

Foreword

SPEECH WITHOUT UTTERANCE

The study of facial expression and its musculature undertaken by Guillaume-Benjamin Duchenne de Boulogne in 1862, something he described as his *orthography of facial expression in movement*, was an attempt to secure biological meaning in the natural language of the emotions.¹ Duchenne believed in the existence of a language of emotions, the *passions*, as they are revealed through the signs of facial expression. The belief was certainly not new: the study of the passions was an elusive subject stretching back to René Descartes's philosophical writings on the dimensions of the soul (1649) and Charles Le Brun's aesthetic teachings on emotion in sculpture and painting (1667).² A decade after Duchenne's photographic studies, Charles Darwin would use Duchenne's work as a touchstone for his *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872).³ However, Duchenne did not simply move the disciplines of myology and physiognomy forward; he opened and reshaped their dimensions.

For the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, the face is a thing that "resists possession"; expression, while "still graspable, turns into total resistance to the grasp," its meaning made available "only by the opening of a new dimension."⁴ That meaning in expression requires such an opening echoes Duchenne's notion of the universal or at least taxonomic attributes of facial expression. Duchenne, through techniques of localized electric stimulation and photography (and, perhaps more importantly, attention to the *movement of signs* in the living body), breaks through the form of emotion—the surface and the *underneath* of the face—that nevertheless delimits it.

Through Duchenne, François Delaporte provides a remarkable philosophical and historical examination of expressive physiology during the mid-nineteenth century, considering the science of emotion as a means of revealing inner life—thoughts, feelings—upon the surface of the face.

The central concern of Delaporte's study is how techniques of studying facial musculature became a point of contact between existing and novel understandings of the body's expressive anatomy. Delaporte shows that Duchenne did much more than contribute to customary knowledge; instead, he entirely reordered the knowledge and limits of expressive physiology in science and art. The face became a site where the signs of inner life are silently revealed, not yet betrayed by speech but brought forth by reflexive physiology or by technical manipulation.⁵

Delaporte's essay on Duchenne shows the close connection between attempts to understand the "vocabulary of nature"—complete with the difficulty of meaning, absorption, and translation—and the vocabulary of experimentation.⁶ Duchenne uses a quote from Francis Bacon to preface his work: "Experimentation is a type of question applied to nature to make it speak."⁷ Later in the same passage of *Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine*, Duchenne refers to Georges-Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon when he writes that the living face is the site "where each movement of the spirit is expressed by a feature, each action by a characteristic, the swift, sharp impression of which anticipates the will and discloses our most secret feelings."⁸ Through the use of electrical currents, Duchenne claims to have "made the facial muscles contract to *speak* the language of the emotions and the sentiments" (emphasis in original). This relationship between the language of nature and the language of experimentation, as Delaporte demonstrates, allowed Duchenne to trace out a physiological grammar of the emotions captured through photography.

The face is the locus of Delaporte's essay, but to say that his study is limited to the face is somewhat misleading. It is equally misleading to say that Duchenne's work is another example of science progressing in the shadow of a chance alignment of ideas and technologies.⁹ Delaporte draws the features that bring the face to the center of a constellation of concepts and techniques. Moreover, he shows that Duchenne did not simply combine the old with the new; rather he created an entirely different foundation for facial anatomy in the living body. Such close attention to epistemological turns within the history of science has always been the case with Delaporte's work: the recognition of signs and the discovery of Chagas's disease; the constitutive relationship between the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, yellow fever, and the birth of tropical medicine; and the historical

claim to a concept of disease in Paris during the 1832 cholera epidemic.¹⁰ Here, the *opening of a new dimension*, to take up Levinas's phrasing, is a space where Delaporte locates the organization of concepts, or more accurately the reorganization of knowledge driven by technologies such as electrotherapy and photography, not as a way of explaining how Duchenne's work was made possible but as an "epistemological reorganization (*reorganisation épistémologique*) under concrete historical circumstances."¹¹ Delaporte follows the availability and circulation of concepts as though they were lines on a face.

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