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[A] Merleau-Ponty: A Phenomenological Philosophy of Mind and Body

Sara Heinämaa

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is nowadays celebrated as a forerunner of several important developments in philosophy of mind.[1] His phenomenological account of perception is taken as an antecedent to enactivist and externalist theories of perception and as a precursor of inquiries into preconceptual content. His work is cited by neuroscientists who work on mirror neurons as well as by connectionists who challenge the cognitivist paradigm of cognitive science.[2] More generally, he is seen as the initiator of the whole theoretical discourse on embodied consciousness with all its practical implications ranging from the treatment of psychopathologies to debates concerning bodily identities.[3]

These discussions highlight important aspects in Merleau-Ponty's works but, on the other hand, they give a one-sided view of his contribution to philosophical investigations of the human mind. Merleau-Ponty did not just come up with a set of ideas that proved crucial to later theory construction but developed a systematic and influential philosophy which includes a complete account of perception and cognition and their dependencies on our bodily-motor relations with the environing world. This philosophy is phenomenological in nature and its methods include the methods of reduction, first-person reflection and eidetic analysis.[4] This means that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy has deep roots in the phenomenological tradition of the 20th

century that began with Franz Brentano's philosophical psychology and received its first full articulation in Edmund Husserl's works in the '20s and '30s.[5]

Thus, if we want to avoid simplifications and misunderstandings and want to capture the core ideas of Merleau-Ponty's thinking in all their strength, the best way to approach his work is not to focus on its results merely—however relevant or useful these results may be to our own inquiries—but to start with a clarification of the philosophical questions, goals and method that lead to these results. Moreover, we also need to study Merleau-Ponty's original conception of the relationship between philosophy and the special sciences in order to see what relevance, if any, philosophical reflection may have to special scientific theoretization and what assistance special sciences, on the other hand, can give to philosophy.

For these reasons I will begin this essay with an exploration of the main conceptual and methodological starting points of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological of mind and body, and only after this proceed to discuss the results of his inquiries into perception, embodiment and intercorporeality as the foundation of intersubjectivity.

[B] 1. Behavior, Intentionality, Presentation: Conceptual Starting Points

The main question of Merleau-Ponty's lifelong philosophical investigations concerns the proper objects of the behavioural sciences, i.e. the sciences that study living organisms and their significant behaviours (comportment) in their proper environments (milieu). We can track the development of this questioning from Merleau-Ponty's first study The Structure of Behaviour (La structure du comportment, 1942) to his seminal work Phenomenology of Perception (Phénoménologie de la perception, 1945) and finally to the posthumous The Visible

and the Invisible (Le visible et l'invisible, 1964) which was planned to become a multi-part volume but only includes four preliminary chapters because of Merleau-Ponty's unexpected death. From the very first publications to the last manuscripts and lecture notes, Merleau-Ponty worked to clarify the relationship between consciousness and the world in its different modalities: perceptual and cognitive, personal and intersubjective, individual and social, human and pre-human, static and genetic.

The first thing to notice is that in the context of Merleau-Ponty's oeuvre, the term 'behaviour' must be understood in the phenomenological sense of practical intentionality that covers meaningful action and interaction as well as reactive comportment towards experienced things and events, both human and animal, both normal and abnormal. What is at issue are not the stimulus-response correlations theoretized by behaviouristic psychologists and philosophers but the ways in which humans and animals intend environing things,[6] act on them and react to them. The relevant correlation is thus between the living organism and its environment as it discloses itself to the organism.

The aim is to provide a philosophical foundation for the sciences that deal with such subjects and such objects. These sciences include psychological sciences and life sciences, but this foundational project also has important implications to bio-sciences, medical sciences, psychiatry, social sciences and the humanities (e.g. Merleau-Ponty, [1960] 1987, pp. 98–113; 1964, pp. 43–95).

Thus there is a foundationalist undercurrent in Merleau-Ponty's philosophical project. However, we must not associate phenomenological foundationalism with any reductivistic doctrines of subjectivism or idealism criticized by Richard Rorty (1979) and other neo-pragmatists. The aim is to provide an explication of the core

phenomena presupposed or taken for granted in the psychological sciences and the life sciences, not to reduce these sciences, their main concept or results, to some metaphysical principle or idea.

This kind of analytical foundationalism has roots in Edmund Husserl's phenomenological epistemology. (See Chapter 3.) Husserl argued that one of the main tasks of epistemology is to provide a clarification of the different regions of being that the sciences presuppose.[7] The objects that the geologists study, for example, are very different from the ones that the biologists investigate. Still both sciences deal with concrete material objects and thus both sciences differ from the sciences that work on ideal abstract objects, such as geometry, logics or generative grammar. To be sure all these objects share certain formal features, and these formal features must be clarified philosophically in formal ontology, but the sciences also differ in crucial respects and the differences too need a philosophical illumination if scientific thinking is to be a rational enterprise and not just a useful or productive project.

