

PRESSING BODIES/PRESSING CONCERNS
– THE “LIVED EXPERIENCE” OF THE NON-HERMENEUTIC
IN THE WORKS OF HANS ULRICH GUMBRECHT

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Roughly 25 years ago, when literary scholars started to feel the dissatisfaction with the long-lasting exclusion of the somatic dimension of aesthetic experience, which reached its climax via the regime of reception aesthetics in Germany, the popularity of micro-histories in France, and the emerging success of new historicism in the United States, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht – then freshly transferred from Siegen to Stanford – gave a speech (entitled *The Body as an Issue of Literary Theory*) concerning the connection between losing the somatic dimension of literature and the impossibility of reference when it comes to the work of fiction. Since literary studies sided with history, it may have gotten closer to the socio-historical conditions of aesthetic experience, but instead of accessing the actual experience of historically specific readers or those mediums that had motivated it by producing sense and sensation, it created an incessant chain of abstractions via constructing idealized and (secretly) normative reader-figures as a consequence of distancing itself from

the substantial-material conditions² of reading, one of which is conceived as “bodily experience.” In addition, deconstruction with its definite emphasis on textual materiality failed to deliver a theory, which would overcome the rigidity of aesthetic experience stemming from hermeneutical differentiation that made aesthetic phenomena the surface whilst positioned meaning in the depth;³ literature institutionalized had, thus, built itself on the practice of meaning-identification as interpretation, and not even deconstruction, with its steady anti-hierarchical ground in its political agenda, managed to turn the tide in this particular question.⁴ In

² As for New Historicism’s shortcomings on actual materiality from Gumbrecht’s point of view, see my essay “In Praise of... Temporality?! On the Hermeneutical Roots of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and the New Temporality of Presence,” *Asteriskos* 3 (2012): 188. Also worth mentioning Wolfgang Ernst’s investigation on the phenomenon of “interface-fantasy,” whose eminent example of Greenblatt’s dialogue with the dead in the archives is interpreted as a phase of missing out on the movements in the *hardware*: Wolfgang ERNST, “Unmasking Interfaces: Archeological Moments of Knowledge” (typescript of the paper “Replacing Faces by Interfaces” presented at the conference *Interfacing Knowledge: New Paradigms for Computing in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* at the University of California, Santa Barbara [CA], March 8-9, 2002) [available online @ http://dc-mrg.english.ucsb.edu/conference/2002/documents/wolfgang_ernst.html]; 20/01/14]

³ Cf. Hans Ulrich GUMBRECHT, “The Body as an Issue of Literary Theory” (paper presented at Stanford University, Stanford [CA], November, 1989) [Typescript in Bestand: Gumbrecht; Kästche: 8, Mappe: 3 at Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach a. N., Germany – abbreviating from now on as @ Gumbrecht KxMy Marbach DLA].

⁴ It became quite obvious to me that Gumbrecht’s attitude towards deconstruction concerning the status of literary studies is rather resentful, to say the least, because it left a mark on the humanities that they cannot easily get rid of (see id., *The Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Tradition of (Academic) Literary Studies: Can it set an agenda today?* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2009), 13.) [in his Vorlass, the manuscript of the lecture-series is catalogued among papers, which propagate a new disposition of dwelling linked to aesthetic experience provided by sports @ Gumbrecht K5M4 Marbach DLA]; deconstruction is presumed to have totalized those asocial tendencies of the “linguistic turn” – stemming from linguistic relativism –, which later turned out to be most harmful to the disciplines (see id., *Warum soll man die Geisteswissenschaften reformieren?* (Göttingen: V&R,

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his speech, Gumbrecht made it very clear that the only way to grasp aesthetic experience in the new millennium is strongly linked to the task of surpassing the so-called historicist chronotope in all of its aspects. Yet such a response as going back to the paradigm before the foundation of the humanities in the era of Romanticism (the very era that produced the mentioned chronotope) was already discredited by Gumbrecht, as it would result in a no less metaphysical concept of experience reception aesthetics had put forward. According to him, already in the (early) modern age, texts and writings – whose main and dominant forms of usage were connected to “embodiment” – were, however, prepared for only spiritual, bodiless forms of communication. Texts as situational frames, and the roles on which they had been relying as extra-textual phenomena became integrated into the texts themselves, so they carried the very conditions of their own performance;⁵ in Gumbrecht’s view this illusory somatic horizon, which was still allowed to remain in the institutionalized form of literature, constitutes the feature we still refer to if we use the very word *literature*.

