⁶ Symbolic dance thereby represents a solution to the problem of how to present something as appearing that can immediately, and without analogical inference, perceptually elicit stable and repeatable images in

¹⁶ For related points, see Sheets-Johnstone (2012).

imagination. Its sociocultural “meaning-effects”, as a symbolic artwork, rely for their own stability on the “presence effects” that are afforded by the perceptual elicitation of related types of images.

Let me now make some remarks about how this applies to the other end of the spectrum, to dance seen as “movement *qua* movement”. Whilst both the symbolic function and stylised theatricality are obviously negated in this case, what remains is still the importance of kinaesthetic memory to the continued dissemination, communication and temporal stability of the work, seen as a cultural object. And this applies as well to the case of movements contained within improvisatory practices, which never appear from nowhere, *ex nihilo*, but owe their emergence to existing individual movement patterns, or “kinetic signatures” that are equally founded on kinaesthetic memory.

The last thing that I want to suggest is that “dance works”, of whatever variety, also rely ontologically for their temporal transferability on a constellation of *additional* non-kinetic image objects, from graphic-notational images, heuristic diagrams, photographic stills and film footage, as well of course on more linguistic forms of transfer, including texts, verbal recollections, vocal instructions and testimonies. In an ontological sense then, a “dance work” work can never coincide simply with the material of the work itself, but what *supervenes* from the work, including montages of images, both quasi-anachronic and anachronic that are vital to its modes of communication, dissemination, identity and temporal stability.¹⁷ Its identity as a particular “thing” depends on phenomenologically complex intentional and *relational* properties to other types of objects and phenomena, in addition to its own material existence.

4. EMPATHETIC PAIRING IN VISUAL ART AND DANCE

¹⁷ This accords in some ways with (Van Camp 2006: 42), who proposes that: “the identity of works of art [including dance] be understood pragmatically as ways of talking and acting by the various communities of the art world”. For more on relationality within aesthetic ontology in general, see Peter Lamarque (2010).

In this Section I will give a second mode of comparison between image consciousness and movement consciousness, and extend this to a similar comparison between the aesthetic experiences of images versus danced performances. The main result I want to suggest is that the states of image consciousness and movement consciousness have distinct similarities and structural affinities, as well as differences, which I will now explain. I will formulate the main similarity via a notion of *phenomenological duality*. As we seen have previously, empathetic relations to intersubjective others, which we can summarise by the Husserlian notion of “pairing”, crucially depend on the duality of the “inside” and “outside” of movement consciousness, or on our ability to both kinaesthetically feel, and kinetically perceive our own movement. This duality extends to emotion and affect, which we can similarly experience as having an inside and outside. A particular emotion or affect can be experienced internally and its physiological effects observed sensorially. And the fact that this extension works at all is a result of the fundamental congruence between movement and affect, the way that emotion “moves us” in characteristic ways, through affective and kinetic “signatures” that are ultimately derived from related movement signatures. The congruence therefore relies on similarities between the qualitative dynamics of movement and those of emotion and affect.

What I want to suggest is that this empathetic pairing occurs naturally in both states of consciousness, involving both image and movement, which share an identical phenomenological structure, but with a different intersubjective “flow” in each case. I will consider the structural similarity first. In both cases of intentional consciousness we see a *triangulation* in and between the following elements: a self (the subjective centre of our movements and emotions as felt), a ‘self-other’ (ourselves as perceived when undergoing a movement or experiencing an emotion), and an intersubjective, or “other” body. In terms of the latter, there is clearly a different variety of “image object” implicated in each: the (figurative) subject “seen-in” an image versus the actual presence of a

physical other. Despite these differences in kind, several annotations in the work of Husserl testify to a profound similarity in the respective perceptions of these different image objects. As part of a “general theory of apprehension”, the experience of images, in common with cultural objects of all kinds is specifically one, Husserl claims, of empathetic apprehension, but occurs not through an experience of straightforward empathy, as in the “pairing” of the given object or social other with our own body, but is “mediated” through the object. Cultural objects like images are therefore mediated expressions of another subjectivity, and are experienced as “analogues of bodies”.¹⁸