In the case of the science of geometry, for example, the task is to give an account of geometrical objects (geometrical points, triangles, circles etc.), their ways of being, and their ways of relating to other types of objects, empirical shapes, on the one hand, and other mathematical objects, numbers and functions, on the other hand (Husserl Hua6: 365–386; cf. Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, pp. 243ff., 385–388). In the case of psychology and the life sciences the task is to give an account of ensouled beings or 'minded beings', to use contemporary vocabulary, i.e. beings that have intentional relations to their environments and to other similar beings and that act on their environing objects on the basis of their intendings.

The psychological sciences are in a central role in Merleau-Ponty's philosophical enterprise since they thematize the very relation between the organism

and its environment that is presupposed in the other sciences that deal with minded beings, for example in social scientific discussions of human action, in medical discussions of pain behaviour and in zoological discussion of the mating behaviours and communicative relations of animals.

In the philosophical framework of Merleau-Ponty's investigations, the mind is essentially, i.e. necessarily, embodied.[8] So we are not dealing here with mental contents, immaterial substances, ideal spirits or dimensionless egos but with living bodies that operate and orient themselves in the environing world in significative ways.[9] In the preface to Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty famously writes: 'Truth does not "inhabit" only the "inner man", or more accurately, there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself. When I return to myself from an excursion into the realm of dogmatic common sense or of science, I find, not a source of intrinsic truth, but a subject destined to the world' ([1945] 1995, p. xi, cf. p. 407).[10]

The other remark that needs to be made concerns the concept of intentionality or intentional relating. The reference here is to what is usually called 'directedness' or 'aboutness' in analytical philosophy of mind and attributed to mental states. However, in Merleau-Ponty's case the concept of intentionality has to be understood in the broad phenomenological sense that questions three central tendencies of traditional analytical philosophy of mind: one-sided focus on judgments or judgmental acts, predominance of representational relations, and the mind-body opposition.[11]

Merleau-Ponty's intentional analyses proceed from perceptual experiences and their directionality to lived bodily movement, sensibility and affection, i.e. pre-conceptual modalities of consciousness that all have their own forms of directedness or aboutness different from the intentionality of judgments, cognitions and decisions.

These are not mental states in the abstract sense of lacking all bodily dimensions but involve the lived body of the perceiver, i.e. her sensing-moving body and its perceptual organs which are constantly co-intended in all perceptions directed at environing things and events (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, p. 77–79).

One must also bear in mind that intentionality in this context does not merely mean goal-directed action. As pointed out above, the phenomenological framework in which Merleau-Ponty operates, goal-directedness is called 'practical intentionality'. It covers all goals and all means to goals, human and non-human, explicit and tacit, precise and obscure. This type of intentionality is central in our actions, individual actions, joint actions and common human projects, and the understanding of its structures is crucial to the development ethics and political theory. However, practical intentionality is not the only way in which we intend objects. We can perceive environing things, for example some scenery, as beautiful (or ugly), and we can also study and describe entities in a disinterested manner without subjecting them or their ways of being to any human practices. These non-practical axiological and theoretical ways of intending are crucial to arts and sciences which, to be sure, are human practices but very particular kinds of practices since they essentially include non-practical ways of intending the world (Husserl Hua6: 325ff.). The aim of Merleau-Ponty is to clarify the relations between these different modalities of intentionality and to explicate, in particular, their functions in our perceptual lives.

The last thing that must be emphasized in respect to intentionality is that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analyses show that perception is not a representation of the perceived thing.[12] The perceived thing is present in perception in full flesh, so to say. It is not re-presented by any other entity, be it a mental state, a neural state or a component of some such state, or a picture, an image, an indicative

sign or a linguistic item. Already in The Structure of Behaviour Merleau-Ponty states: 'the possession of a representation or the exercise of judgment is not co-extensive with the life of consciousness. Rather consciousness is a network of significative intentions which are sometimes very clear to themselves and sometimes, on the contrary, lived [vévues] rather than known' (Merleau-Ponty, [1942] 2006, p. 173).

To be sure, the perceived thing only shows itself partly, it is not completely or fully present in perception. It gives some of its sides and profiles and hides others, and these vary depending on where we position ourselves and how we move in respect to the object. When I study my house from the porch, for example, the southern wall and the main door are there in front of my eyes, but the roof only shows its eaves. However, the roof too is intended in the perception of the house; I expect the roof to be there in so far as the object in front of me is a house. I do not merely think or judge that there is a roof, I approach the perceived object expecting to see a roof if I position myself in a certain way in respect to the building. In other words, intending an object as a house implies precisely this expectation or anticipation. If I climb up a tree next to the building, or fly above it in a helicopter, and see that the roof and the back side are missing, then I judge that the house that I saw is actually a ruin, an unfinished construction, or a piece of stage scenery.

This dynamic presence-absence structure is essential to all perception. When new sides of the object reveal themselves and when new aspects come to the fore, the prior ones sink to the margins of the perceptual field, are covered by new aspects and finally disappear.[13]

The sides and profiles with which the perceived thing shows itself should not be theoretized as intermediate entities that stand between the perceiver and the perceived. Rather these factors must be understood and conceptualized as the object's

very way of disclosing itself. They belong to the perceptual field as its structural elements.

