

Embodied Perception of Self and Others in Social Action. A Research Perspective Combining Theory and Practice

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1. Introduction: the Prismatic Approach. A research perspective combining theory and practice¹

When studying the embodiment of social action, the question arises: how best to study this empirically – which can only mean: by taking the lived body into account. In our presentation we introduce an operational approach where the components of lived *bodily experience*² are more consistently taken into account than is usually the case. Here the researchers understand themselves as embodied agents and bring their bodily experience (as constitutive for knowledge) to bear on the research process. In the structure of our investigation the dynamics of posing questions and taking action develop in such a way that the people involved in this process combine different ways of knowing and explore their interrelationships: bodily experience, notation of what is observed, reflection, dialogue about the object and process of research, recapitulation, and comparison of the elaborated data. These changes of perspective lead to the emergence of more profound or new knowledge about what is being investigated. This approach demands a particular concept (Part 3) with a specific research-design (Part 4)

¹ To facilitate readability participants are only referred to in the masculine form. We thank those who took part in workshops in Munich (Special Research Field/Sonderforschungsbereich 536) and Heidelberg (DISCOS) for their stimulating co-operation, particularly Fritz Boehle, Hanne De Jaegher and Thomas Fuchs (see Clenin/Pieper/De Jaegher/Fuchs 2009a), Katrin Dirschwigl and Michael Pieper for careful reading of the manuscript; Frank Arnsperger for the diagrams' graphic design, and Frank Seiß and Margit Wehrich for their editorial contribution. Acknowledgements for the translated version see end of text.

² In this English version of our article we renounce the distinction made in German between “*Koerper*” and “*Leib*” (See Fuchs 2008a: 99ff (“dual aspect of the living being or the person”), Uzarewicz 2005), instead we employ the concept of “lived body” for describing procedures on how to investigate phenomena of lived bodily experience in social action.

and a special methodology (Part 5). Thus well-established standards such as classification, reflection, comprehensibility, documentation of approach and procedure need not be given up. Our practical-theoretical research perspective developed over the past ten years on the basis of three strands (Part 2): subject-oriented sociology, the Feldenkrais Method, and the arts. Two of these sources appear in each individual biography. We both maintain a private practice as Feldenkrais practitioners; Barbara Pieper is also a social scientist and Daniel Clénin has a background in theatre and mime³. In our Feldenkrais activities we interrelate theory and practice, which allows us to try out the applicability of theoretical questions and statements, and, conversely, to incorporate experiences and discoveries arising out of bodily experience into theoretical development.

Our text is structured accordingly. We have written a “prismatic” rather than a linear argument where the diverse perspectives within this investigation relate to and communicate with one another. The theoretical presentation of concept, abstraction, and method is interrupted and consistently related to the actual research process. We describe a brief experiment in November 2008 where 13 scientists in a workshop at Munich (Special Research Field 536 /Sonderforschungsbereich 536) experienced our approach (Parts 4 and 6). This involved questions of social attunement in work situations, as exemplified in a Turkish barber’s shop (film sequence Agneskirchner 1999 and in Dunkel/Rieder 2004))

We focus on the concept of “Dual Aspect of Perception” as an omnipresent principle of life (Part 3.3.). The term describes the reciprocal meaningful orientation of people to each other. In this process, self-perception and other-perception necessarily and simultaneously take place. Nevertheless (and surprisingly) little attention is paid to self-perception in sociological theories of action, or its expression and significance in social interaction is underestimated (Parts 2.1 and 3.3). Might that be an outcome of the fact that scientists wish to withhold self-perception from the process of research and concentrate solely on the phenomena in front of them?

Our research perspective complements this conventional view about the objects of investigation. As soon as researchers include perception of the self and the other in their

³ B.P. worked for many years in Munich University’s Special Research Field/Sonderforschungsbereich 101 (a precursor of SFB 536), contributing towards the development of subject-oriented sociology. Here she adds to her presentation of the embodiment of social action (Pieper 1997) with the conceptual developments and means of operationalisation devised together with Daniel Clénin since 2000.

work, a dynamism of several perceptual references develops, each with different perceptual qualities (Part 3.2). How people perceive each other (who looks at whom, and why) makes a significant and perceptible difference. Directing perception towards oneself during a conversation is a different process from simultaneously taking the other person into account, putting oneself in his place. However sensing, recognising, and making methodical use of this difference in science (and everyday life!) requires practical bodily experience.

We call our research perspective “prismatic” in terms of intention, concept, and procedure. A prism refracts light and generates a multitude of colours. This makes possible diverse perspectives on perception of light without disintegration into constituent elements, which destroys its unity. If this refraction is later annulled there remains new and more profound knowledge of its nature⁴

Through this brief experiment we show that the embodiment of social action becomes (more) “tangible” by way of the prismatic approach (Part 6). Complex research issues can then appear and be elaborated in a different light. The switch between implicit and explicit knowledge can be described as “meandering”, whereby research processes are structured as perception and configuration. We demonstrate the gain in generating and generalising knowledge which results from embodied research. Contrary to expectation, in such research the degree of complexity does not increase but decreases, since social action is investigated here in its inherent bodily context (Part 7).

2 Origins

In working on this project we made use of various vocational and other sources of knowledge and experience alongside our activities as Feldenkrais practitioners. Instead of focusing on searching systematically for complementary concepts and practices we allowed biographical elements to play a part, especially in incorporating three areas of experience and thought within a prismatic research perspective.

⁴ We originated the prismatic approach in an international project devoted to development of quality and competence in professional practice of the Feldenkrais Method. Our approach complements top-down prescription of criteria of competence and quality with emphasis on practitioners’ own experience. The aim was to “bring out” their knowledge regarding these issues and at the same time to reach some general conclusions. (Clénin 2000; Outline: Black/Clénin/Pieper/Randerson 2009).

2.1 Subject-Oriented Sociology

Subject-oriented sociology⁵ “systematically takes into account reciprocal impacts between an individual and social structures” (Bolte 1997: 35). It is not a sociological theory or school but rather a research perspective that gradually came into existence, concerned with ongoing transition and transformation (Pongratz/Voss 1997b: 23) and “lived openness within research practice” (ibid: 13). Researchers’ interest may be directed towards subjects but not so as to grasp their behaviour as uncoupled from society. Neither are social norms and institutions researched without taking into account how individuals are affected and acting within them. Indeed subject-oriented sociology investigates in its specific way the “in-between”: the linkages. It “draws attention to the reciprocally constituted interrelationship between human being and society” (Bolte/Treutner 1983: 15). Agents are considered in a dual role as “products and producers of social conditions” (ibid: 29).

This emphasis on practical social intermediation between human being and society (ibid: 33) makes it possible to think, accompany, and follow how individual and society exert an impact on one another – from one pole (individual) to the other (society) and vice-versa. This systematic change of perspectives becomes the method (Pieper 1997: 300ff). An investigation thus pursues the dynamic interconnectedness of subject and structure instead of this being divided (as so often) between a micro- and a macro-view.

2.2 Feldenkrais

The Feldenkrais Method⁶ was developed by Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984), physicist, exponent of Judo, and teacher of his form of learning. Feldenkrais researched into the connections between human development and movement, learning and taking action. Far in advance of his time, his investigations also took in gravity as a precondition for human behaviour. He didn’t only ask what happens and why, but also how does something happen

⁵ An overview is to be found in Pongratz/Voss 1997a and Wehrich n.d.; an introduction in Bolte/Treutner 1983 and Bolte 1997; on methods in Pieper 1983; and social structures embodied in subjects’ activities with reference to the Feldenkrais Method in Pieper 1997.

⁶ For the basic texts on Feldenkrais Method see references. Brief introductions and description of the Method in English: Feldenkrais 1980; Pieper/Weise 1997; in German: www.barbarapieper.de; Feldenkrais in the context of subject-oriented sociology Pieper 1997; and context of somatic education: Pieper 2003.

and for what purpose. He thus understood corporal expression as a dynamic process related to action rather than as a static state like posture (leading to the term “acture” composed of both *action* and *posture*).

