
The Articulation of Enkinaesthetic Entanglement

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I Introduction

In a similar way to Merleau-Ponty [1962, 1964a, 1964b 1968 & 1970] my task will be to uncover, one might even say elicit, the sensual layers of pre-theoretical living within our lifeworld or *Lebenswelt*. Yet I go further than this; my central concern is with the articulation of a world of meaningful experience, created, in part, at least, by a process of prenoetic mutually transgressive affective neuro-muscular entanglement; a great deal of the paper will be spent working towards a satisfactory account of what is meant by this mutual transgression. At first blush it will seem paradoxical to use the term ‘articulation’ in the context of pre-reflective felt experience, for if that experience is pre-reflective, it will be pre-conceptual, non-propositional, non-representational, and, we would imagine, incapable of being articulated in the usual way we conceive of articulation. So, let’s begin by making clear what will not be our concern: (i) the more usual uses of ‘articulation’ to mean the articulation of clear sounds in speech, (ii) or the putting into words of a previously inchoate idea, or (iii) any notion of articulation which is centred on the individual and potentially solipsistic. Whilst the first two are interesting and have been the subject of sustained concern for centuries’ worth of the writings of others, the third, I argue elsewhere [Stuart 2012], is specious and, what’s more, impossible. Thus, our much more specific concern is with the articulation of meaning through and by the intentionally-saturated activity of the living body in an affective community of other living bodies and things.¹ It is a richly affective,

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- 1 I have elsewhere, for example, Stuart (2010) & Stuart (2012), used the categories of ‘agential’ and ‘non-agential’, but given Latour’s arguments for the action or participation of non-humans (‘actants’) within rhizomic-networks (see, for example, Latour 2005), I am content to construe the former as intentional, the latter as non-intentional, and

plenisient community, characterised by the implicit intricacy of a pre-reflective neuro-muscular entanglement through which we are the unthinking co-creators, that is, co-articulators of our shared world.² I will argue that this affective co-articulation is made possible by a condition of our own subjectivity, and that this condition is a prenoetic somatosensory intentional transgression of the living dynamic experiencing being of the other. Thus, I will argue, our lived experience is always tempered by the direct spontaneous reception, or passive synthesis, of the experientially entangled living being of the other as they transgress our own experience and we theirs. I will refer to this as the enkinaesthetic community and reciprocity of our affective being *with* our world – our *Mitseinwelt*, and it is our folding into, enfolding with, and unfolding from this community which *is* the co-articulation of our shared meanings.

The most immediate question that arises is what is involved in this process of somatic, semantic and, by no means necessarily, conceptual articulation; so, we will start by an elaboration of the notions of articulation *of* and *through* the body, and then, through the articulated and articulating body, we will reach out through our enkinaesthetic experiential entanglement with other living bodies to the role that living, breathing, feeling bodies play in rendering our shared worlds meaningful and our actions values-realising. In doing this I will extend Husserl's notion of intentional transgression to the enkinaesthetic sphere of lived experience, and in support of this claim I will examine the theoretical and practical work of osteopathic manual listening [Gens & Roche], and the 'felt sense' in focusing [Gendlin 1966, 1992, 1997 & 2015] which emphasises the possible shift from a somatic articulation to a semantic one. Throughout the whole my position will be compatible with Merleau-Ponty's claim that

Whenever I try to understand myself, the whole fabric of the perceptible world comes too, and with it comes the others who are caught in it. ... For [others] are not fictions with which I might people my desert—offspring of my spirit and forever unactualized possibilities—but my twins or the flesh of my flesh.³

both as significant, contributing to the co-articulation of meaning, within a dynamic material-semiotic.

- 2 None of this is to imply that there is no cognitive activity going on, there may be, there may not; and nor is it to suggest that there is no linguistic community, there may well be; it is merely to suggest that this is not the concern of this current paper.
- 3 Merleau-Ponty (1964), 15.

Let's start with a skeleton, put some living, breathing, sensing flesh on its bones, and then proceed, by feeling our way towards an articulation of our twins, the flesh of our flesh.

