

Movement

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Abstract

A wide spectrum of concepts contain ‘movement’, in the sense of ‘passage through space’, even though this is not obvious at first view.

1 Basic movement

Κίνησις [Gk] or ‘kinesis’ indicates a passage through space, whereas the equivalent ‘movement’ (from *movere* [L]) gives hints of agitation, provocation, or disturbance, and the interesting special movement of dancing in the reflective version *movere se* [L] — Table 1.

SOURCE	MEANING	DERIVATIVES
κιν- (<i>kin-</i>) [Gk]; <i>cin-</i> [L]	motion	kinetics (chem.), kinetic energy, cinema
<i>movere</i> [L]	to move, stir, agitate	movement

TABLE 1 Basic movement

2 Greek freedom

Although passing through space is denoted by κίνησις [Gk], the right or the *freedom* to do so is marked by another group: ελευ- [Gk] — Table 2.

SOURCE	MEANING	DERIVATIVES
ελευ- [Gk]	to pass, go through	ελευθερία (freedom)
<i>liber</i> [L]	free (man)	liberty, liberation
<i>vrij</i> [Du], <i>frei</i> [Ge], <i>free</i> [En]	free	freedom

TABLE 2 Freedom

Whereas the Germanic group for ‘freedom’ (*vrij* [Du], *frei* [Ge], *free* [En]) relates to an Indo-European root meaning ‘to love’, as in ‘friend’, and the Latin group (*liber* [L]) is related quite abstractly to ‘rights’ (as in ‘free man’), the Greek group for freedom (ελευθερία [Gk]) relates to passage: for instance, ελεύσομαι, future of έρχομαι (to come), διέλευσις [Gk] (passage), or the very simple and common singular imperative ‘έλα’ [Gk] (come) — Table 2.

3 Tactfully tactic

Taxis [Gk] initially refers to an ‘arrangement in space’, and is equivalent to ‘order’. But life is not static (except, perhaps, for photographs), so there is usually an intention for doing something with an arrangement, and anything that departs from an arrangement implies movement. The most common representation of the concept is the arrangement of the troops in the battlefield; hence, tactics. Presented much later as an extension of the concept, tactics also refers to the positioning and movement of organisms as they seek resources such as light or water; hence, ‘phototaxis’, for instance. As an alert, ‘tactics’ should not be confused with words such as ‘tactile’ or ‘tact’, as these come from a Latin source — Table 3.

SOURCE	MEANING	DERIVATIVES
<i>taxis</i> [Gk]	arrangement (intending to move), order	tactic; phototaxis
<i>tangere</i> [L]	to touch	tactful, tactile, touchy

TABLE 3 Tactics and ‘touchy’ issues

4 A question thrown forward

While ‘problem’ is used to imply an uncomfortable or even distressful situation, or commonly a ‘worry’, there is no reason for involving such strong emotions. Problem is just a ‘question thrown forward’¹ — Table 4. As any mathematician would agree, problems are to be solved. And as Brazilians say, ‘perguntar não ofende’, or ‘asking [a question] does not offend’. Of course, throwing something in front of someone without a warning is naturally startling, so the use of protocol (that is, some formality) is advised when handling problems².

SOURCE	MEANING	DERIVATIVES
<i>ballein</i> [Gk]	to project, to throw	ballistics, problem

TABLE 4 The problem

¹The same concept in Latin is termed a ‘project’ — from *pro-* [L], forth + *jacere* [L], to throw (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2010). The terms problem and project indicate the distinct cultural orientations of their origins: contemplative or philosophical, on one hand, and practical, on the other.

²A very easy operational definition of the ‘problem’ is succinctly presented in Perdicóulis (2011), and with more documentation in Perdicóulis (2010).

5 The art of transportation

Metaphor (μεταφορά [Gk]) is a figure of speech widely used in literary works such as the highly esteemed art of poetry. Surprisingly, though, metaphor has very humble origins: transportation — Table 5. This transportation in the literary sense refers to taking one idea from one context and bringing it into another, and metaphor itself provides the example with its own function being ‘transported’ from grocery to literature.

SOURCE	MEANING	DERIVATIVES
<i>ferein</i> [Gk]	to bring, bear	metaphor, semaphor

TABLE 5 Metaphor

6 Proceed methodically

Going (*cedere*[L]) on the street (οδός [Gk]) are the physical origins of method, process, and procedure — Table 6. As there are many ways to ‘go on the street’, some confusion is to be expected.

The ‘meta-’ in method most likely indicates a change or progression (as in ‘metamorphosis’), in which case ‘method’ is going forward. However, ‘meta-’ could also denote a position behind, after, or beyond (as in ‘metatarsus’), in which case ‘method’ is marking the way so that we can find it again — which makes Charles Perrault’s *Le Petit Poucet* a very methodic boy.

Process and procedure are so close together as words, since they share a common root (Table 6), but so distant as concepts. ‘Process’ is a series of actions towards achieving a desired outcome, while ‘procedure’ is an established way of doing that — which is conceptually closer to the lexically distant ‘method’.

SOURCE	MEANING	DERIVATIVES
<i>odos</i> [Gk]	street, way	method
<i>cedere</i> [L]	to go	procedure; process

TABLE 6 Method and procedure

7 Strategy and other channeling

The buzzword ‘strategy’ (στρατηγία [Gk]) has very humble origins: it means ‘leading the army’, but most likely on foot. When the word was coined, the grand volume of the army consisted of *hoplites* (οπλίτες [Gk]), who were moving on foot. The main component στρατός [Gk] probably relates to the modern στράτα [Gk] (walk), and *strada* [L] (paved road). The second part of ‘strategy’, άγειν [Gk], is conceptually similar to ‘conducting’, or ‘channeling’ — Table 7.

SOURCE	MEANING	DERIVATIVES
<i>stratum</i> [L]	laid down, spread	strada [It], stratigraphy
<i>ducere</i> [L]	to lead	duct; conduct; induction; deduction
<i>agein</i> [Gk]	to lead	strategy

TABLE 7 Strategy and other channeling

The concept of ‘channeling’ or ‘guiding’ captured in ἀγειν [Gk] or *ducere* [L] gives rise to words such as the humble plumbing (water channeled in ducts), but also to the abstract mental operations of ‘induction’ (lead into) and ‘deduction’ (lead out of), and to the brute ‘abduction’, or forceful removal.

Documentation

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