

The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty

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If someone says, "I have a body," he can be asked, "Who is speaking here with this mouth?"

Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §244

The terminological boxes into which we press the history of philosophy often obscure deep and important differences among major figures supposedly belonging to a single school of thought. One such disparity within the phenomenological movement, often overlooked but by no means invisible, separates Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* from the Husserlian program that initially inspired it. For Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology amounts to a radical, if discreet, departure not only from Husserl's theory of intentionality generally, but more specifically from his account of the intentional constitution of the body and its role in perceptual experience.

PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE BODILY STRUCTURE OF PERCEPTION

Husserl's mature phenomenology is based on two strict categorical distinctions. The first is between the inner and the outer: the "immanent" sphere of conscious

experience and the “transcendent” domain of external objects. The second is between concrete and abstract entities: the “real” things existing in space and time and “ideal essences.” With these dichotomies in place, the body inevitably appears as a kind of phenomenological anomaly, posing awkward questions for the metaphysical and epistemological distinctions that Husserl, notwithstanding his undeniable advances beyond traditional epistemology, still largely takes for granted.

For example, my body is neither internal to my consciousness nor external to me in the environment. Husserl consequently resorts to describing it as “a thing ‘inserted’ between the rest of the material world and the ‘subjective’ sphere” (*Id II*, 161).¹ Yet the body is precisely what orients us in a world in which we are able to individuate subjects and objects to begin with. Nor does having a body consist in having either abstract thoughts *about* a body or concrete sensations localizable *in* a body, since embodiment is what makes possible the very ascription of thoughts and sensations to subjects. In his posthumous works Husserl calls attention to the role of the body in perception, but he takes it for granted that cognitive attitudes rather than bodily skills must bridge the intentional gap between mind and world. He therefore attempts to ground bodily self-awareness in what he takes to be a more basic form of intentionality: the quasi-objective localization of subjective tactile sensations in the body. But to tie the body’s intentional constitution specifically to the sense of touch in this way, I shall argue, amounts to a fundamental misunderstanding of its significance for phenomenology.

Unlike Husserl, but like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty looks beyond the subject-object divide to try to gain insight into the concrete structures of worldly experience. But whereas Heidegger does little more than mention the problem of embodiment in passing,² Merleau-Ponty bases his entire phenomenological project on an account of bodily intentionality and the challenge it poses to any adequate concept of mind. Embodiment thus has a philosophical significance for Merleau-Ponty that it could not have for Husserl. Indeed, taking the problem of embodiment seriously, as Merleau-Ponty does, entails a radical reassessment of the very conceptual distinctions on which Husserl’s enterprise rests. More generally, the problem of embodiment raises questions concerning the very notion of the mental as a distinct phenomenal region mediating our intentional orientation in the world. Merleau-Ponty never doubts or denies the existence of mental phenomena, of course, but he insists, for example, that thought and sensation as such occur only against a background of perceptual activity that we always already understand in bodily terms, by engaging in it. Moreover, the body undercuts the supposed dichotomy between the transparency of consciousness and the opacity of objective reality: “the distinction between subject and object is blurred in my body (and no doubt the distinction between noesis and noema as well?).”³ Mentalistic theories of intentionality like Husserl’s therefore inevitably take for granted the very worldly structures of perceptual experience that they

pretend to bracket or set aside as irrelevant to the project of transcendental reflection and pure description.

Some have suggested that Merleau-Ponty's arguments in *Phenomenology of Perception* can be traced back to, or even simply reiterate, Husserl's posthumous works, particularly the manuscripts composed between 1912 and 1928 that make up the Second Book of *Ideas*. Much of the blame for this misconception, it must be said, rests with Merleau-Ponty himself. The very idea of a "phenomenology of perception" would be unthinkable outside the phenomenological movement, of course, and like Heidegger before him, Merleau-Ponty was at pains to acknowledge his debt to the founder of the movement. But his enthusiasm for the spirit of phenomenology undoubtedly led him to overestimate the affinities between Husserl's conception of intentionality and his own. Indeed, any careful reading of the two immediately reveals deep methodological and systematic differences between them.