II Articulation

There is a character, Mr Venus, in Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, whose employ is as an articulator of bones, someone who reconstructs the skeleton of animals, including human animals, and who occasionally extends their skills to taxidermy, that is, making the animal appear as though it still has flesh on its bones. Mr Venus, who possesses the amputated leg of his interlocutor, Mr Wegg, exclaims that:

[I]f you was brought here loose in a bag to be articulated, I'd name your smallest bones blindfold equally with your largest, as fast as I could pick 'em out, and I'd sort 'em all, and sort your vertebræ, in a manner that would equally surprise and charm you. [Chp. VII, p.64]

It's a vivid passage, not least because of the ironic suggestion that Mr Wegg would be around to be delighted by Mr Venus's remarkable feats of reassembly when he has re-articulated his bones, but also for the ease and skill with which Mr Venus makes sense of a skeletal world so familiar to his touch, to his vision, to his life-world. Each of the bones, even the smallest, has significance for, that is, has meaning and matters to, Mr Venus. Through his affective acquaintance he would be able to re-articulate and make sense of Mr Wegg's frame, with each of the individual bones articulating where they meet, in the microcosm of their intertwining. A single bone is inarticulate, yet in Mr Venus's hands it has meaning, it is a value-object, and with Mr Venus's intervention and in conjunction with other bones, all value-objects, its complex social meanings are articulated. Their articulation can be described in functional terms as permitting this or that extent of movement, this or that orientation, these or those degrees of freedom, as having single or multiple axes of movement, and as having flat, concave or convex surfaces, but more importantly their articulation is hermeneutic, making sense and giving voice to the individually unintelligible or incoherent. Mr Venus, as an articulator of bones, is a re-creator of worlds of meaning, where the elements act not as isolated individuals free from any impingement on others, and where the sense of affecting change and being affected brings forth, that is, articulates worlds for the multiplicity of unions. Such unions are not simplified dyadic interactions, and not only for Mr Venus. The whole, including Mr Wegg and beyond, is massively polyadic, consisting not just

of other living beings and things, but also memories, utterances, and events, past, present and future, all of which matter or have significance for us because they affect us and alter us, and in this universal dialogue we affect and alter them. It is within this affective community and reciprocity we feel our way in a co-articulated values-realising co-constituting dynamics.

Yet, for all this, the world of meaning that Mr Venus re-creates cannot yet be our 'twin' in the way Merleau-Ponty implies. To be our 'twin' Mr Wegg's skeleton must have feeling and sensing flesh on its bones, and this would have to comprise some part of its neurodynamical enkinaesthetic ability to feel the givenness and ownership of its own experience as entwined with the living feeling breathing dynamical being of other living beings and things. Only if this is the case can our 'twin' be affected and altered, can it sense and anticipate, and only if this is the case can it reciprocate in a co-articulation of meaning and value. So let's examine in a little more detail what Merleau-Ponty might mean when he says that others are not fictions, that they are the flesh of my flesh; to do this we'll explore the notion of articulation through the lens of enkinaesthetic theory.

III Enkinaesthetic Co-Articulation

There are three characteristics of enkinaesthetic theory which are crucial for this paper. The first is that there exists between us and other agents a prosody of resonance and fragmentation, in the form of interpersonal felt cadences that are "regulated by emotions of affection and enjoyment, expressed and given meaningful form by rhythms of modulated movement".⁴ The second is that, through our actions and perceptions we inhabit the other's experience, which is to say that there exists an immanent intercorporeality in the prosody of our neuro-muscular entanglement. This notion is similar to Husserl's notion of *Paarung*, but we will also see that it is profoundly different. And, the third feature arises as an interplay of the first and second, for in that interplay we don't just enact and articulate our own meanings, we also bring forth, that is, articulate others' meaning. So, just as Varela claims about an object, that it is not 'out there' independently, but "arises because of your activity, so, in fact, you and the object are co-emerging, co-arising"⁵, I claim that the co-articulation of meaning arises out of our enkinaesthetic co-emerging, co-arising. We'll proceed by examining these aspects in more detail.

