

## Husserl's Deconstruction of Merleau-Ponty's Corporeal Intersubjectivity

### Abstract:

In this paper, I show how Husserl, via the method of the epoche, dissolves Merleau-Ponty's starting point in the gestalt structuralism of primary corporeal intersubjectivity, revealing a more radically temporal foundation that has nothing of gestalt form in it. Whereas for Merleau-Ponty, the dependency of the parts belonging to a whole is a presupposed unity, for Husserl, a whole instantiates a temporal story unfolding each of its parts out of the others associatively-synthetically as the furthering of a continuous progression or enrichment of sense. As a consequence of the deconstruction of the gestalt, Husserl's notion of the foreign must be understood in different terms than that of corporeal otherness. He offers an otherness to self that manifests itself as a thematic belonging to self whose self-similarity presupposes and is built from this irreducible foreignness. This is not a privileging of the same over the different, but rather a situating of the binary in a more insubstantial and therefore more intimate space of relationship than that of corporeal embodiment.

In recent years, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty have become valuable sources of inspiration for philosophers and psychologists embracing embodied approaches to consciousness. A common tendency within this scholarly community is to judge the success of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology by how closely it aligns with Merleau-Ponty's project. Some believe that Merleau-Ponty nudged phenomenology further along in the direction that Husserl was aiming toward in his later years, the implication being that Merleau-Ponty's project is a more radical one than Husserl's and that Husserl was not able to overcome a tendency to fall back into transcendental solipsism, subjectivism, Kantian idealism. Others claim that a reading of the entire Husserlian oeuvre including unpublished manuscripts reveals Husserl to have escaped these charges of Cartesianism. In either case it is Merleau-Ponty's embodied phenomenology that is often used as the yardstick by which to measure Husserl's account.

The thesis I will argue here is that a crucial dimension of Husserl's philosophy is being missed when we read Husserl using Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception as a normative frame of reference. Instead, I offer a reading of Husserl that shows him to have undertaken a deconstruction of Merleau-Ponty's starting point in the structuralism of gestalt corporeality. Following from this, Husserl's approach offers a decisive alternative to Merleau-Ponty's explanation of the role of alterity in one's relationship to one's body as well as intersubjective engagements.

Let me begin with a brief outline of Merleau-Ponty's notion of corporeal structure. For Merleau-Ponty, the body of perception is the underpinning of being in the world, and the primordial basis of perception is the gestalt structure.

"Each point in its turn can be perceived only as a figure on a background. When Gestalt theory informs us that a figure on a background is the simplest sense-given available to us, we reply that this

is not a contingent characteristic of factual perception, which leaves us free, in an ideal analysis, to bring in the notion of impressions. It is the very definition of the phenomenon of perception, that without which a phenomenon cannot be said to be perception at all. The perceptual 'something' is always in the middle of something else, it always forms part of a 'field'." (Phenomenology of Perception, p.4)

When Merleau-Ponty says a figure appears against a background, we can understand this to mean that the background is the system(ensemble, constellation, environment, setting, scene) that the figure belongs to. Figure-ground together form a 'spontaneous arrangement of parts' in which, 'its parts together make up a whole to which each is related without leaving its place' (Phenomenology of Perception, p.16). The figure cannot be understood outside of its role in this systematic totality. The ensemble has properties which are irreducible to those of the assembled elements. Merleau-Ponty makes internally centered structure irreducible. Gestalt is a founding configuration.

"The 'real' is that environment in which each moment is not only inseparable from the rest, but in some way synonymous with them, in which the 'aspects' are mutually signficatory and absolutely equivalent... The thing is that manner of being for which the complete definition of one of its attributes demands that of the subject in its entirety; an entity, consequently, the significance of which is indistinguishable from its total appearance."(P of Perception, p.376)

" It is as much of my essence to have a body as it is the future's to be the future of a certain present. So that neither scientific thematization nor objective thought can discover a single bodily function strictly independent of existential structures, or conversely a single 'spiritual' act which does not rest on a bodily infrastructure. "(P. of Perception, p.501)

Merleau-Ponty sees intersubjectivity as a simultaneous configuration of parts just as he does perception of objects. Sense always co-implies body, and subjectivity belongs to intersubjectivity. Being in the world for Merleau-Ponty is occupying a position within a shared gestalt (the same world for everyone). I am primordially situated in an intersubjective world.

How does Husserl's treatment of the concept of the whole-part relationship compare with Merleau-Ponty's? Scattered throughout Husserl's writings are descriptions of many different kinds of whole-part relations within both lower passive and higher active egoic constitutive strata. There are whole-part structures constituted as associative fusion, explication, objectification, relational plurality, and apperceptive intersubjective pairing, to name a few. Husserl defines a whole in the broadest sense in the following way: "by whole is understood every unitary object which admits of partial apprehensions, that is, a penetrative, explicative contemplation, and by"part" every explicate that results therefrom. "(Ex and Judgement, p.141).

Conspicuously missing from this definition is that feature of a totality which qualifies it as a gestalt, the dependence of the meaning of the parts on the whole. If we attempt to find in Husserl's work a narrower delineation of whole-part structuration which captures the essence of the gestalt field, we might at first believe we have found it in his analyses of the apprehension of a spatial object.

When one apprehends a spatial object in terms of a quality or property that one notices in it at any particular moment (its color, shape, size) both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty speak of such explications as dependent moments of the object, that is, as determinations of a 'part' whose meaning is dependent on the whole. Husserl writes:

"To pin down the concept of non-independence, it is enough to say that a non-independent object can only be what it is (i.e. what it is in virtue of its essential properties) in a more comprehensive whole." (logical investigations, p.169). Before we assume that Husserl and Merleau-Ponty have in mind the same concept of dependency with regard to the determinations of the moments of a spatial object, we need to take seriously Merleau-Ponty's own critique of the Husserlian model of the constitution of the object.

Husserl's reduction of the simultaneous Gestalt perception to a temporal structuration:

Merleau-Ponty sees acts of synthesis and constitution, what he calls signification, as derivative and secondary in relation to structure (gestalt), which defines the world and is therefore the condition of possibility of synthetic, constitutive acts. From this vantage, it appears to Merleau-Ponty that Husserl treats the elements of a flowing multiplicity of hyletic data as positive essences, as objects separable from what conditions them via subjective history. Instead, he argues, "There is no hylé, no sensation which is not in communication with other sensations or the sensations of other people." (P. Of Perception, p.471). Perceptual essence

"is not a positive element, not a quiddity; it is rather a divergence within the corporeal field of things. The unity of the thing is of a piece with the unity of the entire field; and this field is grasped not as a unity of parts but as a living ensemble. The living ensemble cannot be recomposed of essences in the sense of *eide*, since these are positives – signficatory atoms or constants. Hence, the eidetic method is in reality an idealistic variant of the constancy hypothesis [a point-by-point correspondence between a stimulus and the perception of it]." (Phenomenological Method in Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Gurwitsch, Ted Toadvine, p.200).

### **Multiplicity as Collective Combination:**

Merleau-Ponty is correct that for Husserl a totality is grasped 'as a unity of parts', but I believe Merleau-Ponty misunderstands how singular elements of meaning (primal impressions) function for Husserl in relation to totalities. (I will discuss later the relationship between hyletic data and the body in Husserl's account.) The central issue between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty concerns the following: Is there a way to view Husserl's alternative to Merleau-Ponty's gestalt corporeality not as a problematic treatment of ordinary otherness, but as putting into question the philosophical justification (whether as phenomenology or ontology) of Merleau-Ponty's configurational grounding of experience as centered totality?

In *Philosophy of Arithmetic* (1891), well before his first forays into transcendental subjectivity, Husserl described a method for understanding the constitution of a multiplicity or plurality composed of independent parts, which he dubbed 'collective combination'. It may seem odd to introduce an analysis of whole-part relation that begins from independent parts rather than the dependent moments of a whole that gestalt structure presumes to comprise. However, as will be

made evident shortly, I aim to demonstrate that the so-called dependent elements of a gestalt do not in fact meet Husserl's criterion of radical dependence.