What I hope to achieve with this paper is the drawing out of some points of argument, and ideas from Gumbrecht’s various unpublished manuscripts and conference papers of a time span of more than 20 years, and organize these elements around two main areas. The first one is the longing for bodily experience in our contemporary digital culture that one might rather identify with an urge or drive to save the body at all costs – as if it needed saving, anyway. Yet, this self-proclaimed crisis has produced brilliant books in cultural studies so far, like N. Katherine Hayles’s *How We Became Posthuman*, and essays like Sybille Krämer’s *Does the Body Disappear?*. The second field of interest is the question how sports can contribute to raise self-reflexivity in the humanities. Through philosophical

concepts like disinterestedness, unconcealment, and emergence sports can act as a model for the humanities, raising awareness to unpleasant (and inherently political) consequences of a hermeneutical disposition. However alarming the signs are, the symptoms which I will try to sketch out in the end, make up precisely the blind spots of aesthetic experience understood in a hermeneutical way, and that is the reason why “lived experience” (*Erlebnis*) – provided most eminently – by sports is brought up as our savior in Gumbrecht’s enterprise. Because, despite the fact that there surely is some truth in those voices which claim that Gumbrecht wrote his book on sports (*In Praise of Athletic Beauty*) for – with some euphemism – fame and fortune –, or at least it was written in the way it was eventually written for the sake of popularity –, an intensive philological investigation provides unquestionable evidence of sports playing a characteristic role in his oeuvre as early as the 1980’s; when he was still considered to be a “proper German intellectual” by many of those who later criticized him for abandoning “serious literary business.”

Disinterestedness and unconcealment in sports

If the pertinence of aesthetic experience is to be preserved nowadays in a way that still contradicts “such ideas as imitation, appearance, irreality, illusion, magic, dream,” all of which assume “that art is related to something different from itself: real being,” it is exactly not “interpretative” aesthetic experience (*Erfahrung*), which “teaches us that the latter does not think in terms of this relationship but, rather, regards what it experiences as genuine truth.”⁶ “Interpretative” experience hence does not go beyond the dimension of a semiotic conception of bodily effects since it cannot achieve an actual introduction of somatic experience into reading, but simply provides a means to save the epistemology of hermeneutics through universalization.

2010), 20.).

⁵ Id., “The Body as an Issue of Literary Theory.”

⁶ Hans-Georg GADAMER, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 2006), 72.

Therefore Gumbrecht's project focuses on rehabilitating "lived" experience in order to claim right to presence effects,⁷ and finds the horizon within which they could easily be put forward; in the fields of sports. Although, unlike his interpretation of philology (in his book *The Powers of Philology: Dynamics of Textual Scholarship*), in which he resorted to the praxis of handling manuscripts to constitute an ontological disposition, sports in his works serves not as a paradigm, but as a model *in action* so as to reestablish humanities: its effects transcend the limits of understanding, as in the case of the swimmer Pablo Morales who failed to describe his sensation of jumping into the pool after a long pause in his career,⁸ but whose experience was nonetheless surrounded by the peculiar aura of disinterestedness. Since being disinterested concerns both the athlete and the spectator,⁹ their focused intensity and their being lost in aesthetic experience may converge. That is to say, the eminent effects of sports have to be conceived as something which disconnects the swimmer from anything that is outside the competition.¹⁰ If we apply this peculiar eminence of experience revealed by Gumbrecht to the work of art, it may be stated that the pertinence of art is preserved whereas it has to separate itself from everyday life in order to constitute the field of intensity, as it does so in sports for participants and spectators in the stadium alike. While Gumbrecht recognizes this triggering (i.e. intensifying-resonating) effect the artwork is capable of, he conceives of it according to a different horizon. The double movement of withdrawal and unconcealment most eminently provided by team sports might be interpreted as the spatio-temporal operation of materiality through which Gumbrecht can situate and underpin the experience of

"lost in focused intensity" at the border of disconnectedness and pertinence. This is a threshold-crossing which constantly escapes the limitedness of interpretation and meaning. Therefore, if this type of constellation is rendered to the work of art, the dilemma of its relation to the world is more or less suspended as the gap – between its eminent status concerning its fair share from the truth, and its environment as the every-day life – is bridged. Just like the work of art,¹¹ sports starts to resonate particular parts of life: either temporally, like the Handball European Championship transforms a simple after hours, or spatially, granting a special ontological bias to stadiums.