4 Malloch & Trevarthen (2009), 2.

5 Varela (1999) 71-72.

Trevarthen observes that “There is an old and frequently rediscovered understanding that we come alive as subjects or persons *only in relation with others*, by [our] being innately sensitive to their actions toward us”⁶; I would add, and their being innately – and synchronously – sensitive to our actions towards them, for only with that co-responsiveness can we feel the other as immanent in our own being. Enkinaesthetic theory is a further rediscovery of this understanding, but it is also a development of it, bringing with it a means of drawing together how we articulate our concerns and the concerns of others within the sensitive community and reciprocity of living being, where each action, already characterised by its givenness and a saturated intentionality, engenders affect and that affect engenders action, not just within ourselves but within all life. Thus, it is through our enkinaesthetic entanglement that we experience the intercorporeal resonances, and the fractures and fragmentation of resonances, with those agents with whom, and those objects with which, we are in a perpetual community of reciprocal relations, within the experiential repertoire of the whole. As Sperry says “The experience of the organism is integrated, organised, and has its meaning in terms of coordinated movement”⁷, but Sperry is too cautious and fails to mention that movement is affectively coordinated with the energetic pitches, cadences, and tempos that characterise our polyphonic intertwining with other organisms and things [Stuart & Thibault 2015].

Communication between similarly motivated and similarly formed subjects, with the same kind of brain and the same rhythms and forms of attending, evidently has evolved by brains taking up and engaging with – or resonating to – the timing, aim, and style of these intentional and sense-directed activities generated in other brains.⁸

Without embracing Trevarthen’s emphasis on the brain, I am claiming that this communication is a natural, direct and unmediated apprehension of the other’s experience in our own. This is not to say that our experience of the other’s experience is from their perspective; that would be absurd. It is to say that when Merleau-Ponty speaks of others as real in our experience, as the flesh of my flesh, he is claiming

6 This is from an early draft of a paper sent in personal correspondence. It is worth noting that in that paper Trevarthen refers to Hutcheson (1755), Smith (1759), Buber (1937), Macmurray (1961), and Reddy (2008) who each make this ‘rediscovery’ from fascinating perspectives.

7 Sperry (1939), 295.

8 Trevarthen (2009), 12. Marvellous examples of this affective coordination are given in Validation Therapy, see: <https://vfvalidation.org/web.php?request=index> especially the validation breakthrough with Gladys Wilson <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrZX-zl0FcVM>

that the other is ‘always “already there” [in my experience] before reflection begins’ [Merleau-Ponty 1970, p.65], and that it is an always already there as the ‘primordial being which is not yet the subject-being nor the object-being’ (Merleau-Ponty 1970, p.65). In this way, in the day-to-dayness of the community and reciprocity of our affective *Mitseinwelt* we need neither to develop and implement some conjectural cognitive theory about the mind of the other, nor to perform some curious simulation of what the other might be thinking if we were them, and neither of these is required because we routinely transgress our own bodily boundaries spilling over into, that is, pervading the plenisentient bodily experience of the other, and they ours.

[A]t the same time the other who is to be perceived is himself not a “psyche” closed in on himself, but rather a conduct, a system of behavior that aims at the world, he offers himself to my motor intentions and to that “intentional transgression” (Husserl) by which I animate and pervade him.⁹

Husserl argues that, through a process of corporeal analogising, by which he means recognising the other as having a body similar to our own, we co-present the other and understand it to be, not simply a body like an object, *Körper*, but as being an ‘ensouled’, psychic, or living body, *Leib*.¹⁰ Analogising in this way couples ego and alter ego as *Paarung*, where the other, as psychically distinct from me, is, nevertheless, appresented as *Leib*. The emphasis for Husserl is on the auditory and visual perception of the other as having a moving, kinaesthetic body like my own, and it is in this observation that an ‘intentional transgression’ occurs, and I spontaneously appresent the other as another ego, an alter ego. Merleau-Ponty also emphasises the role of visual perception saying:

Husserl said that the perception of others is like a “phenomenon of coupling” (*accouplement*). The term is anything but a metaphor. In perceiving the other, my body and his are coupled, resulting in a sort of action which pairs them (*action à deux*). This conduct which I am able only to see, I live somehow from a distance. I make it mine; I recover (*reprendre*) it or comprehend it. [ibid.]

9 Merleau-Ponty (1964b), 118.

10 The anomalous counter-factual cases of, for example, antisocial personality disorders, including psychopathy and sociopathy (DSM-5 301.7), of depersonalisation or derealisation disorders (DSM-5 300.6), of Cotard’s delusion (DSM-5 297.1), and of Capgras syndrome, reveal our co-presentation of the other as *Leib* to be the non-anomalous one might say, natural, everyday response to other human beings. All references from DSM-5 2013.

