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Ekkehard Tenschert

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Questioning the primacy of touch in Matthew Ratcliffe's "Touch and the Sense of Reality"

In the book *The Hand, an Organ of the Mind*, Matthew Ratcliffe discusses in chapter 6 "Touch and the Sense of Reality" the role of tactual perception in constituting a sense of reality and belonging to the same world. In this essay I summarize his approach regarding the role of touch for perception, and the sense of reality and belonging as necessary background. I will raise questions and discuss how he argues the claimed primacy of touch over all other senses.

The role of touch

Ratcliffe criticizes the dominant role vision is given in many philosophical discussions, which is mirrored in words such as *view of the world* and may lead to a tendency to generally think of perception as sight-like. While vision is often interpreted as giving an independent, uncorrupted, objective image of the world, the role of one's own body in touch cannot be so easily forgotten (cf. Merleau-Ponty in Ratcliffe 2013, 131). The emphasis on sight often fails to characterize the sense of reality and belonging to the same world, that is fundamental to all perception. Interestingly Ratcliffe argues that touch as the only sense takes part in constituting this sense of reality and belonging, while all others presuppose it.

Ratcliffe refers to an also existing different tradition that puts some emphasis on touch. As far back as Aristotle, who named touch "[...] a necessary condition for the being of an animal body" (Freeland in Ratcliffe 2013, 152), he finds statements in non phenomenological philosophy. In phenomenology he names Husserl who called touch "the only sense without one could not have an 'appearing body'" (Husserl in Ratcliffe 2013, 132), Merleau-Ponty who ascribed an important role to touch in "Phenomenology of Perception" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 328) and Jonas who in his *The Nobility of Sight* described touch as the primary sense that constitutes a relationship with the world that vision presupposes (cf. Ratcliffe 2013,133).

Not wanting to here discuss the principal possibility of a distinction of senses, Ratcliffe builds on a diversity of uncontroversial tactual experiences and focusses on perceptions that lack differentiation between perceiver and perceived, since these do not seem adequately acknowledged by his predecessors.