With a Philosopher's Eye: A 'Naive' View on Animation

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ABSTRACT: Animation has never been a subject that has attracted much interest from philosophers, except perhaps from a very few interested in the philosophy of film or perhaps in visual aesthetics. Aspects of philosophical thinking may well be relevant to animation, however, and animators and theorists of animation have certainly shown an interest in philosophy: most often in time, movement, and process. But it is one thing to draw on philosophy in working within a field, and another thing to try to think philosophically about that field. In this admittedly naive view of animation – naive because it comes from philosophy to animation rather than the other way around – animation is explored from an explicitly philosophical perspective, with a particular focus on animation as a 'making move'.

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I. Animation has never been a subject that has attracted much interest from *philosophers*. Indeed, one is hard-pressed to find any examples of philosophers working centrally within the discipline who have directly addressed the topic of animation. Someone like Thomas Lamarre, who must surely be counted one of the leading theorists of animation, comes from outside philosophy even though he also draws heavily on philosophical ideas and sources. Often when animation is directly addressed by philosophers, it is from within discussions of film or visual aesthetics (and frequently only as part of some larger discussion – eg Cavell, 1979 or Deleuze, 1986), or else, more commonly, in terms of the philosophical content for which particular animated works are taken as the vehicle (this seems especially true of the volumes in the *Philosophy and Popular Culture* Series that address animation eg Irwin et al, 2001, and Steiff and Tamplin, 2010). Often animation itself appears as a field onto which already existing philosophical approaches and concerns can be projected and inscribed – and to some extent this is true, notwithstanding its groundbreaking position in the field, of Alan Cholodenko's seminal *Illusion of Life* (Cholodenko, 1991) – such that the very distinction between animation and philosophy seems to collapse (or, perhaps, less charitably, animation seems almost subsumed under the philosophical, becoming more a medium for the *continuation* of an independently generated inquiry than the genuine focus *for* such inquiry[1]). Moreover, both these tendencies can be seen as features of the philosophical engagement with animation quite generally, whether as undertaken by philosophers or others.

When philosophers do give real attention to animation, if they do so at all, it is typically with something of a 'naive' eye. The field is not typically one in which they are

involved as practitioners nor in which they can claim any specialised expertise. Such naivety can represent a source of blindness, but it can also open up one's vision, allowing one to see things from a new or different perspective. Naivety can thus be a way to open up a question or a field anew. One might argue that when animation first developed as a focus of study, naivety was the only possible mode of approach, and the naivety of the philosopher is therefore nothing unusual – except inasmuch as it may be a naivety that comes rather late to the game. Whether it is properly naivety that characterises the attitudes and approaches that are operative as a new field develops, however, is open to contention. Naivety is not an absolute condition, but always stands in contrast to sophistication – and where there is no developed field it seems hard to distinguish the naive from the sophisticated at all. If we can do so, then the distinction is surely one applied only in hindsight, and in contrast with the assumed sophistication of a contemporary perspective.

In any case, the naivety of the philosopher with regard to animation is not peculiar to the philosophical engagement with animation alone – philosophers almost always come into other fields from the outside – as *strangers*. Indeed, as Pierre Hadot points out, for ancient thinkers, the love of wisdom itself made the philosopher a "stranger in the world", (1995: 57). In this respect, one might argue that what is at issue in the naivety displayed by the philosopher in approaching a field such as animation is not merely a naivety that comes from the philosopher's character as an outsider to just the field that is in question. Rather it is a naivety that comes from the very character of philosophy, when genuinely undertaken *as philosophy*, as *always* coming from without, and so as based in a making strange even of what is otherwise familiar no matter what field it may approach. It is a naivety that looks to address what is at issue in a way is both attentive to its character as genuinely worthy of

questioning, and in a way that remains focussed on what is basic and fundamental in that questioning.

The naivety at issue here can be compared to the naivety of the child – a naivety that underpins both a sense of wonder and a desire to know (even if, in the case of the child, that desire may often lack direction). Moreover, it is not uncommon to find philosophers themselves caricatured as 'childish' – something epitomised in stories of philosophical foolishness or supposed lack of worldiness. In a discussion of animation as it stands in relation to issues of life and non-life (issues also touched on in the discussion below), Suzanne Buchan invokes the naivety of childhood as also an element in animation. She writes:

One reason that animation has long been sidelined by film studies… is because it was generally considered to target children; in other words, animation was naive. I contend that one of the attractions of many styles of animation lies not in its being 'childish' in a regressive, omnipotent way… but rather in a naive delight we experience in seeing inanimate forms come to (a type of) life (Buchan, 2013, 167).

I will return to the delight that Buchan refers to here later – and to the way such naivety can be construed as tied to an experience of the world that goes beyond (or perhaps comes before) the ways we typically construe that experience. In this article I want to pursue the idea of a certain sort of 'naive' encounter with animation that draws both on the naivety of philosophy and the naivety of animation. The aim of that encounter will be to enter into a consideration of animation that thematizes the very character of animation as such – and in doing so to ask some quite basic questions, not only about what animation is, but also about what animation may have to offer to philosophy. In keeping with Buchan's invocation of

both naivety and childhood, the article's starting point is a piece of popular culture that itself draws together naivety and childhood, along with animation, film, and their interwoven history, and that invokes, as well, something of the wonder and delight to which Buchan also directs us. The piece of popular culture in question is Martin Scorcese's film *Hugo* (2011) – an adaptation of the illustrated children's book by Brian Selznick, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007).