The manuscript later published as *Ideas II* clearly made a profound impression on Merleau-Ponty, so much so that he once described studying it as "an almost voluptuous experience."⁴ Yet the account Husserl offers there of the body differs crucially from his own. In *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty refers just once explicitly to the text,⁵ alluding with approval to Husserl's observation that one's own body never appears as a discrete object of perception. As Husserl puts it, "I do not have the possibility of distancing myself from my body, nor it from me," since "The same body that serves me as a means of all perception stands in my way in the perception of itself and is a remarkably incompletely constituted thing" (*Id II*, 159). The moment of perception excludes the perceiving organ itself from the domain of objects perceived. Merleau-Ponty agrees: "as for my body, I do not observe it itself: to be able to do so, I would need the use of a second body, which would not itself be observable" (*PP*, 91). He thus concludes, "Insofar as it sees or touches the world, my body can therefore be neither seen nor touched. What prevents its ever being an object, ever being 'completely constituted,' is that it is that by which there are objects" (*PP*, 92).

It is hyperbolic, of course, to say that the perceiving body cannot be perceived. Indeed, when Husserl says, my body "stands in my way in the perception of itself," his point is simply that the body cannot see or touch itself as it can other objects, since it cannot step back and, as it were, hold itself at arm's length. Husserl and Merleau-Ponty never deny that the body can, with one of its parts, see or touch another of its parts (see *Id II*, 144–47). But what about the perceiving organ in relation to itself? Husserl observes that "The eye does not appear visually" (*Id II*, 147), and Merleau-Ponty makes the same point, albeit somewhat more colorfully, when he writes, "my visual body includes a large gap at the level of my head" (*PP*, 94).⁶ Nor is the body's peculiar perceptual unavailability to itself anything trivial or accidental: it is not comparable to the altogether uninteresting fact that the teapot cannot be inside the teapot, nor does

it amount to some merely contingent limitation of our sensory capacities. Rather, it tells us something about the very bodily structure of perception.

Yet Merleau-Ponty appreciates the essentially incorporated structure of perception in a way that Husserl does not. For Merleau-Ponty, that is, the body plays a constitutive role in experience precisely by grounding, making possible, and yet remaining peripheral in the horizons of our perceptual awareness: “my body is constantly perceived,” Merleau-Ponty writes, yet “it remains marginal to all my perceptions” (*PP*, 90). Again, the body is neither an internal subject nor a fully external object of experience. Moreover, as embodied perceivers, we do not typically understand ourselves as pure egos standing in a merely external relation to our bodies, for example by “having” or “owning” them, instead the body is itself already the concrete agent of all our perceptual acts (*PP*, 90–94). In perception, that is, we understand ourselves not as *having* but as *being* bodies.

AN “ABYSS” BETWEEN CONSCIOUSNESS AND REALITY?

It is no accident that Husserl fails to appreciate the full scope of the body’s role in perception, relegating its intentional constitution instead to the realm of localized tactile sensation. For equating the perceptual subject with the lived body, as Merleau-Ponty does, would mean relinquishing the conceptual dualism on which Husserl’s project rests.

Husserl is not a metaphysical dualist, indeed he takes no particular position on the mind-body problem as such. His aim is not to construct an explanatory theory, he says, but merely to describe “the things themselves.” When he does refer explicitly to metaphysical debates about the mind, it is only to dismiss the canonical views as fatally compromised by naturalistic presuppositions. In *The Crisis of European Sciences*, for example, he rejects Cartesian substance dualism, commenting on the “absurdity” of “this centuries-old prejudice,”⁷ as well as Spinozistic dual-aspect theories, such as Wundt’s.⁸ This is not to say that Husserl was a closet materialist,⁹ for what he criticizes in dualist and monist positions alike is their failure to rise to the level of transcendental reflection and thus recognize pure consciousness as an autonomous domain of self-contained phenomena: “consciousness, regarded in its *‘purity,’* amounts to a *self-contained context of being*, a context of *absolute being*, into which nothing can penetrate and from which nothing can escape” (*Id I*, 93).

Notwithstanding Husserl’s professed ontological neutrality, then, there is an undeniable spirit of dualism animating his phenomenology, indeed his theory of intentionality is predicated on what he regards as a strict categorical distinction between consciousness and reality. The phenomenological *epochê* or transcendental reduction,¹⁰ for example, consists in bracketing or abstracting from all objects transcendent to consciousness in order to reflect on the contents

immanent within it, contents that are responsible for directing our awareness to anything transcendent.¹¹ An object is “transcendent,” in Husserl’s sense, if it is given to consciousness perspectivally, or in “adumbrations” (*Abschattungen*), so that only one side or aspect of the thing is immediately present to us at any one time. An object is “immanent” if it is given to consciousness all at once, transparently, so that no perspectival variation mediates our apprehension of it. Physical bodies and worldly states of affairs are transcendent objects, for Husserl, and so too are the abstract entities of mathematics and formal ontology.¹² The contents of consciousness are immanent, by contrast, since we each have immediate, transparent access to our own (current) thoughts and experiences.

