If the Body Is Part of Our Discourse, Why Not Let It Speak? Five Critical Perspectives

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone

Abstract Of the five perspectives set forth in this essay, four of them specify obstacles that block experiential understandings of emotions. The obstacles in one way and another subvert the living body, whether presenting it as a mere face or as an ahistorical adult body, as an embodied phenomenon or as a brain unattached to a whole-body nervous system. Such accounts bypass the affective dynamics that move through bodies and move them to move. Being true to the truths of experience, the fifth perspective, requires recognition of our infancy and even of our prenatal lives, both of which are tethered to developmental movement. It furthermore requires recognition of affective realties as subject-world relationships and recognition of the dynamic congruency of emotions and movement. In the end, the perspectives lead us to inquire about "the things themselves."

Keywords Animate · Dynamic · Brain · Embodied · Infancy

The five critical perspectives described and exemplified in this essay are: (1) the absence of the body below the neck; (2) the after-life of adults; (3) the lure of embodied simulation and microphrenological reductionism; (4) the whole-body nervous system: real-life, real-time embodiment; (5) the challenge of being true to the truths of affective experience. In its first four perspectives, this essay focuses on ways in which our understanding of emotions is cut short, that is, on obstacles to fathoming emotion and to carrying out veridical analyses of its experienced realities. In its fifth perspective, the essay shows in initial ways how, by enlisting other perspectives, we have the possibility of meeting the challenge of being true to the truths of affective experience and ultimately engage in phenomenological elucidations.

M. Sheets-Johnstone (✉)
University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, USA
e-mail: msj@uoregon.edu

N. Depraz, A. J. Steinbock (eds.), *Surprise: An Emotion?*, Contributions
To Phenomenology 97, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-98657-9_5

1 The Absence of the Body Below the Neck

A provocative observation made in the course of a panel discussion on "Expression" during a conference on "Emotions Inside Out: 130 Years after Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*" (Ekman et al. 2003; the conference proceedings were subsequently turned into a book) aptly captures the commonly truncated affective-kinetic character of adult emotion as rendered by science. An unidentified audience member comments, "I've been so excited by this whole presentation of this session [on "Expression"] because everybody is coordinated into one unit, but what has fascinated me is the absence of the body below the neck [laughter]" (ibid: 273). He or she goes on to explain: "I was fascinated by hearing the words, by seeing the faces, but I did not see the talking by the fingers, by the hands, by the movement, poise, and pattern of the people that were moving, sitting, or shifting." He/she then asks "if there is any further matter going on with the body as a Gestalt when you are communicating with your voice and your face" (ibid).

Well-known psychologist Paul Ekman responds first by citing the "pioneering work" of David Efron on gestures – what Efron refers to as "emblems" – and comments, "They are the only body language" (ibid: 273). But he goes on to mention Efron's specification of "speech illustrator movements," and then alludes to his own research on "bodily movements that we called *self-manipulative movements,*" movements such as playing with one's hands or scratching one's face (ibid: 274; italics in original). He concludes his response by stating, "There are other approaches that aren't looking in this formalistic way, but are looking at the flow, or quality, of movement," and goes on to remark, "These are people who primarily come out of dance. It doesn't appear that these body movements are as direct a signal source for emotion, in humans at least, as the face and voice. That's why we couldn't have found someone able to give a scientific talk on the body movements of emotion" (ibid).

The "absence of the body below the neck" might well be characterized as a chronic metaphysics of absence in "scientific talk on the body movements of emotion," and the absence of "flow, or quality, of movement" as a chronic absence of both dynamics and first-person experience in "scientific talk on the body movements of emotion." It is pertinent to point out with respect to both absences that phenomenological analyses are open to verification within a methodology no less demanding than that of Western science, which means they can be brought to self-evidence by anyone caring to examine experience. The absences readily conceal the qualitatively blinkered bodily life of most present-day scientists, perhaps even of most present-day philosophers, if not of academic and non-academic people generally. The deficiency of a blinkered science in particular notwithstanding, we can nonetheless clearly recognize that the absences constitute absences of a whole-body qualitative dynamics. Our voices and faces are part and parcel of those dynamics, part of the qualitative affective-kinetic dynamics created by otherwise spontaneously whole moving bodies. Animate bodies are indeed ones from which movement *flows*, and in flowing, creates a qualitative dynamic that can be elucidated in fine phenomenological detail (Sheets-Johnstone 1999a, b/exp. 2nd ed. 2011, 2009), a

detailing that in truth is far more affectively and kinetically elucidating and exacting than scientific disquisitions on emblematic gestures, illustrator movements, and self-manipulative movement.