According to Husserl, the basis of any sort of whole of independently apprehended parts (a whole in the pregnant sense) is the collective combination, which is an abstracting act of consciousness uniting parts.

“Collective combination plays a highly significant role in our mental life as a whole. Every complex phenomenon which presupposes parts that are separately and specifically noticed, every higher mental and emotional activity, requires, in order to be able to arise at all, collective combinations of partial phenomena. There could never even be a representation of one of the more simple relations (e.g., identity, similarity, etc.) if a unitary interest and, simultaneously with it, an act of noticing did not pick out the terms of the relation and hold them together as unified. This 'psychical' relation is, thus, an indispensable psychological precondition of every relation and combination whatsoever.”(p.78)

He conducted these researches under a psychological rubric, leading to accusations of psychologism from Frege and others. Ten years later he understood his method to be phenomenological, correcting the impressions of psychologism without affecting the substance of his description of the constitution of totality. In *Experience and Judgement*, he conducts a similar investigation under the heading of apprehension of plurality.

In any such whole the parts are united in a specific manner. Fundamental to the genesis of almost all totalities is that its parts initially appear as a temporal succession.

“Succession in time constitutes an insuppressible *psychological precondition* for the formation of by far the most number concepts and concrete multiplicities - and practically all of the more complicated concepts in general.”(Phil of Arithmetic, p.29) “Almost all representations of multiplicities - and, in any case, all representations of numbers - are results of *processes*, are wholes originated *gradually* out of their elements. Insofar as this is so, each element bears in itself a different temporal determination.”(p.33) “Temporal succession forms the only common element in all cases of multiplicity, which therefore must constitute the foundation for the abstraction of that concept.”(p.30)

While the first step of constitution of a multiplicity is the awareness of the temporal succession of parts, each of which we are made aware of as elements “separately and specifically noticed”, the collective combination itself only emerges from a secondary act of consciousness. This higher order constituting sense changes what was originally a temporal succession into a simultaneity by ‘bringing’ back ‘the previous parts via reflecting on them in memory. Husserl says that a combination of objects is similar to the continuity of a tone. In both cases, a temporal succession is perceived through reflection as a simultaneity.

“For the apprehension of each one of the colligated contents there is required a distinct psychical act. Grasping them together then requires a new act, which obviously includes those distinct acts, and thus forms a psychical act of second order.”(p.77) “It is essential that the partial representations united in the representation of the multiplicity or number be present in our consciousness *simultaneously* [in an act of reflection].”(p.33)

The constitution of an abstract multiplicity is analogous to the creation of any whole, even though the former involves a peculiarly external form of unification in comparison to combinations unified by similarity or continuity.

A key feature of the fact that a totality is a product of a temporally unfolding series of sense acts is that prior elements of the originally apprehended series have already changed by the time we move on to the succeeding elements of that series. "In forming the representation of the totality we do not attend to the fact that changes in the contents occur as the colligation progresses."(p.32) The secondary sense-forming act of the uniting of the parts into the whole is not, then, 'faithful' to the original meaning of the parts it colligates, in that they have already changed their original sense via the passage of time at the point where we perform the uniting act of multiplicity. Rather than a being faithful, the sense of the unification act may better be described as a moving beyond the original sense-constituting acts forming the apprehension of the parts.

In forming a new dimension of sense from retentional and protentional consciousness, the unifying act of totalization idealizes the parts that it unifies. In addition to the abstractive concept of groupness (collective combination), many kinds of more intimate idealizations are constituted as wholes out of original temporal successions. We can see this clearly in the case of the real object, an ideal totality formed out of a continuous synthetic flow of adumbrations in which what is actually experienced in the present is not the 'faithful', that is, actual presencing of temporally simultaneous elements but a simultaneity of retentional series, present sense and protentional anticipations.

Let me conclude this discussion by emphasizing three fundamental features brought out by the analysis of the collective combination :

- 1) The would-be simultaneity of 'all these right here right now' must be experienced originally as a series of temporal creations birthing, via association, my apprehension of each part from my apprehension of a previous.
- 2) In an act subsequent to the sequential apprehension of parts, when the ensemble does appear as a simultaneity, it is not as a presence of multiple parts, but as a synthesis of recollection, presencing and protention. Co-existence is never the appearance 'at the same time , in the same space' of multiple presencing, but a synthesis of memory, the now, and expectation. It is "the coexistence of retentions with the sensible point as momentary primordial coexistence"(Active and Passive Synthesis, p.479).
- 3) The unity connecting all of them together in the 'same' instant requires a secondary act , a new temporal creation, a new 'object' of sense beyond the succession of original apprehensions of the individual parts. The whole, forming the full latent meaning of each part as all belonging equally to the same multiplicity, is the result of a secondary creative act motivated by the experiencing of the original parts, but constituting a new sense going beyond the parts, enriching their meaning rather than capturing it. Association connects separated consciousnesses to a consciousness of a higher order. "Unity, ipseity, is given to consciousness through a higher consciousness founded in multiple consciousnesses, precisely in "synthetic" unitary consciousness."(Passive and Active Synthesis, p.487). Thus, for Husserl an entire ongoing history underlies an 'all of these all at once unified in this way'.

Although the collective combination is a peculiarly abstractive and externalistic form of whole-part relation, these three features necessarily inhere in all types of wholes. To understand this more clearly, let's look at an example where the 'parts' of a whole make up dependent moments of the object rather than being independent of each other. The explication of the moments of a spatial object in terms of individual determinations of its qualities and properties provides us with such an example. For Husserl the object as I experience it this moment in any of its aspects is the full, synthetically unified concatenation of contents from memory, anticipation and presence. Whereas in the case of the collective combination, each part bears no relation to the others, in the constitution of the spatial object via adumbrated synthesis, each step coincides, interpenetrates and overlaps the previous on the basis of associative similarity. Each moment enriches by being born from the totality as a new sense within the object's (substrate) total unity or synthesis of coincidence and correlation. Each moment is a partial apprehension within what is present to consciousness as a whole. This notion of whole isn't a sum of parts, but a creative becoming and fulfillment in which each 'part', each moment of adumbrated sense gives birth, via associative similarity, to a new sense of the whole.

“Of essential necessity there belongs to any “all-sided” continuously, unitarily, and self-confirming experimental consciousness of the same physical thing a multifarious system of continuous multiplicities of appearances and adumbrations in which all objective moments falling within perception with the characteristic of being themselves given “in person” are adumbrated by determined continuities. Each determination has *its* system of adumbrations; and each of them, like the physical thing as a whole, is there as the Same for the seizing-upon consciousness which synthetically unites memory and new perception as the Same, despite any interruption of the continuous course of actional perception.” (Ideas I, p.87)

Dependent parts of whole substrates modify and enrich the prior whole. The temporal constitution of an object is a “progressive creation of sense”.

“...the having-in-grasp of the object being explicated is not a having-in-grasp which is unchanged with regard to content, i.e., a still-having-in-grasp of the same, “such as” it was for consciousness before this stage; on the contrary, thanks to constantly new partial coincidences, it is an always different having-in-grasp. In every step, what is gotten hold of as singular is incorporated by the coincidence into the sense content of the substrate. The individual graspings are transformed, not into merely retentive individual graspings such as occur when something is still retained in simple contemplation or when one passes on to a new object, but into modifications of a total grasp, in other words, into enrichments of its content”. (Exp and Judging, p.118)

When Husserl speaks of the co-existence of correlated features of an object, this must be understood as a reciprocal activity of constitution in which each adumbration has its own sense as a temporal moment within the fused whole. (“With every current Now, we have an “ensemble” of retentions in their succession (in “coexistence”), and this entire sequence is in “coinciding”” (Passive and Active Synthesis, p.429)). The constitution of corporeality unfolds temporally as a system of regulating changes in multiple senses (kinesthetic, optical, tactile) in the apprehension of a unified physical object. Rather than a co-presencing of parts in the same NOW, systems of corporeal relations organize themselves in consciousness temporally as what Husserl variously calls a retentionally-protentionally unfolding flow, stream, flux, synthesis, series, interplay, concordantly and synthetically progressing perception, continuous-unitary manifold.