“An essential difference thus emerges between *being qua experience* and *being qua thing*” (*Id I*, 76), Husserl writes. “Therein the fundamental distinction among modes of being, the most cardinal that there is, reveals itself: that between *consciousness* and *reality*” (*Id I*, 77). Husserl even insists on “the fundamental detachability (*Ablösbarkeit*) of the entire natural world from the domain of consciousness, the sphere of being of experiences” (*Id I*, 87). In sum, “Between consciousness and reality there yawns a veritable abyss of meaning” (*Id I*, 93). The immanence of transcendental subjectivity occupies an altogether different sphere of existence from anything natural or positive: “Everything that is purely immanent to experience ... is separated from all nature and physics, and no less from all psychology, by abysses — and even this image, as naturalistic, is not strong enough to indicate the difference” (*Id I*, 184). Finally, helping himself to Descartes’s definition of substance, Husserl writes, “Immanent being is thus undoubtedly absolute being in the sense that it fundamentally *nulla ‘re’ indiget ad existendum*” (*Id I*, 92).

Husserl did not simply advance these claims as dogmatic metaphysical assertions, and we should bear in mind their purely descriptive intent. Still, even at a purely descriptive level, phenomenologically speaking, a more steadfast commitment to the spirit of dualism is hard to imagine. Moreover, it is precisely this conceptual dualism, this idea that consciousness and reality are separated by an “abyss of meaning,” that prevents Husserl from acknowledging the body as the original locus of intentional phenomena in perceptual experience. Instead, he regards our intuitive identification with our bodies as an accomplishment based on a more primitive form of intentionality in which we understand ourselves as transcendental egos in possession of purely subjective sensations. To put it bluntly, as Husserl does, “all sensings belong to my soul (*Seele*), everything extended to the material thing” (*Id II*, 150). For Merleau-Ponty, by contrast, getting out from under the cloud of the mind-body problem demands that we come to recognize the body, even purely descriptively, as the place where consciousness and reality in fact come to occupy the very same conceptual space.

It is important to keep in mind that Husserl’s account of “the body” is an account of the lived or personal body (*Leib*), not of “bodies” (*Körper*) understood simply as material objects. The distinction is crucial. Indeed, as Strawson has

argued, the mind-body problem, traditionally conceived, thrives on a concept of *body* that is systematically ambiguous between persons and nonpersons.¹³ And indeed, outside the seminar room we all immediately acknowledge a basic, if only gradual, difference between embodied agents and mere physical things. In the same spirit, it would seem, Husserl writes, “what we have to set over against material nature as a second kind of reality is not the ‘soul,’ but the *concrete unity* of body and soul, the human (or animal) subject” (*Id II*, 139).

On further reflection, however, it becomes clear that simply appealing to a “concrete unity” of body and soul does little to free us from the conceptual dualism underlying that distinction itself. Even Descartes insists, after all, “that I am not merely present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it, so that I and the body form a unit.”¹⁴ Nor does Husserl’s notion of the “psychophysical unity” of persons prevent him from referring elsewhere to “the connection (*Verknüpfung*) of consciousness and body,” in which consciousness “in this psychophysical relation to the corporeal, forfeits nothing of its own essence and can take up into itself nothing foreign to its essence, indeed that would be an absurdity” (*Id I*, 103). In short, describing persons as “unities” of mind and body is precisely the opposite of acknowledging what Strawson calls “the primitiveness of the concept of a person,”¹⁵ according to which “The concept of a person is logically prior to that of an individual consciousness.”¹⁶ Husserl’s distinction between the lived body and material bodies is not enough, then, to overcome the conceptual dualism underwriting his project.

HUSSERL’S NOTION OF THE BODY AS A “BEARER OF SENSATIONS”

It is only in light of his residual phenomenological dualism, then, that we can hope to understand Husserl’s account of the intentional constitution of the body and its role in perception. Consider more closely his point about the inaccessibility of the eye to its own visual field. Husserl writes:

Naturally one would not say that I see my eye in the mirror. For my eye, the seeing qua seeing, I do not perceive. I see something, of which I judge indirectly, through “empathy,” that it is identical with my eyeball (constituted, say, by touch), just as I see the eye of another (*Id II*, 148n).

