

Running Head: THE TIME OF THE EXPLICATING PROCESS

THE TIME OF THE EXPLICATING PROCESS<sup>a</sup>  
COMMENT ON THOMAS FUCHS' "BODY MEMORY"

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The body has at last entered our current intellectual discourse. Fuchs provides another advance in that development. Until recently the most common question my philosophy would elicit was "But why the body?"

Fuchs systematically describes how the body's memory functions in all present living. He brings its ubiquitous performances together and classifies them. I will comment on this valuable treatise, and extend its import. I will add a distinction. I propose concepts of a different kind for some of his major terms. I certainly agree with what he vividly and directly points to.

I do have one objection: He tells it all as if the body's performances consisted only of the learned, automated, repeated, "-ed," only habits, repetitions, re-enactments, as if the body could only repeat its past, as if it were incapable of anything new.

Through repetition and exercise, a habit has developed. Long-trained patterns of movement and perception have been embodied . . . [I]mplicit memory . . . does not re-present the past, but re-enacts it in the course of the body's performance. What we have acquired as skills, habits and experience, has become what we are today; implicit knowing is our *lived past*.

What Fuchs doesn't quite say but shows throughout is that the past reshapes itself in the course of the body's present performance. Of course the past exists and functions in and as our new present. But the present must be capable of something new, otherwise past experience could not have happened either. The past might have been based on a previous past, but at some point it had to be new. And not only at an earlier point. Present experiencing is always capable of something new that reshapes the past.

The present living process **reshapes its past by reshaping itself**, reshaping what it was. In every living process each next bit reshapes the previous. We could say that the past reshapes itself as present living. Or, we could say that present living generates a "past" by reshaping itself.

The past is not past because an observer determines that it happened at an earlier position on Newton's absolute time line. The past is the living process's own past, made past by its new present. Or, we can say the past makes itself past by functioning to shape a new present. If one living process is both (and I agree it is), we have to say that it is a constantly self-reshaping process.

But this regenerative living process does not fit the familiar conceptual models; it fits

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<sup>a</sup> This comment refers to the online article of Thomas Fuchs from 2003, available at:

[www.klinikum.uni-heidelberg.de/fileadmin/zpm/psychatrie/ppp2004/manuskript/fuchs.pdf](http://www.klinikum.uni-heidelberg.de/fileadmin/zpm/psychatrie/ppp2004/manuskript/fuchs.pdf)

neither the model of separate single unit-events, nor the usual holism. Fuchs uses both although the body's performance points beyond them.

He speaks of *explicit* memory as recording "single events," as if the objective environment consisted of single events. And he calls *implicit* memory "holistic:"

...skills that have been formed by repetition and automation. They integrate single elements into holistic temporal patterns . . . (my emphasis)

I don't think Fuchs wants to **assume the old model of environmental reality as meaningless singles that have to be integrated into meaningful patterns and wholes.**

In my view there is a more original tie between body and environment. Living process *is* body-environment interaction, always already organized and patterned, not first meaningless separate events that have to be integrated. The earlier patterns function implicitly in the development of more complex patterns.

It is true, however, that we first learn many things in separate singles, so I need to make a distinction: The separate singles that we learn are made later, after a new pattern emerges. Civilization is passed on by dividing creative innovations into single parts so that everyone can learn them. The singles are made from a creative innovation after it has come.

Quite different from singles, Fuchs shows something more profound: the natural process of a living body building upon itself. This natural building upon itself is not an integration of prior singles.

To view the living process as beginning with singles is a case of the traditional Western model which always assumes that nature consists of the units which logical analysis separates and combines. The recent analytic creations are read back into all the earlier, more basic processes. But we can honor and use the immense contributions of the analytic unit model and still also have the new science of living bodies which is developing right here. How the living process reshapes itself need not be reduced to later-made singles.

Take Fuchs' example of learning how to waltz. Certainly it is a learned rhythm, but we could not learn it if the body's living process didn't already have some rhythms or the capacity for rhythm. Some person's body process first generated the waltz pattern. Then it was divided into parts, so that now others can learn part-moves until the rhythm emerges for them too. It emerges as a new form reshaping the human body's rhythms. And because it can emerge from human bodies, therefore everyone can learn it.