[B] 2. On the Method

In The Structure of Behaviour, Merleau-Ponty proceeded by way of dialectical-critical analyses of the then available accounts of consciousness in order to clarify its relations to the natural world. While struggling with the deep anomalies of his contemporary empiricist and intellectualist philosophies[14] and psychologies, he realized that he needed a new philosophical method that would be powerful enough to counter their reductionistic tendencies and their oppositional conceptions of sensibility and understanding. This method he found in 20th century phenomenology, i.e. in the philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger: 'The suspension (epoche) of the natural movement which carries consciousness toward the world toward spatio-temporal existence, and which encloses it—this phenomenological reduction does not merely tend to a more faithful introspection: it is truly an introduction to a new mode of knowledge which moreover manifests the world as well as the self' (Merleau-Ponty, [1935] 1996, p. 91; cf. [1945] 1995, p. xxx).

What these authors shared was a specific methodology designed for the purpose of illuminating, describing and analysing our intentional relations to the world in all its modalities, practical, axiological and theoretical. While studying Husserl's manuscripts in Leuven, Belgium, in 1939 and discussing his findings with Husserl's former assistant Eugen Fink,[15] Merleau-Ponty had already realized that phenomenological methods would allow him to reformulate the question of consciousness in a radical new way, to pierce into the structures of perception and the

perceived thing and to investigate how these structures emerge in the process of experiencing (cf. Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, pp. vii–viii, 124–126).[16]

The phenomenological method is composed of a series of reductions. These however are not ontological steps that reduce areas of reality into other areas of reality, supposedly more fundamental or more primitive—steps, for example that reduce chemical components into physical particles, or steps that reduce the ideal objects of the sciences into historical practices or into the psyche of human beings. The phenomenological reduction is not a reduction of reality but is a reduction of our preconceptions of reality and the pre-established significations of the real involved in these conceptions. In it, we put into brackets or out of action all our habitual conceptions of reality—practical, theoretical, metaphysical and scientific—and study our experiences of things and events as they give themselves to us.[17] The aim is not to question or reject any preconceptions but to dispense with them in the description of experiences and the phenomena that they involve.

> It is because we are through and through compounded of relationships with the world that for us the only way to become aware of the facts is to suspend the resultant activity, to refuse our complicity (to look at it ohne mitzumachen, as Husserl often says), or yet again, to put it 'out of play'. Not because we reject the certainties of common sense and a natural attitude to things (…) but because, being the presupposed basis of any thought, they are taken for granted, and go unnoticed, and because in order to arouse them and bring them to view, we have to suspend for a moment our recognition of them (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1995, p. xiii, cf. pp. 395–398).

Thus conceived the phenomenological reduction is only a temporary suspension, not a permanent exclusion. After the clarifications that it makes possible, we can return to our cognitive and significative routines and continue our practical and theoretical lives as before. Phenomenology, like any self-responsible philosophy, leaves everything as it is, to use Wittgenstein's words (Wittgenstein [1953], 2009, §124, 55[e]). It must not proceed to suggest theoretical hypotheses or practical improvements since its task is to investigate the foundations on which such suggestions rest, and must rest.

Many of the other reductions that Husserl uses, e.g. the notorious 'reduction to the sphere of owness' (Hua1: 124ff.), are designed to help distinguishing between the different factors of experiencing and to illuminate their mutual dependences. The so-called eidetic reductions do not postulate essences, as is often assumed, but, by way of imaginary variations, distinguish between the dependent and the independent, the obvious and the hidden, the surfacing and the deeper factors of experiencing. In Phenomenology of Perception Merleau-Ponty characterizes the task of eidetic variation in an illuminative and colourful way: 'Husserl's essences are destined to bring back all the living relationships of experience, as the fisherman's net draws up from the depths of the ocean quivering fish and seaweed' ([1945] 1995, p. xv; cf. 1964, pp. 49–50).

For Merleau-Ponty, the most crucial of the phenomenological methods is the reduction of the objective sciences. His critique of objectivism in Phenomenology of Perception and his critique of reflective philosophy in The Visible and Invisible are both grounded on this critical idea. Merleau-Ponty found the reduction of the objective sciences described in Husserl's manuscript The Crisis of European Sciences

and Transcendental Phenomenology (Hua6: 138ff.). In this last of his works, Husserl argued that if we proceed to the phenomenological suspension immediately, i.e. if we proceed by a single enormous step, so to speak, then we easily neglect or disregard important relations of dependency between our various worldly dealings. Husserl called this way of proceeding 'the Cartesian way', since it resembled Descartes' radical doubt in its equalizing approch: all preconceptions, both scientific assumptions and practical convictions, both natural scientific theories and human scientific interpretations are evened up and put out of action in one unitary critical gesture (Hua6: 157–158). Such a reflective philosophical leap, Husserl argued could only be performed successfully by rare well-trained individuals or else by an ideal thinker, a God perhaps or an idealized version of ourselves. For concrete persons, phenomenology has to proceed by way of several steps. We must, so to speak, peel away layers of signification, and layers after layers, in order to reach the core experiences on which other experiences depend.

