The Clever Body

Csepregi, Gabor

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THE CLEVER BODY
by Gabor Csepregi
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Notes

Introduction


10 Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*, 106.
19 Ibid., 35.


24 Frederik J. J. Buytendijk, Erwin W. Straus, Eugène Minkowski, Viktor Emil Freiherr von Gebsattel, Jürg Zutt, Paul Christian, Herbert Plügge, Hubertus Tellenbach, and Jan Hendrik van den Berg are among the most important figures of this movement.

25 The archaeologist Bjørnar Olsen, in his recent study, alleges that most of the scholars of social sciences and humanities show no interest for the materiality of our everyday life. He fails to notice, however, that the anthropologically oriented thinkers have always emphasized the inseparability of bodily actions from the material context and refused to treat the experiencing men and women as “extramundane subjects” (Straus). See “Material Culture after Text: Re-Membering Things,” *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 36, no. 2 (2003): 87–104.


chapter 1


14 Buytendijk, *Prolegomena*, 134. Werner Herzog, in his film *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (1997), shows how meaning is bestowed upon specific objects (doors) on the basis of one’s life experience.


20 Tellenbach, *Melancholy*, 42.

21 Ibid., 41.

22 Ibid., 42.


chapter 2


6 Straus, “Forms of Spatiality,” 27.


13 Lavelle, Dilemma of Narcissus, 84.

14 Paul Weiss also defines sensibility as a singular capacity to discriminate. It differs from sensitivity inasmuch as it is more refined and relies on the proper functioning of different parts of the body. “Living bodies are responsive. Their responsiveness is the product of an exercise of their of their existence, differently answering to the different pressures and occurrences encountered. Their existence is a sensitive power. When the body is merely alive, this power serves to sensitize it, have it ready to respond. When the sensitive power is expressed to a greater degree than this it makes the body sensible, a being which differentially acts as a single body with stresses of various sorts in different parts of that body, to make possible a more flexible and appropriate response.” “Man’s Existence,” International Philosophical Quarterly 1 (1961), 561. See also his Privacy (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 57–73.


18 Straus, The Primary World of Senses, 254.

19 Ibid., 367–79.


21 See, for example, Robert Rivlin and Karen Gravelle, Deciphering the Senses: The Expanding World of Human Perception (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).


23 Nogué, Esquisse d’un système, 180.


26 Spitz, The First Year of Life, 136.


29 Storr, Music and the Mind, 124.


31 Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, 327.

32 Ibid., 281.


36 Gernot Böhme, Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht: Darmstädter Vorlesungen (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985), 199. See
also by the same author “Atmosphäre als Grundbegriff einer neuen Ästhetik,” in Atmosphäre: Essays zur neuen Ästhetik (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1995), 21–48.


38 Tellenbach, “Die Begründung,” 175–79.


40 Tellenbach, Geschmack und Atmosphäre, 47.

41 Nicolaï Hartmann views the acts of “seeing through” (Hindurchsehen) and “hearing through” (Hindurchhören) and their correlates, the “affective tones” (Gefühlstöne), as constitutive elements of human perception. Ästhetik, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1966), 42–49.


50 Maldiney, “Comprendre,” 75–76.

51 Minkowski, “Se répandre,” 118.

52 Hiss, The Experience of Place, 34.

57 Ibid., 306.

Chapter 3

1 On the relationship between voluntary disposition and natural spontaneity, see Bruaire, *Philosophie du corps*, 141–64.
4 Buytendijk, *Prolegomena*, 188.
10 Ibid., 97.
11 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 364.
18 Ibid., 176.
19 Buytendijk, Allgemeine Theorie, 296–98.
21 See Peter Röthig, “Betrachtungen zur Körper- und Bewegungsaesthetik,” in Grundlagen und Perspektiven ästhetischer und rhythmischer Bewegungserziehung, eds. Eva Bannmüller and Peter Röthig (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1990), 94–95.
22 See Buytendijk, Allgemeine Theorie, 362.
25 Ibid., 353.
32 Ibid.
33 Janice E. Kleeman contends that “composers, performers, and audiences all possess an instinctive desire for the new, the unknown, the challenging, which may spring from the evolutionary process: those human beings survive and procreate who best cope with the unexpected in a dangerous world. Whatever its origin, our creative compulsion is a wide vein in the bedrock of habitual behavior.” “The


35 Ibid., 115.


38 Pressing, “Improvisation: Methods and Models,” 149.


41 A rigid insistence on internal representation could also hinder our understanding of spontaneity. Oliver Sacks strongly criticizes all those who undertake an empirical analysis of spontaneous events and give a mechanical interpretation of “the musicality of action and life.” “They speak of ‘programs,’ ‘procedures,’ ‘solving the motor task’ – as if their patients were computers, or ‘cyborgs.’ They miss the essential beauty and mystery of action, they miss its grace, its musicality.” *A Leg to Stand On* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990), 216.


Chapter 4


2 One might question Jean Piaget’s assertion that “imitation is never a behavior which is an end in itself.” Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood, trans. C. Gattegno, F. M. Hodgson (New York: W. W. Norton, 1962), 73.


9 Not only Jean Piaget’s detailed study on the syncretism of perception and imitation but also more recent findings confirm the accuracy of Cassirer’s observations. Andrew N. Meltzoff and M. Keith Moore showed that children not only select aspects of the perceived gesture but also combine these aspects creatively and end up “constructing” a “novel act.” “Infant’s Understanding of People and Things: From Body Imitation to Folk Psychology,” in The Body and the Self, eds. Jose Luis Bermudez, Anthony Marcel and Naomi Eilan (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 52.


