

Somatic - Semantic - Shifting:
Articulating Embodied Cultures
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Language as Process

This chapter will highlight an approach to language that can take account of a process of articulation that unfolds contents that cannot be conceived as representative referents. The kind of practice needed for this process highlights an interactive dimension involved in articulation. It enables the formulation of background patterns which usually function in what is said. Drawing on A. Damasio's 'somatic markers' as manifesting learned structures in a bodily way, and on G. Gendlin's 'felt sense' as a feeling of complex content, I want to demonstrate how cultural as well as biographical 'contexts' that function in the meaning of what we say, can themselves become more articulate, thus opening up creative new realms of meaning that can enhance (interpersonal as well as transcultural) understanding.

In daily conversation, as well as in scientific and creative work, there is a risk involved, which consists in letting go of one's point while trying to formulate it, even though the formulation is grammatically correct. Further more, by drawing on language games that are easily understandable, what we say in understandable terms can sometimes destroy the very significance and subtlety of what we actually mean. Thomas Nagel captures this point in regard to meaningful questions, when he describes how:

We can feel a question apart from its verbal expression, and the difficulty is to pose it without turning it into something superficial, or inviting answers that may seem adequate to its verbal form but that don't really meet the problem beneath the surface. (Nagel 1986, 56)

To conceive this well known challenge that Nagel describes, a theory of language has to be able to accommodate the possibility of continuity between a felt context and its articulation, albeit its possible disturbances and interruptions. When one learns a new language, for instance, one feels the disruption by being able to say only crudely what one thinks or feels. This kind of disruption is felt as a kind of awkwardness or being stuck(stuckness), a sense that might be described as not being able to move in the language one uses. But the same can happen in one's own native tongue. A disruption of continuity can be felt if the question one 'feels' or the point one is trying to make does not find its adequate form in what one says. According to analytical theories of language, this failure is due to an unclear referent that makes the speech act impossible in principle (Searle 1969). However, if one waits and continues to try, one might become more successful in later attempts. This phenomenon implies a view of languaging along the lines of an experiential interaction, instead of symbolical representation or construction. Being aware of this interaction may open up an understanding for the connectivity between (individual) bodies, contexts, cultures and meaning that is unfold-able and also transformable on the basis of practice. This, of course, again implies that practice is at the basis of this kind of connectivity. To understand this requires philosophical models that break away from the skeptical interest in meaning that is focused mainly on truth conditions of finished propositions and their classifications. In the following paragraphs I want to provide a rough sketch of philosophical approaches that can provide perspectives on a continuity involved in the very fabric of meaning that necessitates bringing body- environment interaction, practice, context and culture together.

According to classical epistemology, it is primarily the structure and the content of experience that counts as relevant to "knowledge". Significant epistemological concerns address the kind of sensation that is experienced, the category that can be applied, the cognitive operation involved or the truth-value of a judgement or a claim. The descriptions of clear cut cognitive elements and operations also characterize a computational view of thinking and of human language. To philosophically and scientifically pay attention to an experiential process instead of definable cognitions can be considered the result of a radically different kind of epistemological starting point and interest. Due to the pioneering work of hermeneutical, classical American pragmatist and phenomenological philosophers, cognitions came to be conceived as the result of primary processes, and human rational capacities as developments grounded on historically and multi-generationally grown embodied interactional processes in actual situations. These approaches are being widely re-discovered and re-acknowledged

today in what is conceived as embodied or situated cognition (cp. Fuchs 2013, Jung 2009, Gallagher & Zahavi 2008, Thompson 2007, Noë 2006, Varela & Thompson & Rosch 1993). The following brief account indicates an opening that is relevant to demonstrate what I seek to term an unfolding or developing dynamic of articulation that can explicate and thereby change the contextual framework in which it operates.

Dilthey's emphasis on the role of "Erleben" highlights an anti-linear, even illogical characteristic of experience, which seems essential for thinking. He demonstrates how sequences of experience do not obey categories and logical rules that traditional epistemology has drawn upon to conceive a cognitive order. Also, the connectivity of life, what Dilthey refers to as "Lebenszusammenhang" (cp. Dilthey 1983), does not obey temporal linearity. Yet, it is this kind of connectivity experienced in the way we live our daily lives that is the ground on which to know how to apply categories. Experienced connectivity, constitutes an implicit sense of self without which logical concepts and categories such as identity or substance would not make sense. With this perspective, Dilthey turns the Kantian epistemological order around: categories of reason cannot be the only basis constituting our sense of reality. They need to be complimented with what Dilthey terms "Real-Kategorien". These are not conceptual and do not rest upon definitions. It is the organic development of life and the lived experience situated in historically grown cultures that functions as their point of reference:

Eine Formel, die eine reale Kategorie eindeutig bestimmte, ist nicht möglich, da die Unergründlichkeit des Lebenszusammenhangs für das begriffliche Denken in jeder Kategorie wiederkehrt. Und die Ordnung derselben ist nicht zu bestimmen, da man gleichsam an ganz verschiedenen Zipfeln diesen Zusammenhang erfassen kann. (Dilthey 1983, 204)

From this perspective, a one-sided and uni-directional applicability of categories on experience for the sake of conceiving knowledge breaks down. More so, the limitations of categorical thinking come into view, carefully explored by Dilthey in comparing the real-categorical sense of self-identity with the abstract and categorical understanding of identity. What is capable of being conceptualized according to categorical systems and logical rules cannot grasp what can be drawn together according to sequences that are experienced as the "Lebenszusammenhang". Yet, Dilthey does not open up a new dichotomy between thinking and experiencing. He points to a more complex relationship between what might be termed experiential universality, on the one hand, and conceptual universals on the other; both are co-

dependent in more interdependent dimensions than Kantian epistemology prefigures.