II. One of the striking features of *Hugo* is the way in which it draws together themes from both animation and film – much as does Selznick's original book. Although clearly a homage to the early history of cinema, and a celebration of the wonder and enchantment of film, *Hugo* is no less a homage to, and celebration of, *animation*. Indeed, the film could be viewed as coming close to an endorsement of the claim by many animation theorists that film has its *origins* in animation, while demonstrating that this is also where film is surely heading back. In *Hugo*, the beginning of film is drawn together with its contemporary endpoint, and at the same time, is thereby drawn into an intimate engagement with animation in all its variety.

Scorcese's movie includes a range of quite specific animation references and techniques, from stop-motion and flip-book animation, time-lapse, morphing, and transition, the use of miniatures and, inevitably, computer generated graphics. But the movie is also replete with other forms of animation, perhaps most obviously in the form of the automaton that is a central focus for much of the early part of the movie, as well as in the constant presence of various forms of clockwork mechanisms from the station clock Hugo himself tends, to the toys in Méliès' small shop, to the old-fashioned film projector itself. Here animation, even the animation exhibited by a clockwork mouse, appears as

something wondrous and magical – a connection reinforced by the magic tricks, especially card tricks (that themselves evoke a certain mode of animation, of movement, of appearance and disappearance), that are also part of Méliès' stock-in-trade.

The breadth of animation that appears in Scorcese's movie, and that is also exhibited, if to a lesser extent, in Selznick's original book, is indicative of the fact that, although animation does have a special relationship with film, it is not restricted to the cinematic alone. As Scorcese's film shows, animation is not only a means of enabling the presentation of what might be thought as the fantastical and dream-like, as is the case with so many of Méliès' own cinematic creations (and there is an implicit argument here that positions Méliès, as have many animation theorists, as a pioneer of animation no less than of film), but it is, in addition, inextricably bound up in the experience of the everyday. Animation belongs to the very structure of the everyday, evident in the mechanisms that are ubiquitous throughout it, while itself providing a means to see into and explore the reality of that world, and the possibilities it contains.

In this respect, Scorcese's use of computer animation and computer graphics, to take one salient example, belongs to a domain of animation practice that is not exclusive to the cinema or even to the entertainment industry. The same animation and graphic techniques that are deployed in a movie such as *Hugo*, as well as in computer gaming, have also taken on a huge role in, amongst other areas, design and architectural practice, in education, and in training and simulation environments, as well as in heritage and curatorial contexts. In this respect, the question that appears in many contemporary discussions of animation – whether animation belongs properly to film studies or whether film itself belongs to animation – surely depends on a mistaken, or simply too narrow, appreciation of the domain of animation. Animation is not restricted to cinematic or cinematic forms of

representation, instead encompassing a wide range of objects, devices, processes, and practices.

III. 'Animation', as many theorists have pointed out, is tied to *movement* (see, for instance, Wells, 1998: 10; movement also figures prominently in Lamarre, 2009). As the etymology of the term implies, it is literally a 'making move' – and it is this that underpins the enormous variety in animated form and practice. Just such a variety of movement – of *animation* – is evident in Scorcese's *Hugo.* In the same way, however, that not every occurrence of marks – even those marks that seem to fit a recognised language – count as a meaningful text, neither does just any occurrence of movements or makings of movement count as animation. Rather than movement alone, animation – whether 2D or 3D, hand-drawn or computer-generated, analogue or digital – involves a form of *unitary* movement, where the unity of the movement reflects the unity of that which moves. This point seems seldom to have been directly addressed in discussions of animation. In spite of the widespread recognition of the centrality of movement, the question of the unity of movement, and the nature of that unity, tends often to remain unasked (partly because the tendency is for attention to come to rest, not on movement as such, but on certain formal or technical properties of particular *types* of animated movement, on particular types of animation).

The unity that is at issue here is equivocal – it has at least two aspects. The first is a sense of unity that derives from the way in which the movement of an animated figure *is* movement *of a figure* in virtue of the larger context in which that movement appears. More specifically, that an animated figure moves depends on the way in which that figure is placed in relation to a larger 'animational' context. The very character of the figure *as animated* depends on the way the figure appears in relation to other such figures, against a

certain background, and within a larger socio-cultural framework – a framework in which animation appears *as animation*. The presence of an animator does not alone determine this – the reason being simply that the character of the animator *as animator* is itself dependent on the same animational context. The point at issue here reflects the more generally holistic constitution of meaning and content: that something is meaningful or contentful, and that it has the particular meaning or content it does, depends on its locatedness within a larger horizontal context that encompasses agents, things (both artifactual and otherwise), and world (see Malpas, 2002).[2]

The second, and perhaps more immediate, sense of unity that appears here is a sense that attaches to the character of movement as such, and so concerns the unity of that very movement. In this latter respect, the movement of an cel animated figure, for instance, counts *as animation* because of the way in which the movement of the figure is related to the unity of its parts. The figure moves as one, which means that the different parts of the figure move in a way that is partially determined by the movements of the other parts. This is so even though the cartoon figure, a moving figure whose movement is present only in the figure *as seen*, moves as a result of a causal process that is based in the projection of successive images onto a screen and, prior to that, in image construction and design undertaken by an animator using one or another animation technique (whether traditional cell animation, computer generated animation, or whatever). Even in cases of what might be understand as 'abstract' animation, where no obvious figurative elements are present, still the animation can be said to have a unity that belongs to it. Similarly where the figure lacks any well-differentiated organisational components, or where those components change in the course of the animation, there is nevertheless a rudimentary unity that is itself the basis for the possibility that there is indeed *something* that *moves*.