What is lacking in the Husserlian account is a fuller justification of why this is possible at all, rather than just being an assertion. What I want to claim is that this missing dimension can be filled by an appeal to more contemporary accounts of the phenomenology of movement consciousness, as described above in Section 2. The connection between the empathetic perception, or more correctly “apperception” of images versus real bodies operates at all because the qualitative dynamics of movement inheres both in felt kinaesthetic experience, the perceived kinetic experience of our own bodies, and, via the ways in which we “animate” images, depictions or images of other bodies.

We can immediately speculate of course that this connection is traceable to the activity of “mirror neurons” which activate when visual qualities of the observed body or image are mapped onto our kinaesthetic sense modality, resulting in a “vicarious simulation” of the observed activity by the observer.¹⁹ This simulation occurs with regard to both the cases of depicted emotions in figurative images, but also to abstract art through the perception in the latter of marks and brushstrokes, that are subsequently perceived as the causal residues of human actions. Put more succinctly: “Mirror neurons

¹⁸ See Husserl (2008).

¹⁹ For details, see Freedberg and Gallese (2007).

support empathy which is pre-reflexive and non-inferential, via an “analysing apperception” which is achieved through the passive pairing of certain aspects of self and other” (Ratcliffe 2006: 348).²⁰

Mirror neurons notwithstanding, the problem of the lack of justification in Husserl for the empathetic apprehension of images as cultural objects, extends to a similar problem in recent writing on empathetic picturing in analytic aesthetics. Dominic Lopes, for example, explains our empathetic response to images as derived from the “contour theory” of musical expression. Briefly put, this is the view that musical expressiveness can be traced to a resemblance between its perceivable properties and the “contours” of human affective response.²¹ Whilst this is entirely consistent with the “affective attunement” view we have been holding up to now, it is questionable how the implied extension to visual art actually works. The same author (Lopes 2005) builds a theory that empathetic picturing involves certain “expression looks” that can also inhere in a figure or an overall scene or design, as well, as we posited in the last Section, in works of dance. Empathy towards pictures can be explained, because “the features of seeing-in that are responsible for evoking empathy are features with respect to which seeing-in resembles face-to-face seeing” (ibid: 119). Thereby, pictures express emotions in ways that parallel ordinary perceptual experience, reflecting the view that pictures are perceived empathetically because pictures can show not only how emotions *look*, but how they *feel*. But let me make an obvious objection here. We can recall from Section 1 that emotions and affects do indeed have “contours”, but that these are *dynamic* and have irreducible temporal components, in terms of the way affects are attuned to movements that approach and recede, attenuate and diminish, and so on. Whilst music has the temporal means at its disposal to reflect this, pictures lack this ability, presenting

²⁰ Note that it is doubtful whether the theory of mirror neurons is (fully) compatible with phenomenological theories of empathy. See, for details, Zahavi (2011).

²¹ See Davies (2006).

only frozen and static “looks” of expression within image objects. It is a leap of faith therefore to a comparative empathetic theory of picturing, which involves a medium that lacks this temporal quality.

What *can* explain this, I suggest, is a renewed attention to the qualitative dynamics of movement, representing a method that runs in the reverse direction from the last Section. Here we can see how the philosophy and phenomenology of dance, rather than being seen as a kind of poor relation within aesthetics more generally, can have a correcting influence on certain theoretical *aporia* within theories of depiction in analytic aesthetics. How does this work exactly? One thing I want to suggest is that it is precisely this deficiency of images, pertaining to their spatial and temporal rigidity, that causes us to create certain mental images *in relation to* them, in a manner reminiscent of the last Section. The key to understanding this relies on some key ideas in philosophical psychology and cognitive science that assert that we form mental images when something within the patterns of our normal “online” perceptual mechanisms, or “schemata” stops working, or “breaks down”; necessitating a recourse to a simulation, through “offline” imagination. For example: “When an active schema (at any level) fails to find the information to which it is attuned, the character of its activity changes...It is under these conditions I submit, that we have mental images. Imagery is the inner aspect of perceptual anticipations, of readiness to perceive. (Neisser 1978: 169-170). In a similar vein: “Imagery is experienced when a schema that is not directly relevant to the exploration of the current environment is allowed at least partial control of the exploratory apparatus” (Thomas 1999: 218). Note that this is compatible with the phenomenological theory of imagination sketched earlier in Section 1, which asserts that in mental imagery, we are conscious of an imagined scene made up of the hypothetical sensory consequences anticipated by simulated movements.