By conceiving limits of conceptuality that cannot be noticed from inside logical and epistemological systems, Dilthey connotes language to an experiential source of order that is wider than a conceptual one. However, the relation of both is not graspable in hierarchical terms. By noticing and demonstrating how experienced connections, for instance, can deepen the sense of a word's meaning and how the use of words again reflexively deepen and open up the experience to which they are applied, Dilthey provides perspectives to think of articulation in interactional terms and relations. "Instancing" (cp. Gendlin 1997) a kind of reflectivity that can draw on more than the classical categorical systems of epistemology, he forges ways to think fruitfully into the tension that Thomas Nagel mentions above. With Dilthey one can begin to understand that this tension includes experienced or felt connections that draw on an embodied life story in its historical and cultural embeddedness that, in addition, always exceeds the explicit categorical connection patterns available. What is needed to unfold this kind of background are formulations that are able 'work' in the experience, thus manifesting a tacit question or point in ways that coextensively deepen the experiencing implied in it.

On a similar note, John Dewey dwells on the presence of a situation as decisive for a relevant use of language and choice of distinctions (Dewey 1931)¹. By pointing out that situations are not perceived like objects or like a multitude of sensations that need to be categorically ordered, he allows this term to widen the epistemological framework and its notion of experience. In a careful phenomenological study, Dewey describes the way in which one "has" a situation as a kind of feeling, even though it cannot be equated with an identifiable emotion or explained as a subjective internal state. Instead of indicating an individual's state of mind, the kind of feeling Dewey draws to attention allows access to a context, a kind of background that functions as the framework for being able to 'know' what is relevant to say B. It is this regulative function of a felt quality of a situation which Dewey emphasises as necessary also for inquiry and abstract thinking. The only way not to get lost in the quantity of data collected or not get stuck in a conceptual framework is:

sensitivity to the quality of a situation as a whole. In ordinary language, a problem must be felt before it can be stated. If the unique quality of the situation is had immediately, then there

¹ John Dewey is increasingly recognized as pioneer on an embodied approach to the mind by Joas 1996, Jung & Heilinger 2009 and Crippen n.y.

is something that regulates the selection and the weighing of observed facts and their conceptual ordering. (Dewey 1938, 70f.)

This kind of sensitivity takes up the challenge mentioned in the beginning. The danger of losing or letting go of one's point by verbalizing it can now be described in terms of a sensitivity to the quality of a situation that can be ignored or that can function in formulations in order to stay 'in touch' with felt situational regulation. Dewey thus suggests an open process of articulation that involves a situated context that is not "given" as an inner entity, feeling or state of mind, but that needs to be felt or attended to so as to function within a relevantly sense-making use of language that provides distinctions that can work in the situation.

Even earlier, also William James notices a form of subtle intentional regulation that cannot be identified with an explicit intention (feeling, idea etc.). He points to a moment in the languaging process that is not yet language but necessary for the words to come to a speaker as an "intention of saying a thing before he has said it":

It is an entirely definite intention, distinct from all other intentions, an absolutely distinct state of consciousness, therefore: and yet how much of it consists of definite sensorial images, either of words or of things? Hardly anything! Linger, and the words and things come into the mind: the anticipatory intention, the divination is there no more. But as the words that replace it arrive, it welcomes them successively and calls them right if they agree with it, it rejects them and calls them wrong if they do not. It has therefore a nature of its own of the most positive sort, and yet what can we say about it without using words that belong to the later mental facts that replace it? The intention to-say-so-and-so is the only name it can receive. One may admit that a good third of our psychic life consists in these rapid premonitory perspective views of schemes of thought not yet articulate. (James 1950, 253)

Again, the challenge in holding the dynamic between not yet articulated anticipatory thoughts and formulations that come, is to conceive of a continuity of sense-making that begins before the finished proposition. The difficulty thus consists in not identifying (and thereby confusing) the anticipation with the formulation and thus falling into a "double world legend" of an inner and outer world of representable things that constitute the meaning of words, which has been convincingly deconstructed by major thinkers of the 20th century such as

Ryle and Wittgenstein. In this volume, Deacon points to a similar challenge. James stresses the regulative function of this continuity, by suggesting an “intention to-say-so-and-so” functions to invite and choose the words, even though this “welcoming” or “rejecting” faculty is not in words itself. Further on in the same chapter, James points out how the same “anticipatory intention” that lets words come, and shifts as a unified whole with every new word being said. In saying, what has been intended, it may thereby become “fuller and richer than the initial way” we had it (cp. James 1950, 280). Merleau-Ponty points to a similar characteristic when describing the articulation of a thought as a process of completion. Drawing on organic terms, such as “maturation” to characterize the experience of a formulative process (Merleau-Ponty, 1976, Chapt. VI), Merleau-Ponty points out that the experience of articulating is more like filling a deficit or a need which is felt as long as we have not succeeded in accurately expressing thoughts).