The sort of animation at issue here can be counterposed to the animation, if we are to call it that, or alternatively, just the *movement*, that belongs, not to what is immediately seen to move, but to something that is itself seen to move *in the movement that is immediately presented* – as the movement of the wind is seen in the movement of the leaves, or, perhaps more significantly for this discussion, as the movement of the hand is seen in the movement of the shadows it casts onto the wall behind. The difference at issue here can be understood as a difference in the *locus* of movement – which is not the same as the question about the *cause* of movement – but it can also be understood as a difference in the relation between the movement *that causes* and the movement *that appears*. The cause of movement in the case of the leaves or the shadow is itself evident in the moving of the leaves or the shadow (even though we can, and often do, dissociate the one from the other).

One might characterise the two forms of movement that appear here through of the notion of *transformation*. In the case of the leaves or the shadow, the movement that appears has much the same form, even when the movement is exaggerated or diminished, as the movement that is its cause. Thus the leaves move as the wind moves, and the shadow with the hand. In the case of most forms of filmic animation, however, the movement of the figure does not directly replicate or mirror the movement that is its cause.[3] So in the case of hand-drawn cel animation, for instance, the movement of the figure in no way duplicates the movement of the artist's hand in drawing nor the movements that are involved in the production process that follows on from this, and the same is true of computer generated animation effects. One might say that whereas the movement of the shadow is unified in relation to the movement of the hand, the movement

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of, for instance, the cartoon figure in a cel animation, is unified in relation to the movement of the figure itself.[4]

Animated machines and similar devices may be taken to provide an equivocal case in relation to the two kinds of movement that are at issue here. For instance, the movements of a clockwork automaton – such as that in Scorcese's film and Selznick's book – may be thought to be the direct and outward manifestation of a set of internal movements that belong to the clockwork mechanism itself. Yet the clockwork is driven by a movement that typically has a different form from the movements exhibited externally by the figure: the release of tension in a spring has a different character from the extending and retracting, say, of a hand, or the opening and closing of a mouth – the exact purpose of the mechanism is to transform the one movement into the other. The situation is perhaps clearer in the case of animatronic devices in which the external movement is no longer determined by clockwork, but electronically, and may even be said to have its origin in a code or programme. Animated machines should probably be understood, then, as exhibiting a similar unity of movement to that of cartoon figures rather than of marionettes. Significantly, this analysis of movement can also be applied not only to visual animation, but also to animation in sound, for instance, to the acoustic animations of Norman McLaren (in films such as *Synchromy*, 1971 – see also McLaren, 1976). These involve the production of sound through markings made directly onto film. The sounds *are* movements, and one finds the same transformation of one form of movement into another. The movements that produce the sounds, McLaren's markings, are transformed through their projection into sounds which have a character of their own, and, one might argue, a movement that belongs to them.

The difference between animation and mere movement is a difference found *both* in the way the animated figure appears within an 'animational' context *and* in the unity that belongs to the movement of the figure that is animated. On this basis, one might well take issue with Disney's famous characterisation of animation as the 'illusion of life' (Thomas and Johnston, 1981).[5] It is *movement*, rather than *life* that is at the heart of animation as such – although one might say, much as does Aristotle, that life *is* movement; and perhaps even, as Sergei Eisenstein claims (at least as quoted in Wells, 1998),[6] that movement is life. Moreover, the movement that is at issue is not merely an *illusion* either, but its *reality*. Even the cartoon image can properly be said to move – and it is indeed *the image* that moves, with the movement located *in the image* and belonging to it (rather than the image being itself moved) – which is one reason why, as argued above, the image can also be said to be itself *animated*.

IV. The original Latin term from the word 'animation' and its cognates derive, *anima*, usually translated as 'soul', originally had associations of air, wind, or breath, as does the Greek *anemos*, from which *anima* comes (a term meaning 'wind'), as well as the Greek term *psyche* of which *anima* is the Latin translation. *Psyche* is usually translated into English as 'soul' or 'mind', and the term also refers to that creature that floats on the air, the 'butterfly'. In all of this, the focus on the 'aerey', on breath and wind, should not be taken as a metaphorical reference to 'life', or for that which is the basis of life, namely the soul, but rather as referring, more literally, to a pervading capacity for movement that is characteristically exemplified in the movement of air, and which is itself the basis for the understanding of life – the latter thus itself being understood as a certain fundamental capacity *for movement*.