In one sense, of course, I can perfectly well see my eye in the mirror. What Husserl means is that I cannot *see my eye seeing*, “the seeing qua seeing.” I do not locate visual sensations in my eyes. So, too, with hearing: “The ear is ‘there,’

but the sensed tone is not localized in the ear” (*Id II*, 149). The situation is different, he points out, with the sense of touch. When I touch something with my hand, not only do I feel the qualities of the object, I also feel, and can turn my attention to, tactile sensations localized in the hand itself (hence the two senses of the word “feel,” one transitive, the other intransitive). So, whereas the eye cannot, even with the aid of a mirror, literally see itself seeing, the body can indeed feel itself feeling. More precisely, whereas I do not locate visual sensations in my eye or auditory sensations in my ear, I do locate tactile sensations in the parts of my body involved in touching things (*Id II*, §37).¹⁷

Husserl’s theory of bodily intentionality is predicated on what he considers “the privilege of the localization of touch sensations” (*Id II*, 150), that is, the double aspect of tactile sensation that he thinks grounds our bodily intentionality. By “bodily intentionality” I mean the immediate sense of embodied agency we are all familiar with, and that we all take for granted, in contrast to the reflective thought that one is identical with some object, a thought we might fancifully imagine a free-floating eye entertaining while gazing at itself in a mirror. This immediate sense of one’s own concrete agency is what Schopenhauer calls “will,” without which one would be, he says, “nothing more than the purely knowing subject (a winged cherub without a body).” For Schopenhauer, consequently, “My body and my will are *one*,”¹⁸ and the immediate familiarity I have with my own concrete agency differs fundamentally from the representational knowledge I have of objects, including my body in its external aspect.

Like Schopenhauer and Merleau-Ponty, Husserl appreciates the constitutive role of free bodily movement in our perception of the environment. In *Cartesian Meditations*, for example, he writes:

Among the ... bodies (*Körper*) of this *nature* I then find uniquely singled out *my body (Leib)* ... the only one *in* which I immediately *have free rein (schalte und walte)*, and in particular govern in each of its *organs* —. I perceive *with* my hands, touching kinesthetically, seeing with my eyes, etc., and can so perceive at any time, while these kinestheses of the organs proceed in the *I am doing* and are subject to my *I can*; furthermore, putting these kinestheses into play, I can push, shove, etc., and thereby directly, and then indirectly, *act corporeally (leiblich)*.¹⁹

My perceptual acts are themselves always bodily, of course. On Husserl’s account, however, those bodily acts in no way constitute the body *as a body* for the embodied subject. The body is itself constituted intentionally only in the reflexive relation it acquires to itself when it perceives one of its organs by means of another. Husserl continues:

As perceptually active, I experience ... my own corporeity (*Leiblichkeit*), which is thereby related back to itself. This becomes possible inasmuch as I *can* in each case perceive the one hand *by means of* the other, an eye by means of a hand, etc., so that the functioning organ must become an object, the object a functioning organ.²⁰

Moreover, Husserl argues, this intentional reflexivity of the body, far from being a primitive or ubiquitous feature of perception, depends uniquely on the double aspect peculiar to the sense of touch: “The body as such can be constituted originally *only in tactuality* and in everything localized within the sensations of touch, such as warmth, cold, pain, and the like” (*Id II*, 150). Consequently, “A subject with eyes only *could not have an appearing body at all*” (*Id II*, 150, emphasis modified). Indeed, the body “becomes a *body* only through the introduction of sensations in touch, the introduction of pain sensations, etc., in short, through the localization of sensations qua sensations” (*Id II*, 151).

In its most primitive manifestation, then, the body does not coincide with the subject of experience itself, but is instead a “field of localization” of feelings *belonging to* the subject: “The subject, constituted as the counterpart of material nature, is ... an I, *to which a body belongs* as the field of localization of its sensations” (*Id II*, 152, emphasis added); “the entire consciousness of a human being is in a certain sense *bound to its body* by its hyletic substrate” (*Id II*, 153, emphasis modified). For Husserl, the body is fundamentally “a bearer of sensations,” again, “a thing ‘inserted’ between the rest of the material world and the ‘subjective’ sphere” (*Id II*, 161).