Feldenkrais emphasised the crucial importance of sensation and movement (sensorimotor loops) in the arising, stabilisation, reinforcement, and changing of behaviour. The concept of kinaesthesia is based on the old Greek words *kinein* (to move) and *aisthesis* (perception). The better trained this sense is the more appropriately can living beings, objects, and issues be distinguished from one another. That is one of the preconditions for experiencing, recognizing, understanding, inventing, and taking purposeful action.

Action is always accompanied by movement. Anyone who initiates an action would like to do or to try out something specific. Feldenkrais recognised the “relevance of movement in terms of conduct” (Pieper/Weise 1997: 7). He used this coherence to initiate developing and changing people’s behaviour. Every human being has the capacity to adapt again and again to changed conditions and to restructure the basis for life. Human potential and individuality have developed by way of embodied experience in sensing, feeling, thinking while moving. They are interwoven and “stored” in a subject, its self-image and embodied organisation of movement. That is why it should be possible to change behaviour by way of the same process.

Here the how takes precedence over the what: “If you know ‘what’ you are doing and even more important ‘how’ you use yourself to act, you will be able to do things the way you want” (Feldenkrais 1981:70). Feldenkrais points to the importance of being (or becoming) aware “of the way one directs oneself in acting or functioning in life” (ibid: 96). Awareness becomes the fundamental orientation and praxis in taking action. Simultaneously perceiving oneself in action (and possibly others and objects too) is the precondition for confidence and competence within options beyond previous limits.

2.3 The Arts

An artistic approach to the world is almost always linked with the body. In arts involvement in formal aspects is more clearly emphasised than elsewhere. In mime, dance, and drama it is lived bodily experience with an emphasis on corporality, in music and literature the sonic and linguistic aspect, which is the basis for the demanding attempt to find and shape adequate

forms of representation and expression. In music the material nature of the instruments on which it is played shapes the musical structure and the theories derived from that. Literary language always emanates from spoken language which in turn originates primordially from gestures, serving bodily mediation of content.

In many arts the phenomenology of perceiving and experiencing is accepted in diverse ways as self-evident. Reflection of the self in the accompanying perspective is an intuitive or very conscious part of that. This demanding intensification gives rise to a work which is often still mediated by an interpreter called upon to deploy his embodied capacities in order to do justice to the creation and make it accessible to a public.

2.4 Preferences and Gaps

Here we select four characteristics of those approaches which are of particular importance for the prismatic perspective within the context of the embodiment of social action:

(1) Openness and dynamism. Subject-oriented sociology and the Feldenkrais Method are characterised by theoretical openness (also methodologically implemented in Feldenkrais). Perspectives are devised in both research and practice, allowing the development of theories. In that way new interdependences become apparent time and again. Our dynamic and embodied way of investigating detects recursive reciprocities of social preconditions (“structure”) and people’s way of dealing with them (“function”) while interacting.

An example: In human beings such phylogenetic patterns of movement as standing, walking, grasping, the sexual act etc, are “prearranged”. During the course of a life history (ontogenesis) a human adapts these dispositions. There thus develops a personal organisation of movement which can become so firmly established that to the individual concerned it ultimately seems inherited like a structural pattern of movement independent of behaviour. During this process the way in which a person “functions” - i.e. how he actualises the available range of movements – retroacts to his organism’s structure. Over the course of time the structure of his sensing, feeling thinking and his corporality increasingly corresponds to his behaviour since – as long as he is not aware of this interrelation – he only chooses movements which accord with the self-image on which his actions are based.

(2) *Concept of action.* In sociology socially constituted action is an established aspect of knowledge. People operate in a social context and their behaviour is intentionally related to others – to a considerably greater extent than they realise. Subjectivity and objectivity are mediated – at least in subject-oriented sociology – by way of human behaviour’s reciprocity or – in other words – via intersubjectivity.

Unusual for a physicist, Feldenkrais also employed a concept of action in which he emphasised the intentionality of movement. A human being has a chance of surmounting social influences and achieving growth, maturity, and autonomy by refraining from wanting to “function as a useful member of society” (Feldenkrais 1972:18) and thus learning to be self-directed. Feldenkrais did not write about the fact that a person may be shaped by society but also shapes such social structures – and not just himself. The close connection and empathy between two persons may be recognised, utilised, and trained in practical application of his Method, especially in individual sessions, but his concept of action disregards the dialectic of social action comprehended as an intersubjectively constituted principle.

(3) *The bodily nature of action.* Sociology (including its subject-oriented form) remains largely abstract (Pieper 1997: 144ff). For long it chose to ignore the bodily nature of action. For Feldenkrais however orientation towards the body is basic for behaviour, systematically elaborated and integrated. A distinction is made between four elements within doing: sensing, feeling, thinking, and moving (see section 3.4). Those are actualized in the image people have of themselves which directs their actions (Feldenkrais 1972:10).

(4) *Taking into account the first, second, and third person.* Subject-oriented sociology at least relates first, second, and third person perspective, recognising intersubjectivity as a source of mediation. But then (once again) it concentrates on two poles (individual and society) even though in changing perspectives. In everyday practice of the Feldenkrais Method, in courses and individual lessons, connections relating to the first and second person predominate. In theoretical representations of the Feldenkrais Method the individual is usually set in opposition to society and the dynamics of the second person relationship in mediation between the first and third person are underestimated.

The arts describe, exaggerate, and defamiliarize areas of human existence, making possible insights into self-perception and perception of others by the people portrayed or by the actors

in their social surroundings. They do not usually lay claim to presentation of systematic behaviour or to achievement of generalisations about the phenomena shown.

Summary: Subject-oriented sociology emphasises (abstractly conceived) perception of the other within the reciprocity of social action. Each person is simultaneously perceiver and perceived. That overlooks the fact that those involved also perceive themselves. The opposite is the case with Feldenkrais. Here the focus is on embodied self-perception. Perception of the other as a constitutive element in action (and development) receives less attention. In the prismatic perspective we have taken up the advantages of our three backgrounds in practise and theory, uniting them conceptually and methodologically in such a way that they can fill previously existent gaps.

3 Conceptual Introduction

3.1 Practice before Theory

We call our approach a “research perspective combining theory and practice”, thereby wishing to emphasise the priority of practice over theory (Boehme 2003: 9). That is all the more the case with regard to embodied projects and analyses. Our text thus also contains a practical element (sections 4 and 6). We present a concept which offers possibilities of an operational approach within embodied social action research, taking bodily elements systematically and logically into account.

For that we employ an intersubjective functional approach. The researchers involved regard and use themselves as an embodied instrument (“tool”) for making findings related to specific questions. We have developed a structured embodied method where the researchers enter upon an active relationship with the “object of investigation” by way of a sequence of changes in perspective. Normally scientific observers step back from the situation they are investigating. They employ an external view of what is being observed and thus remain at a distance, intended to make possible a degree of neutrality or objectivity. This “ingrained” separation of the areas of knowledge and experience developed over the course of centuries. It

helped make possible an immense acquisition of knowledge – but the price paid for this was separation.

Researchers, in terms of their understanding of themselves and their impact on the world, grow up in a tradition maintaining that research findings become increasingly reliable the more they succeed in leaving subjective experience out of account. In the prismatic approach lived bodily experiences are not restricted to the “object of research”. Researchers take their embodiment seriously by relating it to themselves in their research. They bring their own perceptions into the process of investigation, structuring it respectively. For both, researchers and research process, such an expanded and challenging task is linked with a considerable increase in quality.

Our concept and terminology⁷ gradually developed within the interaction of lived practice and theory. We put our research perspective to ongoing use in practical projects and can quickly reconsider this approach, make it more precise, change it, or even abandon it.

3.2 Perceptual References

The term perceptual references permits to describe from where to where a perception occurs.. The term is relates to perceptual directedness in both space-time and a social context. This perception can be initiated (or avoided) from right to left, from above to below, from outside to inside, or vice-versa. Also from one’s own head to one’s own foot, or from one’s own head to another person’s foot, from one room to another, from the aeroplane to the city or the other way round.