The unique field that artworks are capable of constructing is, thus, excavated from the experience sports provide in Gumbrecht's.¹² The problem arises at the moment when the status of sports as a form of aesthetic experience is approached on an institutionalized level, if sports are defined as "performance under conditions of arts," since during the game something may come to life in the very sense as

⁷ For a detailed description, see Hans Ulrich GUMBRECHT, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford [CA]: Stanford UP), 104.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Id.*, *In Praise of Athletic Beauty* (Cambridge [MA]: Harvard UP, 2006), 51.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹ For Gumbrecht's reading of Heidegger's famous essay see: Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, 64-78, as well as *In Praise of... Temporality?!*, 192-6.

¹² Although Gumbrecht most certainly proposes a democratic view on aesthetic experience, his enterprise concerns less the reading patterns occurring in popular literature, as he keeps his distance from the apologetic rhetorics of those trends, which endlessly try to legitimize their institutional existence (i.e. answering the question of why humanities are still important) by concentrating on socially integrated aspects of their praxis, so as to raise the prestige of their discipline; considering his academic background, it is hardly a surprise. (For more information on this, refer to my forthcoming essay entitled *Meta-realities & Materialities: Konstanz – Dubrovnik – Stanford*). This does not mean, however, that he would refrain from such attitude, which Shusterman praises so much in Dewey, when the latter suspends the sterility of the work of art (cf. Richard SHUSTERMAN, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Lanham [MD]: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 21f.).

Heidegger understood the event of unconcealment.¹³ The happening of “taking the field” presents its own form(ation) as an event (i.e. unfolding) in the stadium’s becoming of the very space where a unique dynamism occurs.¹⁴ At each moment it is quite clear which team is in offense and which is in defense, yet these roles are not only in constant exchange, but due to the oscillation (as a work of negentropy, to create form during an attack, and entropy, to destroy it via a defensive maneuver),¹⁵ something unexpected is also brought forward in the field. At the heart of it lies the phenomenon that the spectator does not “understand” the tactics applied in team-work during the game, he only sees them as pure surface-movements, and does not relate them to the archetypes instructed by the coach.¹⁶ It happens as an event of singularity: it is the emergence of form where the process of emergence itself operates as form.¹⁷ The potential of such events

comes exactly from the paradox between the emphasis on bodily movements that actively situate the person in space (of every-day life) while simultaneously provide the athletes the status of demigods, as they ceaselessly put their mental and physical performance to the limits.¹⁸ Sports interpreted this way, rather than as a cultural object, does not only pose the problem of incompatibility between experience and perception, as well as between these two components and the scholarly apparatus trying to grasp and describe them – that is the lack of possibility of total convergence between each element of these two dichotomies –, which had resulted in the founding act of humanities as “a cluster-like, independent, yet on the whole institutionalized and solid form”¹⁹ in the first place, but also points to the inadequacy of the inherited conception of aesthetic experience from the time of this founding act.

Therefore, in order to claim legitimacy to bodily experience based on sports as a model for aesthetic experience, the re-founding of humanities has to be carried out with constant respect to phenomena with this type of borderline-status in order to solve paradoxes that sports (seemingly) offer – conceived of as paradoxes within a hermeneutical context, of course. According to

¹³ A new perspective on Heidegger’s „gain” from his affiliation with the SA (leaving the three volumes of the “Schwarze Hefte” – published recently – out of consideration, of course, as Gumbrecht’s theme is exactly the non-ideological “gain” out of ideology) puts the emphasis on the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, consequently proposing the reading of certain passages from Heidegger’s *Introduction to Metaphysics* with or through sport events of his time. Cf. Hans Ulrich GUMBRECHT, “Philosophy and Sports” (a course given at Stanford University, Stanford (CA), 2003 Summer Semester) [manuscripts @ Gumbrecht K11M2 Marbach DLA].