11 Ibid.


Harvey B. Sarles, Language and Human Nature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 214.

See Pierre Feyereisen and Jacques-Dominique de Lannoy, Psychologie du geste (Bruxelles: Pierre Mardaga, 1985), 156.


See also Meltzoff and Moore, “Infant's Understanding of People and Things,” 52–54.


See Buytendijk, Le football, 21–22.


38 Piaget, Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood, 70–71.

39 Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, 185. On the body’s “comprehensive power,” see also Buysendijk, Traité de psychologie animale, 325–43.

40 Ibid., 352.


42 Helmuth Plessner, “Zur Anthropologie der Nachahmung,” in Ausdruck und menschliche Natur, vol. 7 of Gesammelte Schriften (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982), 391–98. Plessner makes a clear distinction between imitation and vital motor response. The former requires the gradual learning of movements and the ability to objectify the body. In the absence of such an ability, we are unable to consider our own bodily schema and the interchangeability of motor performances.


Ibid., 98.


Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 146.


For an excellent overview, see Peter Röthig, “Betrachtungen zur Körper- und Bewegungsästhetik,” 88–95.


Ibid., 105.

See Peter Buystendijk, *Allgemeine Theorie*, 280–86.


28 Ibid., 34–35.

29 Ibid., 26. The dancer Eric Hawkins declared: “Isadora Duncan was the first dancer in the West to intuit a kinesiological truth: that human movement starts in the spine and pelvis, not in the extremities – the legs and arms. That is: human movement, when it obeys the nature of its functioning, when it is not distorted by erroneous concepts of the mind, starts in the body’s center of gravity and then – in correct sequence – flows into the extremities.” “Pure Poetry,” in *The Modern Dance: Seven Statements of Belief*, ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), 41.


32 Gehlen, *Der Mensch*, 190–92.


36 Gehlen, Der Mensch, 222–27.
40 Valéry, “Philosophy of Dance,” 204.
42 See also Ursula Fritsch, Tanz, Bewegung, Gesellschaft: Verluste und Chancen symbolisch-expressiven Bewegens (Frankfurt am Main: AFRA Verlag, 1988), 41–48.
43 Seashore, Psychology of Music, 142.
44 Valéry, Cahiers, 1279, 1283. See also Bernhard Waldenfels, “Vom Rhythmus der Sinnen,” in Sinnesschwellen: Studien zur Phänomenologie des Fremden (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1999), 79–83.
47 Souriau, Aesthetics of Movement, 23.
49 See Gehlen, Der Mensch, 144.
50 Buytendijk, Wesen und Sinn des Spiels, 79.

Chapter 6

1 Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, 181.
3 Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, 198.
4 See Haeffner, Philosophische Anthropologie, 110–11.
170 | notes


22 Ibid., 143.

23 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 169. We refer here to the original text, because writing “a certain type” in the translation is incorrect.


chapter 7


2 Palágyi, Naturphilosophische Vorlesungen, 163.

3 Palágyi, Wahrnehmungslehre, 79.

4 The Japanese philosopher Ichikawa Hiroshi voiced a similar view about tactile perception: “When we grasp a stone, we sketch its possible shapes and respond to both to its actual and possible shapes.... To explain it in reverse, we elicit the stone’s response by grasping and posing questions to it.” The quote is taken from Shigenori Nagatomo’s article,

5 See Palágyi, Wahrnehmungslehre, 97.

6 See Palágyi, Naturphilosophische Vorlesungen, 165.

7 Ibid., 160–63.

8 Ibid., 169–70.

9 Ibid., 226.


13 Palágyi, Wahrnehmungslehre, 94.

14 Gehlen, Der Mensch, 185–86.


16 Green (with Gallwey), The Inner Game of Music, 99–100.


18 Palágyi, Naturphilosophische Vorlesungen, 130.

19 Menyhért Palágyi, Székely Bertalan és a festészet aesthetikája (Bertalan Széky and the Aesthetics of Painting) (Budapest, Hoffmann & Vastagh, 1910), 28.

20 I recently delighted in the tactile spontaneity and expression of the Khmer sculptors who carved the astounding bas-reliefs of the Angkorian temples.


24 Ibid., 230.

25 Ibid., 234.


**Conclusion**


7. Much can be learned from the oriental understanding of the body and bodily practices. See Ichiro Yamaguchi, *Ki als leibhaftige Vernunft: Beitrag zur interkulturellen Phänomenologie der Leiblichkeit* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1997).


11. Ibid., 148.

18 Hengstenberg, Philosophische Anthropologie, 264.


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In Western civilization, we have come to regard the body as an instrument or a machine that responds to external challenges but does not have a life or creativity of its own. Thanks to some of its inherent capabilities, however, the living body can act in a highly intelligent and creative manner. All of us have noticed from time to time that our body can move naturally, without any conscious effort, it can adapt to new situational demands and propose unexpected solutions. While skiing or rock climbing or sailing, we may have abandoned ourselves to our bodily timing and responsiveness, our acute feeling for new solutions. In *The Clever Body*, Gabor Csepregi describes in detail the nature and scope of these innate abilities – sensibility, spontaneity, mimetic faculty, sense of rhythm, memory, and imagination – and reflects on their significance in human life.

Gabor Csepregi is the President of the Dominican University College in Ottawa. He has published over fifty articles, reviews, and essays on education, music, and sport.

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