⁷Our approach is in the tradition or discussion of Boehle 2009 (“Erfahrungswissen” – knowledge achieved through experience); Bolte/Treutner 1983; Bolte 1997; Berger/Luckmann 1966; Buehler 1927 (reflexive perception); Feldenkrais 1981; Fuchs 2008a : 357 (“Dual aspects of a person”); Mead 1934 (Identity – I and me – as social process); Merleau-Ponty 1993 (intercorporality); Noë 2005 (Perception as activity); Pfeifer/Bongard 2007 (Embodied intelligence); Plessner 1928/1975 (Excentric positionality); Schmitz 2011 and 1992: 57 (“Einleibung”. "encorporation" – human capacity spontaneously taking also another’s felt body as basis for one’s own behaviour); Schoen 1984 (“Reflection in action”); Weber 1922, volume 1, part 1, chapter 1, § 1 (Persons reciprocally orientate themselves to the past, present or accepted further behaviour of others, assuming that a person’s behaviour is meaningfully oriented to that of others = “subjectively intended meaning” of a person’s action as precondition of social action). However in the literature the embodiment of social action is rarely systematically integrated as the authors of this text do. If it is, steps in an embodied operationalisation in the posing of theoretical questions are usually missing.

That sounds like an everyday occurrence. However this concept entails more than just focusing attention in a specific way. In each perceptual reference other impressions come into existence: The modality of a perception differs, depending on how which reference of perception is configured in each instance. It feels different, is accompanied by different thinking, and varies in sensory impressions so that the accompanying activities are modelled differently, too.

Try out a little experiment either sitting or standing:

Place the surface of your right hand on your lower left arm and move this hand backwards and forwards between the wrist and the elbow. Your right hand thus investigates the lower left arm. Pay attention to your hand's sensation of touching. Continue this movement, but now change your intention and thus also the directedness of your perception. Now your lower left arm should perceive your right hand. Observe yourself. What is happening now? You've only changed the perceptual reference. First your right hand "initiated" perception of the arm. Now you are initiating your lower left arm's perception of the right hand. Most probably this second perceptual reference will be less familiar. How did that become apparent to you? For instance did you slightly "slow down" the right hand's movement on the lower left arm so as to be able to carry out this unfamiliar task? That means you sensed a difference or else you wouldn't have changed the timing of this movement.

Perceptual references are *per se* given and known in many disciplines (architecture, the arts, philosophy). We are interested in their significance in social action. References of perception are bound up with experiencing and thus differently directed and formed by people according to their situation and intentions involved. They develop intentionally and in a "circular" manner: *what* I perceive depends on *how* I perceive, which in turn depends on *what* I perceive. What I sense when my lower arm is touched by my hand depends on how – from where to where – I have perceived my lower arm: from my hand to the arm or vice-versa. In our usual experiencing such differences in perceptual relationships normally merge and are not easily recognisable or accessible to reflection.

The significance of differences in experiencing – as they arise within the directionality of perception – is greatly underestimated. Without investigation of one's own lived body people will ask: Why should there be a difference in touch and movement relating to the direction of how hand and arm contact have been initiated?

This example demonstrates how closely one's own bodily experience is linked with theoretical knowledge. As far as we know, up to now there does not exist any theory devoted to embodied differences in experiencing perceptual references as fundamentally influencing behaviour. For instance there has not been any empirical investigation on whether, how and which different neuronal processes are executed according to different perceptual references when (in our example) the hand perceives the lower arm or vice-versa. Such investigative questioning should initially be based on experience and not – as is usually the case – on a theory which must either be confirmed or disproved.

3.3 Dual Aspect of Perception: Self-perception and other-perception

Proceeding by way of reflected embodied practice makes it easier to utilise – in terms of both concept and method – the fundamental significance of perceptual references in researching the embodiment of social action.

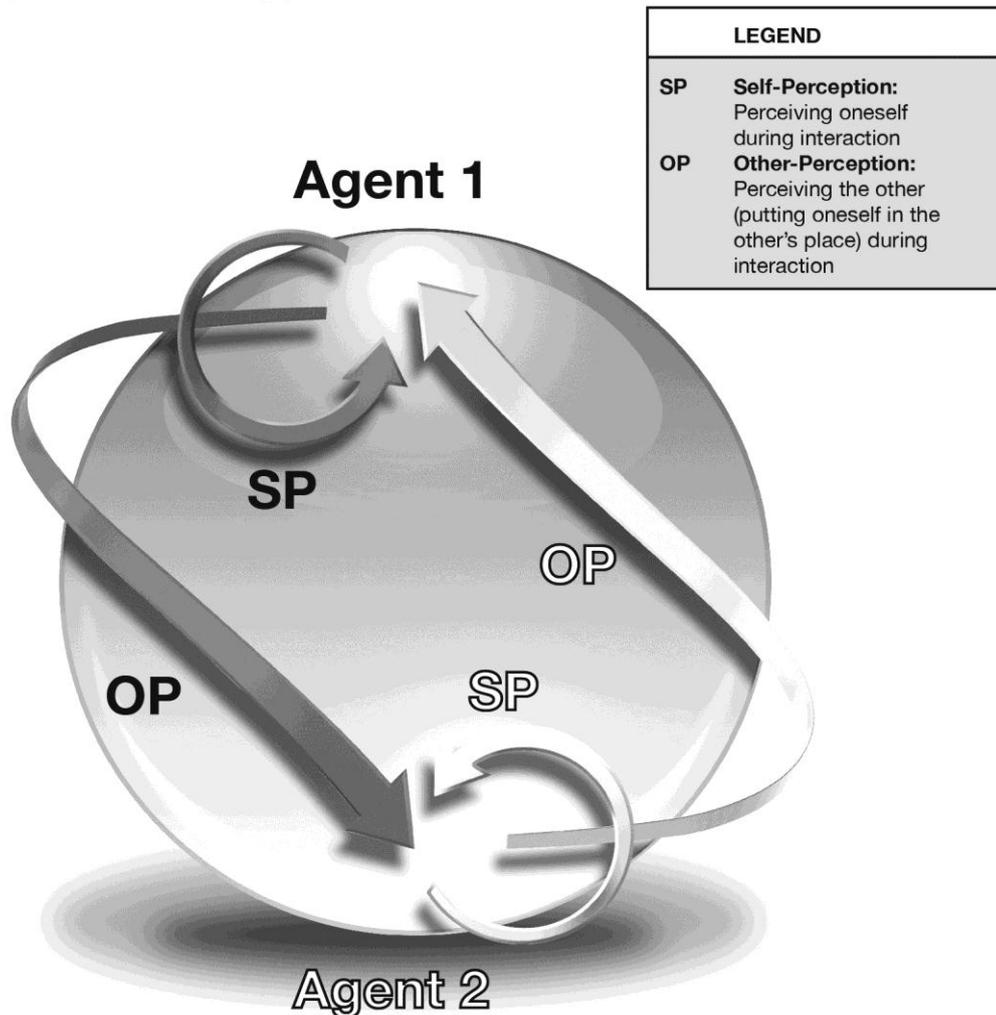
Here is another experiment with the hand and arm. For this you will need a partner.

Place the inner side of your hand on your partner's lower arm. Move your hand backwards and forwards on this partner's lower arm between the wrist and the elbow. Now first perceive what you yourself sense when your hand is moving along the other's lower arm. Continue this movement but now change the perceptual reference. Put yourself in the other's place: what would that other person sense while your hand is moving on his lower arm? Make a brief note of both these impressions: first the perception of yourself and then what you perceived when putting yourself in the other person's place. Then switch roles until your partner has also written down two brief accounts of these two perceptual relationships. In this experiment you sensed yourself and your partner, and this partner did likewise. Finally compare what the two of you wrote about your perceptions.