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In this respect, the idea of the *anima*, in its original sense, cannot be simply contrasted with the bodily or the physical – such a contrast, at least when employed in any strong sense, is characteristically *modern*. The *anima* might be said to be movement itself, or, at least, to be the movement that belongs to a body, and certainly it stands in an essential relation to the body. As Aristotle understand matters, the *anima*, or properly, for Aristotle, the *psyche,* is the proper form that belongs to the body, constituting the body *as* body, so that the body that has no capacity for movement whatsoever; the dead 'body is not properly even a body (it is a body only in an equivocal sense – see Aristotle, 1957a: 412b10-24).). Understanding *anima*, and animation, in this way, then, implies no necessary opposition of the animated to the physical,[7] nor any separation of the animated from the bodily. Rather, the two must be understood as belonging together. In this respect, then, neither the idea of the *anima* nor of animation implies any necessary connection to *animism*, at least not inasmuch as this is understood in terms of the commitment to the existence of some separate 'animating' *spirit*, nor need *anima* or animation be taken to draw attention away from the materiality and physicality of movement. It is indeed the bodily that moves and is moved; and movement is given in and through the materiality of what moves.[8]

The focus on movement ought to be absolutely central in any attempt to think seriously about animation – as is indeed recognised by theorists such as Wells and Lamarre, as well as many others. Moreover, movement is a much more significant notion here than are many of the other concepts that sometimes also figure in discussions within animation theory, whether they be, not just 'life', but 'process', or even 'time', even though the prioritisation of these other notions (especially those related to time – a matter to which I shall return below) often obscures the centrality of movement, as it can also obscure the

understanding of animation itself. In this regard, what movement may be is all too often taken for granted – as if it were a notion that is already well-understood such that it could be supplanted by or reduced to other notions. The centrality of movement is an issue to which we shall return, but first, let us briefly consider the way the focus on movement allows us to reconstruct a certain history, or perhaps prehistory, of animation and even animation 'theory' — a history that stretches back, in the case of European thought and culture, to the Greeks, if not beyond.

If animation is indeed a 'making move', and, with the emphasis on the 'making' here (on *techne*), on a certain *art* of movement, then animation can be said to begin, naturally enough, with the gods, and especially with Hephaestus, who in his workshop fashioned automata of brass, silver, and gold. Stories of marvellous automata abound in the Greek world, and can also be found in many other cultures from the Chinese to the Arabic (see Zielinski, 2013). Yet it is perhaps Daedalus, the Athenian master craftsman who used his art in the service of the Cretan King Minos, who should warrant most attention as the one who stands closest to the very beginnings of animation, at least to its mythic European origins, since it is Daedalus who is the first mortal credited with the creation of statues that had the power of movement. Thus, in the 4th Century, the Greek rhetorician Callistratus compared the work of the sculptor Praxiteles to that of Daedalus, writing that "as I gazed on this work of art, the belief came over me that Daidalos had indeed wrought a dancing group in motion and had bestowed sensation upon gold." (Callistratus, 1931, 3). Aristotle reports Daedalus as having constructed a wooden figure of Aphrodite that was moved by quicksilver within it (Aristotle, 1957a: 406b9).

Aristotle himself devotes considerable attention to what seem to be mechanical puppets or similar devices (the term used by Aristotle in the Greek is *ta automata*) in his

writings on the nature of movement (see De Groot, 2008), and especially in what may be viewed as the very first writing on animation, perhaps the first work in animation theory, namely the treatise *On Animal Movement (De Motu Animalium*) (see Aristotle, 1961, also Nussbaum, 1985). This small book, which draws on ideas which Aristotle also sets out in other works, notably *On the Soul* (*De Anima*) (Aristotle, 1957a) and *Parts of Animals* (*De Partibus Animalium)* (Aristotle, 1961), focuses specifically on the nature of movement. Aristotle argues that motion is impossible in that which lacks differentiation, and that in anything that moves there must be at least two parts, one of which is active and the other passive, as well as a resisting surface outside of that which moves, and which, relative to what moves, is itself unmoved.

The account Aristotle gives of motion, which also leads from an examination of animal motion to that of the heavens, is significant from the point of view of animation in that it provides a structural analysis of movement and its preconditions, while also connecting movement directly to the understanding of the unity of bodies (or of figures), and more specifically of living bodies, and their relation to their surroundings.[9] Movement is a central concept for Aristotle. All change (*kinesis*) is understood in terms of movement (*kinesis* means, in fact, *both* change *and* movement – the two being more or less the same), and the primary instance of movement is said to be local movement or change *of place*. Understanding change and changeability, which is the focus of Aristotle's *Physics*, thus gives a central role to *place* also (see esp. Aristotle, 1957b, Bk IV). Here place emerges as the key to movement, and since all and every appearing depends on movement, place must also be the key to understanding appearing – whether the appearing that occurs in an animated movie or the appearing of things in the world in general. To put matters summarily (and perhaps provocatively): appearing is *moving*,[10] which is also, one might say, *placing*.

Moreover, the placing that is at issue is both a unifying *and* a differentiating (as was already suggested by my earlier brief summary of Aristotle's analysis of movement). Although the connection back to place is not always made explicit in this context, the general claim that movement requires differentiation can be seen to underpin more recent discussions of animation in terms of notions, frequently taken from writers such as Deleuze (but, one might argue, already elaborated in Heidegger), of *difference*, or better, of difference *and identity* (Heidegger, 1969; see also Malpas, 2006, 2012).[11]

V. The concern with movement, both its analysis and the art of its production, is a preoccupation that extends from Aristotle right through ancient and Classical thought, into the Medieval period, the Renaissance, the early Modern, and so to the present – and that also extends, of course, well beyond Europe. It is a concern often manifest, at least so far as the production of movement is concerned, with the construction of automata. Examples range from the brazen talking head supposedly employed by such as Pope Sylvester II, Roger Bacon, and Albertus Magnus, to the air and water-powered machines devised by Hero of Alexandria, the thaumaturgical devices of such as John Dee, and the wide range of mechanical wonders that proliferated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The production of movement in images is not absent from this history; although drawn, the portrayal of movement in Neolithic cave paintings is sometimes taken as the beginnings of animation (something to which Werner Herzog gives prominent attention in his 2010 documentary on the Chauvet Cave in Southern France, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*), while the production of zoetropic animation has a history almost as long as human culture itself. Nevertheless, it is not properly until the late 19th and early 20th century, with the invention of cinematography, in particular, that animation in images comes into its own.

