

## WHAT IS MOVEMENT?

Approaching the concept of the body as though it is a singular entity is a non-starter, for it is a many-splendored thing, a multidimensionality, dynamically plastic, and at times an open-ended affair. With regard to movement, it is understood that the definition of the body is similar to an individual's perception comparable to the understanding of color, sound, temperature, and that the experience of or with the body, evokes an empiricist notion of existence. According to Van Den Berg, human movement is not a mechanical blundering process but a significant performance, having a broad foundation in the whole of human existence [11], with William James hinting that the importance of the body is closely related to the sense of self and the starting point of identity [2]. Through perception and experience, human movement demonstrates and defines both the harmony and discord of man and his world, which borrows from the phenomenological Husserl notion that every *cogitio* implies a *cogitatum*.

As an ontological construct, movement is suggestive of the existence of the self and of the type of being. It is apodictic, implying both a positive evidence of "being" and the impossibility of "non-being" [4]. The act of movement represents an experience, a physical "noema" adding to the concept of self. According to Roberts, "...*exploratory maneuvers through and around an environment engender systematic profiles of sensory change that are contingent upon both the movements involved and the manner in which features of the environment are located and arranged...*"(p.102) [6]. In addition, as Proust once voiced "...*we have of the universe but formless visions, fragmentary, and which we complete with*

*associations of arbitrary ideas...*"[5]. In other words, many essential and constructive conjectures can be created if one interprets the universe through the act of movement.

Heidegger's dictum that the "*object just is*" reflects a Husserl view that the first-person knowledge of "self" is an intermingle of the self and the immediate environment from which experience is garnered. In addition, the German philosopher Hermann Schmitz claimed that all we are is body, and that this holds the key to our understanding of ourselves and everything else there is [10]. In other words, movement is a process that integrates both propositional meaning and direct sensory contribution, a holistic "sense" or "feeling" rather than thoughts or images, for movement is not simply a photographic representation of existence.

With movement, the body orients us in a manner allowing for the individuation of the subject (person), responsible for enabling the very ascription of thoughts and sensations to the subject [1]. Merleau-Ponty asserts that the body is the concrete agent of all our perceptual acts and it is in perception that we understand ourselves as having and being bodies [10], and where consciousness and reality occupy the same conceptual space. With Descartes insisting that "*I am not merely present in my body, as a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it, so that I and the body form a unit*" [3].

Movement enables the body to feel, with this awareness being the summation of tactile sensations as the body perambulates through its immediate environment. According to Schopenhauer, references through movement and the changes experienced by the body, are themselves immediately known, and are not informed upon reflection [9], suggesting that movement affords the body a cognitive like method of *pure understanding*, without which perception would never be achieved. From the concepts of cause and effect, an understanding is developed, for as the body moves through its immediate environment, the knowledge associated with it stands out as a perception extended in space, varying in respect of form, and persisting through time [9]. This understanding unites both space and time, proclaiming a causality that is real in response to the subject (person), and the object (body). However, the degree of the acuteness of movement itself, determined by the forces and laws of nature, are responsible for not only rooting an individual to the world, as well as creating an understanding in accordance to the stimuli. The manifestations and action of the

body reveal to an individual their existence, exposing qualities of their unique inner mechanism of being, formulating their identity. Every true act is an act of one's will and without exception involves a movement of the body, as a means of gaining an understanding of existence [8]. Therefore, both voluntary and involuntary movement is more than just a physical act, it creates a cognitive understanding and a knowledge of one's relationship to their environment.

1501

Authors :



**Nikos Apostolopoulos PhD**

*Adjunct Professor*

*Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education*

*University of Toronto,*

*Toronto, ON, Canada*

---

**Ita. | Sports Reh Po.**

Italian Journal of  
Sports Rehabilitation and Posturology

italian journal of sports rehabilitation and posturology

## REFERENCES

1. CARMAN, T. 1999. *The body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty*. *Philosophical Topics*, 27, 205-226.
2. CEBOLLA, A., MIRAGALL, M., VARA, M. & PALOMO, P. 2015. *Embodied mindfulness: review of the body's participation in the changes associated with the practice of mindfulness*. *Actas Espanolas de Psiquiatria*, 43, 36-41.
3. COTTINGHAM, J., STOOHOFF, R. & MURDOCH, D. 1985. *The philosophical writings of Descartes (trans.)*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
4. MESSERICH O.F.M., V. 1953. *An apodictic approach to reality*. *Franciscan Studies*, 13, 1-36.
5. PROUST, M. 1954. *A la reserche du temps perdu. A l'ombre des jeune filles en fleurs*, Paris, Gallimard.
6. ROBERTS, T. 2010. *Understanding 'sensorimotor understanding'*. *Phenom Cogn Sci*, 9, 101-11.
7. SCHMITZ, H. 1964-1980. *System der Philosophie Bonn*, Bouvier.
8. SCHOPENHAUER, A. 1909. *The world as will and idea (trans. from the German by Haldane, R.B. & Kemp, J.)*, London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.
9. SCHOPENHAUER, A. 1969. *The world as will and representation (trans. from the German by Payne, E.F.J.)*, New York, Dover Publications, Inc.
10. SMITH, C. 1962. *Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, trans.*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
11. VAN DEN BERG, J. H. 1952. *The human body and the significance of human movements: A phenomenological study*. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 13, 159-83.



1503



**ISSN 2385 – 1988 [Online]**