In interactions between two agents four crucial perceptual references occur at almost the same time. For that we use the term dual aspect of perception. In the experiment each of the partners perceived the other and also themselves. In the everyday experience of interacting subjects these four perceptual references usually merge. Depending on the situation and the experience, one or another reference may have been registered or overlooked to a greater or lesser extent. Nevertheless it is useful to look more closely at the systematics of these references and take them into account methodologically. These are presented visually in diagram 1. The sphere shows two agents' activity. The arrows represent the two perceptual

references for each agent. These lines extend outside the sphere, symbolising the fact that this is not a closed system of interaction.

Dual aspect of perception: two agents (sphere = activity)



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Diagram 1

The dual aspect of perception takes into account this fundamental relationship: Each agent perceives both the other and himself. The chosen direction affects the manner and quality of perceiving. The interactional dynamics of perceiving oneself and the other fans out further if the agents know that they are also being simultaneously perceived. (Those relationships are not included in the diagram.)

Perceiving oneself and others simultaneously is a principle of life which everyone experiences daily. If, for instance, someone is coming towards me a great cascade of perceptions passes through me: Do I know him? Is he ok? Does he want something? If he does, what do I do and

how will he react? Breathing, the workings of the heart, feelings, and thoughts are involved in all of that. Some becomes apparent (the heart beating) and much not immediately or not at all. Corresponding processes are occurring in the other. The dual aspect of self- and other-perception is the precondition for and the outcome of socially constituted action – whereby this dual aspect empirically configures considerably depending on the social, cultural, environmental, and personal context.

For sociology Bergman/Luckmann (1966: 29ff) describe the essential feature of intersubjective relationships as entailing “continuous reciprocity”, referring here (only in the German version !) to Theodor Litt’s phrase “reciprocity of perspectives” in taking action (Litt 1926: 109 ff):

“Indeed, it may be argued that the other in the face-to-face situation is more real to me than I myself [...] ‘What he is’, therefore, is ongoingly available to me [...] ‘What I am’ is not so available. To make it available requires that I stop, arrest the continuous spontaneity of my experience, and deliberately turn my attention back upon myself. What is more, such reflection about myself is typically occasioned by the attitude towards me that the other exhibits. It is typically a ‘mirror’ response to attitudes of the other” (Berger/Luckmann 1966: 29 ff).

Berger/Luckmann consider self-perception in interaction to be less self-evident (spontaneous) than perception of the other. Understanding oneself would demand a “coming to a stop” so as to make reflection possible. Berger and Luckmann seem to view other-perception as more continuous and natural, whereas self-perception seems more reflective to them. However – for us – it can just as well be the other way round, too: That the other is also perceived reflectively in interaction by the person; and that the person more continuously and natural perceives himself, nevertheless whether (as Berger/Luckmann argue above) “the other in the face-to-face situation is more real” to the person than the person to himself (ibid.:29 ff).

We have included Berger/Luckmann’s understanding of everyday social interactions because, unlike other sociological approaches, they take sufficient account of a person’s self-perception – even if, in our opinion, in a reduced form. In our concept the four perceptual references, as demonstrated in the dual aspect of perception, are in principle of *equal weight*. It would be much too dangerous for a person if he only behaved reflectively when perceiving himself instead of also permanently being oriented to his present spatiotemporal and social environment. Reflexivity, when it occurs, can be directed as much towards one’s own position as to another person’s. If embodiment were to be recognised in investigation of social action

to the same extent as attitudes and social norms, the fundamental dynamics of the dual aspect of perception would be more clearly apparent⁸.

Feldenkrais was so convinced of the great importance of self-perception that he developed a training method: “Improvement of talented people comes through their awareness of themselves in action” (Feldenkrais 1981: 96). In individual Feldenkrais lessons the practitioner’s capacity for self-perception while putting himself in his client’s place is the key to knowledge (of himself and of the other). Conversely clients perceive what the Feldenkrais practitioner is doing. However Feldenkrais, in dialoguing with the client, paid less attention to the client perceiving the practitioner than to the other three perceptual references (Practitioner’s self- and other perception, client’s self-perception).

In the arts (see section 2.3) the dual aspect of perception already almost a matter of course. We make use of that “potential for knowledge” in our approach.

Back to the experiment:

Imagine you are watching two partners involved in the experiment with hand and lower arm. What is involved in this dual aspect of perception for you as observer of the interaction? Which self- and other-perception do you employ?

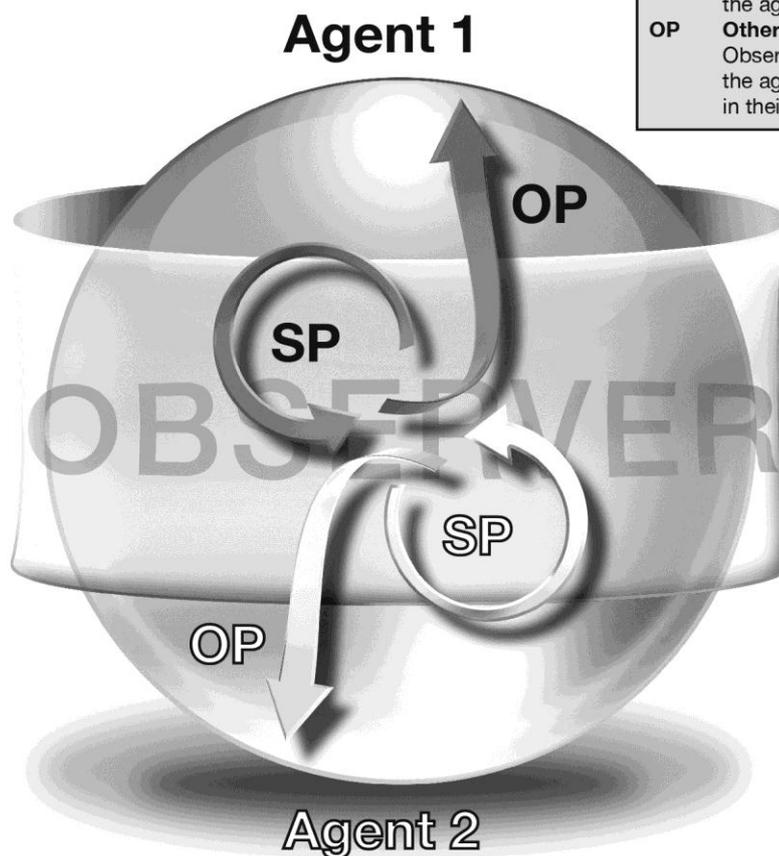
Diagram 2 shows the dual aspect of perception for someone observing two agents. This observer is at some distance from the interaction. So he is represented by a transparent strip which encloses the sphere (= the activity) horizontally. In the interaction of two agents the observer has to master four perceptual references, symbolized by two x two connecting arrows. These arrows enter the agents’ space of interaction. This indicates that the observer may not be part of the interaction but is related to it. This diagram may at first seem rather complex but it only describes an everyday situation: Two people are talking while a third watches them. In section 4’s consideration of survey-design the observer’s perspective will be included and expounded.

⁸ Cf. Karl Buehler’s concept of “reflective perception” with its dynamic observation of reciprocal steering of interaction by ego and alter (Buehler 1927:50). See also Linnebach 2010.

Dual aspect of perception: observer of two agents

(sphere = activity)

LEGEND	
SP	Self-Perception: Observer perceiving himself while watching the agents
OP	Other-Perception: Observer, while watching the agents, puts himself in their place



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Diagram 2

The dual aspect of perception represented in an everyday situation: two people interact while a third watches. From a distance the observer perceives each of the two agents and also himself. If the agents knew that their interaction was being observed, the reciprocal perceptual references between agents and observer would unfold still further. (In this diagram the references of those being perceived are not taken into account.)

Summary: We understand our approach as a concept of interaction. The term *Dual Aspect of Perception* expresses that self- and other perception are embodied and closely reciprocal. All four references in this dual aspects of perception are *per se* given, fundamentally socially constituted, and in principle of equal weight. Self- and other-perception – whether implicit

(unrecognised) or explicit (noticed) – occur in any agent and any social action⁹. This is absolutely necessary in social action but usually taken for granted in everyday life. So it's not surprising that the importance of self-perception within social action research is underestimated or, depending on the approach, one or other of the four fundamental perceptual references are ignored in theory or empirie.