Much of this story will be familiar to anyone has looked, even if in cursory fashion, at the historical background to contemporary animation. What should be emphasised, however, is the way this history not only constitutes animation as part of a well-established inquiry into the nature and art of production of movement (a discipline that might also be called *kinematics* had the term not already been appropriated by the natural sciences[12]), but also the way in which it is precisely around movement that this history is indeed constituted.

It is thus not time, or process, or life, or any other such concept that is central here, even though these may also be implicated in one way or another, but movement, *kinesis*. It may also be said that movement is one of the most fundamental and ubiquitous, and yet also most *obscure,* of concepts of all. It is movement, in its many different forms, that first provokes our questioning and to which our explanations are directed and yet what movement itself is remains perplexing – so much so that one might well argue that although we better understand many different kinds and instances of movement, we have made relatively little advance in understanding the concept of movement beyond the sort of analysis offered by Aristotle. Movement seems to be more a concept by means of which we understand other phenomena than a concept that is understood in its own right.

It is perhaps because it is so fundamental, so basic, that movement is also that which, as Buchan suggests, is so often a source of wonder and delight. Movement is that which provokes us to question, but it also beguiles and entrances us. In this regard, Scorcese's *Hugo* – with its mechanical toys, its magic tricks and sleights of hand, its dreamlike images and moving pictures, even the narrative action that the film itself presents and plays out – can be seen to be a film that entertains through the proliferation in the varieties of movement that it presents, at the same time as it is also a celebration of

movement. It is a celebration too of the 'naive' wonderment, the wonderment experienced, above all, by the child, that movement itself evokes. A celebration, one might say, of that which first draws us into the experience of the world, which holds us there, and which characterises the nature of that very experience – the experience of movement, and so of the world, is an experience of our own moving and being moved. It is also directly tied to the experience of place and of being placed. It is through movement, and the possibilities for movement, that we orient ourselves in place, and by means of which place is itself structured (see esp. Malpas, 1999).

VI. It might be thought that the emphasis on movement is already well established within contemporary understandings of animation, and that whether we focus specifically on movement or take it up through some related concept makes little difference to the understanding of animation as such. It might even be argued that movement itself requires elucidation, and that this is precisely what is enabled by the understanding of movement in terms of other concepts. Yet in any process of analysis, at least as regards concepts, it is vital that the original object of analysis is not lost sight of – that it is not eliminated or replaced. Any genuine elucidation of movement, in particular, ought not to involve movement giving way to other concepts, so much as other concepts being brought into conjunction with the idea of movement in order to give rise to a richer framework of understanding. Unfortunately, one of the features of much contemporary discussion of animation, is that movement is often effectively *replaced*, and sometimes *eliminated*, rather than *elucidated*. Movement is itself seldom the focus of sustained analysis, and although it may be the starting point for discussions of animation, movement typically recedes into the background as those discussion proceed in favour of other more privileged notions.[13] Such shifts in focus

may provide insights into *aspects* of animation, and even of movement, but that does not mean that they tell us a great deal about animation or movement *as such* or *in general*.

For some, however, the very focus on movement, and the manner in which it is developed here, may indicate that the approach at issue is indeed *naive* in an all too straightforward sense – that it takes a set of commonplace assumptions about animation too much at face value, overlooking the radically destabilising and critical potential that animation carries within it, and remaining stuck within an old-fashioned mode of thinking that cannot shrug off its metaphysical prejudices. To be sure, the approach that underpins the 'naive' thinking about animation outlined here is a thinking grounded not in what is often referred to as 'theory' (a term that seems both too general and too specific at one and the same time), but rather in a more specific mode of mode of phenomenological, hermeneutic, or as one might also put it, *topographic* or *topological* analysis (see Malpas, 1999, 2006, 2012a).

One of the key presuppositions of such thinking is that it can begin only by taking seriously the autonomy of its object as given *in its own situatedness* with respect to its own place or *topos* – and so, too, on the situatedness that enables and sustains the engagement of thinking itself with its object. [14] On this basis, what determines one's thinking is that which originally calls for thinking, and what surely calls for such thinking in the case of animation is a certain form of movement, and the nature of that movement. To think this movement in a way that properly attends to it must also, if the Aristotelian suggestion of the closeness of the relation between movement and place is to be taken seriously, mean attending to the *place* of movement – thinking, in other words, in a genuinely topographic or topological fashion, in a fashion that is itself determined, in terms of both focus and method, by place or *topos* (see Malpas 2012b). To think movement in this way may also be

construed, once again, as bringing with it the idea of a certain naivety – an abandonment of our preconceptions about movement, and a willingness to allow ourselves to be drawn into the very place of movement – a form of thinking that is 'naive' as it is also genuinely responsive.