¹⁴ Id., “We People Watch Football: Aesthetic Experience Where You Do Not Expect It” (paper presented at the conference *The Role of “Aesthetic Value” in Literary and Cultural Studies*, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, March 21, 1998) [draft @ Gumbrecht K3M2 Marbach DLA].

¹⁵ Gumbrecht borrows this idea from Lyotard, who introduced the concept of negative entropy for the growing complexity of the world since the appearance of humans. Yet human beings never managed to become the motor of this process but remained simply its effect. Cf. Jean-François LYOTARD, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (Stanford [CA]: Stanford UP, 1991), 22.

¹⁶ Hans Ulrich GUMBRECHT, “Präsenz” (lecture delivered in Magdeburg, Germany, October, 1996) [manuscript @ Gumbrecht K8M1 Marbach DLA].

¹⁷ A dynamism not dissimilar to Dewey’s conception of the work of art; cf. John DEWEY, *Art as Experience* (New

York [NY]: Penguin Books, 2005), 189.

¹⁸ Cf. Id., “How Necessary are Violence and Death for the Pleasure of Watching Sports?” [s. l. a. [probably February or November 2005] manuscript @ Gumbrecht K4M2 Marbach DLA]; also see id., “Limits of Athletic Performance” (lecture delivered in Chicago, March, 2004; Moscow, April, 2004; Wuppertal, May 2004; Kyoto, June, 2004; Kopenhagen, September, 2004.) [draft @ Gumbrecht K5M3 Marbach DLA]. The idea of demigods came to Gumbrecht while reading Heidegger’s essay *The Thing*, in which a tetrad structure of earth and heavens, and mortals and immortals is posed. Gumbrecht uses demigods as a figure for in-betweens, which via extraordinary performance (of facing death through transgressing mental and physical boundaries) can shed light on the existence of mortals.

¹⁹ Id., “The Promises of a Birth Trauma” (lecture given in Jerusalem, Israel, April, 2005) [manuscript @ Gumbrecht K4M2 Marbach DLA].

Gumbrecht, the individual claim of aesthetic experience in the humanities has somehow got lost in their way to institutionalization, “coincidentally” hand in hand with the somatic dimension. In his view, however, it is not by chance, that these two factors were diminished at practically the same time. Hence making the connection motivated between body and individuality explains why sports has turned out to be so vital a subject Gumbrecht’s oeuvre during the 80’s up to his book on football in 2006. The project of returning to the individual dimension of experience is backed up this way by the scenario of rehabilitating the body in reading (as seen in a non-metaphorical manner in his recent book; *Stimmungen Lesen: Über eine verdeckte Wirklichkeit der Literatur*). It partly stems from the recognition of how conditions have changed due to rapid technological developments, which triggered a radical and ceaseless yearning for the bodily experience of being-together, of bodies piling up; a phenomenon for which the recent protests in Brazil give a perfect example.²⁰ Yet apart from its relations to contemporary culture, the imperative of individuality supported by the body has become all the more compelling, because by focusing so exclusively on the universal claim of experience, humanities so often became a victim of ideologization, further widening the gap which had already separated them from the sciences, on the one hand, and made them vulnerable – as we have become too familiar with this via several examples from György Lukács through Ezra Pound to Hans Robert Jauß – to extreme leftist and rightist temptations, on the other hand.²¹ Moreover, this trait was enhanced by humanities’ easy-going adjustment to artistic trends, like High Modernism as a protest to the epistemology-oriented ways of the 19th century against all attempts of radical Avant-garde

movements to rehabilitate the fair share of the body.²² Therefore the paradox of contemporary aesthetic experience eventually goes as follows: “if we generally find unacceptable in the past those positions which try to relate the individual experience of [past] culture to collective (national) goals (yet we formulate such goals in the present) and the *individualistic* concept of Erlebnis is surrounded by such a massive taboo that any return seems to be impossible.”²³

