

Comprehension and Constitution

Through the gaze of others and their questions about my practice, I have found ways to articulate what I do. From previous experiences of the impossibility of bridging misunderstandings, of clarifying and explaining in relations to different pre-understandings, I am interested in and have engaged in the difference between my own idea about my practice and how someone else understands it.

Concepts

The concepts *comprehension* and *constitution* have given access to and made it possible to describe the relationship that developed my study. The concepts are from Chrysa Parkinson's (2018) work *Documenting experiential authorship*, that is shared as an exposition on Research Catalog 2018. I also learned about the concepts in research presentations and lectures held by Parkinson at Stockholm University of the Arts in 2016.

Comprehension

Comprehension, which means understanding and inclusion. To comprehend is to both understand and include. To be comprehended is to be understood and included. The beauty of this word is in its ability to hold both of these meanings.

(Parkinson 2018, 10)

Comprehension is a concept that describes how one is understood and included by another. I use *begripelse* as a Swedish equivalent to the word. In the process of translation from English, I have worked with meanings of including something, to deal with, to relate to all or several aspects of something. A perspective with a wide angle to include a large content. To provide protection against the risk of damaging a representative or group's own means of expression, to relate curiously and with a listening distance to someone's way of proceeding. To give time and not imagine that someone can be quickly understood based on one's own experiences.

It has been difficult to find the concept as a noun in Swedish. There are lots of definitions of *begripelse* as a verb. That is perhaps precisely the point of the concept: to require an activity. Comprehending is an activity, a slow process that needs both closeness and distance. I will use the term *begripelse* in Swedish, in its rare form as a noun, but also stick with my experiences of the meaning of *comprehension* as it is described by Parkinson (2018) in English.

Constitution

Constitution, which means what I am made up of. To constitute something means to make it up – to fill it in or out. In discussing the authorial work of performing, the "I" is my constitution: My body, its genetic factors, my training, the ways in which my training have affected my body, the ways in which physical vocabularies and artistic conventions have affected my body.

(Parkinson 2018, 13)

The Swedish word *konstitution* is close at hand to use for describing how experiences have created one's self-understanding and shaped one's ideas about the practice. How life's experiences shape self-understanding, structure, fundamental principles that have become bodily inscriptions. Through the concept of constitution, I can highlight my own experience as central to my position and what I can say in my research. Experiences and history have shaped my body and through dance I can get perspectives that both zoom in and out and has the potential of openings for constituting and choreographing of a position.

My study is based on the interest in the difference between someone's comprehension and my own constitution. I am leaning on Parkinson's question "Are we ever comprehended?"¹. The question keeps the relationship between comprehension and constitution open through the encounter in practice. To describe the generative relation in the process between *comprehension* and *constitution*, Parkinson (2018) uses *the gap* and *miscomprehension*. She uses the concept *plasticity* to define the quality of the relationship.

Plasticity

Plasticity helps me to describe how one can have the ability to be shaped in the encounter but still maintain one's shape. Parkinson (2018) reasons about that particular quality and examines adjacent approaches in a relationship, approaches that lack the ability to keep their shape. Parkinson examines approaches as adaptable, versatile and flexible and points to their inability to retain form. She argues for how plasticity is important because it lacks the socio-political connotation that the other expressions carry. "Plastic materials are buoyant, resilient and resistant. Both soft and insistent, [...] even as it has the potential to modify its form it doesn't lose that form entirely. Plastic materials remember" (Parkinson 2018, 19). *Plasticity*, *comprehension* and *constitution* are buoyant concepts in my study.

¹ Parkinson, Chrysa. 2016. Lecture 2016-11-15, at DOCH, SKH within the MA-program Contemporary dance-didactics, the course Dance-didactics as field of research.

Parkinson, Chrysa. 2018. *Documenting Experiential authorship*. Research Catalogue.

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/392218/392219>