Here we see the same features that pertained to the collective combination of independent parts. 1) the original temporal constitution of the object from singular adumbrated sense parts 2) the 'simultaneous' appearance of the parts, not as co-presencing within the same space of now of multiple elements, but a synthesis of retentions, presencing and protentions 3) the experiencing of the adumbrations via the aspect of 'same' object as a secondary act, a new 'object' of sense beyond the collecting together of the original apprehensions of the individual parts, enriching their meaning rather than capturing it.. "Unity, ipseity, is given to consciousness through a higher consciousness founded in multiple consciousnesses, precisely in "synthetic" unitary consciousness." (Passive and Active Synthesis, p.487)

Note that while the elements that form the collective combination are not associated with each other via similarity as are the adumbrated moments of a spatial object, they are not devoid of all connection. Their mutual relationship as members of a plurality, while abstractive, nonetheless manifests a historical dependence. That is, each particular 'gives birth to' the following in a temporal succession. Their mutual dependence is assured by the synthetic flow of time consciousness. The way that I am motivated to notice now one, now another element, and then to recollectively hold them together as a plurality in order to constitute a new object of sense from them (what unifies them as a whole), manifests a radical dependency of sense on previous sense, even in the case of the colligation of separate objects.

Let me now try to make clear why I chose to begin my discussion of Husserl's account of whole-part relations with an example of colligation of independent parts. If for Husserl, even independent parts are related via original temporal dependency, is this true for Merleau-Ponty with regard to the elements that belong to gestalt configurations? It is certainly the case that the very essence of the meaning of parts of a gestalt lies in their utter dependence on the whole. But this is not the same sort of dependence as that represented by temporal genesis. Let's see why this is.

For Merleau-Ponty, there is, outside of memory and anticipation, a concatenation of parts appearing in consciousness in the present moment all at once as 'this object'. Intrinsic to this 'all at once' ensemble, giving it its unity as gestalt, is a dimension common to each part but not reducible to it, a centering identity of the whole configuration both belonging to each part but beyond each particular: A gestalt system is "a signification common to an ensemble of molecular facts, which is expressed by all the facts and which is not contained completely in any one of them." (Structure of Behavior, p.143). The features that for Husserl are essential for dependent moments, as well as independent elements, of a whole object, are absent from Merleau-Ponty's gestalts. Within the confines of their configurational structure, ensembles are absent history, temporality and progression. Relative to one another, the elements defined by the field evince a dependence of arbitrary connection, not a dependence of genesis.

Merleau-Ponty's 'spontaneous arrangement of parts' in which, 'its parts together make up a whole to which each is related without leaving its place' is a collection of independent objects when seen from within the freeze-frame moment. How so? Only when we shift from one moment to the next can we discover that the meaning of all of the parts that form the whole shift as a unity,

in that all of the pieces are transformed -dissolved-reconfigured equally relative to their prior role in the ensemble. But within the instantaneous frame, each element has no genetic connection with other elements. Unlike for Husserl, each part has not been 'born' from other elements within the ensemble. The sense of each is presupposed by itself rather than created temporally from the others, and one then presumes to understand the meaning of each independent element by its arbitrary relation with all the others within the total configuration. The nature of the dependence of each part on the others in the moment must then be considered an external relation between independent objects in comparison to the Husserlian synthesis of adumbrated parts. In the freeze frame moment, our consciousness of the ensemble is as a collective combination or relational plurality of independently constituted objects, an 'all of these right here right now' in such and such a pattern of relations.

This may seem to run directly counter to Merleau-Ponty's insistence that elements of a gestalt are anything but external to each other '...without any perception of the whole we would not think of *noticing* the resemblance or the contiguity of its elements, but literally that they would not be part of the same world and would not exist at all.'(PP,p.19) Could one not say here that the whole gives birth to each of the parts? Yes, but it does so, not as unique associative syntheses between individual parts, but equally to all. Each part is dependent on the SAME genesis, and because each part is at the same time different from each other, this comes down to saying that these senses are independent of each other even as they are united by the whole. In other words, Merleau-Ponty's dependent pieces of a whole function as a plurality of related independent parts. The whole relating each part dependently with the others does not reveal to us a temporal story unfolding each element out of the others associatively-synthetically as the furthering of a continuous progression or enrichment of sense, only a pre-supposed pattern.

The thinking of plural structure as a simultaneous spatial unity implies a multiplicity of parts or senses (even if completely dependent on the whole), captured in that present instant of the now that is sandwiched between retention and protention. But the assumption that we can imagine this parallel existence of differences at the 'same time', as the 'same space'(subjective, not geometric space), organized and centered as a 'THIS'(this configuration), must unravel with the knowledge that each differential singular is born of and belongs irreducibly to, even as it is a transformation of, a prior sense. Two different elements (and they must differ if they are to belong to a configuration) cannot be presumed to exist as actually present at the same time as dependent aspects of a totality because each single sense is its own time. The assumption of a spatial frame depends on the ability to return to a previous element without the contaminating effect of time. How can we know that elements of meaning are of the same spatial frame unless each is assumed to refer back to the same 'pre-existing' structure?

If the notion of a gestalt, after reduction to the stratum of primordial constitution, is deprived of its claim to make the otherness of an outside configurational ground intrinsic to the meaning of an element of sense, how does otherness make its way into the heart of the primal impression? Perhaps the better question here is why Merleau-Ponty finds it necessary to begin from configurational structure in order to assure that an element of meaning is carved out of otherness rather than solipsist positivity. I think the answer from Husserl's point of view is that Merleau-Ponty never took notice of the peculiarly insubstantial subjective-objective becoming that makes



Husserl's starting point in the retention-impression-protention triad of time consciousness already a self-othering, thus an exposure to the foreign from within the resources of subjectivity, prior to any configurational-corporeal constitution. But do not retention, primal impression and protention themselves form a totality? They do not in the sense of a colligation of separated contents. Instead, they form the structure of a SINGLE element. One could say that a singular moment of sense for Husserl is its own gestalt in that its tripartite structure(past-present-future) is a unification of three aspects.

"...one's own presence, one's own past are in themselves non-independent; only the entire unity of my life given in originary experience, to which belong my entire past and the anticipated future, is a full concretum."(First Philosophy, p.376)

It would have to be made clear, though, that such a totality constitutes the structure of temporality itself. By contrast, corporeal configuration is a second order act of abstraction on a succession of elements IN time, that is, each with its own temporal marker. As such, corporeal gestalt has no claim to irreducibility and essentiality. Merleau-Ponty has inadvertently totalized a history).

### **The Epoche and The World For All of Us:**

When a gestalt configuration changes, even though it is true that all the elements comprising that configuration are altered, there is really only one change, that of the field as an irreducible totality. If the elements of that field are persons, then in intersubjective communication each participant's alteration is an aspect of the total change in the social configuration. There is one change, that of the totality, and each person is only an element of that change. As Merleau-Ponty says:"as the parts of my body together comprise a system, so my body and the other's are one whole, two sides of one and the same phenomenon, and the anonymous existence of which my body is the ever-renewed trace henceforth inhabits both bodies simultaneously."(P. Of Perception, p.412)

From Husserl's perspective, just as each element in a perceptual system gives birth, via associative synthesis, to the rest of the system as a synthetic unfolding, as participant in an intersubjective community each of my motivated acts gives birth to, that is, frames and orients, my reciprocal interactions with others in my community. This temporal 'birthing' constitutes intersubjectivity in such a way that my own subjective thread of continuity runs through and organizes it. That is to say, hidden within the naive exteriority of my social encounters is a peculiar sort of coherence or implicate self-consistency. However alien to me is a world of fellow egos, each with their own subjective process, all I can ever apperceive of that otherness is what I mediatively, non-inferentially 'pick out' in analogical similarity with my own process.