Enkinaesthetic theory takes the intentional transgression further beyond Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's conceptions, arguing that visual and corporeal analogising plays only a greatly diminished role in our grasp of the intentional arc of the other's current and future action, and that the 'alter' ego that we appresent whilst remaining visually other, is not affectively other; this appresented other is already there in its primordiality. We have no need for analogising the physical body with our own, recognising it as similar, and switching to seeing it as a living being. We are always already within the perpetual felt community and reciprocity of an enkinaesthetic field, where "field" refers to the domain within which a particular condition prevails – in this case a topologically complex, affectively-laden, intentionally-saturated *Mitseinwelt* of other beings and things. We dwell within our plenisentient intersubjective engagement with other agents, human and non-human, and this dwelling, this entangled enkinaesthetic experience, is a transcendental condition for the prenoetic affect, which makes alter ego identification, co-presentation, co-articulation, and co-action possible.¹¹ In these massively polyadic enkinaesthetic intertwining, the simultaneous experience of our affect on others and their affect on us has an immanence in our being; we are, at one and the same time, both subject and object, and object not just in the gaze of the other, but also in our own sensed reflection in our memory, and in our anticipatory framing of ourselves within horizons of current and future possibilities.

In a phrase redolent of Merleau-Ponty's 'chiasm', Young (1980) uses "ambiguous transcendence" to describe the experiential inseparability of our being, at one and the same time, both subject and object; the dynamics of such a crisscrossing or 'intertwining' of the "touching [subject] and the tangible [object]", are fundamental for the success of living organisms within the enkinaesthetic field.¹²

This can happen only if my hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example, if it takes its place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of them, opens finally upon a tangible being of

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- 11 There is no opportunity in this current paper to do justice to the claim that there exist, and indeed that there *must* exist, intra- and inter-species enkinaesthetic resonances and fragmentations. In this regard I wholeheartedly commend to the reader Chapter 3, "Affect Attunement, Discourse Ethics Across Species", of Willett's *Interspecies Ethics*.
 - 12 An alternative, not a counter-, example from nature might be an animal which can simultaneously be both predator and prey. Weasels prey on smaller mammals like mice and voles, but they are also prey for larger predators like foxes and owls; and fish are nearly all piscivorous which means that they eat fish but they are also likely to be eaten by larger fish. In both these cases weasel and fish are likely to be simultaneously the subject of their experience and aware that they might also be the object of the other's experience; they are both the touching and the tangible.

which it is also a part. Through this crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it ...¹³

There is here no problem of the alter ego because it is not I who sees, not he who sees, because an anonymous visibility inhabits both of us, a vision in general, in virtue of that primordial property that belongs to the flesh, being here and now, of radiating everywhere and forever, being an individual, of being also a dimension and a universal.¹⁴

It is in this way, through the everywhere and forever radiation of resonances and fragmentations within our enkinaesthetic chiasm, that we bring forth, that is, co-articulate our, that is, collectively 'our', world. And, in this way, our 'own' world can never be brought forth or articulated, without the worlds of all others being brought forth or being articulated too; they are always already within our own articulation, immanent and never fully transcendent. Thus we are, at one and the same time, prenoetically a universal non-individuated being, and noetically (and visually) individuated.

All that I've said here is consistent with the direct perception theory¹⁵ [Chemero 2006 & Gallagher 2008] proposed as an alternative to theory-theory [Carruthers & Smith 1996] and simulation-theory [Davies & Stone 1995] as the means by which we understand what is in another's mind. There is something so remarkably cumbersome about having to first establish a theory, in some third-person scientific manner, about what another may be thinking, or having to place myself rather awkwardly and time-consumingly in the other's 'shoes', so that I can have a first-person experience of the world from 'their' perspective, that makes one wonder why these theories have remained credible for so long. I am not here denying that there are occasions when the situation is massively complicated and I have to judge whether or not I am, for example, being deceived by a smile or humoured by an agreement, but in general this kind of judgement is made *post hoc* through some reflective analysis; however, crucially, the felt sense we have of doubting the sincerity of an interaction relies on our prenoetic openness to the radiating resonances and fragmentations within our enkinaesthetic chiasm. This too is consistent with Gibson's ecological approach to perceptual experience, the first tenet of which is that perception is

13 Merleau-Ponty, (1968), 133.

14 *ibid.*, 142.

