

## **Movement out of the etheric**

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### **How does movement arise?**

Any phenomenon, which makes a spatial change within a measurable unit of time, is generally called movement. In existence, there are the most varying forms of movement, for example political or physical, linear or arching movements etc. The phenomenon of movement is always change, that shows itself in relation to a fixed reference point. In general one speaks of locomotion, which leads to the revelation of this change within the spatial conditions.

For the contemplation of movement in the sense of artistic dance, yoga exercises or the general movements a person makes, a simple discernment is certainly important, that a physical body cannot change outwardly in its locality or spatial dimension without an additional impetus, an incoming drive, or better said, without a guiding force. A stone, which falls downwards from the mountain side through the force of gravity is brought into movement through an impetus from outside. In a similar way so it is with the human physical body, which has to receive energy from outside, so that a person can activate their so-called motor skills.

### **Movement in humans**

A wide variety of nerve impulses, be they voluntary or involuntary, that means consciously guided or unconscious, vegetative reaction, lead acetylcholine to the so-called motor end plates, at which muscular impulses are stimulated and respond with movement. A physical body would be completely immobile without this guiding impulse, which approaches it from the outside and is transmitted through a wide variety of nerves. The muscles seem, therefore, not to the beginning of life in movement and even the nerve impulses, which transmit the initial stimuli with a burst of power before the muscular action, do not yet explain the real phenomenon, which is the underlying basis of movement. A great mystery, which deprives the eyes and even at first the ability to research in a measurable way, lies at the basis of every life in movement. The external changes in space, which a physical human body accomplishes every day, are the expression of a larger superordinate work of forces, which occur over the body and even over the conscious carrying nerves, and lead to the revelation of the phenomenon of human kinetics.

While the physical body shows a static structure through its earthly composition, its bones, tissues, fibres and many substances, the various so-called energetic processes, which are conveyed by means of active human wanting, cause a veritable active movement-life. The body would be a pure body, which would fall into gravity and immobility, if it were not moved by a breathing soul and if it were not moved by fluidity, which acts as life force. Breathing precedes movement and depending on how powerful the floods of human desire are, the soul breathes into the earthly existence with many mobile forms of expression.

### **Common explanatory models are not enough**

The explanatory models, used today to interpret movement, both in its chemical and its physical interaction, begin with observations on the physical body and ultimately explain all phenomena within the sense perceptible reality. It says, for example, in the book "Yoga Anatomy" by Leslie Kaminoff states on page 7:

*"Breathing, the process of taking air into and expelling it from the lungs, is caused by a three-dimensional changing of shape in the thoracic and abdominal cavities. Such a definition of breathing explains not only what happening but also how it is done. For the practice of yoga this has profound implications, because it makes us deal with the spine."*

Yoga, however, but not only this, even conventional medicine, describe the phenomena of movement in context, but only in contexts that affect the most diverse body systems themselves. Is breathing actually caused by the three-dimensional deformation of the respiratory muscles? With every breath of air, it is said, not only the diaphragm, ribcage and abdomen move, but the spine also changes. It can even be said that for each small movement - be it a breathing movement or a muscular movement of the limbs - includes always the rest of the body a subtle experiencing and resonance. The question, however, as to where movement

originally comes from, and what soul-spiritual dimension underlies it, remains unconsidered in these interpretations, which are generally described as holistic models.

### **What role plays the ether body for movement?**

The etheric body of the human being, which according to anthroposophy is next to the physical body, which represents the next finer being-limb of nature, can open up a very meaningful perspective. What is the meaning of the etherical stream, which is not visible to the eyes and yet is perceptible as a subtle feeling of life within the body? The yogin speaks of *prana* and with this word means the breath, which is composed of “pra”, meaning “forth”, and “an”, meaning “to blow” or “to breathe”. According to historic traditions, it connects the breath with the energetic processes taking place in the body. Breathing means movement and if one breathes well, so can one assist the energising of the body and help the accomplishment of astonishing movements. In relation to the art and way of breathing, however, there are various techniques and values of experience. The human etheric body is a kind of energy body, the prana body, if one wants to translate it simply, and its influenced significantly by the way the rhythm and quality of the breathing take place. From a spiritual view the etheric body of the human being works according to the principle of weightlessness and the constant being-in-motion. Just as all energy is freely available, by being moved, so the flowing of the ethereal subtle element is available to life, because it is active in the constant flow of up and down. The physical body can for moments relieve itself from gravity, as it rises up into a vertical line with the spine. But how does this rising up really happen? It is, in the first moment, the etheric body, which mediates the power to rise up against gravity. But to a more precise degree, how does the etheric body do this straightening up?