3.4 Elements of Perception: Sensing, Feeling, Thinking

Sensing, feeling, and thinking are involved in perception. Shaped by our experience as Feldenkrais practitioners, we accord special significance to those three elements of perception. In Feldenkrais sensing, feeling, thinking and moving are viewed and described as aspects of action (Feldenkrais 1972: 12, 31) and utilised in many ways and fields of application. Nevertheless there is a lack of conceptual clarity in the way these elements are related to one another. In our terminology movement is seen as necessarily going together with action¹⁰. Only with movement action can be “expressed” or “performed”. Accordingly movement is also involved in sensing, feeling, and thinking. Movement therefore should be classified as the broader concept, overarching the three elements of perception (sensing, feeling, and thinking).

By *sensing* we mean sensations to differences in light and temperature, aspects of spatial location such as contact with the ground, space-time orientation, rhythm, etc. *Feeling* involves evaluation (consciously or unconsciously) of sensations like fear of being alone in the dark or changes in heart-functioning resulting from anxiety or joy. We see *thinking* as involving much more than logical and analytical activities, for instance understanding opposing of right and left, of recognising rules, or capacity for imagination (Feldenkrais 1972: 32). Linked to the experiment with hand and lower arm, described in section 3.3, the ability to implement the variations in the experiment demands a socially mediated idea of “hand” and “arm”, and beyond that a cognitive capacity to recognize both of them in other contexts, i.e. as “paw” and “foreleg”.

⁹ Here the prismatic approach is different from the more introspective process in supervision and coaching, transference in psychoanalysis, and the concepts of cognitive science (critically considered in: De Jaegher/Di Paolo 2008, McGann/De Jaegher 2009)

¹⁰ It is more adequate to specify “sensing” as “sensorimotor”, i.e. kinaesthetic (kinesis=moving, aesthesis=perceiving) because sensory perception and movement jointly constitute a “Gestaltkreis” (Weizsaecker 1940). For operationalization of self- and other perception in social actions we classify sensing together with feeling and thinking as “perceptual elements” since these three can be distinguished from each other via lived body experiencing, despite the fact that they always involve movement.

Distinguishing between the characteristics of the three elements in perception is not easy. Sensing, feeling, and thinking are trained very differently in the course of life and interact in coping with everyday activities¹¹. Nevertheless, they can be distinguished through bodily differentiation in perceiving and reflecting. Such a capacity of discrimination is promising much in generating both practical and scientific knowledge, especially regarding the embodiment of social action (sections 4 and 6).

3.5 Strategic Use of Changing Perspectives

We use the term *perceptual references* in the sense of a change of directed attention, strategically, cautiously, and progressively employed in both research and practice. Use of perceptual references is a particular way of changing perspectives. To discern and shift perspectives in sensing, feeling and thinking is another one. These strategies make it possible to see more accurately or differently what is being perceived or observed in the moment – and how that is happening. In addition terminology and concepts can be made more precise; other ascription of different meanings undertaken; and novel connections generated.

To describe what is meant by a change of perspectives we utilise the metaphor of the prism. A prism is a crystal body in which white light refracts into the colours of the spectrum. It thereby allows different perspectives on the perception of light. With these different colours what was previously perceived is autonomously transformed and amplified. A prism makes possible analysis and separation into different colours without the light being split into its individual components, destroying unity. When a prism is used the light can be reflected and continue in existence. Upon canceling the breaking of the light, people end up with a different understanding from the original state, enabling the gaining of new knowledge about the complex nature of light. New forms of action then become possible. Intention, concept, procedures, and the name of our approach accord with this process of the reflection of light.

3.6 The Value of Awareness of Perceptual Difference

¹¹ People “modulate” their thinking, feeling, and sensing. We do not take account here of such “modes of perception”.

Thomas Fuchs' concept of the "dual aspect of the living being or the person" (2008b: 356) takes into account "the reciprocal relations and cycles" (ibid. : 355) in which the subject is embedded within his life world. „Taking the perspective of the other, as a decisive moment in the development of self-consciousness, presupposes the bodily resonance and empathy that spontaneously emerges during perception of their actions“ (ibid.: 30), „while we identify with the intentions of others“ (Fuchs cites Spaemann 1996: 67).

For us empathic implementation does not entail the subject sensing, feeling, thinking in exactly the same way as the person who is the focus of attention. In such "intercorporeal perception" (Fuchs 2008b: 31) there remains a decisive difference between the first and second person with regard to perception of self and other during interaction. If the dual aspect of perception is consistently taken into account and taken seriously with regard to methodology, it can be shown that – and how – perception of self and other (during putting oneself in the other's place) are differing qualities of perception. These distinctions must first be recognized, named, and not rashly conceptually unified or regarded as *per se* integrated phenomena just because they initially appear as such in people experiencing themselves and others. If these often very subtle differences are revealed in experiences of perceptual references, ways open up for investigating and enriching the theory and practice of embodied social action.

4 Observational Praxis I: “Turkish Craftsmanship” – the Barber’s Shop. Social Attunement during the Work-Process

4.1 Observation Material (film sequence)

Our way of proceeding is based on the assumption that information allowing recognition of the research topic is already “present” in individual participants’ partial systems and their interaction. We have therefore devoted attention to the question of how this knowledge can be “collected” (Clénin/Pieper 2007, 2009). During a workshop we applied our concept to a research question on embodied social attunement during the work-process in a Turkish barber’s shop. For that purpose the organisers made available a short sequence (“Washing and Setting”) from Alice Agneskirchner’s documentary film “Turkish Craftsmanship”

(Agneskirchner 1999, also in Dunkel and Rieder, 2004). Following our practical and theoretical research perspective, the researchers had an opportunity of integrating their own selves as embodied “instruments of research” and at least to some extent of trying out a short version of the prismatic approach to observation.

4.2 Survey-Design (short version)¹²

The film sequence (2 minutes) shows two Turks, the customer and the barber. Subtitles, peripheral figures plus a second barber, and the interviewer’s questions are not of importance here. This sequence is shown twice. The researchers, now being observers, are asked to sit comfortably and to observe what is shown with as “soft a focus” as possible, i.e. keeping their perception open without concentrating on any detail.



A third of the researcher-observers are given the task of directing their attention towards the customer, another third towards the barber, and the third group towards interaction between the two of them. For this observation only one of the three perceptual elements (section 3.4) is selected: sensing. Sensory perceptions are relatively easily recognisable because they are linked with

immediate bodily experience – e.g. the way of breathing, changes in heart-activities, variations in warmth and coldness, and body movements. Feeling and thinking, which would normally be integrated in a longer session, have to be left out of account as far as possible here.

During the first run-through the researches are asked to perceive themselves while observing their “protagonist” (customer, barber, or the interaction between them) in the film sequence. The perceptual reference is thus directed towards the observer himself: towards his own response to sensing himself while watching his particular protagonist (Self perception SP). One observer thus senses “constriction” within himself; another wants to “flinch”. After that

¹² The short version was made for the November 2008 workshop. The survey-design on which this is based is called *PRISMA Green* to distinguish it from other PRISMA projects, see Clénin/Pieper 2007, 2009; Clénin et al 2009b.

observers note on small pieces of differently-coloured paper (post-its) what immediately comes to their mind regarding their task, i.e. what is already apparent anyway. The very first comments often turn out to be the most relevant. Not much time is required for writing them down.

In the second video run-through the observers have to put themselves in the place of one of the protagonists or in the interaction between them, asking themselves how the customer or the barber probably would sense himself, or what might probably happen in their interaction. Here the perceptual reference is directed towards the protagonist observed and his presumed sensory perceptions including those relating to interaction. Of course the observers here also make use of their own senses – however vicarious. They put themselves in the place of the “protagonists” and their interaction. An observer thereby senses “tiredness, passivity” or (accompanying the barber’s actions when burning little hairs off the customer’s face) “the flame’s temperature on the surface of the hand”; and with regard to the interaction “a sense of routine and everydayness”.