What indeed is "going on with the body as a Gestalt when you are communicating with your voice and with your face?"

If the body is part of our discourse, why not let it speak?

2 The After-Life of Adults

In his Introduction to *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Darwin voices concern that his analysis have a sound foundation and in this context calls attention straightaway to infants. He states: "In order to acquire as good a foundation as possible, and to ascertain, independently of common opinion, how far particular movements … are really expressive of certain states of the mind, I have found the following means the most serviceable. In the first place, to observe infants; for they exhibit many emotions, as Sir C. Bell remarks, 'with extraordinary force'; whereas, in after life, some of our expressions 'cease to have the pure and simple source from which they spring in infancy'" (Darwin 1965 [1872]: 13). What Darwin specifies as the "after life" of adults with respect to "the pure and simple source" of emotions in infancy can surely be described as a shift away from the animate body, in more precise terms, as an espousal of cognition, measured intellect, information-processing, the amygdala and other brain entities, and so on, over the realities of everyday spontaneous feeling in the form of affective-kinesthetic sentience – in short, a definitive predilection for mind over body in a literal spatial as well as ontological and epistemological sense.

It is relevant in this context to recall Jung's observation that "[e]motions are instinctive, involuntary reactions," and that "[a]ffects are not 'made' or wilfully produced; they simply happen" (Jung 1968, pp. 278–79). Emotions do indeed "spring" from the body and in their own distinctive qualitative kinetic dynamics, as both Darwin and Bell demonstrate graphically as well as descriptively (Darwin 1965 [1872], Bell 1844). In his final chapter on the expression of emotions titled "Concluding Remarks and Summary," Darwin emphasizes "the intimate relation which exists between almost all the emotions and their outward manifestations" (Darwin 1965 [1872]: 365). Indeed, both implicitly and explicitly throughout his text he has validated the intimate bond between movement and affect. Infant psychiatrist and clinical psychologist Daniel Stern aptly terms these kinetically-charged affective dynamics "vitality affects" (Stern 1985, 1993). Obviously, to appreciate them, we need to regain touch with our primordial animation by affectively and kinetically interrogating our "after life" as adults. When we do so, we are led to recognize the dynamic congruency of emotions and movement. In an article titled "Emotions and Movement: A Beginning Empirical-Phenomenological Analysis of Their Relationship" (Sheets-Johnstone 1999a), I spelled out that congruency, documenting its reality in scientific studies of animate life, i.e., in ethologist Konrad

Lorenz's description of fear in the readily notable behavior of a greylag goose; its reality in literary descriptions of people's reactions, i.e., in William Faulkner's vivid narrative of a character's fear in his novel *Sanctuary*; and its reality in an imagined scenario in which one is being pursued by an unidentified assailant at night in a deserted area of a city, i.e., in a phenomenological analysis of fear that sets forth its movement dynamics. In all three instances, we find a formally congruent dynamic; that is, emotions move us to move in ways that are dynamically congruent with the dynamics of the feelings we are experiencing. It is indeed because they are *formally* congruent that emotion and movement can be separated from each other, a separation that makes possible both the feigning of emotion and the restraining of its expression. In other words, we can go through the motions of a feeling, ostensibly showing others we feel a certain way, and we can restrain ourselves from moving in the way we feel inclined to move. In effect, we can smile when we actually feel no friendliness and we can refrain from a felt urge to slap someone in the face. It is important to point out that we know we can pretend or inhibit in a prereflective sense; our knowledge comes from our own lived experiences of the dynamic congruency of affect and movement. In particular, we have not pondered over the relationship between our feelings and our movement and come to realize that – "Hey! – I can pretend and I can inhibit!" Though we are typically if not certainly restrained in childhood from hitting or harming others, and thus inhibit our affective-kinetic proclivities, we are not typically apprised of the relationship between affect and movement and have not thought through on our own their relationship. Moreover no one actually teaches us to dissemble or to feign. In short, though emotions "simply happen," as Jung pointedly observes, we are free to follow through on their dynamics, moving in ways they move us to move or not. Similarly, we are free to feign their dynamics, moving or not moving in ways that are incongruent with our feelings. In our after-life as adults, we easily both feign and restrain. Bodily-felt feelings and bodily movement are commensurately narrowed. In our after-life as adults, we have a tendency not just to shut down the "pure and simple source" from which emotions spring in infancy, namely, our affectively felt bodies that move us to move, but to forget that source ever existed. In turn, we dampen our range of expressive movement and forget that we are, in Husserl's perspicuously exacting words, basically and quintessentially *animate* organisms. In turn, and in short, we cultivate an adultist perspective on emotions.