Husserl's The Crisis of European Sciences demonstrates that the entities of the objective world thematized, explained and conceptually articulated by the sciences are rational abstractions and idealizations resting on our direct experiences of the world (Hua6: 123ff., cf. Hua4: 191ff.). Husserl calls 'life-world' (Lebenswelt) the world of direct experience that is not given to us by theoretical methods and concepts but is composed of everyday practical and affective things and the persons that intend such things. The main argument of his work is that the philosophical delineation of the senses of science and scientific rationality demands that we make clear how, by what constitutive steps, the abstract entities of the objective sciences emerge from the things and the events of the life-world and from the intersubjective practices between persons operating in this world.

As I said, the life-world is a world occupied by practical things, e.g. utensils, tools and instruments of different sorts, and affective things, i.e. the things that attract and repulse our sensing moving bodies. Also scientific instruments of measurement and modelling belong here as practical tools as well as scientific results as achievements of human persons and communities of human persons. In a series of manuscripts on intersubjectivity (Hua15), Husserl introduces the concepts of home-world (Heimwelt) and alien-world (Fremdwelt) to argue that the common life-world of pre-scientific experience organizes itself along the lines of familiarity and foreignness so that what we actually have are multiple layers of more or less homely practical environments.[18]

In Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty undertakes to explicate the structures of the life-world ([1945] 1995, p. xviiff., pp. 299ff.). This requires the reduction of the objective sciences. At the very beginning of the work, he writes: 'To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the country-side in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is' ([1945] 1995, p. ix; cf. p. 23).

Merleau-Ponty's main interest, however, is in the most basic and most common layer or stratum of the life-world. This is the perceptual world, the world that is accessible to us simply as perceivers, independently of our cultural and historical practices and homely and alien interests. The objects of this world are not pieces of inert matter but are affective things that motivate us in different ways. The philosophical questions that Merleau-Ponty poses in Phenomenology of Perception concern the intentional structures of the perceptual world and its genetic constitution

in experience:

> The perceiving subject ceases to be an 'acosmic' thinking subject, and action, feeling and will remain to be explored as original ways of positing an object, since 'an object looks attractive and repulsive before it looks black or blue, circular or square'. (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, p. 24, cf. pp. 395–398)[19]

[B] 3. Intercorporeality

'Intercorporeality' (*intercorporéité*) is a general heading for one of the most important and influential results of Merleau-Ponty's intentional analyses. To put it simply, this term refers to the basic corporeal connection that we have to one another as bodily subjects, a connection that lays the ground for and makes possible other ways of intending. Several conceptual points must however be made in order to clarify this result and to dispose of possible misunderstandings. The most important of these concerns the concept of corporeality or embodiment.

In Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological framing, 'corporeality' does not refer to the causal-functional processes that are observed, hypothesized or discovered by physiologists or neurophysiologists (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, pp. 72ff., 105–106). What is at issue is a specific type of phenomenon in which our own operating body takes part in the disclosure of the perceptual object and at the same time appears itself at the margins of the perceptual field.[20] For example, when a goalkeeper in an ice hockey match notices an approaching puck, the thematic object of his perceptual experience is this threatening moving entity, this black and round thing that flies toward him with great speed, but at the same time his experience also involves several

marginal factors, e.g. his ice hockey stick, the goal, the teammates and the opponents. But this is not all. In addition to the thematic object and the marginal objects, the goalkeeper also experiences his own living and operating body in a specific way. The body is not at the centre of his attention, as it may be when he is learning a new bodily skill or is being treated by a dentist. Rather than being the object of thematic attention, his body is his fundamental grasp upon the world and the zero-point of orientation from which all his perceptions issue. It is permanently with him and never completely disappears from his perceptual field, but it constantly gives itself in a peculiarly fixed perspective: 'It is neither tangible nor visible in so far as it is that which sees and touches. The body therefore is not one more among external objects, with the peculiarity of always being there. If it is permanent, the permanence is absolute and is the ground for the relative permanence of disappearing objects, real objects' (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, p. 92, pp. 278–279).[21]

Following Husserl, Merleau-Ponty argues that each perceptual experience involves a marginally given functioning body, a set of operating organs, and a general gestalt of bodily operating (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, pp. 316–317, cf. pp. 101–103). Thus understood, our bodies are not things or entities encountered in the world but are our means of experiencing things and acting on them. To be sure, we can objectify our operating bodies, study and treat them as things among other things, and we do this in multiple situations and for many different purposes, practical, theoretical and political. This possibility of objectification belongs essentially to our bodily existence. However, the phenomenologist argues that the objectification of our operating bodies is not a free possibility but is grounded in and motivated by experiences in which external objects are given to us by means of our own operating bodies. Thus the objectifying attitude is not self-supporting or independent but rests

on a more fundamental attitude in which bodies are given to us as our means of having thingly objects (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, pp. 360–361).