Now what I want to claim, is that image consciousness, which, as we have already seen, represents a type “pause” in otherwise normative aspects of everyday life, is a state of consciousness in which the essential temporal character of empathetic pairing is similarly “paused” or “breaks down”. It is precisely because of this that we “animate” static images by supplementing them with mental imagery, in a manner that I will now break down into several parts.

Firstly, we can assert that if emotions can be kinetically perceived, then they can, in principle at least, be depicted. They maintain the “possibility-of-depiction”. After all, a picture is a visual appearance in itself, and therefore can present, in principle at least, what can be visually perceived. Secondly, we know that in everyday perception, we correlate the visual appearances of things against our kinaesthetic sense modality, and we can suggest that this mapping also occurs in relation to the empathetic perception of other bodies. We use these correlations not just to identify physical objects in space, but to empathetically pair with other bodies as well. Visual triggers in the perceptual scene are constantly being “mapped against” kinaesthetic-affective feelings, a process of active scanning and “affective appraisal” that has temporal extension.²² Pictures can only *depict* emotions by freezing particularly salient moments of expression that would normally trigger an emotional response with a specific temporal contour. When we look at pictures this temporality is suspended, so that our normal modes of empathetic perception “break down”, and what happens as a consequence, I claim, is that we *complement* the static “expression look” of pictorial figures with kinetic and kinaesthetic imagery, forming small imagined movements “through” the image that temporally extend the implied contour of an emotion that is only depicted, “animating” it through various types of kinetic and kinaesthetic-affective experiments that we conduct on ourselves. Visual clues in the depicted scene are “tested” vicariously, and without actual movement towards the image, through kinetic and kinaesthetic

²² See Robinson (2005).

imagery, to see if what appears can be simulated internally and “matched” to a particular emotion or affect. This results in a mimetic pairing, or a “making oneself similar to” the image. And we seem to be able to do this holistically and without apparent causal sequencing, and again, without analogical inference or reasoning. My claim is that it is the complementation of these mental images with what is visually perceived in the real image that gives us a full empathetic response to pictures. The foundation of this is again a phenomenological depth factor that rests on on the remarkable properties of the qualitative dynamics of movement. Namely that a *particular* qualitative-affective dynamic can inhere in both a visual kinetic perception, and hence a depiction of that visual perception; the *same* dynamic can also be simultaneously be kinaesthetically *felt*, through the complementation to the depiction of kinaesthetic imagery, in which this particular qualitative-affective dynamic is restored to something like its temporally extended character. Thus, a full empathetic response to an image is grounded dually in what it brings to us, in terms of a visual perception, and is completed by what we bring to it, through complementary forms of kinaesthetic-affective imagery. Hence the experience is not one of mere projection onto the image, but reflects a specific “ontological reciprocity” between ourselves and the object; one that is present uniquely in the state of image consciousness. Again, what we see here is that ontologically speaking, an image cannot just coincide with, or be collapsed into its materiality: we need additionally to account for the relational aspects of what supervenes from the image, in terms of the complementarity we bring to it. And in relation to the last Section there is something else that is interesting to note here. What happens is both an aspiring-towards-picturing in symbolic dance, or an emulation of image consciousness, as a means of its acquiring stable temporal identity, and in the case of images, an aspiring-towards-animation, in the opposite direction, as a means of securing empathetic vitality, which otherwise more naturally resides in the state of movement consciousness.