This resistance of each subjectivity to the normativity of the intersubjective ensemble is untenable from the vantage of Merleau-Ponty's gestalt approach. Merleau-Ponty writes, in opposition to Husserl's apperceptive access to the Other,

” My friend Paul and I point out to each other certain details of the landscape; and Paul’s finger, which is pointing out the church tower, is not a finger-for-me that I think of as orientated towards a church-tower-for-me, it is Paul’s finger which itself shows me the tower that Paul sees, just as, conversely, when I make a movement towards some point in the landscape that I can see, I do not imagine that I am producing in Paul, in virtue of some pre-established harmony, inner visions merely analogous to mine: I believe, on the contrary, that my gestures invade Paul’s world and guide his gaze. When I think of Paul, I do not think of a flow of private sensations indirectly related to mine through the medium of interposed signs, but of someone who has a living experience of the same world as mine, as well as the same history, and with whom I am in communication through that world and that history.”(Phenomenology of Perception, p.471)

“ In the experience of dialogue, there is constituted between the other person and myself a common ground; my thought and his are inter-woven into a single fabric, my words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of the discussion, and they are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of us is the creator. We have here a dual being, where the other is for me no longer a mere bit of behavior in my transcendental field, nor I in his; we are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity. Our perspectives merge into each other, and we co-exist through a common world. In the present dialogue, I am freed from myself, for the other person’s thoughts are certainly his; they are not of my making, though I do grasp them the moment they come into being, or even anticipate them. And indeed, the objection which my interlocutor raises to what I say draws from me thoughts which I had no idea I possessed, so that at the same time that I lend him thoughts, he reciprocates by making me think too. It is only retrospectively, when I have withdrawn from the dialogue and am recalling it that I am able to reintegrate it into my life and make of it an episode in my private history”. (Phenomenology of Perception, p.413))

Merleau-Ponty’s treatment of the social space as centered configuration makes individual behavior in social situations the product of narrative norms, reciprocities, shared practices and social constraints. The presupposition here is the belief that essentially the same social signs are available to all who interrelate within a particular community, that there are such things as non-person-specific meanings, originating in an impersonal expressive agency . This is not to say that his account denies any role to individual psychological history in the reception of social signs, only that intersubjectivity is characterized by a reciprocal cobbling and co-ordination between personal history and cultural signs in which the ‘joints’ of such interactive bodily-mental and social practices are simultaneously within my own subjectivity and common to other participants in my community .

Let’s take a look at how Husserl employs the phenomenological reduction to penetrate beneath the naivete of Merleau-Ponty’s ‘same’ intersubjective world in order to arrive at the world from my vantage. In this passage from the Crisis, one of his last published writings, Husserl uses the universal epoche to strip away all that is merely relative and contingent in experience, in order to lay bare the irreducible architectonics of subjectivity. Such relativities include myself as a natural ego embedded within a reciprocal intersubjective world of monadic others. What then remains as founding these secondary transcendencies is the apodictic structuration of consciousness as an essential unified mineness.

“I have others through the experiential mode of empathy as existing actualities with whom I know myself to be merely in community. But when I practice the reducing epoche on myself and *my* world-consciousness, the other human beings, like the world itself, fall before the epoche; that is, they are merely intentional phenomena for me. Thus the radical and perfect reduction leads to the *absolutely single ego* of the pure psychologist, who thus at first absolutely isolates himself and as such no longer has validity for himself as a human being or as really existing in the world but is instead the pure subject of his intentionality, which through the radical reduction is universal and pure, with all its intentional implications. This is the apodictic ego, existing apodictically in its intentionalities, which are apodictically contained within itself and can be opened up. And if the coexistence of other subjects, but as implied other egos, and thus the primal division between T' and "other," can be established [as being] in these intentionalities—and essentially so—then one of the main tasks of pure intentional psychology is to make understandable, by way of the progressive reduction of world-validity, the subjective and pure function through which the world as the "world for us all" is a world for all from my—the ego's—vantage point, with whatever particular content it may have. ...”(Crisis, p.256)

Among the things we learn from this method is that a thread of unified internal integrity runs through my apprehension of an intersubjectively interaffecting world of others. Other egos, reducible to transcendental subjects, are not just figments of my own constitutive process, but exist alongside my own in a system of intentional interpretation. However, an ongoing thread of subjective continuity underlies my (and every other ego's) participation in interpersonal relations. My contact with another person is not a dialogic ping pong game. Rather than a single game, interpersonal relationality is at least two intertwining games, from my vantage; it is both my integrally varying senses of the other's interpretation of our encounter, and my awareness of the dynamic stability of the difference between his and my outlook(our individual habitual histories of motivated position-taking). While I am with my friend, I can move back and forth between styles of my self-conversation and the interpersonal interchange, noting an ongoing difference in the relative thematic coherence of these two threads. In attempting to share my ideas with them, I can be aware of the overlap in our understanding at the same time that I recognize incommensurabilities between our perspectives.

But my perspective and that of another are not to be understood as solipsistically private regions. The interpersonal relation directly remakes my sense of what my 'own' perspective is, as well as what I assume to be the other's integral position. When I apperceptively 'get inside the other's head', it is simultaneously they getting inside my head. It is always a new sense of 'me' and 'other' that emerge in conversation, but as an intertwining correlative movement among internally unitary threads of implication.

Just as an object constituted from my own recollections and anticipations is only the 'same' over time as a unity of concordant nexus of changing modes, my sense of the identical object for all of us in empathetic community is a naive experiencing of what is only similar among all of us, a between-person similarity limited by an unbridgeable gap between our own subjective synthetic processes.

“Just as I, in the realm of *my* life, bring a perception of an object that I now carry out to a synthetic unity with another perception reproduced in recollection—in the consciousness of the same thing

which exists presently and which also existed in the past—I can likewise, through *empathy* into the other, bring a perception empathized by *him* and carried out by him to a synthetic unity with my own perception, knowing it is the same object perceived by both of us. And likewise *vice versa*..” (First Philosophy, p.389)

My sense of my own identity is relentlessly, but subtly, formed and reformed through direct and indirect social engagement, but in a manner which presupposes and is made possible by the unified synthetic continuity of my motivated history of position-taking. I can passively allow myself to be influenced by others, but this is a superficial, ‘merely external’ type of affecting which does not steer my core motivational processes.

“What comes from others and is "taken over" by me, and is more external or less so, can be characterized as issuing from the other subject, first of all as a tendency proceeding from him and addressed to me, as a demand, to which I perhaps yield passively, perhaps reluctantly, but by which I am still overpowered. Alternatively, I might annex it on my own accord, and then it becomes part of me. In that case it no longer has the character of a mere demand to which I yield and which determines me from the outside; it has become a position-taking that issues from my own Ego and is not merely a stimulus coming from the outside and retaining the character of a borrowing of something that came forth from another Ego, of something that has its primal instauration in him.”(Ideas II, p.281)

Coming back now to inter-corporeal interpretations of Husserl, from the vantage of a thinking of irreducible intersubjectivity, it is troublesome that Husserl so consistently characterized the noetic-noematic subject-object relation in terms of unitary synthetic ‘mineness’. In order to make sense of this puzzling terminology in such a way as to rescue it from the charge of solipsism, it became necessary to interpret Husserl as meaning that the otherness of the world and history ‘passes through’ egoic subjectivity. For writers such as Merleau-Ponty and Zahavi, my sphere of ownness is a harbor for othernesses which have their home at the very heart of my subjectivity.