Again, it is appropriate to ask: If the body is part of our discourse, why not let it speak?

3 The Lure of "Embodied Simulation" and Microphrenological Reductionism

As if prescient of the direction in which his neuropsychiatric profession will take him, Edmund Jacobson comments in his 1970 book *Biology of Emotions* that "those who would do homage to the brain with its ten billion cell-amplifiers can well

continue to do so," but they must also not overlook empirical evidence: that "muscles and brain proceed together in one effort-circuit, active or relaxed" (Jacobson 1970, pp. 36, 34). Through his clinical studies with trained observers, people who are not casual subjects as in traditional scientific studies, but trained in the technique of "auto-sensory observation" that he developed, Jacobson shows that "objective and subjective data," i.e., neuromuscular activity on the one hand, and attention, emotion, and imagination, for example, on the other, "indicates conclusively that when the trained observer relaxes the neuromuscular elements apparently specific in any mental activity, the mental activity as such disappears accordingly (ibid., p. 35). Note that Jacobson does not say that *all* mental activity disappears, only the mental activity ongoing before relaxation of neuromuscular elements.

Jacobson's empirical evidence of a singular muscle-brain 'effort-circuit' accords with Darwin's basic insight that movement and emotion go hand in hand. It accords as well with his seminal insight based on worldwide observations of animate life: "Experience shows the problem of the mind cannot be solved by attacking the citadel itself. – the mind is function of body. – we must bring some *stable* foundation to argue from" (Darwin 1987 [1838–1839]: 564; italics in original). Bodies are indeed the ground floor of animate life. Their kinetic/tactile-kinesthetic invariants – and proprioceptive corollaries thereof, e.g., the slit sensilla of spiders, the campaniform sensilla of insects – undergird the distinctive everyday affective-kinetic dispositions and capacities of each species of animate form. Morphology in the broad evolutionary sense of species-specific and species-overlapping kinetic/tactile-kinesthetic invariants thus provides precisely the stable foundation that Darwin specifies as necessary to veridical understandings of mind. Kinetic/tactile-kinesthetic invariants are the foundation of *synergies of meaningful movement* (Sheets-Johnstone 2009, 2010, 2011). Synergies of meaningful movement are to begin with *motivated* and remain *affectively charged*. They are thus affectively informed from beginning to end.

In contrast to Jacobson's empirically-grounded "muscle-brain effort circuit" and its resonance with Darwin's insights into emotion, movement, mind, and body, present-day neuroscience and cognitive science reduce the kinetic-affective-cognitive realities of animate life to neuronal activity in *the brain*. The lure of explaining ourselves to ourselves atomistically in this way has spread beyond the laboratories of neuroscience and the academic halls of cognitive science and philosophy, and other disciplines as well, to popular culture. Indeed it appears an irresistible lure, even to the point of absurdity. Consider, for example, an advertisement by The Teaching Company (*Science News* (vol. 175, no. 13, p. 3) that specifies a course taught by a neuroscience professor at a well-known and reputable university. The course is titled "How Your Brain Works." It is described as follows: "Everything you hear, feel, see, and think is controlled by your brain. It allows you to cope masterfully with your everyday environment and is capable of producing breathtaking athletic feats, sublime works of art, and profound scientific insights. But its most amazing achievement may be that it can understand itself" (vol. 175, no. 13, p. 3).