Dancing is not just the learned steps. Dancing is the original body process now further developed.

We learn reading and writing like we learn the waltz. As individuals we learn the letters first, but letters are a "recent" Phoenician innovation after writing was in word-pictures for thousands of years. They broke the sound-patterns of words up into separate sound parts so that letters could stand for sound-parts.

Like the waltz rhythm, the word-sound patterns developed first. And what we recognize when we read is still the words, the pattern of letters, not letter by letter. We recognize the words just as we used to recognize them in picture writing. Well, of course. This is how we recognize cats and dogs, and all objects. We recognize them by their patterns, not by integrating single parts. Breaking things up into units for analysis, teaching, automation, and technology is a later development, not the beginning of living processes.

The significance of what Fuchs describes goes further. Understanding what the body provides takes one beyond the current conceptual models. It can reshape the current conceptual models. As he says,

The memory of the body is an impressive refutation of the dualism of consciousness and the physical body.

If what Fuchs points to is the case – and it is – then it also instances a very different overall conceptual model. The body's performances go beyond single units or holism. I will now try to show an alternative model in a few instances.

## II .

I will reformulate a few terms Fuchs uses, so that they don't fall back into either of the old models. Seeing the performances of the body can liberate us from them if we have an alternative. Elsewhere I have developed a model of process (1997; in press). I will use it to reformulate four terms: "holism," "time," "space," and "intercorporeal memory" (emotion, affect-motor schema).

### **"Melted" and "Holism"**

Developing previous patterns into higher order patterns is characteristic of all living process, even the most primitive kind. Animals also generate new behavior, and human bodies generate new cognitive patterns as well. All living process constantly reshapes itself.

But all living is internally complex. Even a single cell does many things at once. These are not separate singles, but they always remain many *specific* events. They happen in an interrelated way. These unseparated specifics are not "holistic," not merged or melted. They remain precise and rigorously specific.

In Fuchs' example, each of the piano player's fingers functions specifically with its own sequence of acts. No "holistic" merger could play the piece. Fuchs certainly doesn't deny the specific precision of each finger. He uses the old word "holistic" only to say that the player plays without retrieving the single finger movements. Similarly, his word "melted" is meant to describe how they are in the player's awareness, not how they function.

This kind of "specificity" goes beyond the old models according to which everything must be either separate or merged. To conceptualize this kind of specificity we need a new kind of concept. We can create the concept right here from how each finger performs its specific actions. Let us allow this way of functioning to define a concept. How we name it is less important. I propose "*functional specificity*," "*unseparated multiplicity*" and "*implicit precision*" (see Gendlin 1997; in press)<sup>1</sup>

But what is in the player's consciousness is not at all indeterminate. It is *more determined* than a fixed pattern because it is *both* finely specific *and* open to being enacted in a new way.

For example, a musical composition first comes to the composer as an improvisation directly from the body. Then it is written down because the composer deems it worth keeping. Composers first *play* (in both meanings of the word), then there is something to write in notes and measures. But a great score is an opportunity for fresh unique expression. If just the score is repeated, critics complain that the performance was pointless. And even the performer's unique way of playing can lose its exciting effect if it is played as something repeatable. The performer strives to let it come as a fresh expression (see Gendlin 1993).

In the old models it would be paradoxical to speak of a bodily sense that is both finely determined and is also an open implying of fresh further coming. But we can allow this to define

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1 Hegel's holism refers only to thought. The body is assumed to be purely mechanical. Hegel dismissed actual experiencing as indeterminate in the first few pages of his *Phenomenology* (see Schöeller, in press). So his view was nothing like the bodily experiential differentiation.

a concept. I call it a “felt sense.”<sup>2</sup>

“Unseparated multiplicity” and “felt sense” begin to tell this different kind of order, the order of implicit process, more order than the fixed patterns of a static “is.”

### Temporal Patterns Zeitgestalten

If we think the words, our fingers type the letters. Fuchs very revealingly points out that we can do a complex action if we aim at the result we want. We cannot do it if we aim first at one part, and then the next. This is familiar, but it can be quite startling when we have to do something that is new. We move ahead with just the aim, not knowing what we will actually do. The body has to find the actual doing, and quite often it does! Letting the body do it may bring more into the new doing than we know.