Zahavi writes:

“When I realize that I can be an alter ego for the Other just as he can be it for me, a marked change in my own constitutive significance takes place. The absolute difference between self and Other disappears. The Other conceives of me as an Other, just as I conceive of him as a self. I realize, that I am only one among many, that my perspective on the world is only one among several, wherefore my privileged status in relation to the objects of experience is suspended to a certain degree.” “No longer do I experience [my object of experience] as being dependent upon me and my factual existence. Quite to the contrary, as an intersubjective object it is endowed with an autonomy of being that transcends my finite existence.”(Zahavi, Husserl’s Intersubjective Transformation of Subjectivity, Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology 27/7, 1996, p.3)

Drawing from what the epoche reveals concerning the status and constitutive origin of intersubjectivity, it is possible to situate Zahavi’s comments on the social other in terms of its stratum of constitution. When Zahavi speaks of ‘my objects of experience’, he is referencing the naive view from the vantage of the natural ego. As a higher level of constitution than that of the primal ego, I apprehend myself as this natural ego in the moment that, through empathy, I apperceive an alter ego. That is the point where, the alter ego having been constituted through an

apperceptive pairing, I then understand myself as one ego among others within an intersubjective community and empirically objective world. This enables the features that Zahavi describes to appear to me as constituting my world. This includes my awareness that 'I' (as natural ego) am only one among many, that my objectively constituted perspective on the world is only one among many perspectives, that the world is endowed with an autonomy of being that transcends my (the natural me) finite existence. But because the nature of this stratum of my experiencing is that of a secondary transcendence, this 'world for all of us' is only a relative, contingent constitution rather than the supposedly irreducible one Zahavi makes it out to be. Whereas Zahavi (1996) claims that "a radical implementation of the transcendental reduction leads with necessity to a disclosure of transcendental intersubjectivity", Husserl insists that a radical reduction reveals the philosophical solitude of the absolute ego, which is prior to the constitutive accomplishment of transcendental intersubjectivity.

This 'world for us', from one to the other to the other, is constituted within MY (the primal me) subjective process as MY privileged apperception of 'from one to the other to the other'. Primordially, the autonomy of being given to others is not directly accessible to me (me as apodictic rather than natural empirical ego). Rather than making the absolute difference between self and Other disappear, intersubjective apperception exposes this unbridgeable gap by allowing only an interpretive mediate access to the alien, from within the singular 'I'.

"The epoche creates a unique sort of philosophical solitude which is the fundamental methodical requirement for a truly radical philosophy. In this solitude I am not a single individual who has somehow willfully cut himself off from the society of mankind, perhaps even for theoretical reasons, or who is cut off by accident, as in a shipwreck, but who nevertheless knows that he still belongs to that society. I am not an ego, who still has his you, his we, his total community of co-subjects in natural validity. All of mankind, and the whole distinction and ordering of the personal pronouns, has become a phenomenon within my epoche; and so has the privilege of I-the-man among other men." (Crisis, p.184)

"...it was wrong, methodically, to jump immediately into transcendental inter-subjectivity and to leap over the primal "I," the ego of my epoche, which can never lose its uniqueness and personal indeclinability. It is only an apparent contradiction to this that the ego—through a particular constitutive accomplishment of its own—makes itself declinable, for itself, transcendently; that, starting from itself and in itself, it constitutes transcendental intersubjectivity, to which it then adds itself as a merely privileged member, namely, as "I" among the transcendental others. This is what philosophical self-exposition in the epoche actually teaches us. It can show how the always singular I, in the original constituting life proceeding within it, constitutes a first sphere of objects, the "primordial" sphere; how it then, starting from this, in a motivated fashion, performs a constitutive accomplishment through which an intentional modification of itself and its primordially achieves ontic validity under the title of "alien-perception," perception of others, of another "I" who is for himself an I as I am." (Crisis, p.185)

Because the constitution of egoic otherness is a secondary, higher order differentiation within my own egoic processes, bracketing off the intersubjectively constituted objective world does not deprive my egoic processes of any of their essential features. The coherent founding stratum of what is included in my ownness includes what is other for me. "...every consciousness of what is

other, every mode of appearance of it, belongs in the former sphere”[ of what is included in my peculiar ownness]. (Cartesian Meditations, p.100)

“But here something remarkable strikes us : a sequence of evidences that yet, in their sequence, seem paradoxical. The psychic life of my Ego (this "psychophysical" Ego), including my whole world-experiencing life and therefore including my actual and possible experience of what is other, is wholly unaffected by screening off what is other. Consequently there belongs within my psychic being the whole constitution of the world existing for me and, in further consequence, the differentiation of that constitution into the systems that constitute what is included in my peculiar ownness and the systems that constitute what is other.”(Cartesian Meditations, p.98)

Footnote: The natural empirical ego that experiences a world as alien to me is founded on the ‘my ownness’ of the personal, psychophysical ego as a differentiation within it (exteriority constituted within interiority). But note here that the personal ego is itself an idealism in that, rather than leading us back to the apodictic self-othering, subjective-objective becoming of temporal constitution, the psycho-physical ego is itself a product of constitution, via self-apperception. When we complete the epoche by abstracting away this self-apperception, we arrive at the primordial stratum where there is as yet no ego, but there remains the unitary flow of subjective temporal processes. “At the beginning of its development, the subject is not an Object for itself and does not have the apperceptive unity, "Ego.””(Ideas II, p.361)

If the unique ongoing integrity of my subjective flow of experiencing makes it impossible for me to ever have direct access to others, except as a naive presumption, via what Merleau-Ponty refers to as a ‘dual being’, ‘shared operation’, or ‘single fabric’, and what Zahavi calls a disappearance of the absolute difference between self and Other, then I cannot treat any notion of the intersubjective defined in this way as a philosophical a priori of experience.

As I discover that I am not simply my interactions with other people in the naive way that they are represented in corporeal intersubjective accounts, I am able to insert myself into the process of another's thinking more effectively. My recognition of the other's integrity of perceptual process is not a barrier to interaction with them, but an invitation to proceed further than the level of analysis which locates our conversation within shared rhetorical genres. This further engagement is not a retreat from the depth of social connectivity that is achieved via discursive methodology, but the move to a more thoroughgoing sociality, a sociality that recognizes the ongoing integrity of each person’s motivated position-taking.

Those larger patterns of human belonging abstracted from local joint activity, which Merleau-Ponty’s intercorporeal approach discerns in terms of cultural language practices, also hide within themselves a more primary patterning. While our experience as individuals is characterized by stable relations of relative belonging or alienation with respect to other individuals and groups, the site of this interactivity, whether we find ourselves in greater or lesser agreement with a world within which we are enmeshed, has a character of peculiar within-person continuity. It also has a character of relentless creative activity that undermines and overflows attempts to understand human action based on between-person configurations or fields. We may identify to a greater or lesser extent with various larger paradigmatic communities, delicately united by intertwining values. But the contribution of each member of a community to the whole would not originate at the level of spoken or bodily language interchange among voices; such constructs repress as much

as they reveal. Even in a community of five individuals in a room, I, as participant, can perceive a locus of integrity undergirding the participation of each of the others to the responsive conversation. In my dealings with other persons, I would be able to discern a thread of continuity organizing their participation in dialogue with me, dictating the manner and extent to which I can be said to influence their thinking and they mine. My thinking can not properly be seen as 'determined' by his response, and his ideas are not simply 'shaped' by my contribution to our correspondence.