The brain is clearly the oracle at Delphi, the Mecca, so to speak, to which all questions about ourselves and our relationship to our surrounding world are

addressed and from which all questions will in time be duly answered. In effect, the *fons et origo* of our effective relationships with other humans and with the array of objects we experience in the world about us, the fount of our knowledge of the world and of other people is neurological and lies in our own heads in the form of "internal non-linguistic 'representations' of the body-states associated with actions, emotions, and sensations." In the brochure summary of his guest lecture in conjunction with his Arnold Pfeffer 2009 prize award, Vittorio Gallese states just that. A critical problem lies in such a thesis. It is all but explicit in Gallese's own detailed account of "The Inner Sense of Action: Agency and Motor Representations" that appeared in an article published in 2000 (Gallese 2000). It is all but explicit in a different sense in his co-authored 2007 article with David Freedberg titled "Motion, Emotion and Empathy in Esthetic Experience" in which Freedberg and Gallese state that their purpose, is to "challenge the primacy of cognition in responses to art" and to propose instead that "a crucial element of esthetic response consists of the activation of embodied mechanisms encompassing the simulation of actions, emotions and corporeal sensation, and that these mechanisms are universal" (Freedberg and Gallese 2007, p. 197). In the first instance, it is a question of Gallese's underscoring of what he terms the "*common code*" (Gallese 200, p. 24; italics in original) of neuronal activity, namely, that all electromagnetic, mechanical, and chemical energy that constitutes stimuli of one kind and another, are "transduced" into action potentials. Action potentials of nerve cells are the common code of all stimuli. The singular problem is how this common code of all neural activity is itself transformed into "representations," a word that, incidentally, Gallese himself puts in quotation marks in speaking of "internal non-linguistic 'representations' of the body-states associated with actions, emotions, and sensations." How, in brief, can a common code – a same-for-all-stimuli – eventuate in distinctive representations – in a representation now of someone picking up a glass, in a representation now of horror in seeing a painting by Goya in which bodies are being mutilated, in a representation now of a tuber being "'not edible'" (p. 32)? The "common code" was recognized by Descartes and properly recognized precisely as a problem. Gallese's solution is to "naturalize" representation by giving it a home in the brain via "embodied simulation" (pp. 24). "[C]ausative properties," he states emphatically, "*are* content properties" (pp. 30, 34). In effect, as he goes on to state, "[T]o be phenomenally *conscious* of the meaning of a given object depends also on the *unconscious* simulation of actions directed to that object" (p. 32). Mirror neurons, as must be evident by now, are the key to naturalizing representation; they give representations substantive reality in the form of embodied simulations. The problem of explaining how a common code can eventuate in distinct representations is thereby elided. What Gallese terms "the safe bastions of physicalism" (p. 37) are indeed secured, for no further mention is made of a common code; it has been superceded by the capacity of neurons in the brain to simulate what Gallese terms "actions, emotions, and sensations." He justifies his naturalization of representation specifically to the point of adducing meaning, as when, in follow up to his statement that "causative properties *are* content properties," he adds, that "at least for *some* forms of mental content – their meaning

is literally *constituted* by the way they are 'enacted' by a situated and functionally grounded organism" (p. 30). His neuronal formulation of meaning comes close to Evan Thompson's later claim that "[t]he nervous system … creates meaning".

In the second instance, it is a question of passing over the very bodily experiences that necessarily ground any so-called embodied simulations of "actions, emotions, and sensations" in the form of neural representations. In brief, Freedberg and Gallese's conception of aesthetic experience rests on ready-made mirror neurons. Indeed, in their eyes, we seem to be born with them. Precisely in this context, it is notable and of considerable interest to point out that in their initial experimental research to determine whether mirror neurons exist in humans, Rizzolatti, Fogassi, and Gallese – the major neuroscientists at Parma – did not utilize PET scan studies to determine neuronal activity in human brains; they utilized *neuromuscular* studies (see Sheets-Johnstone 2012 for a full analysis of mirror neuron research). They quite breezily pass over this fact in their special 2006 neuroscience article in *Scientific American* titled "Mirrors in the Mind," an article that gives a background history and summary of their findings to date. In particular, in describing their first experiments with human subjects in which the aim was to determine "whether a mirror neuron system also exists in humans," they state, "As volunteers observed an experimenter grasping objects or performing meaningless arm gestures, for example, increased neural activation in their hand and arm muscles that would be involved in the same movements suggested a mirror neuron response in the motor areas of their brains" (Rizzolatti et al. 2006, p. 58). The *suggestion* of "a mirror neuron response in the motor areas of their brains" and in consequence of a mirror neuron system in the human brain is clearly what is of moment to them. Accordingly, they pass over the *kinesthetically interesting finding* because of their desire to identify "the exact brain areas" that are activated when volunteers observe what they term "motor acts" (ibid.). Motorological talk readily and easily ignores kinesthetic experience in a way similar to the way in which talk of sensation readily and easily ignores dynamics, the experienced dynamics of both affect and movement. Real-life, real-time affective-kinesthetic experience is precisely what grounds the aesthetic experience of horror in face of a painting by Goya just as it grounds the everyday experience of horror in witnessing a freeway accident, videos of a tsunami or of a tornado, and so on. The experience of horror, here anchored in the recognition of extraordinary harm and pain is not located in canonical neurons – "premotor neurons" that are selectively activated according to the type of visual object being experienced. The experience is grounded in first-person tactile-kinesthetic/affective experiences, experiences we have all had in the course of growing up, of injuring ourselves in one way and another, in being injured by others, of being in pain from a stomachache, a toothache, and so on. As Sartre succinctly put it: "I live my body" (Sartre 1956, p. 325). I would add, I do not live my brain. Indeed, though it is distinctly a part of my body, my brain is nowhere in my experience, present not even as my heartbeat and breath are present.