The body as a power of having things it is not bound or limited to any particular entities or groups of entities. Rather it is a general potential that allows us to relate to all things, actual or possible, real or imaginable. It is 'our general power of inhabiting all the environments that the world contains' (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, p. 311). We may imagine and picture things that are beyond our reach, experienced merely by animals or extra-terrestial intelligences, but each such imagination and picturing draws its sense from the experiential relation that is established between our own operating bodies and the things (cf. Hua4: 56–57).

In Phenomenology Merleau-Ponty argues that the phenomenological tradition—as all post-Kantian philosophy—has been preoccupied with practical and cognitive relations to the extent that it has neglected the analysis of a more fundamental type of bodily relating. Our bodies are not merely tools or instruments for the uncovering and manipulation of objects; they are also communicative expressive gestures by which we address one another and respond to the addresses of other minded beings (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1995, pp. 145ff.).

Merleau-Ponty calls 'intercorporeality' the immediate communicative and expressive connection that prevails between living bodies of humans and animals independently of their social roles and cultural circumstances. The best known example that he gives of this fundamental phenomenon is a young infant who is able to recognize the bodily intentions of an adult by merely looking at his facial movements:

> A baby of fifteen months opens its mouth if I playfully take one of its fingers between my teeth and pretend to bite. And yet it has scarcely looked at its face in the glass, and its teeth are not in any case like mine. The fact is that its own mouth and teeth, as it feels them from the inside, are immediately, for it, an apparatus to bite with, and my jaw, as the baby sees it from the outside, is immediately for it, capable of the same intentions. (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, p. 352, cf. 1964, pp. 117–118)

Intercorporeality is a direct recognition of the other body as similar to one's own body. The similarity at issue is not merely that of visual and tactile form but also, and more importantly, that of intentional movement, i.e. directional movement in respect to one's own body and directional movement in respect to other bodies, toward them, away from them, along with them and in line with them (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, p. 354, cf. Hua1: 142–144).

The connection is direct in the sense that it is not mediated by any thought-processes or inferences, such as introjection, projection, simulation, analogical inference, conceptual subsumption or theoretical or practical reasoning.[22] The link between the two bodies is constituted simply on the basis of the similarity of their manners of moving:

> It is imperative to recognize that we have here neither comparison, nor analogy, nor projection or 'introjection'. The reason why I have evidence of the other man's being-there when I shake his hand is that his hand is substituted for my left hand, and my body annexes the body

> of another person in that 'sort of reflection' it is paradoxically the seat of. My two hands 'coexist' or are 'compresent' because they are one single body's hands. The other person appears through an extension of that compresence; he and I are like organs of one single intercorporeality. (Merleau-Ponty. [1960] 1987, p. 168)

This immediate recognition of similarity is possible because neither body 'coincides' exactly with itself. Neither is a self-enclosed unitary system but both are internally divided or differentiated in a specific way: In each living body, each performed movement is given, so to speak, both from 'inside', i.e. kinaesthetically, and from 'outside', i.e. tactually or visually.[23] I raise my arm, and I see the arm moving at the same time as I feel its movement kinaesthetically. The body is thus a dual system, a dynamic intertwinement of interiority and exteriority. Its duality is constituted in the fundamental process in which our movements are localized in different parts of our bodies, in the tongue, in the lips, in the face, in the fingers, in the legs, etc. This means that intercorporeality and intersubjectivity are grounded in the experiential structures of our own bodies. Husserl argues very strongly and consistently for this constitutive fact (e.g. Hua1: 127ff.; Hua4: 164–175, 197–200; Hua6: 106–108, 220–221), but we find the same insight defended by Merleau-Ponty in Phenomenology:

> Through phenomenological reflection I discover vision, not as a 'thinking about seeing', to use Descartes' expression, but as a gaze at grips with a visible world, and that is why for me there can be another gaze; that expressive instrument called a face can carry an

> existence [conscious subject], as my own existence is carried by my body, that knowledge-acquiring apparatus. (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, p. 351, emphasis added; cf. pp. 92–93; cf. 1964, pp. 120–121, [1964] 1975, pp. 80–82, 123–125, 192)[24]

Thus intercorporeality does not mean that separate bodies or bodily functions blend or merge to form one unified super-body, as is sometimes suggested. What it means is an immediate corporeal correspondence between individual bodily subjects or 'minded bodies', grounded on the kinaesthetic, proprioceptic and sensory capacities of the bodies in question. On the basis of this basic correspondence, human and animal bodies can spontaneously operate in concert, i.e. in coherence and harmony.