After these experiences again have been noted groups of three are formed with a researcher having observed either the customer, the barber, and their interaction. Each researcher brings along his notes on self- and other perception. The six perceptual references (kept separate in this short version) can thus be completed in the small groups. In the following exchange of experiences the researchers are requested to refer to their notes. Only then will the discussion remain within the bounds of the initial perceptions.

In the *complete processing* (“Full Set”) several showings of the film would be necessary so as to allow each observer to comprehend all three protagonists within self- and other perception inclusive of all three perceptual elements (sensing, feeling, thinking). There would then be 18 different written statements per observer. With 13 participants (as in the workshop) the empirical outcome would be 234 statements relating to social attunement between customer and barber.

Before we present the findings of observational practice (section 6) we would like to elucidate some of the conceptual and methodological characteristics of the prismatic approach, and to present individual aspects of the value of self-and other perception in embodied analysis.

5 Characteristics of the Prismatic Research Perspective

5.1 Short Notation as a Deliberate Methodological Constraint

For the prismatic process, we use coloured Post-its. The lack of space on these pieces of paper is initially disconcerting for participants. They feel prevented from writing down as many impressions as possible. However we deliberately chose this constraint as part of our method and concept. It is the first impression that counts. In the course of our prismatic projects we have time and again established that what is first noted turns out to be the most relevant perception. Later views merely add more precise differentiations.

Participants also have difficulty in staying with what was first written down and being satisfied with what turned up. In conversations about the task involved they “forget” to refer to these notated experiences or regret that they have to adhere to them when proceeding further. The short notation calls for commitment. Staying with what is written down makes it more difficult to digress in discussion of the protagonists observed. Of course things worth knowing about what is being investigated can be “gathered” in free associations or open dialogue, too. However, our form of procedure makes it possible to substantiate the individual bodily experiences relating to initially recorded statements. They can be recalled, further pursued for the gaining of knowledge, and reconstructed as required. This means that the experiences can be employed in steps towards further processing in this investigation.

5.2 Search for Similarities

Similarities are sought in the statements written down on the little pieces of paper – and nowhere else. The search for similarities is inbuilt in us. It accords with the human inclination to order new situations in terms of recognition. Standards are set by the similarities experienced. These similarities establish criteria for comparison and thus a shared basis for further steps. For instance similarities in written down statements can be combined by way of a new formulation or choosing of one of them that combines the “essence” of others. Then the immediate bodily experience does not remain unchanged within the process of investigation. A step towards distancing from what was experienced occurs. Conditions are thereby created for achieving more general statements which continue to contain what is crucial in individual

perceptions. Nevertheless the way towards generalisation does not involve participating researchers having to agree on similarities when they process their notes. This procedure is arranged in such a way that an impact is exerted by unified aspects which already exist (concealed) in the phenomena investigated and are then brought to awareness.

5.3 Analytical Refraction of Perceptual Experience

We make methodical use of the fact that well-directed employment of perceptual references can bring to light other “qualities” in perceiving among the protagonists (see section 3.2). The observer-researchers are guided through a process where they sequentially perceive what they would otherwise see “all at once” or integrally. Our process makes it more difficult to use familiar patterns of perception. Instead it promotes something new and different which would normally remain “hidden”.

The initial analytical refraction during observation concerns the interacting protagonists (here customer and barber). The researchers first have to perceive each of the two separately, leaving out of account their contact. Nevertheless the intersubjective element is also preserved in such observation of individuals since the observers are constantly “occupied” with the protagonists and their interaction by way of the different perceptual references. The second analytical refraction demands that the observer-researchers initially concentrate perception on themselves when monitoring the protagonists. Only after that do they turn to perception of the other. The third analytical refraction entails concentration on a single perceptual element (see section 3.4). Distinguishing between *sensing*, *feeling*, and *thinking* is not so simple. People often only notice how much these are “intermingled” when asked to watch them separately.

Alongside brief notation, sequential processing of what is experienced as belonging together is another deliberately introduced restriction, as often employed in the Feldenkrais Method. There too the use of “constraints” leads to unfamiliar patterns of movement, making new discoveries possible and thereby generating knowledge about oneself and others and integrating this in a person’s self-image. However the precondition for this process being “successful” is that at least the moderators know the “whole picture” and implement the provisionally selected constraints in connection with the overall functional context. That differs from the usual analytical processes where investigation of individual aspects often leads to loss or even destruction of the overall context.

A relevant metaphor: In separately processing perceptual references the prismatic approach is first concerned with being able to “relish” and distinguish between a soup’s ingredients while knowing very well that this involves such-and-such a soup rather than just any old ingredients and any old dish. Constraints in learning to distinguish make possible the acquiring of more refined knowledge of ingredients. That allows making the soup both relishable and also tasty.

So what initially seems a “strict structure” in implementation of the process of investigation (and is at first also criticised by participants) forms a framework for a very open way of processing. Again and again participating researcher are surprised by unanticipated capacities within themselves, benefitting the process of gaining knowledge.

5.4 Interrelating Different Approaches to Knowledge and Experience

Due to our dynamic understanding of embodied processes the refraction of experience does not lead to separating ways of observation. We may separate in terms of method but not conceptually. Subjective experience always also contains aspects of thinking; objective ways of observation cannot even come about without sense perception; generalized knowledge and understanding become the basis for new experience, etc. The prismatic approach thus takes care that bodily experience, processing of materials, exchanges of results, work in small groups, and plenary discussions alternate. The researchers involved in this process of investigation thereby train their own embodied “investigative apparatus”, and that becomes all the easier the more exactly bodily experience corresponds with the questions posed. If, for instance, the workshop provides practice (by way of bodily experience) in how sensory impressions can be perceived, the subsequent observation of the research process itself is facilitated. Interrelating areas of knowledge and experience promotes creativity, produces synergistic effects, and maintains the dynamism of the investigative process. Above all, however, this generates knowledge which doesn’t arise in traditional procedures.

5.5 Recombination, Recursivity, and Reflexivity

In prismatic research-designs subjective experience from various perceptual references is “gathered”, recorded in writing, regrouped, or boosted so as to allow other aspects to become apparent. One strategy involves one of the “gathered” statements (for instance subjectively felt “constriction” while watching the customer) being specially reproduced by the observers

while they put themselves in the position of the customer, barber, or their interaction. The recorded impressions can then be compared with earlier statements regarding customer, barber, and their interaction. This methodically induced experience – produced on purpose on the meta-level – does not only bring about reflection on earlier perception; there also develops further knowledge about what is observed, and observers’ capacity for embodied imagination is expanded.

Returning to previously recorded statements becomes a principle of structuring. We call this procedure “wahr-gebend” (truth-giving in German, no English equivalent) as opposed to “wahr-nehmend” (truth-taking in German– also equals perceiving in English) (see section 7.2). Here recursivity during generating knowledge is not a step backwards but rather a means of gradually allowing individual statements to become findings about the social attunement of both customer and barber, which extend beyond the recorded individual experiences but continue to contain their essence¹³.

5.6 Indirect Process

In the example described here social attunement between customer and barber is not directly observed as such. Instead an investigative process open to any outcome is set up. Via observers’ embodied experiences findings about protagonists’ interaction can be “unlocked” leading to further knowledge on social attunement. That is a difference in perceptual reference from those used in procedures where the focus is on the object being investigated rather than consistently bringing researchers’ embodied capacities into the research process.

The indirectness of the approach also becomes apparent in the formulations chosen. In presenting the researcher-observers’ tasks we use the more comprehensive term “interaction”. In this empirical phase we avoid directly asking about the protagonists’ social attunement. Uninfluenced by directly using the specific terminology “social attunement”, the diverse statements recorded give rise to a multi-faceted picture out of which findings about social attunement during the work-process can be “filtered out”.

¹³ In the workshop these methodical steps towards various meta-levels (What? How of the What? How of the How? (see Foerster 1991) could not be included. For outcomes of observation with several meta-levels, using the same material, see Clénin et al. 2009a.