²² Although Gumbrecht prefers to refer to the young Bataille of the 30’s, who did not actually set the stage for repressed sensuality, rather contributed to the depicting of the longing for such bodily experience (cf. id., “The Present Transformation of the Philological Disciplines in Western Germany: Observations on a Historical Background” (a lecture intended to be given in Budapest, Hungary in 1988 [in fact in 1989]) [typo-script @ Gumbrecht K8M2 Marbach DLA]), I would instead point to the exclusion of the body in literary praxis through the rewritings of Pygmalion’s myth (see Jan METZLER, *De/Formation: Autorschaft, Körper und Materialität im expressionistischen Jahrzehnt* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2003), 127-33), as well as to the difference between the popularity of Freud’s case studies in contrast to Alfred Döblin’s, which also serves as a fine example of the repression for describing the somatic in a non-narrative framework in high modernism (cf. Wolfgang SCHÄFFNER, “Psychiatrisches Schreiben um 1900: Dr. Alfred Döblin [in der Kreisirrenanstalt] in Karthaus-Prüll [Mit einer Folge von Krankengeschichten, mitverfaßt von Alfred Döblin, 1905-1906.]” *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft*, 35 (1991), 13-4.; for an overall importance of this topic with more emphasis on case studies, see the projects of Nicolas Pethes, esp. his essay “Fakta und kein moralisches Geschwätz,” in *Zu den Fallgeschichten im “Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde” (1783-1793)*, eds. Sheila DICKSON, Stefan GOLDMAN, and Christof WINGERTZAHN (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011), 13-32.). In addition to all this, I would once more like to pick up Gumbrecht’s idea of reading Heidegger together with the atmosphere of the Olympics, which would open up an alternative interpretation of Heidegger’s critique on modernity in his *Introduction to Metaphysics, The Question Concerning Technology, and What is Called Thinking?*, based on the first-hand experience of the somatic, whose lack would explain modernity’s faulty interaction with the *Ge-stell*, and its self-misunderstanding when faced with the material basis of the movement of unconcealment described above.

²³ GUMBRECHT, “Lived Experience?”

²⁰ Personal conversation with Professor Gumbrecht in September 2013.

²¹ My examples, though see id., “Anti-Konstanz/Non-Hermeneutic/Presence (About Myself) (lecture given in Moscow, Russia, April, 2005) [manuscript @ Gumbrecht K4M2 Marbach DLA].

Bodily experience through the rhythm of the game

The return to the founding act of the humanities gains its importance because Dilthey based his enterprise on the exact same means of oscillation through thresholds, which Gumbrecht identifies in sports: “Their [i.e. humanities – R. S.] study of language includes the physiology of the speech organs just as much as the theory of the meaning of words and the sense of sentences. [...] But there is a tendency in the nature of the group of sciences that we are considering to reduce the physical aspect of processes to the mere role of conditions or of means of understanding.”²⁴ What Dilthey spoke of, is an ambiguity that can no longer be described within the framework of nowadays’ aesthetics, and in this manner, Gumbrecht’s intention to get humanities back on track again, rests on the premises of spatiality and materiality.²⁵ As *Erlebnis* originally stood for a *phase* or a *stage* between perception and experience, the practice of

interpretation meant the individual mind’s focus on a certain segment of sensual perception.²⁶ The importance of this type of threshold-phenomena returns in Gumbrecht’s “materialities” project of the 80’s, in which they are defined as elements “constituting the dividing line of our semantic economies between the spiritual and the material.”²⁷ One of these materialities is *rhythm*, whose conventional connection to literature reached such heights that one might think it is impossible to access this phenomenon any other way than through poems, and has too long been regarded as part of the regime of sense and semantics over material presence (e. g. the body).²⁸ Gumbrecht, however, reappropriates it in Husserlian terms using “retention” and “protention”²⁹ to identify rhythm as a “time object in the sense proper.” It exists in constant transformation, because each sound is surrounded by an echo, as well as by the pre-resonance of the consecutive sound;³⁰ tones are therefore situated according to their difference from others, while they simultaneously make up continuous chains with one another.³¹ And that is how Gumbrecht defines rhythm as form, borrowing Niklas Luhmann’s system theoretical approach to compensate for what in Husserlian phenomenology would result in sheer impossibility. Form here is, thus, understood as the “unity of the difference between self-reference and outside-reference,”³² and *rhythm as form* carries out a twofold action: with its spatial similitude to the stadium

²⁴ Wilhelm DILTHEY, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (Princeton [NJ]: Princeton UP, 2010), 103.