“Besides the tendencies which proceed from other individual persons, there are demands which arise in the intentional form of indeterminate generality, the demands of morality, of custom, of tradition, of the spiritual milieu: "one" judges in this way, "one" has to hold his fork like this, and so on—i.e., demands of the social group, of the class, etc. They can be followed quite passively, or one can also actively take a position with regard to them and make a free decision in favor of them. Therefore the autonomy of reason, the "freedom" of the personal subject, consists in the fact that I do not yield passively to the influence of others but instead decide for myself. “(Ideas II, p.281)

The extent to which I could be said to be embedded within a particular set of cultural practices would be a function of how closely other persons I encounter resonate with my own ongoing experiential process. I can only shape my action to fit socially legitimate goals or permitted institutionalized grammatical forms to the extent that those goals or forms are already implicated in my ongoing experiential movement. Even then, what is implicated for me is not 'the' social forms, but aspects hidden within these so-called forms which are unique to my habitually stabilized motivated position-taking; what I perceive as socially 'permitted' rhetorical argumentation is already stylistically distinctive in relation to what other participants perceive as permitted. Each individual who feels belonging to an extent in a larger ethico-political collectivity perceives that collectivity's functions in a unique, but peculiarly coherent way relative to their own history, even when they believe that in moving forward in life their strategic language moves are guided by the constraints imposed by essentially the 'same' discursive conventions as the others in their speech community.

### **The Hyle and The Body:**

Husserl's exercise in abstractive reduction seems to point to a contradiction. On the one hand, I can imagine myself experiencing a modified world in which all otherness has been abstracted away, leaving only synthetic acts belonging to my peculiar ownness. And yet, such a reduced consciousness is still a consciousness of something. That is to say, it pre-supposes primal impressions and therefore hyletic data. Does hyletic data not imply sensation and therefore a constituted body? If so, am I not confronted with otherness in encountering my own corporeality, within my own 'peculiar mineness'? Even if we could imagine a reduced world without other souls, am I not already introduced to the alien through my encounter with my corporeal body? What is at stake here is my claim that through the epoche, the unmediated otherness represented by Merleau-Ponty's gestalt corporeality is dissolved into a radically integral absolute temporal flow.

Zahavi writes

“If there can be no primal impression without a hyletic content, and no hyletic content without a lived body (according to Husserl, the hyletic data are only given in correlation to kinaesthetic experiences), it must be concluded that the nature of temporality and embodiment cannot be exhaustively comprehended independently of each other. We are ultimately dealing with an incarnated temporality.” (Merleau-Ponty on Husserl: A Reappraisal, p.7)

” It is only possible to understand the experience of the Other—of the one who is foreign to me—when it is understood that I am foreign to myself. Hence my encounter with the Other is predelineated in my encounter with myself as an object, for then I am already an Other to myself. If I perceive a part of my own body in an objectifying way, then I am perceiving myself in my being-for-others—and it is within the horizon of this experience that the Other appears to me as well. To put it another way, in my corporeal existence I am intersubjective and social from the start” (Intersubjectivity in Sartre's Being and Nothingness, p.10).

Following this reasoning, we would need to understand the analogical, associative pairing making other egos accessible to me through apperception as the likeness I disclose between my self-alienating subjective-objective corporeality and that of others. Could it be that Zahavi and Thompson have found a way to reconcile Husserl's apperception of the Other and Merleau-Ponty's 'world for all of us' by locating the absolute origin of intersubjective otherness in my reversible relationship to my body as now subjective and now objective (as for instance when my one hand touches the other)?

Thompson and Zahavi claim that my bodily self-exploration permits me to confront my own exteriority, but this raises a number of questions. First, if Husserl considered my bodily self-exploration as a direct encounter with my own exteriority, and as preparation for my access to alien others, then why does he, in *Cartesian Meditations* (p.97), use the example of my one hand touching the other as demonstration of the sphere of the psychophysical ego's 'peculiar ownness', contrasting it with the alienness of the transcendental other? Is not Husserl's aim here to illustrate that I can never directly confront my own exteriority, whether within my own corporeality or through my apperception of an alter ego?

Second, even as my self-constitution as psychophysical being is a pre-condition for empathy, does my bodily self-exploration represent an ORIGINAL stratum of constitution? I agree with Merleau-Ponty, Zahavi and Thompson that my encounter with the Other is predelineated in my encounter with myself, but I believe the epoche requires me to bracket my corporeal being (my touching and touched hands), revealing the foundation of my experience of alterity not in my corporeality but within the pre-bodily stratum of original temporal constitution.

It is my contention that I originally confront my own 'outside' within the primordially reduced level of temporal constitution of the non-independent triadic concretum of past, present, and anticipatory future, and furthermore, this peculiarly intimate 'foreignness' must be understood in different terms than that of an objective exteriority. In this connection, I think it is significant that Husserl analogizes my apperception of an alter ego not to my relation to my body, but to the act of recollection.

In recollection, "... the immediate "I" performs an accomplishment through which it constitutes



a variational mode of itself as existing (in the mode of having passed). Starting from this we can trace how the immediate "I," flowingly-statically present, constitutes itself in self-temporalization as enduring through "Its" pasts. In the same way, the immediate "I," already enduring in the enduring primordial sphere, constitutes in itself another as other...Thus, in me, "another I" achieves ontic validity as co-present [kompräsent] with his own ways of being self-evidently verified, which are obviously quite different from those of a "sense" perception."(Crisis, p.185)

But if it is the case that there is a more reduced stratum than that of corporeality, within which it is dissolved, we need to reconcile this with examples where Husserl appears to situate hyletic data as irreducibly corporeal. Take, for instance, the following passages:

“Sense data can present themselves only if there exist "in Objective actuality" sense organs, nervous systems, etc. To these correspond possible apprehensions of sensuous data and concomitant intersubjective regulations.”(Ideas II, p.303) “Surely the higher consciousness, the properly noetic, becomes *co-dependent* on the Body, to the extent that it is founded in the hyletic. Surely not only are the sensuous sensations in the stricter sense determined by the Body, but so are the sensuous feelings as well, and the lived experiences of instincts.”(Ideas II, p.308)

“Can it now make sense to assume that even the possibility of any apprehension whatever and of all consciousness in general is dependent on the Body and its Bodily-Objective events, or that apperceptions, position-takings of belief, of will, etc. are dependent on the Body in the same sense as the data of sensation are?”(Ideas II, p.303)

Can we conclude from this that hyletic data require a body, that corporeality is fundamental to transcendental subjectivity? What then do we make of Husserl’s analyses of the primordial stratum of constitution in which no body has yet been constituted?

In Ideas II, Husserl points to a pre-bodily stratum in which consciousness is possible without a body: He identifies a lowest level stratum of constitution of the sensuous thing, wherein sense perceptions exist prior to the construction of a corporeal Body (“no dependence on the Body has yet been taken into account”(Ideas II, p.319)).

“If we think of monadic subjects and their streams of consciousness or, rather, if we think the thinkable minimum of self-consciousness, then a monadic consciousness, one that would have no "world" at all given to it, could indeed be thought - thus a monadic consciousness without regularities in the course of sensations, without motivated possibilities in the apprehension of things. In that case, what is necessary for the emergence of an Ego-consciousness in the ordinary sense? Obviously, human consciousness requires an appearing Body and an intersubjective Body - an intersubjective understanding.”(Ideas II, p.303)

Again, in a note, Husserl speculates

“It is *thinkable* that there would be no Bodies at all and no dependence of consciousness on material events in constituted nature, thus no empirical souls, whereas absolute consciousness would remain over as something that cannot simply be cancelled out. Absolute consciousness would thus have in itself, in that case, a principle of factual unity, its own rule, according to which it would unfold with

its own content, all the while there being indeed no Body. If we join it to a Body, then perhaps it becomes dependent, though in the first place it still retains its principle of unity and does so not just through apriori laws of consciousness in general.” (Ideas II, p.308)

“If now, as belonging to the apriori essence of consciousness, there exist certain necessities in the course of its succession- the way, e.g., the modes of retention within the constitution of time are linked (apriori), as succeeding one another necessarily, to various impressions-then these nexuses of the sequence could not be conditioned by the Body and by the sequence of its Objective states. Only that which the essential nexuses leave *open* can be empirically conditioned. For instance, only the sensation could be conditioned, but not what is necessarily linked to it in terms of the retentions. Or perhaps, more precisely, what is conditioned would only be the content of the sensation and likewise, within the predelineated form of the retentional sequence, a content left open by it, that is, differences in clarity and distinctness, etc.; in which respect it is problematic, and to be determined in experience, to what extent the content is conditioned psychophysically.”  
(Ideas II, p.307)

Husserl appears to be saying here that because a pre-bodily stratum underlies corporeality, the structures of this pre-bodily stratum cannot be dependent on such higher levels of constitution. Thus the sensory content of hyletic data, to the extent that it is dependent on a constituted Body, is relative, empirically conditioned and embodied. However, via the epoche, the a priori essence of consciousness, and along with it an apparently pre-bodily stratum of sensuous hyle, survives the bracketing of the corporeal body.