Accordingly, if the body is part of our discourse, why not let it speak?

4 The Whole-Body Nervous System: Real-Life, Real-Time Embodiment

The sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems constitute the autonomic nervous system, a system that, along with the somatic nervous system, constitutes the peripheral nervous system. The peripheral nervous system is so named in relation to the brain and the spinal cord that are encased in the skull and vertebral column respectively, that is, in relation to the central nervous system. Evolutionary anatomist and former Alexander Agassiz Professor of Zoology at Harvard University, Alfred Romer, who wrote numerous, widely and well-used textbooks on evolutionary morphology, describes the sympathetic nervous system in general terms as follows: "Stimulation of true sympathetic nerves tends to increase the activity of the animal, speed up heart and circulation, slow down digestive processes, and, in general, to make it fit for fight or frolic" (Romer and Parsons 1977, p. 501). The parasympathetic often works in opposition to the sympathetic. Though it promotes digestion, for example, and other vegetative functions, it commonly constricts or contracts, and tends to slow down activity. Both sympathetic and parasympathetic are anatomically as well as functionally distinct parts of the autonomic nervous system. Parasympathetic fibers emerge from the cranial and sacral regions of the central nervous system, that is, from the brain and lower spinal cord. Topographically, the sympathetic system has its origin in the thoracic and lumbar regions of the central nervous system, hence its alternative name, the "thoracolumbar" system. Of particular interest is the fact that sympathetic fibers extend outward from each side of the spinal cord, and, unlike parasympathetic fibers, they synapse at ganglia at a distance from their target organ, be it heart, stomach, or intestines, for example, many of the ganglia forming what is called the sympathetic chain, a chain parallel to the vertebral column. The chain is an elongated synaptic junction, that is, a neural orchestrating column from which postganglionic fibers extend to internal organs – heart, bladder, liver, intestines, genitalia, stomach, and so on. Insofar as ganglia within the chain serve to mobilize organs, muscles, and other parts of the body – for example, bronchiole dilatation and dilatation of heart arteries – and to increase the rate of contraction of heart muscle and to contract the anal sphincter, for example, the sympathetic chain is obviously of moment in the day-to-day contingencies, opportunities, surprises, and challenges of animate life – in what Romer in general terms calls fight and frolic. In this respect, the sympathetic chain recalls a poem by a newspaper columnist, Bert L. Taylor, about the enlarged segment of the spinal cord of the dinosaur Diplodocus between its hips, an enlargement that notably exceeded the size of its brain (Romer 1954, vol. 1, p. 96):

Behold the mighty dinosaur,
Famous in pre-historic lore,
Not only for his power and strength
But for his intellectual length.
You will observe by these remains

The creature had two sets of brains–
One in his head (the usual place),
The other at his spinal base.
Thus he could reason *a priori*
As well as *a posteriori*.
No problem bothered him a bit;
He made both head and tail of it.
So wise was he, so wise and solemn,
Each thought filled just a spinal column.
If one brain found the pressure strong
It passed a few ideas along.
If something flipped his forward mind
'Twas rescued by the one behind.
And if in error he was caught
He had a saving afterthought.
As he thought twice before he spoke
He had no judgement to revoke.
Thus he could think without congestion
Upon both sides of every question.
Oh, gaze upon this model beast,
Defunct ten million years at least.