²⁵ Although both Shusterman and Gumbrecht make serious attempts to extend the field of pertinence for aesthetic experience, and while they both seem to share the idea of returning to the original meaning of the aesthetic, this way building upon sensory-sensual perception (SHUSTERMAN, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 274.; Hans Ulrich GUMBRECHT, “Perception versus Experience: Moving Pictures and their Resistance to Interpretation,” in *Inscribing Science: Scientific Texts and the Materiality of Communication*, ed. Timothy Lenoir (Stanford (CA): Stanford UP, 1998), 361.), their aims eventually diverge. Shusterman tries to reformulate the inadequate concept of art, making aesthetic experience partly independent from it (SHUSTERMAN, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 21.) in order to provide more ground for individual experience that would otherwise not fit into the contemporary frame. At the same time he also tries to expand the means and field of interpretation (see his criticism on Sontag: *ibid.* 119f.). Whereas Gumbrecht uses unorthodox phenomena of aesthetic experience to shake the institutional praxis, which too many times resulted in disastrous consequences whenever humanities were confronted with portions of experience, with emphasis on the somatic rather than on the intellectual; in the end reforming not the concept of art but (the practice and identity of) humanities themselves.

²⁶ GUMBRECHT, “Lived Experience?”

²⁷ *Id.*, “Rhythm and Sense” (paper presented at the conference *Materialität der Kommunikation*, Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia [Croatia], April, 1987) [manuscript @ Gumbrecht K8M2 Marbach DLA].

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ For his means of using this two termini, see Hans Ulrich GUMBRECHT, “nachMODERNE ZEITENräume,” in *Id.*, *Präsenz* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 2012), 51.

³⁰ *Id.*, “Rhythm and Sense”

³¹ This relation later became reinterpreted from a Lacanian perspective in Mladen DOLAR, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 2006), 31.

³² Hans Ulrich GUMBRECHT, “Charms of the Distich: About the Functions of Poetic Form in Goethe’s “Römische Elegien” [s. l. a., manuscript @ Gumbrecht K5M3 Marbach DLA].

(i.e. via resonance), rhythm, according to Gumbrecht, (hardly) surprisingly does not become paired with music, which exists only in time, but with sports, whose experience constitutes a reference to the world complementary to a recurring expansion, through intensification of space and time. The factor that makes this whole frame operate is rhythm as “the complex stability of a recurrent pattern of transformation,” which “replace[s] the elementary stability of a form without movement.”³³

Sports linked to rhythm synthesizes spatial parallelisms and temporal continuities into simultaneity, so that the resulting piling up of processes eventually leads to intensified moments. Having a Möbius-strip-like structure, the moment of singularity made up from simultaneity based on focused intensity due to present effects, equals with the action of folding, topologically speaking. Rhythm as form is therefore; synchronic, operational, and ontological as far as the somatic dimension of aesthetic experience is concerned. As constantly transgressing the threshold between the inside and the outside, and between self-reference and reference to the other, rhythm by its crucial part in the coordination of the body is capable of inducing the feeling in each person that their body becomes part of a collective body.³⁴ This way the absence of a level of the observer from which one can see the system from the outside (i. e. as being separated), contributes to the ontological status of the stadium during a game;³⁵ that is the event of an experience constituted by rhythm as its

purely material basis. This extraordinary aesthetic experience – stemming from being on the edge – is the being-together, provided by the collective body as a fusion of participants and spectators, carried out by the rhythm of the process of unfolding (of strategies, tactics etc.) throughout the game in the arena, without suspending one’s own bodily experience, which he receives from this connection in the taking place of the “lived” experience. Despite the peculiar double-bind – or one might even say, sophism – articulated by this structure, we can confidently state that if a Gumbrechtian reading of Heidegger positions the work of art as a scene where truth has the highest chance to happen, in his own work Gumbrecht regards sports as the field where experience resides in its purest form, lacking any ideological residue.

Against hidden ideological biases: answers to the questions “why to be disinterested?” and “what becomes unconcealed?”