Articulation as an interaction process, ‘working’ in an experienced connectivity (Dilthey), in the felt quality of a situation (Dewey), in the unrepresentative tension between anticipation and formulation (James), in the maturation of thoughts (Merleau-Ponty) becomes even more apparent when studying the process more closely. Mindfulness-related practices involving articulation such as “Focusing” (Gendlin 1981) or the “Elicitation Technique” (Petitmengin 2006) cultivate an awareness of this kind of interaction process on a micro scale. By being attentive towards subtle shifts happening at a fine-grained experiential level while we articulate, one can think, feel, experience and articulate oneself more deeply into the felt relevance of the situation. Thereby further connections of the experience open up, developing or changing a felt background. In the following, let me demonstrate this in more detail using the basis of the “Focusing” practice.

“Focusing” makes aware, how an articulation uncovers a crossing of vast past experience, as fuzzy as it may be, and the present (this might be one reason why in daily communication one agrees on the striking oversimplification of saying “fine” or “good” whenever asked “how are you?”). In feeling a situation, an issue or problem, as unclear as it may be, there are volumes: What was learned and experienced long ago, what may have happened this morning, the tacit cultural-political conditions we move in, a difficult relationship at home, an upcoming decision at the office, a pain in the back etc.etc., - all this not separate, but in a bodily sense of how we are doing. To paraphrase Damasio, it is “the feeling for what happens” (Damasio 1999), or – what Gendlin calls – a felt “unseparated multiplicity” (Gendlin, 1991B & 1997) that makes situations diversely rich and multi-interpretational from individual to individual.

By living in situations, humans carry along a vast complexity that is not “inside” like furniture inside a house. Rather, it needs attentive development to decipher actions one can account for, to short-term and long-term intentions that become clearer along the way and to articulations that make sense.

2. Close Talking

Carl Roger’s pioneering attempts to measure psychotherapeutic progress provides evidence of the kind of interaction involved when trying to articulate something that is not yet easily retrievable in words. To the overall disappointment of the therapeutic professionals, change proved to be dependent not so much on the therapist’s competence and schooling, but on certain ways of the client’s relating to (experiencing) his or her felt situation now. “No significant change is brought about through more analyzing or more intense feeling of emotions” (Gendlin 1964). Gendlin, who played a major role in Roger’s research project, shows, that the one factor that seems to matter most, is an awareness, a kind referential closeness to the present experienced situation, even if that seems utterly unclear, “fuzzy and murky” (Gendlin 1961 &, 1963) and therefore at first quite unable to be formulated. Staying with this kind of feeling, and articulating-from rather than about it, slows down the way we usually speak . People might pause for quite a while in the midst of a sentence or frequently correct themselves. Research on this kind of attentive articulative process has shown how experiential connections and meanings open up that affect the experience one is speaking-from” (Gendlin et al. 1968, Klein et al. 1969, Egendorf & Jakobson 1982, Hendricks 2001, Todres & Galvin 2007). The term ‘speaking-from’ (cp. Gendlin 2004) indicates a mode of speaking unlike ‘speaking about’ the problem from a detached position that interprets, analyzes and theorizes, but that has descriptive words which *come ‘from’* feeling the situation. To say it with Dewey: having the felt situation “function” in the emergent relevant distinctions requires immersing in that very feeling. Research on this therapeutic progress also affirms what James said: the anticipatory feeling which lets words “come” moves in relation to the way it is being articulated. It closes down, feels more stuck and tense, or it moves around – quite noticeably in the body - shifting, opening up further, unfolding into pictures, linking to further situations, instances and memories. The noticeable responsive shifts happening can lead to discernable tension release (cp. Klein et.al. 1985). But evolves more than physical tension release: new ways of experiencing a situation, a problem or an issue become experientially available, and thus new possibilities of thinking, acting and

communicating. Gendlin calls this kind of responsive sense “felt sense” and the dialogical kind of process that interacts with it “Focusing”. “Focusing” (serves me as an example that) indicates the kind of subtle yet powerful practice involved in articulations that are able to speak-from backgrounds in ways that do not pre-suppose them, but makes them accessible and understandable, by developing and thereby changing the feeling one speaks-from.