5.7 Ongoing Documentation

Objections that purely subjective statements are much too arbitrary to apply beyond an individual case can be dispelled. Every step towards (more) general findings is methodically controlled by way of structuring the process – with the handwritten statements constantly recorded during the investigation and finally transcribed during the evaluation. Time and again it is astonishing how thanks to systematic documentation, implemented almost in passing, the initially short written statements “take on form” and become more complete and general – and how a visible, comprehensible, and strikingly “self-evident” order develops in the findings.

6 Observation Praxis II: Findings

Researchers are not used to registering embodied self- and other perception during the process of research. When the researchers became aware that they were supposed to incorporate themselves as what one woman called “constituents for generating knowledge”, they were initially astonished, somewhat insecure, or amused by this challenge: “If I’m supposed to sense something here I’ll return home as a changed person”. Those reactions say more about the socially established separation of areas of experience than about the researchers attending the workshop. Even though the anticipated practical preparation for embodied perception (Feldenkrais practise) had to be abandoned for lack of time, the researchers quickly found their feet in this unfamiliar role as observers.

6.1 Survey of Results

Summary of written statements. The survey (table 1) contains all the statements on self-and other perception by 13 participating researchers (= PA) observing a barber at work (“Turkish Craftsmanship” film sequence). These statements relate to the customer (perceived by PA 1 to 5), the barber (by PA 6 to 9), and the interaction between them (by PA 10 to 13). The short version of the research-design only took account of the perceptual element of *sensing*. The material presented here was generated in just 40 minutes and briefly reflected in small groups.

Note: We repeated the experiment in January 2011 in Berlin – same film sequence (Turkish Barber’s shop), same research design – with 99 participating observers, allowing a comparison with the findings described here below. Documentation of results and manual on the design are compiled (in German) in Pieper and Clénin 2011.

Observational Praxis for the “Turkish Craftsmanship” film sequence. Social attunement during a work-process

Table 1: Overview of Findings

This overview contains 26 anonymous written statements by 13 researchers regarding perception of themselves and others while observing a process of social attunement. These brief notes relate to the customer, the barber, and interaction between them (here only with regard to sense impressions). That provides four to five parallel statements concerning six perceptual relationships. These permit comparisons.

	Observation Phase 1 Perceptual Reference: Agent 1 Customer		Observation Phase 2 Perceptual Reference: Agent 2 Professional (Barber)		Observation Phase 3 Perceptual Reference: Both Agents Customer and Barber	
	Self-perception SP 1 Perceiving oneself while observing the customer	Other-perception OP 1 Observing the customer: putting oneself in his place to sense how he perceives himself	Self-perception SP 2 Perceiving oneself while observing the barber	Other-perception OP 2 Observing the barber: putting oneself in his place to sense how he perceives himself	Self-perception SP 3 Perceiving oneself while observing the interaction between customer and barber	Other-perception OP 3 Observing interaction between customer and barber: putting oneself in their place to perceive what might happen between the two
Task: Sensing	SP 1-S <i>During the film sequence I observed the customer and sensed <u>in myself</u>...</i>	OP 1-S <i>During the film sequence I observed the customer. It seemed to me that <u>he</u> sensed ...</i>	SP 2-S <i>During the film sequence I observed the barber and sensed <u>in myself</u>...</i>	OP 2-S <i>During the film sequence I observed the barber. It seemed to me that <u>he</u> sensed ...</i>	SP 3-S <i>During the film sequence I observed the interaction between customer & barber and sensed in myself ...</i>	OP 3-S <i>During the film sequence I observed interaction between customer and barber. With regard to sensing it seemed to me that <u>between the two of them</u> ...</i>

Written statements by participants (PA)	SP 1-S/PA 1	OP 1-S/PA 1	SP 2-S/PA 6	OP 2-S/PA 6	SP 3-S/PA 10	OP 3-S/PA 10
	...Constriction/closeness Irritation (Tel. rings), Disturbance/ Interruption of work -Distance through massage; Drifting into sleepy state	...Alternation of composure/relaxation and tension; generally ends with relaxation / satisfaction / informality/ well-being	I sense: -obligation -consideration, -tension	He felt in his element, concerned, obliging as a subservient provider of a service	... that I am pulled this way and that, exposed to what is pleasant and unpleasant, pleasing and unpleasing	Feeling at ease, at home, on intimate terms, informal, sensed as warmth
	SP 1-S/PA 2	OP 1-S/PA 2	SP 2-S/PA 7	OP 2-S/PA 7	SP 3-S/PA 11	OP 3-S/PA 11
	...somewhat constricted; wearyed by all the wriggling to and fro, towards the end relaxation.	...many hand-movements, - while telephoning he doesn't sense the barber, pulling, heat so briefly sensed that it could also be a very cold contact	...resisting his pushiness when on the telephone; How does heat feel on your skin?	...Heat's temperature on the hand, customer's relaxation when massaged	Trust, familiarity, at home, friendship, warmth, well- being	Feelings of routine, of everydayness. At work „getting things done“
	SP 1-S/PA 3	OP 1-S/PA 3	SP 2-S/PA 8	OP 2-S/PA 8	SP 3-S/PA 12	OP 3-S/PA 12
	...itching face; tiredness, my beard, passivity	...warmth,, satisfaction, relaxation, flinching, tiredness, passivity	...hectic, dangerous. Hurried, professionalism, skilled	...Hectic, assurance, composure, professionalism, humour, ability to provide reassurance	...somewhat impatient but also fussy, but wants to pull back too. Am I outside or inside ?	Somehow perceiving this tangibly; Knowing who's in charge (showing what's what). Feeling confident but also not wanting to disturb.
SP 1-S/PA 4	OP 1-S/PA 4	SP 2-S/PA 9	OP 2-S/PA 9	SP 3-S/PA 13	OP 3-S/PA 13	
Unpleasing, threatening, maltreated, like "at the doctor's"	...He accepted it, put up with it, didn't think it particularly pleasant, butdislike of small hairs and unfamiliar skin	...that because of the unusual situation of „being filmed“ I feel like I'm in some exam that's going well.	...some tension and uncertainty	...concentrated and tense, but with positive feelings	
SP 1-S/PA 5	OP 1-S/PA 5					
-Body feelings: how it is to try so hard - Customer's friendly voice, tonal quality ambivalent	Pleasant contacts; dual sensations when rubbing eyes, pleasant relaxation during massage					
Feeling: not surveyed	SP 1-F	OP 1-F	SP 2-F	OP 2-F	SP3-F	OP 3-F
Thinking: not surveyed	SP 1-T	OP 1-T	SP 2-T	OP 2-T	SP 3-T	OP 3-T

Questions regarding Further Processing of Results

The statements in table 1 initially involve subjective experience. Findings can then be further processed by way of specific questions and an interactive shaping of process in order to transform them, using prismatic procedures, into more generalised statements. We would like to mediate an impression of this approach to readers. To achieve that we offer a number of questions used in our practical and theoretical research processes (see Clénin et al 2009a).

Look at the summary of statements in table 1:

1. What immediately strikes you in these recorded statements and in your own sensory perceptions when looking at this “Survey of Findings”?
2. To what extent can differences be distinguished between statements concerning self- and other perception, and what do those entail?
3. How have the researcher-observers coped with the task of limiting themselves to sensory perceptions (just sensing)? Did they comply with that?
4. The task called for noting down sensory perceptions relating to six different perceptual references.
 - (a) Compare the statements (listed vertically in columns) relating to the same reference. What similarities do you discover?
 - (b) What distinguishes the six perceptual references from one another?
5. Bodily experiences are described in these statements. What strikes you about the quality of these descriptions ?