What boosts the importance of bodily experience is not simply the longing for physical contact in contemporary (digital-multimedia) culture in particular, but the alarming consequences of totalizing the so-called spiritual dimension on the whole, so as to emphasize interpretations’ claims of universality. It is a process parallel to losing the body *en bloc*. In Gumbrecht’s view, the body and the individual cannot be separated against all attempts of hermeneutics to preoccupy itself only with meaning, because its neglect of materiality backfires; now, more than ever.³⁶ That is the main reason why Gumbrecht’s rehabilitation-process focuses on disinterestedness as a concept closely related to “lived” experience. Not only does the oscillation, between collective and individual experience with

³³ Ibid., and also see id., “The Charm of Charms,” in *The New History of German Literature*, eds. David E. WELLBERY, Judith RYAN (Cambridge (MA): Harvard UP, 2005), 6.

³⁴ Cf. id., “Rhythm and Sense.”

³⁵ The ontology of the stadium in Gumbrecht, however, originates mainly from his project on the concept of “latency” (see id., *After 1945: Latency as the Origin of the Present* (Stanford (CA): Stanford UP, 2013).): cf. id., “The Ontology of the Stadium” (lecture given at Princeton University, Princeton (NJ), March, 2004) [manuscript @ Gumbrecht K5M3 Marbach DLA].

³⁶ For the ambiguity, and supposedly material basis of Heideggerian termini such as *Gestell* and *Dasein*, see id., “Building, Being, Presence” (lecture given at Princeton University, Princeton (NJ), April, 2007) [manuscript @ Gumbrecht K5M4 Marbach DLA].

respect to players and their teams, teams and their fans, and between the game itself and its spectators, cumulated in the happening of disinterestedness due to the special spatial distinction made up by the stadium, make everything outside of this field impertinent during the time of the match (as a temporal horizon of its effect), but due to the stadium’s resonating-intensifying ability, the event of oscillation supports the very movement in which aesthetic experience finds (its respective) state. Resonation brings along differentiation as well as insularity; certain functions in society and their corresponding operations gain shape, whilst intrinsic motivations of certain types of interactions (e. g. scoring a goal) set them at a distance from everyday life, where all actions have their motivations.³⁷

Therefore the relationship between players and the audience unmistakably alludes to Kant’s concept of the “public” in *What is Enlightenment?*. The “Republic of Scholars” has much in common with the area of the stadium, as the space made up by the (through journals, correspondences etc.) well-connected international network of scholars and intellectuals, is based on the very concept that within this scene everybody is supposed to act disinterestedly (“as pure human”).³⁸ Sports – definitely not as a cultural object any longer – on the one hand, provides the conditions (e. g. the space, the oscillation, the rules, the duration etc.), which fuel the reformulation of the concept of the aesthetic, and on the other it also provides a model for the spatial framework *humanities once were*. During the game, the unconcealment, how Heidegger conceived of the

emergence of Being, happens through bodies gaining shape out of vagueness,³⁹ turning the distinguished existential disposition of dwelling into an activity, which most eminently occurs in this type of “lived” experience; as forming space into place. Gumbrecht’s aesthetic thought does not subordinate to a performative turn however, but regards any kind of human movement as a potential source of aesthetic experience in which the perception of the spectator is faced with an eruption of action. It is a state where a constant anticipation is at work, a certain *paideia* (‘sharpened senses’ or ‘readiness of senses’),⁴⁰ during which the unfolding of tactics behind the movements of (neg)entropy in time and space (i. e. during a match in the field) goes hand in hand with something substantial, as the bodies hold against each other, constituting blocks.⁴¹

That covered the topic of pressing bodies, but there is something else, which is unconcealed during a game, something which involves humanities *en masse*. And that is the pressing concerns, with the consequences regarding the inadequacy of the conception of aesthetic experience. The limits, whether they refer to the spatial or temporal conditions, or even to the rules of sports, distinguish activities which are encountered *in and by* sports, from other types of performance: the field of the stadium, which offers itself to the intensity generated by the people in it, stands as the framework of “lived” experience, intertwining the existential with the aesthetic in its full pertinence to the world. To carry out the interpretation of this type of experience, it no longer suffices to apply the practices of an institution that separated consciousness from the body, and therefore supposed that man can hide his thoughts and intentions

³⁷ Id., “Philosophy and Sports.”

³⁸ Ibid. It is also a key concept in Shusterman’s (Cf. SHUSTERMAN, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 52.), even if its value is radically different in the respective works of the two thinkers; while Shusterman blames the (mis)interpretation of disinterestedness for widening the gap between every-day life and the work of art, Gumbrecht proposes this idea in order to avoid the pitfalls reception theory became a victim of so willingly with its sociological bias.