How the envisioned future can imply and shape the ensuing present shows vividly that the living process doesn't happen only in linear time, now now now. Nor is it enough to say with Husserl that each moment has a “protension” to the next. The whole sequence is always implied, although nothing like it may ever have happened before. But also in ordinary actions the whole sequence is implied. The aim is present throughout. The enacting happens into the implied sequence. The now now now occurs into the implying.

I propose an expanded model of time. Time does not consist only of nows. The now now now occurs into the implying which is thereby carried forward.<sup>3</sup>

Linear time consists merely of positions on an observer's time line. The positions are supposed to be external and independent of what happens. Linear time is an empty frame. The time patterns (Zeitgestalten) of a living process are its own, the body carrying itself forward

The future that is present now is not a time-position, not what will be past later. The future that is here now is the implying that is here now. The past is not an earlier position but the now implicitly functioning past. (For this more intricate model of time in detail, see Gendlin 1997, IVB.)

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2 A felt sense can always form and come if one invites it. With a little training people can learn to put their attention into the body and invite the *physical quality* of right now (expansive, constricted, heavy, jumpy, or no word for it, just . . . *this* quality). The quality changes with each thing, however large or tiny. If the unique quality actually comes, then further steps come *from it*. We call this practice “focusing” (Gendlin 1978/2009; 1997)

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3 “Carrying forward” relates back as well as forward. Its time is retroactive. It is a further development which now says what “was” there then. (See Gendlin 1983. We predicted that time symmetry would be violated, which has recently come about. We predicted that relativity limitations on quantum equations would be loosened, which has not yet happened.)

### **Getting our bearings in space**

We don't live in empty abstract geometric space either, as Fuchs points out. "Situations . . . are more than abstract entities." He cites for example "a roaring soccer game." He points to the inherent relation of "wohnen" (inhabiting) and "Gewohnheit" (habit). I would add only that the living activity comes before the repetition.

We don't want to assume that empty geometric space is the reality, as if the space that living generates were only subjective, only due to repetition of separable units. Let us not assume a universe of separated units in empty space. Such units are essential for technology and making things. But nothing living consists of separated units. A universe consisting of separated units could not have living processes in it.

The featureless space comes from human making (*homo faber*). Humans make new things and fill the world with them. We make furniture from trees. Making things requires making separate parts which we can glue together, or analytic parts which we logically connect. We move separated parts *from here to there* and combine them. Human making happens in seemingly featureless here-there space. It is a space just of motion, changes in locations. It is an abstract frame of points and mathematics, a wonderful human creation.<sup>4</sup>

Fuchs rightly speaks of "a procedural field of possibility." I add that we live in the space of developing tissues, behavior possibilities, cognition, and felt senses. The body's performances could not happen if the featureless space of mere locations were the nature of the universe.

### **Interaction**

Fuchs says:

. . . the motor, emotional and social development in early childhood does not run on separate tracks, but is tightly connected through integrated affect-motor schemata.

He cites

what Daniel Stern calls implicit relational knowing – a bodily knowing of how to deal with others, how to have fun with them . . .

In the context of the body's relational knowing, words such as "affect," "motor," and "emotion" no longer say what we want to say. These old words involve the assumption that our situations and interactions are subjective epiphenomena in a universe of separate parts. In what way motor and emotional and social development are "not on separate tracks" points to something else, not just to a combination of them.

Fuchs points out that someone's cowed posture tells us a lot about that person. The posture is not just the spatial relation of shoulders and limbs.

We can build on what Fuchs says. The body's understanding of others is *prior* to our understanding of ourselves. G. H. Mead argued that self-knowledge develops from prior empathy with others. Wittgenstein wrote: "Think, too, how one can imitate someone's face without seeing one's own in a mirror" (1953: 285). Our bodies can produce the other person's face and posture because they respond *directly* to each other's expressions.