Merleau-Ponty's own examples include the practice of dancing with a partner and the gesture of shaking hands (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, pp. 142–143; [1960] 1978, p. 168; [1964] 1975, p. 142), but we can easily come up with equally illuminating examples that involve other parts of our operating bodies, e.g. swimming together, singing together or working together. Moreover, the experiences of playing football in a team and playing music with an orchestra highlight the fact that body-subjects who operate in concert do not have to perform movements that are physiologically identical or similar, but can by their own movements complement, support and vary the movements of one another. Finally, the bodies operating in concert do not have to belong to one biological species but can also differ grossly by structure, size and/or visual shape. A familiar example is the activity of riding a horse but studies of primates demonstrate that interspecies intercorporeality is not limited

by the boundaries of tactile contact or material exchange but includes visual and auditory signs.[25]

[B] 4. The Body-Schema, the Body-Image and the Habit-Body

As we saw above, intercorporeality is an immediate associative pairing of two, or several, bodies based on their manners of bodily comportment. The association is not established merely between the visual shapes of the bodies or between any of their singular gestures, movements or positions. Rather intercorporeality combines manners of moving, i.e. continuous modes of directed bodily comportment.

Merleau-Ponty uses the term 'body schema' (scheme corporel) to denote the invariant that is manifested in the bodily movements, gestures and comportments of an individual person ([1945] 1995, p. 141, cf. 1964, pp. 117–118). Rather than characterizing a static unity of substance, the concept of body schema denotes a dynamic unity of style.[26] It not only combines actual movements but also delineates a range of possible movements. Intercorporeality is to be understood as the communication or correspondence of body schemas.

As such the concept of body schema must be distinguished from that of the body image.[27] The difference is not that the former is subconscious or preconscious and the latter is conscious, or that the former is preconceptual and the later is conceptual, as is sometimes claimed.[28] Rather the distinction is in the degree of concreteness that these two phenomena have: whereas the body schema involves all senses and incorporates the synergy of motility, tactility and visibility, the body image is focused on the visual aspects of the experiential body merely. Both structures are preconceptual in Husserl's sense, i.e. neither depends on any concept under which individual gestures, postures and movements would be subsumed; both operate

simply on partial and overlapping similarities between gestures, postures and movements (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1995, pp. 233–235).[29]

Merleau-Ponty also argues that the human body is able to extend its motor schema to environing things, to animate them and include them in its own dynamism. The best known example that he gives of this process is the blind man's cane. The cane is not a proper part of the blind person's lived body, since the person does not sense in it, but the cane becomes "an area of sensitivity" for the person in so far as her kinaesthetic sensations and touch sensations combine systematically with the movements of the stick (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1995, pp. 143, 152–153).

Similarly also many other types of things can be incorporated into the lived body, e.g., utensils, tools, musical instruments and vehicles. The incorporation of these entities requires large-scale rearrangement and reconstruction of the body schema. Also learning bodily skills and acquiring or unlearning bodily habits demand that we refashion our body schemas. The required change is a change in the manner or style of movement and comportment. This does not compromise the fact that the body schema is invariant, since its changes – evident in these phenomena – manifest the same style that characterizes the motor process itself.

By the analyses of intercorporeality and its experiential foundations in the reflective structures of our own bodies, Merleau-Ponty demonstrates that human consciousness can be comprehended neither as a result of mere mechanical processes nor a as an intellectual power of judgment or conceptual articulation. Perceptual consciousness is embodied, its embodiment is intentional and its intentionality is deeply rooted in kinaestesia and sensibility.

Thus Merleau-Ponty's philosophy clarifies the experiential ground from which the two dominant paradigms – disembodied mind and mechanical body – emerge by

various processes of abstraction and idealization. It shows that these two abstractive models have governed modern philosophy since Descartes and Kant, and it also demonstrates how they guide investigations in behavioural and psychological sciences. Hereby Merleau-Ponty's discussion serves an important critical function but at the same time it outlines an alternative approach in the investigation of the human mind based on radical phenomenological inquiries into perception and motility. The task at hand is not so much to make use of the results of these investigations but rather to capture their way of questioning and to apply it in new areas of interest.

B] References

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[1] E.g. Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 1991; Dreyfus, 2002a, 2002b, 2005; Noë, 2004; Gallagher and Zahavi, 2005; Gallagher, 2009, pp. 368–369; Berendzen, 2009; Schear (ed.), 2012.

[2] Marco Iacoboni (2008), for example, uses the results of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological inquiries to develop his hypotheses concerning mirror neurons.

[3] By bodily identities, I mean social-personal identities related the different aspects and dimensions of the lived body, e.g. identities related to body size and scale (manifesting for example in eating disorders), identities related to bodily skills and capabilities (professional, athletic, etc.), gender identities, and identities of sexual orientation. For phenomenology-influenced discussions of eating disorders, see, e.g., Turner, 1992; Jacobson, 2006; Bowden, 2012. For phenomenology of gender identities, see Heinämaa, 2012.

[4] One of the main methodological elements of Husserlian phenomenology is eidetic analysis. This is the phase in the analysis that aims at disclosing the essential structural features of the experiences at issue. One example of such structures is the

act-object-background structure discussed in note 6 below. Another example is the temporal structure of perceptual experience which includes an indexical present and two-directional references that bind the present to former and subsequent moments of perceiving (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, pp. 68–69).