However, “Focusing” is a misleading name as it invites the idea of a kind of focused attention or intention. But, “Focusing” neither means to introspect on “internal objects” nor to intentionally focus on an idea or emotion. Rather, it is better explained with the words of Petitmengin and Bitpol, as a “defocusing of the field of attention” by practicing a “non-observational awareness” (Petitmengin, Bitpol 2013 p. 179f.). The authors show, how Husserl already has become very specific in characterizing phenomenological reduction as giving access not to the inner world, but rather to the whole field of experience before exclusive “intentional focusing has narrowed down the region of our full awareness” (ibid). On these lines, Petitmengin and Bitpol suggest a characterization which captures the Focusing attitude rather precisely: “far from being like a gaze on some object (be it focused or expanded), it is tantamount to (re) establish an intimate and close contact with what is to be explored (with the field of lived experience)” (ibid, p. 181). Metaphors of touch seem more accurate to explicate one's relation to experiential backgrounds than perceptual descriptions. A similar point has been made by Ratcliffe who observes that in tactile sensation, as in experience, there are no clear boundaries between what is noticed, experienced or felt and the person noticing, experiencing and feeling something (cp. Ratcliffe 2008 B).

Early on, Gendlin describes the “field of lived experience” as an intertwined relation of thinking and feeling, - a revolutionary concept back in 1960. Damasio indicates something similar today, emphasising how such a view is still very counter culture. Gendlin conceives a notion of feeling that is not identical to emotions, but incorporates a vast scope of contextualisation as “a living texture of environmental interaction.” It contains the “complex world we live in, the environment, our perceptions, the context of all that has been done and said till now, what is being gotten at, the purpose, the definitions, and a very great deal more.” (1966, 45).

Gendlin's notion of the “felt sense” in this way also anticipates Ratcliffe criticism of a too rudimentary juxtaposition of bodily feeling and emotional intentionality (2008 A). More

importantly, Ratcliffe notices that it is only through change of existential background-feelings that these kinds of feelings can come to awareness and become conscious. Gendlin's contribution is to demonstrate how awareness of this feeling-dimension can initialize a consciousness-enhancing process of change that is driven by being articulated.

The difficulty to become aware of this kind of feeling dimension has to do with the fact that one is trained to be intentionally focused on thoughts, contents, bias, emotions and knowledge. Therefore one hardly 'knows how' to pay attention to feelings that are continuously there. This makes it difficult to broaden awareness, as Peirce has clearly pointed out:

It is extremely [...] difficult to bring our attention to elements in experience which are continually present. For we have nothing in experience with which to contrast them; and without contrast, they cannot excite our attention [...] the result is that round-about devices have to be resorted to in order to enable us to perceive what stares us in the face with a glare that, once noticed, becomes almost oppressive with its insistency. (CP 1:134) 2

The "roundabout device", that the practice of "Focusing" establishes, is not only to learn how to "defocus" our field of attention in order to become aware of experiential processes "continually present" and thus most difficult to notice – as in mindfulness meditation, but to engage in articulating them. This again needs a certain training technique in what one might call close talking. Close talking, a term I derive from close reading, is a mode of talking that does not detach from the specific way the situation is felt at the moment. That is, it does not jump to interpretations or conclusions. Instead, as in close reading, it stays carefully close to the felt "texture" of the issue, situation or problem. Very helpful for this process is the presence of an empathic person who listens. This support-frame helps to stay focused on what usually is not in focus, by seeming to double the situation in some way: the listener, listening and reflecting the articulative process helps the person articulating to be attentive in an unusually close way. The listener, by repeating what is said, thus helps the speaker to stay in touch with tacit dimensions of experience that are not easy to express, because they are present in such a constitutive and background-like way and not available like an easy identifiable referent. Paradoxically, in practicing this defocused way of attention, it becomes possible to "refer directly" to what is situationally experienced at the very moment (cp.

² I quote following Dewey's: "Prefatory Remarks", to G.H. Mead, *Philosophy of the Present*, Prometheus Books: Chicago 2002, 33. The omissions are his.

Gendlin's direct reference in his article in this volume), by developing it with the means of language. One might say: by mirroring or saying back, the listener in this way helps to "hold" a referent-in-forming. In a daring analogy drawing on quantum-mechanics, one might even say: like a particle forming by being observed, what is being described in "Focusing", forms as "something" by this very process of attending and speaking-from it. Contents arising in this way do not come about by developing the conceptual, logical or analytical implications of the words applied, however interesting that may be. Instead, speaking-from the experiential process means always to go back and sense what has changed, that is, to attend to the bodily response of what has been described and again – speaking-from there. This back and forth movement of attention notices how the process creates subtle experiential contrasts as "felt sensing", thus responding in very precise and yet undeterminable ways to the articulations applied. Even a feeling which seems entirely somatically based, like a cramp in the neck, a pinching in the heart area or pressure in the stomach can either step by step or suddenly open up into meaningful incidents that clarify the present situation by allowing connections that allow a more conscious experience of what before was only implicitly felt. A feeling that in the beginning may have only seemed "fuzzy and murky", thus opens up in precise aspects with interrelated entanglements to many other situations, factors, values, thoughts. This reaches far beyond the embodied alphabet offered by the New Phenomenology of Herman Schmitz accounting for narrowness or wideness only. "Focusing" on a "felt-sense", a vast alphabet of feeling opens up: one can feel "empty boxes that hurt", "knots, that push", "thick walls, that separate from aliveness", one feels "the good feeling of not being alone", one feels specific "qualities of connectedness", or "feels cutting pain, that is not bodily", one feels "the pressure of something grey..(..)". (cp. Gendlin 1998)