The point of the above quite summary account of the autonomic nervous system, particularly the sympathetic and the sympathetic chain – and the point of the poem and its emphasis on the perks of a double brain in a single body – is to bring into sharp focus the whole body nervous system, the whole body nervous system that includes not only the autonomic system, but the somatic system – sensory and kinetic – and the central nervous system as well. While it is fashionable in today's neuroscience to single out *the brain* – and fashionable in a near decerebrate fashion to do so – *the brain* is clearly and in actuality part and parcel of the whole body nervous system. Accordingly, if we talk in terms of embodiment and about entities or things being embodied, we should be speaking of the whole body nervous system: the whole body nervous system is what is embodied along with muscles, internal organs, blood vessels, and so on. It is indeed the whole body nervous system that is embodied, fully embodied. Accordingly, we should realize that we cannot properly or logically speak of body and brain as two distinct entities. By the same token, and as indicated, we cannot properly and logically speak of "embodied emotions" any more than we can properly and logically speak of "embodied language," "embodied self-awareness," "embodied experience," and of "embodied movement." We can in fact ask: can there be any such thing as disembodied fear, joy, or disgust – any more than there can be disembodied language, experience, self-awareness, and movement? Fear, joy, disgust, conviction, hesitancy, and so on – all are dynamically lived through affective bodily experiences (see Johnstone 2012). Each affect *moves through the body, and moves the body to move* along distinctive dynamic lines (Sheets-Johnstone 2006). Sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems are

essential to these emotional dynamics. Short of them – literally short of them when cut off from everything below the cerebrum as in so much of present-day research on the brain – we would not experience an accelerated or decelerated heart rate, relaxed or widening eyes, not to mention erection and ejaculation. Short of an inherently integrated whole body nervous system, we would not experience grief, delight, hatred, terror, or any other emotion, neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp's reductionist scenarios notwithstanding. While certainly contributing to understandings of the neural architecture of emotions, Panksepp, perhaps as a result of the present climate of apotheosizing the brain, contributes also to an already astonishing number of experiential attributions to the brain. He writes, for example, "In my view, emotional feelings represent only one category of affects that brains experience" (Panksepp 2005, p. 162). Experiential ascriptions to the brain to the contrary, *the brain* – the notable and highly revered human one – is like the brain of any other animate form of life. It does not and cannot experience affects: *it does not and cannot feel*.

In sum, the autonomic nervous system is as vital to survival as the neuromuscular system, the hormonal system, the circulatory system, and all other anatomical, chemical, and physiological built-ins of animate life. Moreover everything works together in this human body of ours as in the bodies of all other forms of animate life. Humans are not different because of an outsized brain. In spite of what well-known neuroscientist Ramachandran writes in extolling prose about our impending brain-in-a-vat existence – "We are all slowly and imperceptibly approaching the brain in the vat scenario where all functions will be literally at your fingertips as you become dissolved in cyberspace" (Ramachandran 2006, p. 2)[1] – and in spite of what he writes in excessive prose about conscious experience and a sense of self – "we take for granted in these enlightened times" that "our conscious experience and sense of self is based entirely on the activity of a hundred billion bits of jelly – the neurons that constitute the brain " (ibid., p. 1) – in spite of all his adulatory prose, *the brain* – any brain – cannot compete with the whole-body nervous system that our phenomenal bodies embody and that is integral to the dynamically experienced whole-body affective realities of animate being and animate life. Thus we may again ask:

If the body is part of our discourse, why not let it speak?

5 The Challenge of Being True to the Truths of Affective Experience

In accordance with Darwin's perspicuous observation about infancy cited in the context of the second perspective, we would do well to begin at the beginning, that is, with ontogeny, if we are to be true to the truths of affective experience. The task is challenging because our adult vantage point is so seductive. We forget that we all came into a totally unfamiliar world; indeed in the beginning, we entered like aliens

[1] We might in fact ask: What's the point of bipedality if you cannot walk? If you are a brain in a vat, you don't have a leg to stand on.

on a foreign planet. We were not, however, totally foreign to ourselves, for we had spent some time moving ourselves. Starting around the 11th of our 42 weeks in the womb, we opened and closed our lips, we turned our head, we moved our hands and feet. Later, approximately halfway through those 42 weeks, our sucking and grasping reflexes begin to develop; we kicked our legs kick and waved our arms, and might have put a thumb in our mouth (Furuhjelm et al. 1977, pp. 95, 124). In short, our prenatal life was a life of developing movement. Moreover sound was not foreign to us. As medical researchers have noted, "The uterus is no silent, peaceful environment. The woman's pulse is constantly pounding; the placenta surges and murmurs; at times the woman moves abruptly, or speaks loudly" (ibid., p. 124). In effect, when we come into earthly life, we are like aliens on a foreign planet, but we are not dumb to touch, movement, and sound. Indeed, we are not awaiting consciousness as Daniel Dennett declared when he wrote, "[consciousness] arises when there is work for it to do, and the preeminent work of consciousness is dependent on sophisticated language-using activities" (Dennett 1983, p. 384).