VII. This sort of approach is likely to lead to a way of thinking about animation that, as already noted, may well lead to a different set of concepts as taking precedence. Movement must remain primary in such thinking, and yet in taking movement as the proper end of animation (meaning both that at which it is directed and that out of which it arises), movement cannot be understood as determined primarily as a *temporal* phenomenon. This is actually one of the points that can be taken from Aristotle's *De Motu* – that work directs attention to the way movement is connected with the unitary character of the figure that moves and its relation to the background against which it moves. This cannot be understood in purely temporal terms but draws on spatial notions also, and is thus essentially topographic, implicating time *and* space, both of which should be understood as aspects of place as such (see Malpas, 2012b). One might argue that this echoes something of Aristotle's own emphasis on the role of place in understanding movement or change in general. It also runs counter to a widespread tendency in animation studies, whatever other concepts may also be deployed, to give particular primacy to the *temporal* (giving lesser attention to the spatial and almost none to the topographic). As a result, the focus is typically on the *duration* of images or the connection between *successive* figures, images, or frames rather than on the spatial and topographic relations that obtain *within* figures, images, or frames – that obtain between co-present elements in them – as these are made salient through the relating of those images or frames.

The tendency to give primacy to time and temporality within animation theory is not peculiar to animation alone, but can be seen as part of a broader 'temporalist prejudice' within contemporary, and more broadly, modern thought – a prejudice that looks to understand all phenomena in terms of process, duration, or even futurity. Bergson and Whitehead, but also the early Heidegger, can be seen to exemplify this prejudice in different ways, in spite of the fact that they are also philosophers who take issue with much that modernity offers. The prioritization of the temporal is often seen as a necessary counter to the modern dissolution of the qualitative into the quantitative, and yet what it achieves is actually a certain sort of dissolution of difference of its own – and this is simply because, without space as well as time, there is no possibility of genuine differentiation or of genuine identity either. The appearing of things, which is both a differing and a unifying, requires both juxtaposition and superposition, both succession and simultaneity. If time is often assumed to be adequate to allow for the appearing of things independently of space, that is only because time is so often conceived of in a way that implicitly takes time to be a mode *of place* (and so to possess a form of spatiality of its own), and so as possessing both expansiveness and emergence (see Malpas, 2012b). In fact, neither time nor space makes sense without the other, and each implies the other, while neither can be understood apart from place. One might even go so far as to say that here is no such thing as either time or space, at least not understood independently of one other, and to argue that both are given only within the encompassing structure of place or *topos*.

As Newton as well as Aristotle tells us, movement is always relative to a context of movement, or as it may also be put, movement, at least so far as animation is concerned, is always topographically or topologically (which means also spatio-temporally) determined and defined. Place or *topos* here appears in direct relation to the idea of *horizon* – that

within which appearance is constituted. This idea is also present in Aristotle, and more specifically, in his own analysis of the structure of place as a 'containing surface' (see Aristotle, 1957b, Bk IV). *Topos* and surface are closely connected notions; to attend to *topos* is to attend to *surface* (something reflected in one sense of topography, that which operates within traditional geography, as concerned with the mappable surface of the earth). In its philosophical sense, the topographical concern with surface takes the form of an emphasis on what is given, rather than what lies beneath, even though what is given may often be occluded or hidden. To think animation topologically in this sense is to think animation in a way that focuses on the moving figure, but that also attempts to analyse that figure in terms of its own appearance and mode of appearance, its own 'surfaces', as well as in its multiple relations within the *topos* of the appearance.

This seems especially appropriate as an approach *to animation*, since there the surface takes on a special significance – no less in 3-D animation than in more traditional forms. If we take seriously the idea that animation is a matter of the making-move of the image or figure, then animation is not a making move of what lies beneath the surface, but a making move that is evident in and through the movement *of surfaces*. If animation is *naive* in the way Buchan suggests, then perhaps it should be viewed as also *superficial* – and indeed, for similar reasons. What animation presents is simply *movement* – movement in its pure phenomenality – without any question of whatever else might cause that movement, to which that movement might be said to belong or from which it might arise. Here perhaps is the real basis for the 'naive' delight that animation provides, since what it offers is indeed a movement that appears in the most direct, immediate and vibrant form.

VIII. The topological approach that is suggested here, and the very focus on movement that comes with it, means that animation, as noted above, is not co-extensive with film. There is a sense in which film appears within animation inasmuch as film presents itself as a mode of movement that also appears by means of movement. There is also a sense in which film extends beyond the scope of animation inasmuch as film also encompasses, for instance, forms of dramatic performance, of plot and character, and of cinematographic technique that do not belong, at least not in the same way, to animation alone. In addition, animation may itself appear as partially encompassed within film, – at least to the extent that animation can be viewed as a form of movement instantiated in and through film – and so may be subject, as film, to much the same sorts of critical interrogation as other cinematic styles, forms, and genres. This idea of the relation between film and animation as an untidy and pluralistic one, in which each may be seen, in different ways, to encompass the other, seems not only to be true to the subject matter at issue, but also to conform with what is more typically true of the way different domains and concepts actually relate. There is seldom the sort of tidiness or the sort of overarching conceptual hegemony that is so often claimed. In this respect, the reference to Scorcese's *Hugo* is especially helpful in exhibiting the character of animation, in its relation to film, as both encompassed and encompassing. In like fashion, Scorcese's film also exhibits the breadth of compass of film itself, as well as the manner in which what film shows and draws upon goes beyond the bounds of film alone.