³⁹ Cf. GUMBRECHT, “Philosophy and Sports”

⁴⁰ Cf. Martin HEIDEGGER, *Der Satz vom Grund* (Frankfurt/M: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997) [GA I. 10.], 19.

⁴¹ Hans Ulrich GUMBRECHT, “The More-than-Postmodern Present and the Emergence of the Paradigm of ‘Emergence’” [s. l. a., probably delivered at the Helicopter Conferences in the 2000’s; draft @ Gumbrecht K5M3 Marbach DLA].

behind the latter by objectivations.⁴² Whether with a positive undertone (hermeneutics as “the good will to power”), or with a negative one (like the “hermeneutics of suspicion”), such trends – via the general claim of the praxis of interpretation – can ignore any experience proper to the body, labeling it too individualistic. The two extrema of humanities’ reactions to their confrontation with the somatic horizon so far can, thus, be formulated with examples mentioned by Shusterman and Gumbrecht; the former’s concerns the disapproval of Adorno and Horkheimer towards the importance and appreciation of the body, which is almost immediately transformed into the question of ideology in their texts (viz. associating beautiful, and well-built bodies with fascism, and making them immaterialized this way),⁴³ while the latter’s raises awareness to the atmosphere of the Olympics, which fueled a dynamic change in Heidegger’s termini. And here I would like to refer to Júlia Tóth-Czifra’s essay in the present volume, where she differentiates between Gadamer’s and Shusterman’s approach regarding the somatic dimension, based on which she formulates her own proposal for a more conscious bodily attitude, so to speak. I am not entirely convinced that it would result in us being less willing to make abstractions, as it would just further strengthen our certainty in our business, risking the same vulnerabilities as before, instead of risking our scholarly apparatus. Paradoxically speaking: it is more rewarding to ready and sharpen our senses (instead of our bodily consciousness), as the greater the unexpectedness of the experience itself, the better our chances of avoiding misuse are.

After all, it is not by chance that Gumbrecht has delivered so many courses on the connections between philosophy and sports, and that his most creative

⁴² Cf. Id., “Spanish Inquisition and the Discovery of Interpretation” (lecture given in Minneapolis, Minnesota, October, 1986) [typescript @ Gumbrecht K8M2 Marbach DLA].

⁴³ Cf. SHUSTERMAN, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 273f.

readings of Heidegger have never missed to comment on the experience the Olympics of ’36 may have offered to the philosopher. Therefore, I would phrase a question on the premises of these manuscripts, which, I believe, deserves some thought, while it might also express the quintessence of Gumbrecht’s preoccupation with sports. In case of a philosopher as insightful as Heidegger was, who diagnosed, or even predicted trends long before their time with essays that still feel legitimate in our contemporary culture, like *The Letter on Humanism* and *The Question Concerning Technology*, it is shocking to accept that he could not cope with the atmosphere of the Olympics. Possessing such an enormous conceptual construct, and the ability of highly reflective thinking, how could he not resist an experience so evidently induced by a dangerous, deadly, and inhumane ideology? Or is it not ambivalence at all? If humanities were willing to give up on those laws they so desperately try to compensate for – thanks to their ceaseless self-pressuring of being scientific –,⁴⁴ they would also feel less obliged to pose interpretation as a praxis that grants false infinity in opposition to the limitedness of scientific laws, resulting in substituting the general for the individual, and the immaterial for the somatic in experience; as in sports, rules could compensate for the void, which the humanities actually has to answer for: the motivations of our actions under the conditions of disinterestedness.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Cf. Hans Ulrich GUMBRECHT, “Is It Good for the Humanities to be Scientific?” (lecture delivered in St. Petersburg, December, 2007) [manuscript @ Gumbrecht K4M1 Marbach DLA].

⁴⁵ Or as Gumbrecht formulated it: “What we have to learn then, is to operate under conditions of ‘emergence;’ and what we have to learn, as an attitude, is ‘Gelassenheit,’ i. e. the capacity for ‘letting things happen’ – without completely abandoning the codes of Subject and Agency.” Id., “Limits of Athletic Performance.”