Being true to the truths of affective experience requires attention not just to infancy but to basic animate realities such as the startle reflex, a fundamental reflex that psychologists Carney Landis and William Hunt studied in experimental fine detail across a range of subjects, including pathological and nonhuman subjects. The startle reflex is an affectively-charged movement pattern and clearly experienced as such, both when we ourselves are startled and when we see others startled. Landis and Hunt describe the movement pattern of the startle reflex "to be a general bodily flexion … which resembles a protective contraction or 'shrinking' of the individual" (Landis and Hunt 1939, p. 23). They detail the pattern specifically as follows: "blinking of the eyes, head movement forward, a characteristic facial expression, raising and drawing forward of the shoulders, abduction of the upper arms, bending of the elbows, pronation of the lower arms, flexion of the fingers, forward movement of the trunk, contraction of the abdomen, and bending of the knees" (ibid., p. 21). The pattern is clearly complex. Landis and Hunt note too the responsive character of the pattern, namely, that "[t]he response is very rapid and follows sudden, intense stimulation," and that the "basic reaction [is] not amenable to voluntary control, [and] is universal" (ibid.). Finally, they point out that four possible emotions are connected with startle: curiosity, fear, annoyance, and "overflow effects," the latter arising because, as they put it, "the primary response is not sufficient to resolve all the motor tensions aroused." In short, the startle reflex is a phylogenetic affective-kinetic reality that attests to an elemental, that is, *foundational subject-world relationship*. In doing so, it testifies directly and with incontestable animated immediacy to the superfluity of embodying, embedding, enacting, and extending "mental processes," as philosopher Mark Rowlands, for example, judges necessary in what is advertised as his "[investigations into] the conceptual foundations of the new science of the mind" (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press 2011 brochure: see Rowlands 2010).

Finally, being true to the truths of affective experience requires recognition of Nina Bull's extended study of emotion via hypnosis, which showed that a body must be free in a neuromuscular sense in order to feel an emotion. In particular, if

one is hypnotically locked into a certain emotion –-say disgust – and then asked to express a certain other emotion, one is unable to do so. As one subject stated, "I reached for joy – but couldn't get it – so tense"; as another said, "I feel light – can't feel depression" (Bull 1951, pp. 84, 85). When it was said earlier that emotions move through the body and move us to move, it could have been added that they may also move us to be still, but not on that account to be simply a bundle of sensations. In contemplating a star-studded night sky, for example, and being stilled by a felt sense of grandeur, the felt sense is moving through us and continuing to move through us in our full-bodied presence to the spectacle before us. We are not moving about, but we are not wholly still either; we are not in a fixed *state*, but are held in what might be described as a dynamic rapture or wonder. Equally, when in everyday life we feel too tense to reach for joy or too light to feel depression, the tension or the lightness we feel is a complex affective-kinetic dynamic that moves through us and that continues to move through us, deterring us for the time from any other affective-kinetic dynamic. In short, to describe ourselves as simply having constricting sensations, for example, when we feel too tense to reach for joy and having weightless sensations when we feel too light to be depressed, or to describe ourselves more generally as being a "mass of tactile, labyrinthine and kinaesthetic data," as Merleau-Ponty does in the context of "catching space at its source" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, pp. 249, 243, respectively), is to ignore the dynamics of movement and affect and of their dynamic congruency. Indeed, were we not already *naturally* animated in a congruent dynamic of feeling, both affective and kinetic, we would be unable to feign an emotion. Such a talent testifies not to an embodied mind but to a mindful body, a body that in a substantive tactile-kinesthetic/affective sense knows itself and its possibilities (Sheets-Johnstone 1999a). Being true to the truths of affective experience requires being attuned to bodily dynamics, bodily dynamics over sensation, and by the same token, attuned to movement over bodily position. In broader terms, to be true to the truths of affective experience requires attendance to phylogenetic, ontogenetic, and experiential truths, all of which are rooted in and attest to the foundational animate realities of bodily life. Accordingly, should we not proceed 'to the things themselves', *to those otherwise eclipsed phenomenological realities of being animate organisms*? Should we not put a methodologically astute ear to our bodies and listen to their dynamics?