15 That enkinaesthetic entanglement is consistent with direct perception theory does not imply agreement with or acceptance of that theory. Direct perception is fine as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. Enkinaesthesia offers immanence, experiential transgression, extended body theory, and co-articulation, all of which take direct perception into new territory.

direct and not for adding information to sensations; the second is that perception is for action guidance, not information gaining; and the third is that perception is of affordances, the action possibilities within a perceptual horizon. Within this horizon, which is, first and foremost, an enkinaesthetic, intentionally-saturated affective horizon “organism and environment enfold into each other and unfold from one another in the fundamental circularity [the enkinaesthetic community and reciprocity of co-articulation] that is life itself”.¹⁶

Gendlin’s process model [1966, 1992, 1997, & 2015] provides a means of elaborating this experiential enfolding and unfolding within what he refers to as the implicit intricacy of the organism’s body-environment felt sense. I will provide a short summary of Gendlin’s work¹⁷ and then offer a practical extension of it through the technique of osteopathic manual listening [Sutherland; Gens & Roche 2014]. In this work we have an example of the naturally occurring co-articulation of meaning within the spontaneous enkinaesthetic appresentation of the other’s experience in mine, in my experience in the other’s.

IV The Felt Sense in Focusing and Osteopathic Manual Listening

The ‘implicit’ has to be felt in the body, but it is not only inside the body. Rather, it consists of body-environment interaction. “Interaction” comes first. Interaction has always already happened, even when we think about a separate environment and a separate body.¹⁸

One way in which we might begin to think about the implicit is as the givenness immanent in our experience. At first glance, this might seem sufficient, but it has echoes of individuation, as though it were somehow possible to separate the givenness of the individual’s experience from its experiential situatedness and the

16 Varela, Rosch, & Thompson (1991), 217. Bracketed phrase my addition.

17 For a detailed account of the Process Model start here: <http://www.focusing.org/process.html>

18 Gendlin (2015). We might say that interaction is primary, but it would be no more true for Gendlin’s model than it would be true to say it of relation in Leibniz’s monadology (Leibniz [1991]); the existence of interaction or relation (respectively) presupposes a multiplicity of entities: bodies, monads, consciousnesses, depending on the ontological commitments of your system. What each model shares or, at least seems to share, is the implicit intricacy with which all things are interwoven. In each it is through consciousness, in each it is relational, in Gendlin’s it is also interactional.

community and reciprocity of our being with other living bodies and things. And, it isn't just an 'implicit', it is an "implicit intricacy", and an "implicit interactional bodily intricacy" which characterises the proto-modal relationships of organisms in the practical everydayness of their lived being. In this way we might develop our understanding along enkinaesthetic lines, so that the "implicit intricacy" which is always already there too *is* our prenoetic enkinaesthetic experiential entanglement.

There is an implicit interactional bodily intricacy that is first – and still with us now. It is not the body of perception that is elaborated by language, rather it is the body of interactional living in its environment. ...We sense our bodies not as elaborated perceptions but as the body sense of our situations, the interactional whole-body by which we orient and know what we are doing.¹⁹

Gendlin's "Implicit intricacy" permeates the enkinaesthetic field, folding into, enfolding with, and unfolding from all things within a vast polyadic affective living landscape of articulating and co-articulating microcosmic intertwinings. Conceived thus, living being, *Leib*, transcends individual bodies and agents within this intricate enkinaesthetic web. As Gendlin says: "nature is an implicit intricacy"²⁰, implying, I will add, but I do not anticipate that Gendlin would disagree, the co-articulation of meaning within a values-realising non-individuated being. This dynamic Gendlin refers to as a "situational understanding", a kind of animal somatic grasp, and it has an ontological and experiential primacy to the "felt sense" that arises and pervades the co-activity or co-articulation of the organism-environment.

If an animal hears a noise, many situations and behaviors will be **implicit** in its sense of the noise, places to run to, types of predators, careful steps, soundless moves, turning to fight, many whole sequences of behavior. Meanwhile the animal stands still, just listening. What it will do is not determined. Surely it won't do all the implicit sequences – perhaps not even one of just these but some subtler response ...²¹

All living being in its implicit intricacy exists in this way within an enkinaesthetic field of affective enquiry and action. The implicit intricacy of "felt sensing" in its "situational understanding" is the articulation and co-articulation of non-propositional, pre-reflective, pre-conceptual, plenisentient interpretation, anticipation, and communication; all of which takes place within a horizon of action possibilities and comes already laden with the implicit non-propositional questions "how

19 Gendlin (1992), 352.

20 Gendlin (1997), 347.

21 Gendlin (1997) Chp. II, 7.

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