Merleau-Ponty relies heavily on Husserl’s insights into the role of free bodily movement in perceptual awareness. Indeed, he cites with approval Husserl’s notion of “motivation” in describing the unity of movement and perception, arguing that our bodily movements are neither reasons nor causes, but “motives” informing structural changes in the order of perceptual appearances as a whole (*PP*, 47–50). As we shall see, however, although he explicitly credits Husserl with the concept (*PP*, 49n), Merleau-Ponty conceives of perceptual motivation in a very different way and puts it to quite different philosophical uses.

Husserl introduces the concept of motivation in *Logical Investigations* in his account of signs and indication, but it comes to play a central role in his theory of perception generally. Indication, Husserl argues, is neither rational nor causal, but a phenomenal “interweaving of acts of judgment in a single act of judgment.”²¹ Even if there is no rational insight to be had into the relation between a motivating and a motivated state of affairs, motivation itself always amounts to a kind of subjective inference, whose objective correlate Husserl calls a “because” (*weil*), and which may be “justified” or “unjustified,” objectively “real (valid)” or “merely apparent (invalid).”²² In *Ideas I* Husserl widens the notion to cover perception as well as judgment, while acknowledging that the concept “is a

generalization of that concept of motivation with respect to which we can say, for example, that willing the end motivates willing the means” (*Id I*, 89n). Motivation thus remains a kind of inference, rational or not.²³ Finally, in *Ideas II* Husserl extends the concept further to cover kinesthetic sensations, which he says likewise motivate, or hypothetically anticipate, sensations linked to externally perceived objects:

if the eye turns thus, *then* the “image” changes thus; if it turns in a certain way otherwise, the image does so otherwise, accordingly. Here we constantly find this double articulation: kinesthetic sensations on the one side, the motivating; sensations of features on the other, the motivated (*Id II*, 58).

As this passage reveals, however, Husserl tends to equivocate between an empiricist and a cognitivist, or what Merleau-Ponty would call an “intellectualist,” account of motivation. Husserl’s discussion in *Logical Investigations*, like the first of the two sentences in the passage above, is intellectualist in spirit: the link between motivating and motivated attitudes takes the form of a hypothetical (“if-then”) judgment. The second sentence, by contrast, depicts motivation as a mere correlation of kinesthetic sensations on the one hand, and sensations tied to the features of external objects on the other. When Husserl discusses motivation, then, he tends to oscillate between a rationalist and an empiricist approach: at times the relation seems to be a kind of inference or judgment combining two intentional acts in a single act, at other times it appears to be a merely habitual association of sensations, or “hyletic” data.

It is essential to Husserl’s theory, of course, that a mere association of sensations could not constitute our intentional sense of embodiment. For sensations are the mere subjective stuff, the “real” psychological content, of experience; they have no “ideal” intentional content of their own. Associations among my kinesthetic sensations and outward sensations, then, cannot constitute genuine intentional attitudes toward my body as my own. Intentional embodiment enters into our experience only with the unique double aspect of tactile sensation, Husserl argues instead, which renders some perceptual organ a privileged object of my subjective consciousness. The body as such emerges in the coincidence of sensing and being sensed, specifically in my sensing my body sensing itself. Hence the essential inadequacy of vision in the intentional constitution of the body.

But Husserl’s insistence on the primacy of touch is problematic on two counts. First, it is unclear why the body’s typically transparent role in action should count any less toward its intentional constitution than its passive role as the bearer of tactile sensations. Why must my body appear to me as the site of localized sensations in order for me to experience my actions and perceptions as embodied at all? Suppose I lack a sense of *this* body being *my* body. Now suppose

I locate my sensations in this same body. It remains an open question in principle *whose* body this is in which I locate my sensations. For there is nothing conceptually incoherent in the prospect of my locating my sensations in the body of another, or in inanimate objects or empty space, for that matter. If I do not already have a sense of body ownership, or rather bodily self-identification, it is unclear what difference the localization of my sensations in this body could make. Locating my sensations in parts of *my own* body means that I already understand the body in which I locate them as my own. But if I already identify this body, in which I locate my sensations, as my own body, then the localization of sensation itself arrives on the scene too late to play the founding role Husserl envisions for it.