If the body is part of our discourse, why not let it speak?

References

Bell, Sir Charles. 1844. *The anatomy and philosophy of expression*. London: John Murray.

Bull, Nina. 1951. The attitude theory of emotion. In *Nervous and mental disease monographs*, x ed., x–x. New York: Coolidge Foundation.

Darwin, Charles. 1965 [1872]. *the expression of the emotions in man and animals*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 1987. In *Charles Darwin's notebooks, 1836–1844*, ed. Paul H. Barrett, Peter J. Gautrey, Sandra Herbert, David Kohn, and Sydney Smith. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Dennett, Daniel. 1983. Intentional systems in cognitive ethology: The 'Panglossian' Paradigm Defended. *Behavioral and Brain SCIENCES* 6: 343–390.

Ekman, Paul, J. J. Campos, R. J. Davidson, F. B. M. de Waal. 2003. Expression: Panel discussion. In *Emotions inside out: 130 years after Darwin's The expression of the emotions in man and animals*, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences. vol. 1000, 266–278. New York: New York Academy of Sciences.

Freedberg, David, and Vittorio Gallese. 2007. Motion, emotion and empathy in aesthetic experience. *Trends in Cognitive Science* 11 (5): 197–203.

Furuhjelm, Mirjam, Axel Ingelman-Sundberg, and Claes Wirsén. 1977. *A child is born*, rev. ed. New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence.

Gallese, Vittorio. 2000. The inner sense of action: agency and motor representations. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7 (10): 23–40.

Jacobson, Edmund. 1970. *Modern treatment of tense patients*. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas.

Johnstone, Albert A. 2012. The deep bodily roots of emotion. *Husserl Studies* 28 (3): 179–200.

Jung, Carl. G. 1968. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 2nd ed. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Bollingen Series XX. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Landis, Carney, and William A. Hunt. 1939. *The startle pattern*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*, Trans. Colin Smith. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; 1945. *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Paris: Librairie Gallimard.

Panksepp, Jaak. 2005. Affective consciousness: Core emotional feelings in animals and humans. *Consciousness and Cognition* 14 (1): 30–80.

Ramachandran, V.S. 2006 (1.10.06). "Mirror Neurons and the Brain in the Vat" (Response to "What Is Your Dangerous Idea?"). *Edge: The Third Culture*.

Rizzolatti, Giacomo, Leonardo Fogassi, and Vittorio Gallese. 2006. Mirrors in the mind. *Scientific American* 295(November): 54–61.

Romer, Alfred S. 1954. *Man and the vertebrates*. Vol. 1. Baltimore: Penguin Books.

Romer, Alfred S., and Thomas S. Parsons. 1977. *The vertebrate body*. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company.

Rowlands, Mark. 2010. *The new science of the mind: From extended mind to embodied phenomenology*. Cambridge: Bradford Books/MIT Press.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1956. *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Philosophical Library.

Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine. 1999a. Emotions and movement: A beginning empirical-phenomenological analysis of their relationship. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6(11–12): 259–277; included in Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine. 2009. *The Corporeal Turn: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, 195–218. Exeter: Imprint Academic, Chapter VIII.

———. 1999b/exp. 2nd ed. 2011. *The primacy of movement*. Philadelphia/Amsterdam: John Benjamins publishing.

_____. 2006. Sur la nature de la confiance. In *Les moments de la confiance,* ed. Albert Ogien and Louis Quéré, 23–41. Paris: Economica.

———. 2009. Animation: The fundamental, essential, and properly descriptive concept. *Continental Philosophy Review* 42: 375–400.

———. 2010. Kinesthetic experience: understanding movement inside and out. *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy* 5 (2): 111–127.

———. 2011. The corporeal turn: reflections on awareness and gnostic tactility and Kinaesthesia. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 18 (7–8): 145–168.

———. 2012. Movement and mirror neurons: a challenging and choice conversation. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 11: 385–401.

Stern, Daniel N. 1985. *The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology*. New York: Basic Books.

———. 1993. The role of feelings for an interpersonal self. In *The perceived self: ecological and interpersonal sources of self-knowledge*, ed. Ulric Neisser. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The Teaching Company. 2011. *Science News* 175 (13): 3.