Paradoxically, close-talking as a "responsive" way of articulating thus conveys an awareness of a situation, issue, problem, that leads beyond it. Whereas detached theorizing does not change the felt quality of the situation, no matter how far fetched the interpretations may be and where they lead us, close-talking techniques of "Focusing" unfold thick connections that enrich, expand and change the sense of the situation as well as the logical routes of thinking possible in it (Gendlin 2004, Deloch 2010). An understanding of background evolves that makes it possible to 'objectify' in an embodied and not theoretical way what before was considered as not communicable. This opens new routes of understanding a situation and of making oneself understood. In this way, the close interaction between 'verbalizing' and 'felt sensing' open new continuities, new 'ways forward' in articulative sequences that also shift

the experiential process. This kind of ‘movement’ is captured in Gendlin’s term of “carrying forward” (cp. Gendlin 2004).

From here, the feeling of being stuck and the paralysis that I mentioned in the beginning become graspable. What I then termed as a disruptive continuity between the sense of the question and its articulation can now be understood in terms of an interaction that needs practices which involve more than the ordinary training in language-games that contemporary philosophers of language have emphasized since Wittgenstein. It needs the engagement of a felt quality of a situation that is not to be identified with the intentions one communicates. This implies a ‘defocused’ attention to ‘touch’ a felt background so that it can function in the ‘coming’ of the words that interact in ways that change it. In this way, language can be used to overcome contextualized (biographical as well as cultural) presuppositions, which prove helpful in therapeutic and creative processes. These practices may also prove increasingly vital for fostering transcultural methodologies of understanding and integration in the context of problems caused by migration.

On this note, the importance of that attitude of kindness in the process cannot be overemphasized. The value of kindness or gentleness as a reflective mode is rarely noted. Kindness or friendliness seem to be an attitudinal environment, one might say, that allows a subtle and micro-genetic sequence to unfold into a more conscious way of “having” the lived experience of one’s present situation (always of course involving uncountable past situations). What, according to Peirce, stares us in the face concerning its insistency, in this way becomes a secure resource for experiencing a felt situation in its rich connectedness to many more aspects of lived experience and “Lebenszusammenhänge”.

In the following section, I wish to briefly indicate how the above-mentioned articulative process affects our understanding of the body. The possibility of somatic-semantic shifting that carries us beyond disruptions caused by the incapacity to say what is at stake in a background-like way, calls for a philosophy that is capable of accounting for a continuity of embodied situation and use of language, i.e. for the “carrying forward capacity” of using words.

3. Responsive Process

In his book *Incomplete Nature*, Terrence Deacon reflects in “Chapter 0”, that what matters in our actions is not available as a materially and energetically present thing that can be measured and analysed into its components. He describes how value and purpose even of a book, for instance, is what is not there in the way the book is there as an object with a certain weight and size and materiality. Concerning science and academic activities, he makes the same point: what keeps it going, what keeps scientists working are not the things, the buildings, the books, the machines, but the driving force of what Deacon calls “absential features”. They do not lend themselves to measurements and descriptions in the scientific terms with which scientist work. “Absential features” – what is lacking or absent in terms of a measurable quantity – is what constitutes the fabric of purpose, aim, values, goals, that is: the specific centre around which human lives, activities and strivings evolve. Thus, Deacon critically comments: “If the most fundamental features of human experience are considered somehow illusory and irrelevant to the physical goings-on of the world, then we, along with our aspirations and values, are effectively rendered unreal as well.” (Deacon 2011, 12)³.

Deacon's point demonstrates the specificity of what a philosophy of language must tackle by thinking into the interactive challenge of an articulative process. Dewey's emphasis on “need” as the core feature of an organism's relationship to its environment co-opts with this perspective:

Need remains a constant factor but it changes its quality. With change in need comes a change in exploratory and searching activities, and that change is followed by a changed fulfilment or satisfaction (...). Of human organisms it is especially true that activities carried on for satisfying needs so change the environment that new needs arise which demand still further change in the activities of the organism by which they are satisfied; and so on in a potentially endless chain. (Dewey 1938, 28)

Gendlin's philosophy of language evolves around this kind of need as characteristic for the organism's relationship to its environment. His thinking shows how this essential feature must not be lost when dealing with the dynamic of symbolic processes. One might say that his approach draws on “absential features” methodologically to think a continuity of body-