Second, if it is just in virtue of my sense of touch, together with my free bodily movement, that I understand myself as having a body, as Husserl suggests, this can only be because I enjoy some prior consciousness of my self, some distinct means of self-identification, apart from my epistemic relation to the body that exhibits quasi-objectively the sensations I feel subjectively. Not surprisingly, Husserl argues that I do indeed have such an abiding sense of self, logically prior to and independent of anything outside my consciousness, including my body, namely my awareness of myself as the “pure” or “transcendental I” standing at the center of all my intentional acts.²⁴

But, famously, Husserl fails to make a convincing case that transcendental self-consciousness is as ubiquitous or as essential to our experience as he says. Do we have a means of identifying ourselves that is distinct from, indeed more basic than, our immediate bodily orientation in perception? One of the central insights of *Phenomenology of Perception* is that we do not. The body, Merleau-Ponty insists, is not a thing I identify myself with only by recognizing it as the bearer of my sensations; it is a permanent primordial horizon of all my experience: “The body is our general means of having a world” (*PP*, 146).

THE “PURITY” OF CONSCIOUSNESS, THE “OPACITY” OF SENSATION

A few passages from the preface of *Phenomenology of Perception* are enough to indicate just how far Merleau-Ponty departs from Husserl’s program, both in broad outline and in fine detail. There he writes, for instance, as Husserl never could, “The greatest lesson of the reduction is the impossibility of a complete reduction” (*PP*, xiv). Moreover, referring specifically to the “eidetic” reduction, he continues,

The need to proceed by way of essences does not mean that philosophy takes them as its objects, but on the contrary that our

existence is too tightly caught up in the world to know itself as such at the point where it casts itself forth, and that it needs the field of ideality in order to come to know and prevail over its facticity (*PP*, xiv–xv).

These remarks are plainly more Heideggerian in spirit than Husserlian. At best, perhaps, they amount to an attempt to reconcile Husserl's conception of transcendental subjectivity with Heidegger's analytic of Dasein, an effort that becomes fully explicit when Merleau-Ponty writes, "Far from being, as has been believed, the formula for an idealistic philosophy, the phenomenological reduction belongs to existential philosophy: Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world' appears only on the basis of the phenomenological reduction" (*PP*, xiv). "It was in his final period," Merleau-Ponty suggests, "that Husserl himself became fully aware of what the return to the phenomenon meant, and tacitly broke with the philosophy of essences" (*PP*, 49n), having composed the First Book of *Ideas* "at a time when he was still distinguishing fact and essence" (*PP*, 51n). Finally, Merleau-Ponty credits Husserl with the discovery of a form of intentionality "that others have called existence" (*PP*, 121n) and describes "the second period of Husserlian phenomenology" as marking a "transition from the eidetic method or logicism of the beginning phase to the existentialism of the final period" (*PP*, 274n).²⁵

Apart from its inherent implausibility, Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of the development and implications of Husserl's work systematically obscures the real challenge his own phenomenology poses to Husserl's project. Yet the challenge is there, clearly enough. For example, Merleau-Ponty concedes that in his early and middle periods, prior to his supposed conversion to existentialism, Husserl was committed to the sort of intellectualism that in effect renders embodied consciousness metaphysically unintelligible (*PP*, 152n). For "Insofar as intellectualism purifies consciousness by delivering it of all opacity, it makes a genuine thing out of the *hulê*, and the apprehension of any concrete contents, the coming together of this thing and the mind, becomes inconceivable" (*PP*, 241). Merleau-Ponty goes on to charge Husserl explicitly (and Sartre implicitly) with clinging to a "classical" conception of intentionality, which, he says, "treats the experience of the world as a pure act of constituting consciousness, manages to do so only insofar as it defines consciousness as absolute nonbeing, and correspondingly consigns its content to a 'hyletic layer' that belongs to opaque being" (*PP*, 243). Merleau-Ponty assigns this distinction between the "purity" of transcendental consciousness on the one hand, and the "hyletic" stuff of sensation on the other, to Husserl's middle works, specifically the First Book of *Ideas* (*PP*, 243n).

