

With this evidence on primordial vision we are at a point just before consciousness got lost from research. The material, read here with recent background, originates from the legendary short flourishing of interdisciplinary research at the Hamburg University, 1919-1933. Psychology and Philosophy initially resides at one and the same institute, led by Ernst Cassirer and William Stern, until Psychology filiates lead now by William Stern and Heinz Werner. To the latter I refer mainly here. As well J.J. Uexküll and Aby Warburg coined the Hamburg climate.

← Merleau-Ponty used the German term „Ausdruck“ and remarked to do so following Ernst Cassirer.

Not Hurley but Kant on pre-theoretical animals: „Reflecting (which goes on even in animals, although only instinctively, namely not in relation to a concept which is thereby to be attained but rather in relation to some inclination which is thereby to be determined)...“ „To reflect (to consider), however, is to compare and to hold together given representations either with others or with one's faculty of cognition...“ So the pre-theoretical animal can choose between present alternatives.

Varieties of Vision Katharina Bluehm

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← Further collaborators: the psychopathologist Kurt Goldstein (a cousin of Cassirer) and Adhëmar Gelb, other Gestaltists, importantly Henry Head, and the Bauhaus woman Gertrud Grunow

„[T]he pictorial mode of visual perception ... depends in the last analysis ... on conditions of attitude. The visual field is a product of the chronic habit of civilized man of seeing the world as a picture.“ J.J. Gibson*

In contrast, what can be said about the experience of an online-coping creature which is (as yet) incapable of stepping out of the online-process, taking a reflective stance:

There is no clear subject-object distinction to be expected. Both, the perceiver and the perceived, fall in one.

The perception is **synaesthetic**¹ (no clear distinction between the senses), **physiognomic** (directed to the immediate expression with a bias to animation) **syncretic** (exclusive sensorimotor-affective), **without clear difference between the animated and the inanimated**², affordance directed, dependent on the **transient** responsibility to the signal things,³ instable/ fluid, bound to the singular situation, directed to the expressive whole while diffuse in the details, **little object constancy**, limited means of fixing a perceptual interpretation and accordingly to retrieve something in different contexts.⁴

Because of the **instability of the perceived**, only **limited criteria arise to overcome the synaesthetic phenomenology and physiognomic perception**.

Accordingly, the absorbed coping of the **pre-theoretical** animal has **different** preconditions compared with that of the **theoretical** animal, **although no theoretical inferences are involved in skillful coping**.

→ Gestalt discrimination and synthesis of 3-dimensionality are in place, but **no object is brought before a subject**.

„Things do not stand out there, discrete and fixed in meaning with respect to the cognitive subject. They are intrinsically formed by the psychological organization of which they constitute an integral part.“ H. Werner [1926] S. 38, 1957 p.59

Visions, „suggested by the shape of trees, the rocks in a cliff, and so on would be impossible ... were they not supported by a lack of differentiation between the objective perceptual experience and the subjective representation [Vorstellung].“ H. Werner [1926], 1957 p. 146

„...motor and affective elements are intimately merged in the perception of things. Because of this the objects of perception are not passive and neutral, but represent the foci of dynamic powers. Without any sort of interpretation...there are already magic-like characteristics in the very nature of primitive perception.“ H. Werner [1926], 1957 p. 337

„The high degree of unity between subject and object mediated by the motor-affective reactivity of the organism results in a dynamic, rather than static, apprehension of things. Things as constituent elements of a dynamic event must necessarily be dynamic in nature.“ H. Werner [1926], 1957 p.67

¹ Cf. recently A. Engel Talk at eSMCs Summer School 2011 46:00, We, as babies, start in a synaesthetic state. I don't think, that this differences in sensory channels are inborn, but we learn it, and we learn it by acquiring differences in the sensorimotor contingencies, which are differ... for... vision, audition...“

² The feed-forward construction, part of realizing the anticipatory perceptual encounter, is also found at work in the perception of moving objects (see the work of Ricarda Schubotz). So far, no distinction between the living and the non-living is provided by the sensorimotor apparatus.

³ Then Butendijk, recently more finegrained Freeman: preaffection: endogenously generated attunement to relevant affordances, e.g. mediated by emotional-motivational programmes.

⁴ In addition, the pre-theoretical animal (like all animals) entertains a monitoring function with respect to OR's and dorsal vision for navigation (mainly unconscious, but both with an own profile of accessible conscious states).

(1) This contrasts with the experience of online coping we know as reflective self-conscious beings: clear distinction between the living and non-living, a less fluent and instable perception, less restricted to the expressive whole and less diffuse regarding the details, object constancy, accordingly **criteria are given to differentiate the sensory channel out of the synaesthetic state**, have means of fixing a perceptual interpretation and of retrieving something in different contexts by coupling them to symbols.⁵

→ not only different criteria of structuring and interpretation, a different phenomenology result.