³ Deacon adds: “No wonder the all-pervasive success of the sciences in the last century has been paralleled by a rebirth of fundamentalist faith and deep distrust of secular determination of human values.” (2011, 12)

environment interaction and the human use of symbols in situations. Gendlin not only describes “absential features”, he manifests the kind of “working” or “functioning” of them in his key concepts to grasp a focused, yet open relation of body and environment that can evolve in an undeterminable evolutionary process. On these lines, Gendlin introduces a notion of “implying” that embraces a relation of body-environment that cannot be grasped according to logical concepts alone, but according to organic sequences, such as hunger and feeding. Taking Dewey's radical comparison of thinking and digesting one step further⁴, he draws attention to the family-relatedness of an articulative process and the process of eating. It is not enough to describe both sequences in external temporal terms of an observer noticing only that hunger comes before feeding or a sentence after someone intends to say something. The consecutive relation between hunger and food does not only apply metaphorically to an anticipatory intention of formulating something and finding the right word for it. Rather, one must engage the experiential dimension to open up a more specific relation that, as a surprising consequence, cuts across the mind and body split in order to be explicated itself. Gendlin demonstrates this with a simple step. By suggesting that on an experiential level hunger “implies” eating, one again needs the experiential level to be able to formulate what eating is in relation to hunger. Gendlin notices:

If hunger is the implying of eating, then eating is the “...” of hunger. The term we want is implicit in the “...” and when we get the term it will do to our “...” what eating does to hunger. (Gendlin, 1997, 8).

To be able to say what eating is in relation to hunger, one has to engage the experience of how it is like to eat “into” hunger. Many different formulations, words and descriptions may come. Filling the open slot with a fitting formulation will not copy or construct the experienced happening, but it will “function” in an implicit understanding to satisfy what is meant and thus complete the open sentence. The expressions will change the unfinished sentence in a more or less satisfactory way that one can also feel, the more closely one tries to explicate the experience. This simple example gathers what seems far flung in terms of the Cartesian paradigm – the “body's” act of eating, on the one hand, and the “mind's” act of symbolizing,

⁴ Dewey writes: “Material used in reflection change even more rapidly than materials employed in meeting hunger and thirst. Their metabolism is at quicker pace. Genuinely to think of a thing is to think of implications that are no sooner thought of than we are hurried on to *their* implications. There is no rest for the thinker, save in the process of thinking.” (Dewey 1958, p. 118).

on the other. To fill the gap in the sentence, the experience of how it is like to eat has to function to let the words come. Symbolization and the bodily experience work together.

Yet Gendlin discerns several different ways of interaction of “felt meaning” and symbols (Gendlin 1962). In *A Process Model*, he makes these methodologically operative: what is missing to complete a definition is engaged in various ways to think conceptually into how it can be completed. In a radical self-reflective methodology, every occurring word, phrase, sentence, every found structure and connection, every new definition comes to be understood as happening into an open implying, that at the same time is precise. Not every formulation will do, only very specific ones. Explicating this process provides a basic concept of continuity: “occurring into implying” (Gendlin 1997, 10). It proves applicable from body-environment interaction to abstract discursive process.

The concept of “occurring into implying” can itself be understood as functional and not representative: it functions in the implicit understanding, which can thereby unfold further and become more differentiated. The “special relationship” of body-environment that Gendlin primarily spells out as “occurring into implying”, can thus open up into further process concepts. The relationship of what occurs and what is implied is not a logical one in the sense that what occurs is identical with what is implied. Rather, it is a change process, albeit not in an arbitrary way. Gendlin refers to it as a “carrying forward” (Gendlin 2004). Carrying forward proves to be a concept of continuity applicable to any occurring in relation to living processes by formulating a decisive characteristic: how an organism relates to an occurrence depends on how this maintains, changes or ends its ongoing interaction-process. When something occurs that is “implied”, a process is thereby “carried forward” that changes the “implying” not in random ways, but as it “implied itself changed”, now requiring a next specific occurring – again in a focused, yet open way. The point is to distinguish a kind of relation between occurring and implying that can account for continuation, but also for interruptions, stops in the process or even an entirely stopped process. Also, “occurring into implying” makes conceivable that nothing happens to a living organism that does not have more complex consequences and changes than the spectator can observe. On this conceptual foundation, Gendlin's self-reflective methodology develops an amazingly intricate understanding of the inseparability of body-environment, of feeling, behavior and of language that steadily grows in implicit complexity, making conceivable how even slight occurrences (such as a movement, a feeling or a word) can make for tremendous impact and change.

At the same time, Gendlin's approach provides an understanding how living organisms re-create the environment that is inseparable to their process. This feature manifests as a red thread from simple organic processes to the abstract process of writing and thinking. A contextual environment is created by means of an active process of felt meaning interacting with symbols, carrying forward a deliberate development we call thinking. In Wittgensteinian terms, the meanings of the words we use in writing a text depend on how expressions become meaningful in the specific ways we use them in a situation. Re-working the situation can also manifest ways of opening up further thinking, feeling and communicating. Meaning and context in this way evolve and grow together.

Gendlin writes:

It is important to realize that for us today, also, words form in a bodily way. The right words must come to us. (If they don't, there is little we can do about it, except wait, and in a bodily way, sense what our situation is, and what we sensed that we were about to try to say.) It is our bodily being in the situation we are in, that lets the right words come. If the reader would stop for a moment, and self-observe, it will be immediately clear. The words of speech and thought 'just come'. How do they come? We do not sift through many wrong words, as if going through a file. We don't 'select' words from among many other words. The right words, or close to the right words, 'just come'. What precedes this coming? Sometimes a bodily sense of the situation. But often there is no separately attended to sense of this kind. Being in the situation lets the words come. The system of interrelated words and the system of interrelated situations and interactions is, in some basic way, a single system. And, in another basic way, there are two interrelated systems: the system of words and the system of our living in situations. (1997, 188).