### **The sensory nerves change the quality of the movement**

In general, the conventional medical explanations speak of efferent nerve pathways, the so-called motor nerves, which mediate movement impulses. According to this usual view, one thinks of the motor skills as a movement from a center to the periphery, and tends to overemphasize the muscular system in their power transference. Very little attention is given, in this general thinking model, to the sensory nerves or afferent pathways, which carry the perception from the periphery to the central nervous system. While motor skills appear initially as the visible executors of movement- which are more in the quantitative investment than the efferent ones or so-called motor - perception and the sensitive systems remain disregarded. The sensitive nerve impulse or the perception, which communicates from the periphery to the central nervous system either happens consciously or unconsciously. If, for example, it is done very consciously during the yoga exercise, it represents a moment of calm or, to put it another way, stillness. **Every consciously made thought and every moment of consciously perceived sensory alertness, works as a restraint against the driving will.** Stillness comes about for a moment and the surroundings take on an imperceptible different size ratio. The conscious sensitive experience with a clear imagination content and a perception creates just that situation, where one's own physical body moves back and the environment in the room is experienced anew. The inner space of the body gathers, while the outer space appears wide. The conscious sensitive experiencing is comparable to a letting go of the physical body.

### **The principle of gathering and expanding in the movement**

In the moving body of the ether lives an infinite dying and becoming or, put another way, a constant gathering and new expansion. A movement always leads to a counter movement and, if you look at it closely, it is like the ventricle into which the blood flows, stands still for a barely measurable moment and finally slides out again with the systole into a greater movement. **From the moment of stillness, movement arises, or otherwise said, from detachment ignites the energy, which makes movement possible.** The sensory nerves are irreplaceable for movement, since these give the first foundation, which subsequently ignites further individual chemical processes, and they enable a kind of weightlessness that is necessary for movement to occur. For every movement, however vigorously it may have been trained in a fitness studio, is nevertheless always a moment of letting go necessary, a moment of gathering, of sensitivity, so that locomotion, the next change in position, can come into a birth.

## **The art of movement**

As one studies the laws of the sensory nerves and doesn't just train movement in a purely mechanical way, one slowly arrives at the realization that the element of detachment, of freeing oneself from all physical fixations, opens up the light and elegant art of movement. For this reason the free breath is also very important for a beautiful and light movement life, because if you fix your breath too tightly to the body, the various yoga exercises take on the expression of a very physical heaviness. With dance, in which the breath remains light, and has a careful choreography, that is, a clear idea is used as an underlying basis, usually expresses lighter movements, than those that are carried out with too much restrained breathing and mechanical requirements. Finally, it is also the one-sided body-oriented ideas, that it's the muscles that only make the power-potential available, and represent successful movement. For movement with free breath the exact imaginative pictures connected with the movement are indispensable, because these create precisely those etheric forces in relation to tension and relaxation, which are necessary for the body to be light and against gravity and take on its desired new form. The moment of letting go and the moment of grasping again are immediate, imitated forms of movement, which the ether-body performs naturally and in the asana, in the physical exercise of yoga, can gain their beautiful and free expression.

A difficult exercise shows in a pictorial way the moments of letting go and collecting again. The handstand, *vrksasana*, from the crow, *bakasana*, could possibly be carried out through a lot of training. By giving the practitioner an idea, however, how they for a moment hand the body over to weightlessness and gathers again at the end, anew, so they usually lead the asana more quickly to perfection. At the same time the expression wins, through the imaginative activity, a kind of detachment from the body and a sensitive open dimension of the senses remains available. The beauty of movement is actually characterized by a consciousness and a freedom from the body. The will remains deliberate and the activity is ennobled by a sensitive light awareness. The handstand is a very difficult exercise. Easier exercises like the sun prayer or even easier simple forms of movement can be carried out by every practitioner with this idea of free breathing, imaginative activity, and finally letting go and right grasping.

For further background to the theme of movement you can find in the article *The healing effects of unbound movement*. Also note the videos on the yoga exercises as well as series of pictures on the headstand, fish, bow and sun prayer.