Additionally, note that a particular qualitative-affective dynamic can pictorially manifest itself both in figures, facial expressions, and in “scenes” and “designs” (Lopes 2015). A depicted landscape or sea, for example can be seen-as “angry” or “calm”. This is because qualitative-affective dynamics are always present in movement regardless of whether the perceived object is animate or non-animate, so that an emotional character to a scene or overall design can easily be depicted or transposed onto an image through non-figurative means.²³

Finally, let me summarise the above through what we could call the “phenomenological duality” of image and movement consciousness, which manifests itself differently in the empathetic pairing involved in the perception of images and movement. What I want to propose is that despite an identical phenomenological triangulation between self, self-other and intersubjective other being present in both experiences, there is a different phenomenological “flow” in direction within each. In the former, we “animate” the image through empathetic pairing, and via a type of mapping onto our own senses of the “inside” and “outside” of movement and affect. In the latter case however, the pairing manifests itself in a quite different phenomenology of “being animated”, the body of another requires no animation, as it is present to us directly as being always already animated. But what we can learn from this body is the possibility of a potential extension of our own kinetic repertoires or “I cans”, and this happens no more apparently than in the art of virtuosic dancing, or equally within the innovations of other types of activity involving highly skilled movement. For example, (Gumbrecht 2004: 113) refers to the type of “epiphany” of a “complex and embodied form” arising from a “beautiful play in team sport”.

²³ This seems to me to be a more plausible explanation of what “ties together” the various “expression looks” in pictures than the one suggested by Robinson (2017), which relies on an appeal to overall the emotional intentionality of the individual creator of the picture.

5 CONSEQUENCES OF IMAGE AND MOVEMENT CONSCIOUSNESS

I now want to move to what is the third paradigm of phenomenological image theory, which concerns the consequences or the effects of image consciousness on observers, and suggest a number of extensions to this within the philosophy of dance. In doing so, I will make a closer analysis of the account provided earlier of the “pause in participation” afforded by images; make analogues of it to movement consciousness, and finally to the aesthetic experience of both participating in, and observing dance. This extension is motivated by two reasons. Firstly, that I believe that what (Wiesing 2014) has posited can actually be radically extended within phenomenological image theory itself, and secondly, that that the main ideas are broadly generalizable to other art forms, including dance. For example, and on the first point, whilst Wiesing refers to the effect of the “de-individuation” between self and social other arising from the aperspectival nature of the image object, it is arguably the case that the anachronic property of the same image object also implicates a different de-individuation between ourselves and those in the historical past. In addition, image consciousness is also arguably also a “pause” in, or cessation of, another fundamental perceptual paradigm of everyday experience. Namely, it is a characteristic of non-aesthetic visual perception that we often only extract partial and practically salient information from our visual field: “seeing is overlooking” (Luhmann 2000: 22). In image consciousness, and to the contrary, we attend to all the visible features within pictures, and in particular temporal sequences. Images, if we are attentive to them, receive our full visual attention.

In a similar fashion, I now want to outline three aspects of phenomenological depth that are also “paused” within movement consciousness and dancing. The first concerns the phenomena in movement of *goal-directedness* and *path dependency*. In our normal interactions with the world, we

are often not entirely conscious of the qualitative dynamics of our movement. This is because our movements, for the most part, are practically and pragmatically goal-directed. Our bodies traverse areas of space with a specific intentional functionality: we reach for something; we remove something in our path; we speed up and slow down because we are late or early, and so on. What escapes our attention is that each of these goal-directed movements exhibits both spatial and kinaesthetic path-dependency. If we so choose, we can perform all the above actions through separate spatial trajectories, or speed up and slow down in this particular way, or in a qualitatively different way. Each of these separate possibilities has its own qualitatively different kinetic-affective dynamic; one that, if we wish, we can become fully conscious of. In dance, and to the contrary, these aspects of path-dependency, rather than remaining hidden, come to the fore. Dance reveals through its material our innate ability to move path-dependently. In dance, this path-dependency becomes coupled with aesthetic style; the way certain dancers traverse space, even in simple ways such as walking, becomes the focus of our attention. In both dance participation and spectating, the otherwise normative concern for practical goal-directedness is temporarily paused or undergoes cessation, which, as is the case in the pausing afforded by image consciousness, may be a reason why dancing fascinates us.