By Chapter VIII of *A Process Model*, Gendlin has created a new language to explicate the plasticity and implicit richness of the interaction of these two systems. Situated feeling, its precise and intricate kind of implying interacts with a system of symbols that is able to reconstitute its own situations. The "crossing" of the two allows growth of meaning (Gendlin 1995).

The emergence of symbolic processes grounding deeply in the relation of bodily-environment-interaction in this way spells a Deweyan idea of continuity, which the classical

pragmatist describes as follows:

its meaning excludes complete rupture on one side and mere repetition of identities on the other; it precludes reductions of the 'higher' to the 'lower' just as it precludes complete breaks and gaps. The growth and development of any living organism from seed to maturity illustrates the meaning of continuity. (Dewey 1938, p. 23)

On the foundation of a basic model of body-environment interaction in the first five chapters, Gendlin gradually conceives of behavioral capacities as a thick and complex space extending and changing the body-environment relation. In this space, gestures and sounds may begin to function in new ways that do not only carry forward behavior. Gendlin proposes how this enables the generation of a new space, growing out of behavior and the way body is and feels itself in the behavior space. Step by step the model thus makes conceivable, how symbolic interactions take over, becoming the new space in which humans behave and interact, without leaving the already complexly elaborated felt behavior space behind. Vast new possibilities constitute the symbolic space thus emerging by "crossing" and "versioning" behavioral sequences in new ways, creating a new system of (symbolic-situational) interrelations, and also new ways to feel, to have and to carry forward actions. The "crossing" of these two spaces and systems that "inter-affect" each other is what Gendlin calls a situation.

The emerging complexity on each level Gendlin conceives by formulating concepts for mutual implicit relations such as "original interaffecting" or "schematized by schematizing" or "cross-contextual formation" (cp. A process model, Chapter IV). A kind of organic thinking is thereby cultivated enabling to understand every occurring in terms of a complex change of implicit sequences interaffecting each other (as mentioned above). The resulting possibility to conceive how present occurring can thus change its own implicit conditions rather than being only determined by them, concerns the philosophy of time as much as an understanding of the effects of psychotherapy.

The inside/outside split thereby comes to be appear as an emergent property of human living in a suprisingly straight-forward way: much more happens in gesturing or speaking than can be observed only as simple signs or sounds. The human space with its symbolic connections has become wider, has more experiential possibilities, more implicit sequences, more interaffective relations than a behavior space without symbolic elaborations. Symbols version the vastness of behavior possibilities as well as bodily process involved in these, thus carrying

forward situations. A philosophical foundation is laid out that allows thought in the powerful change process that can be experienced by merely articulating experience.

Along these lines, one can slowly begin to philosophically underpin the difficulty I began with: Nagel's challenge of adequately articulating the sense of a question "without turning it into something superficial, or inviting answers that may seem adequate to its verbal form but that don't really meet the problem beneath the surface". The complexity of the two interaffecting and inter-related systems of occurring situations and symbols make this difficulty far more interesting than a dubious metaphysical encounter of inner and outer worlds and their representations. (Understanding this challenge on the basis of a creative continuity, furthermore emphasizes the role of practice. This will become more clear, I hope, in the following and last section of my article.

4. Felt Sense and Somatic Marker

What Gendlin depicts as the effective interaction of symbols and experienced meaning, can also be partnered with Damasio's differentiation between emotion and feeling. Emotions, as Damasio suggests, are not just the classical joy, anger, sadness etc. but "complex bodily (bio-chemical, neuronal, organic, muscular) "responses", that help the organism to lead its life. Damasio writes: "Emotions are about the life of an organism, its body to be precise and their role is to assist the organism in maintaining life." (Damasio, 1991, 51). The changes caused by emotions in the brain, in the biochemical homeostasis of the body, the visceral and muscular states, are depicted as feeling. We can also register the changes that these emotional changes trigger. This is what Damasio calls feeling. There are complex confluences of resonance between emotion, feeling and feeling of the feeling that Damasio describes in the following:

We can feel our emotions consistently and we know we feel them. The fabric of our minds and of our behavior is woven around continuous cycles of emotions followed by feelings that become known and beget new emotions, a running polyphony that underscores and punctuates specific thoughts in our mind and actions in our behavior. (Damasio 1999, 43).

Feeling, according to Damasio, is the "very threshold" between being and conscious being. It is this processual approach of transitions from feeling to consciousness that importantly

relates Damasio's and Gendlin's perspectives. It applies a phylogenetic as well as ontogenetic level. This theoretical conception of feeling does not hold a rigid separation between unconscious, inattentive and attentive feeling and from there to more conscious states. This is what Gendlin's practices and philosophy demonstrate vividly.