This prior interconnection is one strand of the larger fact that every living body *is* body-

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4 Quantum physics has taken a big step beyond featureless space. Featureless space still persists because it is built into most of our concepts.

environment interaction. The body consists of body-environment interaction long before there is a separate body distinct from a separate environment around it. Living bodies and their environment are a much more original interaction, long before perception and sentience (consciousness) develop so that we perceive a body here separate from an environment there.

We are body-environment interaction. Other people are an essential part of the environmental interaction which we are. We live our situations with our bodies. We do a lot more with our bodies than we know about. That is why others can sense what we ourselves don't know in ourselves. Our bodies live directly in our situations. That is why focusing works (see footnote 2).

When I attend directly to the body-sense that can come about any situation, a whole field of detail opens. I hear from the "me" that "I" don't know so well.<sup>5</sup>

Human situations and interactions involve expressive patterns, but these living patterns do not lock us in as fixed patterns do. Rather than allowing only what fits within fixed patterns, we develop them by living further. In the continuation of living process a pattern is a further implying.

We can see the different kind of order that is characteristic of implicit functioning in the surprising fact that everyone becomes understandable if they keep going "on in," if they keep differentiating their experience further and further. At first they are often closed puzzles, even to themselves.

We are learning how to listen to each other, to say back what we understand so as to check it, to accept correction after correction until at last the person exhales a "Yes, that's what I mean." Then a characteristic little silence ensues. In that little silence the person tends to go deeper. The next saying is often from a deeper level, eventually to felt sensing.

Our bodies can feel-understand anyone who differentiates from felt sense to felt sense far enough. Experiential differentiation has a different kind of "universality," just as it is precisely the performer's "unique" musical expression which reaches our bodies. The body can empathically generate this universal uniqueness, even when it is utterly foreign to how we ourselves actually live and think. There is no universality whatever in human content. But experiential differentiation is understandable to everyone who listens; it has a superordinate kind of universality.

### III.

#### In conclusion

1 We are learning how to move beyond the old determinism. We are at the beginning of a new science of living process, a more open culture, and a new development of the individual.

Freud found an impossibility of change on many dimensions. Character was unchangeable; children and psychotics couldn't be worked with at all; infantile sexuality and early childhood events were never modifiable; everything was explained by "repetition compulsion." Some things are still unchangeable, but the fact that so many of his impossibles have begun to give way hints that perhaps none of them are inherently impossible. But this has only been the first 100 years, a little more than one lifetime. We are still near the beginning of this human development.

2 Experiences build upon previous experiences. What once was new becomes an old tool in the formation of a newer new. And this is true of the species and the individual. Each kind of living body is genetically able to do at birth what ancestors slowly developed. And for each of

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5 This is similar but not the same as G. H. Mead's theory of the "I" and the "me."

us what we acquired with difficulty is now functioning implicitly in new situations and new developments.

The body's digestion and circulation work reliably and repetitiously although they also produce important effects of each new situation. The body structure is never finished constituting itself. It is not like machines which we first make, and only turn on when completed. The living body constitutes itself from the first cell, and never stops constituting itself further. And so also do new behaviors and cognitions function implicitly in the formation of still newer behaviors and cognitions.

3 The very power of logic to determine "necessary" implications that explain some puzzle also provides the possibility of going further in a way that exceeds the logic. This seeming paradox is explained if we consider not only the pattern and its logical implications, but also the experiential understanding which the explaining brought. It is not from the flat pattern that we develop beyond it, but from the bodily understanding process. "Aha!" we exclaim as we understand the logical explanation. The bodily aha! involves much more than what can follow from the logic that brought it.

Therefore we need to go back and forth between logic and bodily-felt understanding. They build upon each other. It would be wrong to make an ideology of lauding one and pretending to do without the other.

We see clearly that dividing something into units and explaining it logically can bring a new clarity that is not only the explanation itself, but also a wider bodily carrying forward. New clarity continues the living process. That is why it can be so exciting. Thinking is not just *about* something; thinking *is* a mode of the living process.

Living process does not consist of fixed patterns; it generates the patterns by which it carries itself forward.

4 There is one living process which continues the past into the new present, in which the past functions. This is not a paradox. In every present living process its past functions implicitly in going beyond itself. The continuing process has a greater kind of order leading to concepts of a new kind. These begin to explain what Fuchs points to, and carry our understanding forward.

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