The second “pause” concerns the phenomenon of *intercorporeality*. In everyday life we are again preoccupied with practical aspects of our movement and space-occupancy relative to others. More and more of us live in concentrated urban environments, for example, and a combination of social norms and taboos on the nature and possibility of physical contact with others can overdetermine our movements and proximal relations towards these same others. Affective modes of our behaviour, including concords and discords with others are anchored and articulated in the felt qualitative dynamics of movement. And again, we are normally unaware of these fundamental intercorporeal aspects of our interactions with others. But, whether we participate in dancing, or

simply observe dancing, these aspects become visible and consciously experienced. As we have seen, our movements are both felt and perceived. And when we pay attention to this, what we visually perceive primarily is the three-dimensionality or spatial volume constituted by our own movement: This is also how we are aware of possible collisions with either objects or other persons, and as a consequence “The fact that one is or can be perceptually aware of one’s own movement as a kinetic worldly reality is obviously significant with respect to interpersonal relations; one can become aware of the literal or figurative impact of one’s own movement dynamics on others” (Sheets-Johnstone 2011: 517). When we observe dance, but particularly when we participate in it, we become aware of what is normally submerged in everyday experience. Our usual habits pertaining to the avoidance of intercorporeal contact are “paused” in the same manner afforded by the de-individuation between ourselves and social others in image consciousness. In dance, and in modes of dancing like contact improvisation in particular, the otherwise normative intercorporeal tension between the space occupied by ourselves and others becomes temporally backgrounded.

The third and final “pause” relates to the contemporary phenomena of *accelerationism and inertia*. We can recall what phenomenology has already taught us about the way that we orient ourselves in the world, both spatially and temporally. Our individual experience of time, for instance is structured in the present moment as a window of past retentions and future protections, and this immediate experience is supplemented by a horizon of temporal experiences of recollection, memory, remembrance, and narratives concerning the nature of our social and collective historical past that we inherit through culture, and which relativize our temporal experience into other horizons of deep history.²⁴ And in an entirely similar fashion, the way we make sense of our immediate surroundings and its limits merges with a horizon of larger spatial orientation, which comprises the larger orbits of

²⁴ See, for example, Carr (2014).

environment and habitat, and reaching ultimately to the whole of the planet itself, seen as the structural limit or ground of our spatial awareness.

And it is precisely these types of structures, that have become to be fundamentally challenged in accelerated and technologized societies. Paul Virilio (2006) for example, provides an integrated account of time, space, and the subjective body and ego as seen in orientation with the world, suggesting that communicative technologies have made radical alterations to all of these. The experience of the world as changing in real time through accelerated media and digital communication has replaced the historical space of immediate intercorporeality, as it is now possible to experience a simultaneity of presence anywhere, and at any time, resulting in a necessary compression of spatial distances and horizons. Bodies, due to the speed of communications and transportation mechanisms, are thereby reduced to states of inertia, resulting in a similar suspension and compression of the possibilities of our animated nature. The social and historical worlds that centred on the idea of common sociality and community, and which were founded on shared human presence, have similarly given way to a hyper-concentration of contemporary individualism, a regress to a type of individual inertia caused by the ubiquitous technological availability of knowledge and information. But what I want to suggest next is that dance, both in terms of spectating, but perhaps more importantly in terms of participation, provides another type of “pause” or temporary cessation, opposing the physical and subjective inertia present in accelerated cultures. All forms of dancing, somatic practice and organised sport provide a temporary foregrounding or even antidote to the contemporary diminution of possibilities of animation and intersubjective exchange. The recent resurgence of interest in dance participation, and in many other types of movement and somatic practice are maybe important evidence of the importance of the “pause” they provide to the spatial

and temporal compression inherent in accelerated societies. The qualitative dynamics of individual movement, has after all the capacity to *make* its own unique time and space.

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