According to Damasio, feeling is a kind of informative shadow of the cognitive process, which contains further bodily data to be experienced and to be processed. Damasio writes about the constant co-happening of a cognitive and felt process, which he emphasizes contra the tide of dominant conceptions in the cognitive science:

Feelings are just as cognitive as any other perceptual image, and just as dependent on cerebral-cortex processing as any other image. (...) Feelings let us mind the body, attentively, as during an emotional state, or faintly, as during a background state. They let us mind the body 'live', when they give us perceptual images of the body, or 'rebroadcast', when they give us recalled images of the body state appropriate to certain circumstances, in 'as if' feelings. Feelings offer us a glimpse of what goes on in our flesh, as a momentary image of that flesh in juxtaposed to the images of other objects and situations; in so doing, feelings modify our comprehensive notion of those other objects and situations. (Damasio 1994, 159)

Damasio's powerful notion of "minding the body" expresses, how resting in fine visceral and musculoskeletal adjustments confers informative responses to a situation, that – as cerebral patterns – echo cerebral patterns of thought, memories, decisions. He is known for showing the importance of these functions in decision-making. When the felt feed back loops are damaged, it becomes difficult, if not impossible to navigate through the boundlessness of all things to be considered, that is, to be able to live efficiently on a daily basis. This is where Damasio's "somatic marker" comes into play. In most situations in which something has to be decided, the components needing consideration unfold with extraordinary speed, even if only in glimpses, not completely thought through, so fast that not everything can be considered. In this process Damasio discovers the role of what he calls "gut feeling" (Damasio, 1994, 173). The possibility of which he conceives as a kind of automated signal, formed out of situative trainings, learned sequences, punishment and reward-procedures as embodied patterns. Somatic markers contain complex information and they change with further living experience. He writes:

Somatic markers are thus acquired by experience, under the control of an internal preference

system and under the influence of an external set of circumstances which include not only entities and events with which the organism must interact, but also social conventions and ethical rules. (Damasio 1994, 179)

As they are modalities of situational learning, the programmed patterns are individually different. In this sense one can talk of embodied cultures that differ from individual to individual. They support decision-making concerning the plentitude of embodied scenarios, concerns, risks, innumerable aspects, which need consideration, by reducing the effort to go through all these details: “because they provide an automated detection of the scenario components, which are more likely to be relevant.” (1994, 175).

Although Damasio describes the intricate kind of relations and complex information contained by these markers, his language for the signal effect emphasizes a dual character: “happy” or “sad feeling”, “danger” or “go for it”, “painful”, “not-painful”. Noticing this dual kind of response – this kind of “definite” answer from the body is what the popularizing literature to “somatic markers” further propagates and which one can find reduced in seminars for managers and the like.

Like the “somatic marker”, the “felt sense” denotes an interwoven constellation of preferences, circumstances, events, habits, conventions and rules. But the significant distinction is that Gendlin conceives and uncovers the possibility of a responsiveness referring to this complexly unclear sense. He also emphasizes that this kind of “sense” becomes a referent only through the act of tending to it, staying with it, interacting with it, instead of only re-acting to it. In attending to this felt mesh, which we experience as a situation or the challenge of deciding in a situation, differentiating connections to other situations, values and experiences open up and make new ways of deciding and approaching available:

From a felt sense we can obtain much more intricate and better information about the situation, and how we are living in it. The great amount of pre-separated information I mentioned earlier is implicit in the felt sense. But at first, when a felt sense comes, it is an unclear, murky sense, and seems quite unpromising. One does not know what it is one feels. To spend time attending to such a concrete sense of something, without quite knowing what it is, that is what we call ,focusing. (1991A, 258)

One can therefore summarize the relation between the “somatic marker” and the “felt sense” as follows: what Damasio describes as the complex conditions of the possibilities of a “somatic marker” (the embodied culture incorporating the situations in which it forms) manifesting in dual possibilities, becomes potential, accessible information, by attending to the “felt sense”. What thereby opens up is a more conscious way of understanding ourselves in our situation. In other words, what Damasio conceives as the complex conditions of the possibility of “somatic markers”, i.e. everything we have learned and experienced, (being all the situations that participated forming these markers), Gendlin conceives as a gradually accessible content, which has the potential to unfold step by step into a more conscious way of being in the situation⁵.

Becoming more conscious of a situation by realizing how the somatic signal relates with a mesh of situations, one better understands why one feels and thinks the way one does. Furthermore: feeling in this gradual understanding way can subtly shift the way one feels. Thus a space is created in which experiencing functions without determining our spectrum of possible actions and reactions. Responding to the somatic sense as an embodied culture in this careful way allows a movement that carries out-dated patterns forward so that they need not stay the same. Finally, understanding the intricacy of our own experiencing in this way enables a more skillful, non-reductive interaction with the complexity of others. This kind of practice, which attentively engages felt aspects of meaning in articulation leads to an understanding that helps think across the mind-body split, and beyond the limitations of incorporated cultures. This again opens up the possibility of more degrees of freedom in communicative practices and in transcultural ways to understand situations.

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⁵ As I quoted above: “we must take care not to forget that one can ,specify” highly detailed aspects of (this kind of feeling), each of which can be referred to very specifically by our attention, each of which can be employed to give rise to very many specific meanings.” (Gendlin 1962, 14f.)

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