If the focus on movement is taken to be central to animation, with the consequence that animation is not to be viewed as restricted to or even as co-extensive with film, then we should be wary of taking cinematic animation as a paradigmatic of animation as such. Yet even when the extension of animation beyond film is acknowledged, still there seems a

powerful tendency to do just this, and to focus the investigation of animation on cinematic animation or indeed to take cinematic animation as the paradigm. One consequence of this is that it seems commonplace to distinguish, even if usually implicitly, movement from image. Such a distinction is evident, for instance, in the idea that animation is based, not in the image as such, but in the movement between otherwise static images. It is a view apparently supported by the fact that cinematic animation, like all cinema, operates through the succession of images, through their rapid replacement or 'superpositioning' on the screen, even, it is sometimes said, through that which lies 'between' images (a point made by Norman McLaren). The appearance of the image *as moving* is thus often taken, on this account, as indeed an illusory appearance – the image itself does not move, and the real movement lies elsewhere, in the movement between frames, or perhaps more originally, in the movement of the camera, the model, the animator's hand and eye, or the calculations of the computer. Even were we to take this distinction as operative only with respect to *cinematic* animation, and so as not as telling us anything about *animation* as such, still it is a distinction with which, on the face of it, we ought to take issue. As argued earlier, what one sees in animation, no less in cinematic animation than in automata and other moving devices, is not the illusion, but the reality of movement, and that what moves in the case of cinematic animation is indeed the image (although not only that).

The fact that the process that gives rise to the moving image includes operations upon images that do not themselves move is not relevant to the character of the image that appears in animation as itself *moving*. Indeed, that there is a difference between the movement that gives rise to the movement of the image (which in this case involves, crucially, the fact that the images through which animation operates need not themselves move) and the movement of the image, is actually essential to the possibility that what is at

issue is indeed a case of animation. That this is so follows directly from the account of animation sketched above according to which animation always involves a transformation, rather than merely a replication of movement or its immediate transference. I argued earlier that animation should not be understood as the 'illusion of life', but neither is it an 'illusion' of movement: the movement in the moving image – the animation in the animated image – is not illusory. The image has a movement that belongs to it, even though the movement does not originate with the image that moves (it is not 'self-moving' in the Aristotelian sense). In fact, although on the one hand there does seem to be a certain mode of animation theory that treats the movement of the image as illusory, the very focus on animation *as film* implicitly treats animated film on a par with live-action film, and so implicitly treats the movement of the animated image as belonging to the animated image no less than it belongs to the live-action image.[15]

There is, moreover, a closer relation between the image that moves through the superpositioning of images in projection, and the single image that contains a form of movement within it in virtue of the manner of its depiction – the sort of 'animation' that is sometimes taken to be exemplified in its earliest form in prehistoric cave painting. Here movement is given by the inclusion in the image of a clear differentiation of the elements necessary for movement against an equally differentiated, but relatively unmoving (at least as depicted), background (in a way that accords with the Aristotelian analysis of movement).[16] In fact, the discussion of movement in the single image seems to offer interesting points of comparison for the study of animation as it is occurs in the cinematic image (see, for instance, Atkinson, 2009), especially as there are significant structural differences between the two. Yet those differences sit alongside a fundamental similarity: in both cases, one can speak about a movement that belongs *to the image,* even though the

techniques and processes by which this is achieved are in each case different. Movement is possible in both a single image and in a sequence of images. Here we are returned to animation as indeed a making move – something that is not restricted to the cinematic image alone, nor even to the variety of other animational devices depicted in Scorcese's film version of *Hugo*, but which is perhaps also to be found, for instance, in the black and white illustrations that make up Selznick's original book.

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¹ Something like this point seems to be an element in Darley, 2007: "[what emerges is] a way of appropriating animation – animated film – to illustrate grand theoretical positions: animation is no longer a complex object of study and understanding but becomes, rather, an alibi for so called theorizing" (71) – but see also Cholodenko (2009).

² The key idea here concerning the holistic or relational character of meaning and content is based on a much larger body of thinking from within the philosophy of language as well as hermeneutics – an idea that is not restricted to the discussion of meaning or content alone, but can be applied quite generally. Such holism is an important element in the topographical or topological approach to which I refer below (so that meaning and content can be understood as tied essentially to *place*) – for more on such a place-oriented approach, see Malpas 1999, 2006, 2012a, 2012b.

³ The case of filmed puppet animation may be taken to be an exception to this claim, since there, it may be argued, the movement of the puppet does replicate or correlate with another set of movements (those of the puppeteer) that are its immediate cause (this is true of both filmed puppet animation and traditional puppet theatre). The fact of its exceptionality in this regard, may also be taken, however, to indicate that puppet animation is constituted *as animation* in a sense that is different from other forms of animation.

⁴ Note the distinction at issue here is not the same as the distinction proposed by Sean Cubitt between direct and other forms of animation, even though one may be tempted to characterise the type of animation exhibited by the marionette as indeed 'direct' – see Cubitt, 2013.

⁵ Cholodenko, 1991 & 2007, re-deploys this same phrase (and many other theorists likewise talk in a similar fashion). If Cholodenko's use of the phrase is not subject to quite the same critique, this is partly because of the ambiguity and equivocity introduced by Cholodenko's deconstructive wordplay – nevertheless, it is the same phrase around which that wordplay operates, and so the critique cannot be avoided entirely.