6.2 Conclusions

The short experiment already permits the drawing of conclusions about observed processes of social attunement in the barber’s shop:

(1) *Statements about processes of social attunement* as exemplified in “Turkish Craftsmanship”: Embodied attunement between customer and barber can be characterised in terms of the ambivalence of swift changes in interrelatedness and asynchronous activities regarding trust, professionalism, and everyday structuring. Here are a few observations to illustrate the diversity and detail of the statements recorded:

Twelve of the 26 statements register clearly ambivalent behaviour on the part of the two protagonists, and six other statements supply indications of that. In many statements the observations are expressed (in accordance with the task) as sensory perceptions. Such subtleties can certainly not be perceived, expressed, and noted down in predominantly visual observation since they demand bodily experience based on sensing. Similar examples of ambivalence are to be found with regard to the customer (“Twitching and heat sensed so briefly that it could also be a very cold contact” (OP 1-S/TN 2) and “Dual sensations when rubbing the eyes” (OP 1-S/TN 5); to the barber (“Revulsion for little hairs and unfamiliar skin” [SO2-S/PA 9) and “The flame’s heat felt on the hand” (OP 2-S/TN 7); and to interaction between the two participants (“a little impatience but also detachment. Wants to flinch too. Am I outside or inside ?” (SP 3-S/TN 12).

These examples illustrate how embodied processes of social attunement are researched in the prismatic approach. The observational perspective is not directed as usual towards (“onto”-German: “Drauf-Sicht”) the interaction between customer and barber. The essential aspect of this process of investigation and realization unfolds in the “participatory action” (German: “Mit-Tun”) of researchers’ methodically structured perception of self and the other and in their written statements which are further refined in meta-levels of dialogue.

(2) *Anticipated fundamental findings regarding embodied processes of social attunement.* This approach gives rise to manifestations (overlooked elsewhere) of expanded knowledge about such processes. In addition “findings” are also qualitatively different, containing *per se* embodied statements.

The prismatic approach permits the acquisition of precise information and declarations about protagonists’ social attunement (i.e. how this embodied process configures) since researchers employ their own bodily perceptions in their observations. The data thus generated becomes (more) reliable since comprehensive sensory perception is less easily deceived than predominantly visual perception. In addition the diverse self- and other perspectives provide unfolding of perceptual references in terms of the same protagonists in the same situation of processes of social attunement, thereby creating embodied possibilities of comparison.

Categories of and theses about social attunement can thus be developed on the basis of the research perspective presented here, combining theory and practice. Here circumstances of

social action's embodiment are taken into account empirically from the start. In the data thus generated the embodiment of social attunement (inclusive of its formulations) is present from the beginning without this being an added interpretation.

(3) *Researchers' expanded role.* Our research-design shows that scientists are largely unfamiliar with self-perception as a component in their processes of investigation and scarcely make use of its methodological potential within scientific discovery. With this short experiment we would like to arouse interest in and demonstrate ways of both developing the terminology of embodied social action and furthering its empirical investigation. To their surprise and contrary to their expectations, initially sceptical researchers who attended the workshop discovered that indeed an enlightening difference can be ascertained between self-perception when observing the barber and other-perception when the researcher puts himself in the barber's place to find out (by way of one's own senses) what the latter may well have sensed.

At the same time researchers refine their own capacity for perception. They sensitize their own corporality and the embodiment of perception. With our approach we examine scientists' (illusory) "neutrality" in the research process. On the other hand methodically incorporating oneself as an embodied "instrument" in the research process creates new possibilities of knowledge and application in theory and practice.

(4) *Application in other projects.* The prismatic approach is also applicable in other scientific contexts seeking operationalisation of embodied questioning or wishing to move from subjective experience to generalisations. Concept and procedure are tested in the areas of professionalization, development of quality and evaluation so as to arouse potentials in professionals and within the same process to further (see Clénin 2000; Black et al 2009) or (diagnostically) discover what happens in processes of social attunement in organisations or management¹⁴.

(5) *Putting experience into words.* Our procedure investigates pre-linguistic and subjective experiencing. Perceptions written down spontaneously already float on the surface of communication. In further processing its coherence (inclusive of verbally) is checked, made more precise, or restructured so as to penetrate more deeply into understanding of the

¹⁴ If need be Bourdieu's concept of a 'practical sense' could be made operational here. See the text by Alkemeyer/Bruemmer/Pille 2010

phenomena observed. Exactly what linguistic expression in this process can or cannot grasp is a question requiring further investigation.

7 Looking Ahead: Ongoing Research Tasks

In conclusion we direct attention to three areas where we are continuing to deploy our research approach and its findings, both practically and theoretically, in the context of embodied social action.

7.1 “Meandering” between Implicit and Explicit Knowledge

The prismatic process produces knowledge on the transition from implicit to explicit. Implicit knowledge can be “drawn out of” bodily experience, worked on, and again “returned” to the realm of the implicit by methodically combining embodied experience, its transfer into language, reflection, discovery and renewed bodily experience. In our approach there is no decoupling of one sphere of knowledge from the other¹⁵. This involves an observer not stepping back from the action he intends to monitor; instead he integrates his embodied self in this process. Only by way of this dynamism it becomes possible for the researcher to experience and discover the fact that implicit and explicit components of social action emerge (in different degrees) and “meander” in both directions.

Our approach does not result in exact measurement. Nevertheless well-devised methodology regarding the complexity of what is being researched, allows us to come closer to its characteristics. We make use of a “plicit” instead of dualistic examination of explicit and implicit for multi-modal proceeding in various directions (e.g. perceptual references) – to aim at gaining knowledge and its practical application (in this case the embodiment of social action).

7.2 Structuring Social Action as Perception and Configuration

¹⁵ Unlike Stern 2004 and Fuchs 2008b: 37ff, 193ff, Ginsburg 2009 is inclined to see problems in bringing together different spheres of knowledge.

Our approach extends understanding of social action in terms of the significance of different perceptual references as demonstrated in embodied self- and other-perception in everyday activities – and also in the context of research processes. We thus pursue dynamic, embodied ways of structuring observation. Traditional research seeks to integrate the knowledge generated as soon as possible into existing states of knowledge. We however allow subtle differences in self- and other-perceptions to remain for the moment, putting them to methodological use and even intensifying them with the intention of furthering a paradigmatically new quality of procedure, discovery and its application.

We thus move away from the predominant assumption that there really does exist something like a perception which is not influenced by the perceiver. Any observer (like any other participant) is embodied; his sensing, feeling and thinking are always based on unconscious presumptions which influence his supposedly objective perception. Our interest in objectivity is upheld in the fact that the observing researcher consciously and strategically uses and documents his perception in an extended perspective of the investigative process. Knowing that one's own corporality conflicts with the ideal of scientific neutrality and objectivity, our way complements perception (“Wahr-nehmung”) with concrete steps towards configuration (“Wahr-gebung”). So the “truth”, sought after, is both taken and given. The research process thus also entails the social action and intersubjectivity described by scientists and writers: orienting one's own actions on another person is configurative ¹⁶.

7.3 From Experience via Interaction to General Findings

We are not putting forward here any theoretical representation of embodied, socially constituted intersubjectivity. Our approach can show that social action is accompanied by embodied qualities of perception (sensing, feeling and thinking within activities) and how that occurs. It demonstrates the close, complex and constant interrelation and reciprocity of perspectives that underlie the embodiment of social action.

We are working on investigative procedures where the relatedness of subjectivity, intersubjectivity and objectivity are recognised and utilised in practical ways. In this process subjective statements are further processed intersubjectively in small group work and hereby transformed step-by-step in more objective declarations beyond the individual case. These

¹⁶ See also Noë 2005; Gebser 1986.

findings extend without conclusively demonstrating, obtaining or forcing any specific (expected) outcome being confirmed in terms of a claim to objectivity. We can trust (and knowing) that more objective declarations will be generated along the process anyway.

In the prismatic approach the observer has an intersubjective role. The “third-person-perspective” arises out of the investigative processes employed but does not entail individuals having to adopt a “stance of objectivity”. This embodied procedure working towards generalisation is understandable for participants in this process and from there leads back into a next loop of subjective experiencing and practical application.

With our project we are taking a step towards embodied research practice. We hope that the degree of complexity will decrease rather than increase when social actions are investigated in their inbuilt embodied context.

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