Husserl called such structures 'the essences' or 'the eide' of intentional experiences, but he argued that one should not confuse his eidetic analysis of experiences with Platonism nor reify or objectify any essences that this analysis may disclose (cf. Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, pp. xiv–xv; cf. Heinämaa, 1999, 2002). Thus the still common Rylean line of critique that rejects Husserl's phenomenology as a form of Platonism is based on a misunderstanding (e.g. Ryle, [1928] 2009, [1958, 1971] 2009). Cf. O'Connor, 2012

[5] For the philosophical-historical starting points of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological inquiries, see, Moran, 2000, especially pp. 23–67.

[6] 'To intend an object' in this framework means to have an intentional relation to the world or the environment with a focus on a specific thematic object, a thing or an event. Such a relation involves (a) an attentive focus from the part of a conscious subject, human or animal, and (b) an articulation of the world or the environment as consisting of an object and a non-thematic background from which the thematized object stands out (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, pp. 48ff., 68–69, 101–103). Thus understood each intentional relation, each intending of an object, is a dynamic structure with three main elements: the intending act, the intended object and the background from which the object stands out (the corresponding technical terms are: 'the noetic act', 'the noematic object' and 'the horizon'). Despite the simplicity of its basic structure, such a relation involves structural complexity in terms of temporality and in terms of its conditions.

[7] Welton, 2000, pp. 53–56; cf. Husserl Hua3: 20–23.

[8] Merleau-Ponty uses the concepts soul (*âme*), psyche (*psyché*) and spirit (*esprit*) to thematize different aspects of consciousness as well as different approaches to consciousness. In this his analysis refers back to the analyses of Sartre, Husserl, Descartes and Aristotle.

[9] By 'significative orientation and operation', I mean behaviour that has significance for the subject in question. For example, I raise my arm in order to reach an orange in the tree and then I raise my arm again in order to stretch my muscles. These two movements may look identical for an external observer, but for the moving subject they bear different practical significations or senses. I may also perform a physiologically identical movement while dancing salsa in a club, but here the movement does not have practical sense but bears aesthetic and/or erotic significations. Cf., Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, pp. 110ff., 137ff.

[10] This statement is a direct comment on St. Augustine's discourse on 'the inner self' and 'the inner space' but it is targeted at the whole internalist and immanentist tradition that began with his reflections, was rearticulated in the 17th century by empiricist such as Locke and Hobbes as the idea of 'the inner theatre' of the mind, reformulated by the 18th century psychologists, Wundt and his followers, as the idea of introspection, and finally demolished by 20th century critics such as Gilbert Ryle (1949) and Michel Foucault (1984).

The transcendental self and the transcendental person as sense-giving subjects, disclosed by phenomenological critique, are often wrongly associated with such inner agents but as Merleau-Ponty argues these subjects are essentially relational and connected to the 'outer', intersubjective or objective world by multiple linkages of intentionality. Thus, following Husserl, Merleau-Ponty contends that we should not

interpret the thinking ego, discovered by Descartes, as a homunculus but must understand it as a structural feature of experiencing (Husserl Hua1: 100–120; Hua4: 103–183, 324; Hua6: 174–175; Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, pp. 398–407).

[11] Brentano and Husserl.

[12] Here too Merleau-Ponty's analyses agree with those of Husserl (e.g. Hua3: 78–80; cf. Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, pp. 137–139).

[13] This structure is called the horizon-structure of perception. The phenomenological concept of horizon has important systematic and historical connections to William James' pragmatic concept of fringe (e.g. James, [1892] 2001, pp. 85ff.). For this connection, see Husserl Hua6: 267.

[14] By 'intellectualism' Merleau-Ponty refers to Kantian philosophies.

[15] Toadvine, 2002, pp. 174–176. On Husserl's influence on Merleau-Ponty see the articles in the volume Merleau-Ponty's Reading of Husserl (2002), edited by Ted Toadvine and Lester Embree.

[16] The best explication of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical methods can be found in his own works, Phenomenology of Perception and The Visible and the Invisible. The preface and the first part of Phenomenology together make clear that the method used in this work is phenomenological in the sense that it proceeds by reductions, by first person descriptions (p. 77), by intentional analyses, by eidetic variations and by genetic-phenomenological inquiries (p. xviii, pp. 125–126). Moreover, Merleau-Ponty also operates with a set of analytical concepts developed by Husserl, the concepts of attitude (pp. 39ff.), evidence (p. xvi, p. 23), sedimentation (pp. 136–137, 140, 395), horizon (p. 68, cf. p. 302), inner time-consciousness (pp. 68–69, cf. pp. 410ff.) and expressive relation (p. 160, pp. 174ff.).

[17] In this context, experience must not be assimilated with any part or kind of reality, e.g. mental state, psychic disposition or social relation. Rather the term 'experience' refers to our basic relationship to reality.

[18] For a comprehensive account of the concepts of home-world and alien-world, see Steinbock, 1995.

[19] Merleau-Ponty's quote here is from Kurt Koffka's The Growth of the Mind (Koffka, [1924] 2000, p. 320). Koffka was one of the early Gestalt theorists, the results of whom Merleau-Ponty both used and criticized in his Phenomenology. For Merleau-Ponty's transcendental-phenomenological critique of Gestalt theories, see his Phenomenology ([1945] 1995, pp. 45–51); cf. Heinämaa, 2009.