⁶ According to Wells, Eisenstein asserts "if it moves, then it's alive" (Wells, 1984: 14). It is difficult to identify the source of this comment in Eisenstein's own work. In his essay on Disney, Eisenstein does comment that "We *know* that they are . . ."'miracles' and tricks of technology, that such beings don't really exist. But at the same time: We *sense* them as alive. We *sense* them as moving, as active. (1988: 55)

⁷ The Greek *phusis,* from which the modern term 'physical' and its cognates derives, refers to the dynamic emergence that characterises those forms of appearance in which what appears does so in virtue of its own capacity for such appearance (what we might think of today as 'natural' except that here the 'natural' has to be understood as that which is in accord with the being of a thing) (see, for instance, Heidegger, 1998, for a longer discussion of this matter). *Phusis* is thus contrasted, in the Greek, with *techne*, which is the art of *bringing* things to appearance, and so of bringing them to appearance, as it were, *derivatively* ('animation', in the modern sense, is thus a form of *techne*). On this basis, we may say that the *anima* is itself a mode of *phusis*. Both *phusis* and *techne* are forms of *poiesis* – which is emergence into being or into appearing as such.

⁸ None of this is to deny, however, that there are not contexts in which the idea of animation nevertheless carries connotations that are drawn from animistic traditions and modes of thinking. My argument here is only that no animistic connotations need follow from the tracing of 'animation' back to the notion of *anima* and that a thinking through of the role of movement here should not be taken to lead us away from an emphasis on the material and the bodily – quite the opposite.

⁹ Aristotle's analysis of motion is closely tied to his understanding of actuality and potentiality. Potentiality, *dunamis* in the Greek, is the possibility that belongs to a thing; actuality, in the Greek *energeia* or entelecheia, is the realization of that possibility. The *energeia* or *entelecheia* of a thing is the movement that properly belongs to a thing, by means of which it realises itself, and towards which its movement is directed. Such actuality belongs first and foremost to living beings, and yet these terms can also be applied, if equivocally, to the non-living. In one of the very few serious discussions of Aristotle in relation to animation, Suzanne Buchan argues for a notion of *entelecheia* that would apply solely and specifically to the non-living – she refers to this as a 'third entelechy' (Buchan, 2013). Although I can see why Buchan might be led in this direction, the idea seems to me misguided, overlooking the central role of equivocation in Aristotle, and thereby misconstruing the logical structure of the concepts in question. A term like *entelecheia* (or even *dunamis*) may well have a primary application in one case and yet also allow of secondary applications in other cases. Such equivocation is what allows the possibility of two senses of *entelecheia* – 'first' and 'second' entelechy – that themselves mirror the distinction between actuality and potentiality, but it also allows of other applications of *entelecheia* in addition to its primary application in the case of living beings. The idea of an *entelecheia* that belongs to the non-living – Buchan's 'third' entelechy – is thus already possible within the Aristotelian scheme. Moreover, the notion will apply to the non-living analogously to the way it applies in the case of the living, so we can speak of a first and second entelechy in the case of non-living as well as living beings. What this means, however, is that

properly there can be no 'third' entelechy that applies to the non-living – instead *entelecheia* operates as an equivocal across both cases. This seems to me to be relevant, not only to questions of Aristotelian exegesis, but also to the thinking of animation (as Buchan work itself suggests), and so to the understanding of movement as it is instantiated, for instance, in the 'non-living' automaton.

[10] One might say that this is one of the central ideas of process philosophy as exemplified in the work of writers such as Bergson and Whitehead – and it is thus no surprise, perhaps, that process thinking is so often appealed to in animation theory. Yet in contrast to the approach advanced here, process thinking tends to orient itself to the primacy of the temporal, understanding movement in similar terms, rather than taking it, in more Aristotelian fashion, as tied centrally to place.

[11] The interplay between difference and identity, or between plurality and unity, is both exemplified in the structure of place or *topos* as well as depending upon that very structure – see Malpas 2012b.

[12] Kinematics arises as a translation from the French *cinématique* invented by André-Marie Ampère, in the early 19th century, to refer to a branch of classical mechanics concerned with the geometry of motion.

[13] Thus even Lamarre's discussion (2009) might be viewed as providing little analysis of movement as such, focussing instead on composition as the means by which movement is produced in and between images (although see the comment in n.16 below – the way this leads to a thematizing of issues of *spacing* is also important). Following a trajectory that moves via Bergson and Deleuze, the focus on movement frequently gives way to an emphasis on temporality, duration, or process . Sometimes movement barely even appears as an issue – in Cholodenko, for instance, it is the notion of 'theory' that takes precedence, and with it, "ideas of 'abject', the double, the 'uncanny', the sublime, seduction, différance, disappearance and death…" (Cholodenko, 1991, p.14)

[14] See Malpas, 2012a, in particular, for a discussion of the way such situatedness is central to the hermeneutic and the phenomenological – thus both can be viewed as indeed grounded in the topographical or topological.

[15] Cholodenko is notable for his insistence on the idea of animation as itself encompassing of, rather than encompassed by, film (see especially 2009) – in similar fashion, one might argue that the movement found in film is encompassed by, rather than encompassing, the movement found in animation, and that animated movement is therefore not a secondary, but a *primary* instance of movement.

[16] It might be argued that the analysis of the image as moving in terms of the differentiation that makes for such movement connect directly with Lamarre's analysis of movement in terms of composition (suggesting too, contra the claim in n.13 above, that the shift to composition in Lamarre's work is not at all a shift *away* from movement). There is some truth to such a response, although I would argue that the way composition functions here also differs from the way differentiation is related to movement within the Aristotelian analysis.