One can perform a radical reduction such that there is as yet no notion of either my animate body and associated sensations, nor that of material objects. In reducing the psychophysical body to this absolutely primordial stratum, Husserl reveals Merleau-Ponty’s notion of gestalt to be constituted from a more primordial genesis that has nothing of gestalt form in it. And yet my subjectivity does not succumb to a solipsistic egology because what remains is a multiple structure of foreignness within temporal constitution itself.

There is the noema’s alienness with respect to the pure ego, its ability to affect the transcendental ego as a transcendence within immanence. There is also what Husserl points out as the intentional mediacy of recollection and expectation with respect to the immediate NOW (First Philosophy, p.376). Given Husserl’s characterization of my apperception of the alien Ego as a secondary mediacy, it can be argued that what makes this secondary presentation possible is the primary representational mediacy of memory-anticipation( a kind of double foreignness, past and future being ‘alien’, that is, mediate, to the already alien presentational NOW).

“Just as I, in my transcendental subjectivity, do not only have justified experience of what I directly perceive, but also have justified recollection, justified expectation, associative anticipation, presentification, in the same manner [I have] a presentification, based on the same justification, of transcendental consciousness—as empathy. “(First Phil., p.621)

Whichever dimension of primal time constitution we tie the foreign to, this much can be concluded. It is at the most primordially reduced level of transcendental subjectivity that I confront my own ‘exteriority’, but this peculiar sort of exteriority, otherness, foreignness at the root of Husserl’s phenomenological project is of a more intimate and insubstantial nature than

what Merleau-Ponty, Zahavi and Thompson have in mind when they attempt to begin from the body as irreducible gestalt.

Footnote:

Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl's project is well-known, but I believe that Derrida's critical response to Merleau-Ponty's reading of Husserl on apperception shows that he recognized in Husserl an incipient deconstructive move in regard to the notion of corporeal-intersubjective otherness Merleau-Ponty espoused.

"I can never have access to the body (Leib) of the other except in an indirect fashion, through appresentation, comparison, analogy, projection, and introjection. That is a motif to which Husserl remains particularly and fiercely faithful. And when he says "without introjection," indeed, this is not to qualify our access to the other's living body, but the access that others have-that they have, just as I have to their own proper bodies ("without introjection"). But this access that others have without introjection to their bodies, I can have-to their own proper bodies-only by introjection or appresentation. Husserl would never have subscribed to this "It is in no different fashion . . . [ce n'est pas autrement . . . ]" ("It is in no different fashion that the other's body becomes animate before me when I shake another man's hand or just look at him" [Signs, p. 168] ), which assimilates the touching-the-touching [le touchant touché] of my own proper body or my two hands with the contact of the other's hand."(On Touching - Jean-Luc Nancy, p.190)

Husserl writes: "Since here this manifold expression appresents psychic existence in [carnal] Corporeality, thus there is constituted with all that an objectivity which is precisely double and unitary: the man-without 'introjection'" (Husserl, Ideas II, p. 175) .

"Without introjection": these words do not describe my relation to the other's carnal "corporeality" (Leiblichkeit) , which, as Husserl always says unambiguously, is present for me only indirectly and by way of analogical "introjection," which is to say appresented, as this passage clearly puts it. However, what this appresentation delivers to me is another man, and what for him is inscribed-in his phenomenon, which he has, for his part, and which will never be mine-is an originary relation, "without introjection, " to his own proper body, which is the relation I have with my body but will never have with his. There we can find the appresentative analogy between two heres. Husserl had continually insisted-be it only in the two preceding pages-on indirect appresentation and even on the fact that the other's hand, such as I see it while it is touching, "appresents to me his solipsistic view of this hand. " (Let us be quite clear that without this unbridgeable abyss, there would be no handshake, nor blow or caress, nor, in general, any experience of the other's body as such.)

"... at the moment when it is a matter of orienting Husserl and making him take the other into account in a more audacious way (the other who is originary in me, or for me, and so forth)-at the expense of a Husserl who is more classical, more ego-centered, and so forth-there is a risk of the exact opposite resulting. One runs the risk of reconstituting an intuitionism of immediate access to the other, as originary as my access to my own most properly proper-and in one blow, doing without appresentation, indirection, Einföhlung, one also runs the risk of reappropriating the alterity of the other more surely, more blindly, or even more violently than ever. In this respect Husserl's cautious approach will always remain before us as a model of vigilance. (P.191)

Even between me and me, if I may put it this way, between my body and my body, there is no such "original" contemporaneity, this "confusion" between the other's body and mine, that Merleau-Ponty

believes he can recognize there, while pretending he is following Husserl—for example, when he follows the thread of the same analysis and writes: "The constitution of others does not come after that of the body [with which Husserl could agree, but without inferring what follows.—J. D.] ; others and my body are born together from the original ecstasy. The corporeality to which the primordial thing belongs is more corporeality in general; as the child's egocentricity, the 'solipsist layer' is both transitivity and confusion of self and other" (Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 174; my emphasis—J. D.). This "confusion" would be as originary as the "primordial thing" and would make possible the substitutions (that we have noted are impossible) between the other and me, between our two bodies, in what Merleau-Ponty unhesitatingly terms "the absolute presence of origins." In another example, he writes:

"The reason why I am able to understand the other person's body and existence "beginning with" the body proper, the reason why the com presence of my "consciousness" and my "body" is prolonged into the compresence of my self and the other person, is that the "I am able to" and the "the other person exists" belong here and now to the same world, that the body proper is a premonition of the other person, the *Einfühlung* an echo of my incarnation, and that a flash of meaning makes them substitutable in the absolute presence of origins." (Merleau-Ponry, *Signs*, p. 175)

And so, must we not think, and think otherwise (without objecting to it frontally and integrally) , that the said "same world" (if there is some such world, and if it is indeed necessary to account for it, and account for its "effect," as "sense of the world") is not and will never be the "same world"?(*On Touching* - Jean-Luc Nancy, p.193).

### **The insubstantial Intimacy of Motivation:**

I have been arguing that Husserl's starting point in the retention-impression-protention triad of time consciousness exposes me to the foreign from within the resources of my own subjectivity, prior to any corporeal constitution. Furthermore, the radically temporal nature of absolute consciousness dictates that when such higher strata as the subjective and empirical Body do make their appearance within consciousness , they do so as 'co-existences' of retentional-protentional syntheses, rather than as configurational wholes whose parts all belong to the same presentational 'now'.

As a consequence of the deconstruction of the gestalt, Husserl's notion of the foreign must be understood in different terms than that of corporeal otherness. We have seen this difference manifested in the way that for Husserl I maintain an ongoing thread of subjective continuity within my participation in an intersubjective world. I want now to further explore the nature and philosophical justification for the internal integrity of the temporal stream of consciousness . My claim is that Husserl's articulation of the transcendently reduced sphere of consciousness in terms (mineness, unitary, synthetic, continuous) that risk implying a solipsism closed off to the otherness of the world and history wasn't simply an unfortunate choice of terminology.

Rather, Husserl's proto-deconstruction of the gestalt demanded a primordial motivational principle in which noetic anticipatory assimilation dominates the foreignness of the noematic object pole. We see the centrality of similarity manifest itself at all levels of constitution, in the subjective achievement of synthetic unities, analogical apperceptive pairing, associative relationality, correlations, harmonious fulfillments, subjective 'mineness', variations, flowing multiplicities, congruities, nexuses, coherences, etc. Even in difference, negation, senselessness, irrationality, alienation there is no experience in consciousness that is not in an overarching way

variation on a thematics (which are already associative syntheses of variations on variations) for Husserl, a similarity-in-difference.