Even if no conscious monitoring needs to be involved, they don't cease to be a reflective self-conscious individual. It's not simply that they are the same undivided persons with deeply embodied traces of knowledge. **Just because** online coping is a mere dialectic of action and milieu (Merleau-Ponty [1942] 1963), we are free to employ reflective and linguistic activity, sometimes at the same time or only some hundreds of milliseconds away. About fluent switching in unreflective action see Varela/ Depraz, Lewis/ Todd; and Rietveld.

Being a self-conscious animal alters the phenomenology of prereflective online coping without arriving at an act/ content distinction. **Let's make the latter point explicit: Having a stabilizing effect by designation and categorisation does not necessarily lead to a content /act distinction. We can think of network completion without to imply something like truth conditions. In sensorimotor online coping having knowledge about the expected input simply drives the process: „A schema is that portion of the entire perceptual cycle which is internal to the perceiver, modifiable by experience, and somehow specific to what is perceived.“ Neisser 1976, 54 as quoted in De Preester 2012, 17 „The environment is continually interrogated and there is no such thing in the brain that is a final product in the sense of the percept or the image.“ De Preester 2012, 19**

No act/ content distinction is given, no truth condition is involved. Only by stepping out of the online process into a reflective attitude does an act/ vehicle distinction and conditions of satisfaction come into play.

While in the Dreyfuss/ McDowell debate genuinely lived through phenomenology and subjectivity has less or no room, to **our group of authors clearly is a relevant experiential dimension in the pre-reflective coping:**

„If we were to reserve the concept of consciousness for the designation of the reflexive acts of knowing on the one hand and for objective intuition on the other, we should run the risk not only of doubting the possibility of animal consciousness but also of disregarding or disowning an entire province of human consciousness.“ Cassirer [1929] 1957 p.64

„Would it not be an offense against this immediacy, a totally unjustified intellectualization of intuition and perception, if we sought to extend the hegemony of the symbol over them?“ Cassirer [1929] 1957 p.47

And the experience is taken to be of world-disclosing relevance. The lived-through process clearly is the main dimension of consciousness here since there is no unfolded object dimension. **Thereby the intrasubjective component has the main upload.**

(2) Language and pictures come to dominate theories of world reference. Language use leads to reducing cognition to the propositional format. Picture use corresponds to the concept of vision in the sense of

⁵ In experiments with trained animals, the simple coupling of objects with arbitrary symbols has shown to stabilize the recognizability.

stored fully detailed visual fields. Especially under the condition of report the theory might influence the phenomenology. **There are important cross influences: The „picture“ advances to a metaphor (or assumed entity), bridging between conceptual knowledge and the world. Contrarily Vasari defines the disegno as knowledge of a rule-conform imitation of nature, such that the creative core of pictoriality is no longer a the practice but a mental concept (cf. Bippus referring to Kemp 1974).**

(3) Pictures obviously arise as culturally enacted products in their own right, not as frozen vision.

Since primordial vision is by no means picture-like pictures can not be frozen vision. Rather they arise out of the practical: by exploratory production and the (mainly body schematic-emotional) understanding of the world disclosing power enacted product (see the work of John Michael Krois and Slaby 2007).

„[F]orms humans build... arise within the currents of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings“ opposed to a perspective ... merely to transcribe preexistent, ideal forms onto an initially formless material substrate. (Ingold 2011 p. 10-11)

How far the the interaction in the medium determine the embodiment of pictures perhaps might best accounted for practically.⁶

Pictures induce powerful new phenomenological dynamics:

Since pictures resist to be approached in the action oriented manner (in terms of anticipated changes in the expected input) pictures direct perception in a special strong sense and can produce unintended occurrence-like phenomena

Pictures by formal means constitute an intrinsic system of relations, which has the capacity to capture the glance.

Pictures can accumulate visual matter over time and cultivate the read-out of visual material over time as a cultural technique.

Pictures induce an observational stance of vision outside of interaction.

Pictures provide conventions of seeing (Belting 2000). This seems to be right in a strong sense in the case of the conventional assumption of imagery as mental picture, which in the light of recent empirically informed research deserves revision. On imagination as reenactment of the act of perception see De Preester 2012, Thompson 2007.

Pictures seemingly isolate vision, but they inevitably activate the sensorimotor dimension as well. In this and other ways they activate the self-experience of the spectator in the act of seeing.

Pictures induce this and other new phenomenological dynamics, but they do not change general life-world vision into a pictorial mode.

In the perception of fellow creatures vision typically mediates a sensorimotor access of the other as embodied agent. **Altogether, the phenomenology of vision obviously depends on the whole individual and the intersubjective and cultural practices it is embedded in and not simply on what the visual system can do.**

⁶ I held atelier classes with non-artists on this (Leibniz Univ.ersität Hannover).

*Gibson says „visual“, not „receptive“ field (RF). But the idea of RF might not be independent of a pictorial notion of vision. But the RF interestingly turns out to be a highly context-sensitive and variable functional unity, not a neutral homogenous cutout. And that the environment in a certain realm can be monitored (to allow reactions to sudden unexpected occurrences, or in pursuing a specific observational task) does not mean that constantly a picture there of a taken.

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