[20] Merleau-Ponty introduces the concept of intercorporeality in the reading that he gives of Husserl's analysis of embodiment. This discussion is most explicit in the late essay titled 'The philosopher and his shadow' ([1960], 1987, pp. 166–168) but Merleau-Ponty uses Husserl's analyses of embodiment and intersubjectivity extensively already in Phenomenology ([1945] 1995, pp. 92–93, 405–409; cf. [1964] 1975, p. 133, pp. 140–148, 254–257). The focus of his interest is in the reflexive relation that living experiencing bodies or body-subjects have to themselves: When a human person (or a primate) touches herself, for example when she grasps her left wrist with her right hand fingers, the so-called double sensation—i.e. the kinaesthetic sensation of the gesture of touching and the tactile sensation of contact—that characterize each act of touching are doubled. We can consequently distinguish between four sensations that are interconnected in such touchings: (i) the kinaesthetic sensation of movement, and (ii) the tactile sensation of encountering a soft smooth surface (resistance), both of which belongs to the right hand, and (iii) the kinaesthetic-proprioceptic sensation of rest, and (iv) the tactile sensation of being touched by a

moving object, both of which belong to the left hand. For a more complete explication, see Heinämaa, 2010, 2011a.

In Phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty uses this phenomenon as a model for the conceptualization of other types of perceptual relations, most importantly for the conceptualization of the body-thing relation and the body-body relation. In The Visible and the Invisible he takes a step forward and outlines a comprehensive philosophy of nature on the basis of this reflexive way of relating so that he can claim that the human body, or the animal body, is the nature's way of studying itself. Cf. [1960] 1987, p. 170–171.

[21] Merleau-Ponty draws here directly from Husserl: 'The same living body which serves me as means for all my perceptions obstructs me in the perception of itself and is a remarkably imperfectly constituted thing [Ding]' (Husserl Hua4: 159; cf. Stein, [1917] 1989, pp. 41–49; Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, p. 92, p. 406).

[22] Thus intercorporeality also precedes all process of volitional recognition (in the Hegelian) sense and provides the foundation for such processes.

[23] Already in Phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty introduces the metaphors of folds and folding to characterize the relationship that the bodily subject has to itself: 'I am not, therefore, in Hegel's phrase, "a hole in being", but a hollow [creux], a fold [pli], which has been made and which can be unmade' (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1995, p. 215; cf. [1964] 1975, p. 192). However, this metaphor receives a much more central and general function in his late work The Visible and the Invisible in which Merleau-Ponty uses it to develop a complete philosophy of living nature.

[24] Diverging from Heidegger, and the pragmatists, Merleau-Ponty does not see Descartes as the proponent of subjectivistic or dualistic metaphysics but discusses him as the forefather of all modern thinking, subjectivistic as well as objectivistic,

positivistic as well as radical, rigorously scientific as well as fundamentally ontological. (See Chapter 2.) In the introduction to the collection Signs (Signes, 1960), he writes: 'Are you or are you not Cartesian? The question does not make much sense, since those who reject this or that in Descartes do so only in terms of reasons which owe a lot to Descartes' ([1960] 1987, p. 11). In Eye and Mind (L'œil et l'esprit, 1961), he argues that the idea of the embodied subject developed by him in Phenomenology of Perception in the line with Husserl has important roots in Descartes' reflections, more precisely in his discourse on the mind-body compound (union) and the so-called 'third way of knowing' that thematizes this compound: 'We are the compound of the soul and the body, and so there must be a thought of it. To this knowledge of position and situation Descartes owes what he himself says about it or what he says sometimes (…) about the exterior world "at the end" of our hands. Here the body is not the means of vision and touch but their depository' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, pp. 177–178; cf. [1945] 1995, pp. 198–199; cf. Heinämaa, 2003).

[25] On the ontogenetic basis of communicative gestures in animals, see, e.g. Halina, Rossano and Tomasello 2013.

[26] On the Husserlian starting points of Merleau-Ponty's concepts of style and stylistic unity, see his Phenomenology and the collection Signs ([1945] 1995, pp. 273–274, 280–282, 315–316, 327–330; 403–407, 455; cf. [1960] 1987, pp. 52-55, 65–68; [1964] 1975, pp. 10–13; [1969] 1973, pp. 56–57).

[27] For Merleau-Ponty, neither the body schema nor the body image is a representation of the body (experienced, thought or observed). Thus, his analysis differs from discussions in which the body schema and the body image are juxtaposed and compared as two different kinds of representations of the objective body (e.g. Vignemont, 2009).

[28] E.g. Gallagher and Cole, 1995; Preester and Knockaert (eds.), 2005.

[29] Merleau-Ponty's concept of body schema has important connections to Husserl's phenomenology of types (Husserl, [1939] 1985) and to Kant's schematicism. For a more detailed discussion of this background, see Heinämaa, 2011b.