At the the highest level of intersubjective experience, each subjectivity interacts with other subjectivities via their own integral thread of continuous unified experience ( in an apperceptive pairing, my self perception and my apperception of an alter ego “found phenomenologically a unity of similarity” (Cartesian Meditations, p.112)). Consistent with his subjectivity-based sociality, Husserl’s later writings on ethics is personalistic, striving toward an optimal self-consistency of all subjective values at the highest level.

At the level of the constitution of objects within my own sphere of ownness, where the adumbrating intentionality proceeds in an objectifying instinct, this striving is founded in an interest in the enrichment of the self [of the object] ), as a unified nexus of apperceptions .

“Every apperception in which we apprehend at a glance, and noticingly grasp, objects given beforehand- for example, the already-given everyday world- every apperception in which we understand their sense and its horizons forthwith, points back to a "primal instituting", in which an object with a similar sense became constituted for the first time. Even the physical things of this world that are unknown to us are, to speak generally, known in respect of their type. We have already seen like things before, though not precisely this thing here. Thus each everyday experience involves an analogizing transfer of an originally instituted objective sense to a new case, with its anticipative apprehension of the object as having a similar sense. To the extent that there is givenness beforehand, there is such a transfer.“ (Cartesian Meditations, p.111)

Grounding these higher constituting achievements is the central role of similarity at the lowest stratum of passive pre-rational primal association. “ Once a connection is formed in a stream of consciousness, there then exists in this stream the tendency for a newly emerging connection, similar to a portion of the earlier one, to continue in the direction of the similarity and to strive to complete itself in a total nexus similar to the previous total nexus.”(Ideas II, p.234).

“...consciousness is connected in the most general way to another consciousness by a commonality that is correlatively noetic and noematic; and all connection is connection through "commonality." through uniformity and similarity.”(Passive and Active Synth, p.485)

Underlying and founding all these strata is the assimilative basis of temporal constitution. Protention and retention are included in what Husserl calls a “universal drive intentionality (Treibintentionalität).” As Bernet says “ this originary process, as a life-process, is not simply an automatic process; it has a goal and the tendency to draw near to this goal.”(Husserl’s New Phenomenology of Time Consciousness in the Bernau Manuscripts, Rudolph Bernet, p.16)

If we were simply to conclude that an anticipatory tendency characterizes at all levels Husserl’s project, then we could justifiably claim that he has this in common with Merleau-Ponty, whose approach also is oriented around anticipatory temporality. But it is not simply that Husserl claims protension as a general going beyond itself of one’s experience of an object, rather that this going beyond itself has the character of a peculiar implicative consistency. Even in difference, negation,

senselessness, irrationality, alterity, there is no experience in consciousness that is not in an overarching way variation on a thematics for Husserl, a similarity-in-difference.

Husserl offers a foreignness to self that manifests itself as a thematic belonging to self whose self-similarity presupposes and is built from this irreducible foreignness. This is not a privileging the same over the different, but rather a situating of the binary in a more insubstantial and therefore more intimate space of relationship than that of gestalt structuralist embodiment discourses.

The radical intimacy referentially linking one moment of experience to the next, is driven not by the positivity of an idealist subjectivity, but, on the contrary, by the insubstantiality of both the presencing and absencing poles of each absolutely new element of experience. The always novel altering repetition of experience has not the power to disturb to the same extent as it lacks, each time, the centering thickness of configurational ideality.

Events understood as temporally synthesized acts, working within and beyond relations among presumed simultaneous structural configurations (bodily and interpersonal), do not achieve their integrative continuity through any positive internal power. On the contrary, they simply lack the formidability of static identity necessary to impose the arbitrariness of polarizing conditioning, mirroring and cobbling, on the movement of experiential process. When the irreducible origin of meaning is thought as gestalt, violence is also irreducible in the modification of gestalts through temporalization. A gestalt is an environment, a configuration, a locality, and so by necessity temporalizes itself as dislocating gestalt shift.

The thickness of the corporeal imparts to transit an irreducible polarization. Its play of stases conceals the vicissitudes of an intimate experiential movement, so that it always comes too late, noticing and endorsing a wrenching extrication that it reifies as ecstasis (the foreignness of my body to itself and of the alter ego to my ego). The dynamic of sense, pushed to its more radical implications, can teach us to be suspicious of any account of meaning which finds it necessary to claim temporal transformation as a traumatic wandering.

“In all uses of the word *sens*, we find the same fundamental notion of a being orientated or polarized in the direction of what he is not, and thus we are always brought back to a conception of the subject as *ek-stase*, and to a relationship of active transcendence between the subject and the world.” (Phenomenology of Perception, p.499).

“Action is, by definition, the violent transition from what I have to what I aim to have, from what I am to what I intend to be.”, “When I say that I know and like someone, I aim, beyond his qualities, at an inexhaustible ground which may one day shatter the image that I have formed of him. This is the price for there being things and ‘other people’ for us, not as the result of some illusion, but as the result of a violent act which is perception itself.” (Phenomenology of Perception, p.444).

### **Conclusion:**

In this paper I aimed to show that via the *epoche*, Husserl dissolved Merleau-Ponty’s primary

corporal intersubjective grounding of phenomenology into a more radically temporal foundation. I realize that a thorough search of Husserl's published and unpublished manuscripts will not settle the issue of whether Husserl in his later years embraced a thoroughgoing corporeal intersubjectivity of the sort that Merleau-Ponty advocated. It is possible that Husserl did indeed embrace such a position and that I am misinterpreting him here. More important to me than locking down the "correct" Husserlian understanding of intersubjectivity is demonstrating why a treatment of intersubjectivity as a relative, higher order constitutive product of primordial process that is not in itself intersubjective need not be understood as a regression into Cartesianism and solipsism. I believe that the thesis I outline in this article performs a necessary deconstruction of corporeal intersubjectivity, and in so doing constitutes a bridge between Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger (who radicalized Husserl's deconstruction of the gestalt), and beyond Heidegger, to Derrida.

Given my focus in this paper was on the implications of a 'post-Gestalt' reading of Husserl for the understanding of intersubjective relationships, I did not mention the possible differences between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty concerning the nature of the unconscious. I would like to make a brief comment on this issue. Husserl makes very little mention of Freud or psychoanalysis in his work, but he acknowledges that the concept of the unconscious and of latency to consciousness is implicated in the horizontal structure of retentive consciousness, as well in the relation between passive, instinctual and drive processes on the one hand, and active egoic intentionality on the other. Consistent with my argument that associative similarity, consistency and synthetic unity is central to the flow of consciousness at all levels of constitution, my inclination is to view the Husserlian unconscious as that which is not absent from, or in conflict with awareness, but implicit to it. Post-Freudian psychodynamics, to the extent that such approaches rely on gestalt-like psychic structures, fall short of this approach. Husserl explains that unconscious motives are not a matter of a split within the psyche, but rather: "A thought "reminds" me of other thoughts and calls back into memory a past lived experience, etc. In some cases it can be perceived. In most cases, however, the motivation is indeed actually present in consciousness, but it does not stand out; it is unnoticed or noticeable ("unconscious")" (Ideas II, p.234).

As I have argued, Merleau-Ponty's gestalt corporeal model lacks Husserl's internal assimilative integrity, invoking polarization and irreducible violence where Husserl sees variational consistency. The features within his corporeal thinking that leads him to see an intersubjective world of necessary polarization implies an intrapsychic landscape that is polarized within itself. It is not surprising, then, that Merleau-Ponty, in "The Child's Relation With Others" (Primacy of Perception), Merleau-Ponty, drawing from Melanie Klein, entertains a neo-Freudian analysis of social behavior.

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