Enkinaesthesia, Biosemiotics and the Ethiosphere

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Preliminary remarks

1. Consciousness and agency are co-constituting.

2. Consciousness is the relata between agents.

3. True autonomy is mischievous notion.

4. The substance/state ontology is misconceived.

5. All living organisms exist within spatial and temporal horizons of possibility and anticipation.
Language as social coordination
~ starting assumption

But there is something more primary still

There is the feel of being with the other and this will vary depending on who or what the other is.
‘If one may consider the environment of a system as a structurally plastic system, the system and its environment must then be located in the intricate history of their structural, enkinaesthetic transformations, where each one selects the trajectory of the other one’.

[Varela 1989]

I prioritise the relational and interactional domains -- the cognitive, enkinaesthetic fields -- and reject the notion of operational closure.
Borders are not borders, edges are not edges ...

Our skin seems to specify the limit of our bodily ‘self’, but it is also the skin which, overrun with an abundance of receptors*, opens us up to the world and discloses it through our inescapable engagement with it.

*Sixty kilometres of nerve fibres, fifteen kilometres of veins, with millions of sense receptors for pain, temperature, pressure and touch.

Thirty-square kilometres of membranes - surfaces within surfaces.
Experience is plenisentient.

We search, reach, touch, grasp, lift, hold, caress, stroke, feel, see, hear, taste, prehend, apprehend and comprehend, colour, size, shape, shade, texture, tension, density, pitch, softness, pliability, movement, yield, resistance, and so much more.

“The essence of an actual entity consists solely in the fact that it is a prehending thing.” Whitehead, Process and Reality, p.56
Experience is polyphonic

... existing in a continuous flow of the creation and fragmentation of agential-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intersubjective, intercorporeal, enkinaesthetic dialogical memories, melodies and imagination.
Agenda

• Proposing enkinaesthesia

• Supporting arguments

• Supporting pathological / health examples
The living body isn’t just given:
~ the living body enacts, anticipates, and imagines;
~ it is co-affective with other bodies, perpetually folding into, unfolding, enfolding the other;
~ operating within a temporal horizon, not a series of punctuated temporal moments.
Babies in the womb ... send and receive messages without benefit of the words, syllables, and phrases that begin appearing in a year or two after birth. Their daily experiences of communication are punctuated by self-initiated and reactive movements which express needs, interests, and feelings. ... Based on the early development of the senses in the womb, a fetus remains in constant dialog with the surrounding environment.

Between week six and ten, fetal bodies burst into motion, achieving graceful, stretching, and rotational movements of the head, arms and legs. Hand to head, hand to face, hand to mouth movements, mouth opening, closing, and swallowing are all present at 10 weeks (Tajani and Ianniruberto, 1990). By 14 weeks, the complete repertoire of fetal movements seen throughout gestation are already in evidence (deVries, Visser, and Prechtl, 1985). Movement is spontaneous, endogenous, and typically cycles between activity and rest. Breathing movements and jaw movements have begun. Hands are busy interacting with other parts of the body and with the umbilical cord.  [Chamberlain 1995]
Enkinaesthesia

'Enkinaesthesia' is the affectively-laden experience of being with ...

- ourselves and others, including other animals and objects.
- It is specified within the neuro-muscular dynamical flow and muscle tension of bodies.
- Felt through touch and through touch which does not make contact – your perception of others perceiving you, and the way sounds, motion, language and gesture can dynamically affect the body...
Enkinaesthesia is the reciprocally felt affective enfolding which enables the balance and counter-balance, the attunement and co-ordination of whole-body action and interaction through mutual adaptation.

“To language is to interact structurally. Language takes place in the domain of relations between organisms in the recursion of consensual coordinations of actions, but at the same time language takes place through structural interactions in the domain of the body-hoods of the languaging organisms. . . . As the body changes, languaging changes; and as languaging changes the body changes.” [Maturana 1988, §9.5]
Enkinaesthesia

Enkinaesthetic dialogical-relations are
  – preconceptual
  – prenoetic
  – experientially recursive temporal dynamics
which form the deep extended melodies of
relationships-in-time.

An understanding of how those relationships work, when they falter, when they resonate sweetly, and so on, depends on a grasp, not only of our intersubjectivity or our intercorporeality but, of our enkinaesthesia.
With enkinaesthesia, as the presentation of, openness to, and reception of subtle multidirectional cues in all relations, there are grounds for saying, following Heidegger, that it is enkinaesthesia which constitutes the primordial mood of care for human relationships (Dasein) and, as such, constitutes the roots of morality.
Enkinaesthesia – care

I can care for – be consciously related to, moving and being moved by – other things in my world, for example, my cat, my horse, the environment, a drawing, the wood wasps in my kitchen, a particular bench in the park, ...
We reach, we touch, we taste, grasp, hear, and see, and all as the felt mattering of spontaneously occurring motor and aesthetic evaluation.

We are endogenously (transcendentally) ethical, folding enkinaesthetically, and thus concernfully, into the being-in-time of the other.
If (1) every action is enkinaesthetic, and  
(2) all action is endogenously ethical, and  
(3) every action in its immanent *habitus*, even in *utero*, operates within the semiosphere, and  
(4) the semiosphere extends throughout the biosphere, then ...  

the enkinaesthetic dialogue becomes co-extensive with the biosphere and, in its immanent values-realisation, is better described as an `ethiosphere`.
As Ratcliffe states “practical relatedness between people [is] an aspect of interpersonal understanding and experience that typifies ... social encounters” [2008b p.196] and through which “patterns of affective interaction between people” [ibid. p.197] are established which make mutual understanding possible.

Suffering: ostracism, Capgras syndrome, Cotard’s, depersonalisation - affective diminution leads to fragmentation of practical relatedness and understanding.

As their ethiosphere shrinks, so shrinks their field of engagement, their semiosphere
Afterthought

Enkinaesthesia may well be that “vestigial sign language” for which Merlin Donald claims we have no evidence, and whereby ‘sign’ here I intend meaning carrier.

I am indebted to Colwyn Trevarthen for introducing me to synrhythmic co-regulation, projicience, altero-ceptive exteroception, and amphotero-nomic co-regulation.

~ baby chimp example - chimp looks where mother looks

~ dressage example - horse looks where rider looks

Thanks also to Don Favareau for the term teleception, and for showing so conclusively that Heidegger’s claim that animals are poor in their environment is plainly false.
Dziękuję
Herr Professor Schroedinger:

I refuse to participate in any more of your bizarre and life-threatening experiments. Make the dog do it.