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Author

Hermans, Carolien

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BODY of KNOWLEDGE

Participatory sense-making in dance improvisation

Carolien Hermans

Most theories on subjectivity look to social cognition from a representationalist point of view. Models such as theory of mind, theory theory or simulation theory all state that the mental state of other people cannot be directly observed and therefore our mind-reading abilities have to rely on common sense or folk-psychological theory. In contrast, the enactive account looks at the problem of intersubjectivity from an interactive, embodied, nonrepresentational perspective. Enaction stands for the manner in which a subject of perception creatively matches its actions to the requirements of the situation. It refers to a pathway in which several related ideas come together and are unified: autonomy, sense-making, embodiment, emergence and experience. De Jaegher and Di Paolo (2007) draw further on these five basic ideas of the enactive approach. They introduce the concept of participatory sense-making. In this presentation I will argue that group dance improvisation is a special form of participatory sense-making. The five interrelated ideas of enactive cognition will be used to show in detail how group dance improvisation is in essence a joint sense-making process. In group dance improvisation multiple embodied meanings (such as affects and aesthetic intentions) are created and shared on the spot, in the moment. This embodied joint sense-making process offers vital learning opportunities for both professional and amateur dancers.