The ideality of "pure" consciousness and the reality of "opaque" sensation figure prominently in Husserl's phenomenology as remnants of the rationalist and empiricist traditions in epistemology, which Merleau-Ponty criticizes

throughout *Phenomenology of Perception*. Of course, Husserl is not an empiricist in the traditional sense, since he does not think that the immediate objects of our awareness are anything like sensations. Indeed, what had always led the classical empiricists astray was their failure to appreciate the intentional structure of experience, which naturally carves the *objects* of our awareness off from the mental contents through or by means of which we are aware of them.²⁶ The *of* in “sensation of pain,” for example, is not the same as the *of* in “sensation of red,” and Husserl attributes the intentionality of the latter to its implicit connectedness with contents directing us toward transcendent objects, external to our minds.

But although Husserl does not regard sensations as original objects of awareness, or primitive building blocks of experience, he does posit in all perceptual experience what he calls the “sensuous *hulê*”: the material of conscious experience, as opposed to its intentional form (*morphê*). The sensuous *hulê*, he says, “has in itself nothing of intentionality” (*Id I*, 172). This is why, for Husserl, mere associations among kinesthetic and outward sensations cannot by themselves constitute an intentional sense of embodiment. No mere association among sensations could do that, since Husserl conceives of sensation as the mere real stuff of experience, abstracted from its ideal intentional form.

Merleau-Ponty’s critique of the concept of sensation in *Phenomenology of Perception* is no doubt in part an endorsement of Husserl’s emphasis on the primacy of intentionality and a rejection of all attempts to reconstruct objective awareness out of the mere subjective stuff of sensation. But Merleau-Ponty’s critical allusions to the “purity” of consciousness and the opacity of “hyletic data” also clearly amount to a critique of Husserl’s distinction between real and ideal content. Indeed, by describing the dovetailing of bodily movement with perceptual experience as a mere association of sensations, Husserl in effect reverts to the sort of empiricism that obscures the intentional structure of the phenomenon.

For his part, undercutting the distinction between real and ideal, Merleau-Ponty insists that “the material and form of knowledge are artifacts of analysis. I posit a material of knowledge when, breaking away from the original faith of perception, I adopt a critical attitude toward it and ask myself, ‘What am I really seeing?’” Indeed, in ordinary experience, “Neither object nor subject is *posited*” (*PP*, 241). My awareness does not present itself to me as an immanent sphere over against transcendent objects, rather “the perception of our own body and the perception of external things provide an example of *nonpositing* consciousness” (*PP*, 49). The logic of everyday perceptual experience, far from constituting “ideal essences” in the domain of transcendental subjectivity, is “a *logic lived through* that cannot account for itself,” its meaning “an *immanent meaning* that is not clear to itself and that becomes fully aware of itself only through the experience of certain natural signs” (*ibid.*).

This mention of the “natural signs” mediating our perceptual experience is an allusion to Husserl’s concept of motivation, though Merleau-Ponty appropriates the notion for his own phenomenological purposes:

the phenomenological notion of *motivation* is one of those “fluid” concepts that must be formed if we want to get back to the phenomena. One phenomenon releases another, not by some objective efficacy, like that which links events in nature, but by the meaning it offers — there is a *raison d’être* that orients the flux of phenomena without being explicitly posited in any one of them, a sort of operant reason (*PP*, 49–50).

What is this “operant reason” at work in the structure of perception?

Consider the fact that we experience a landscape remaining fixed as we move our eyes and head, looking out across it. A subject whose ocular-motor muscles have been paralyzed sees the entire landscape shift to the left when he thinks he is turning his eyes in that direction (*PP*, 47). Merleau-Ponty rejects both cognitivist and associationist accounts of the illusion: the subject does not *infer* the movement of the landscape from beliefs about the position of his eyes and the position of the landscape in relation to his eyes, nor is the stationary retinal image a mere *cause* of the ensuing perceptual effect. The turning of my gaze is neither a reason nor a cause, but a sign that “motivates” my apprehension of my orientation among things in the environment:

For the illusion to be produced, the subject must have intended to look to the left and must have thought he moved his eye. The illusion regarding the body entails the appearance of movement in the object. The movements of the body are naturally invested with a certain perceptual significance (*PP*, 47–48).

Notwithstanding his casual reliance on notions like reason, thought, and entailment, Merleau-Ponty conceives of motivation not, like Husserl, as either a hypothetical inference or an association of sensations, but rather as the ongoing unconscious preservation of a balance or gestalt in our bodily orientation in the world. For our bodies are constantly tacitly adjusting themselves to integrate our experience and maintain our effective grip on things:

my body is geared to the world when my perception offers me a spectacle as varied and as clearly articulated as possible, and when my motor intentions, as they unfold, receive from the world the responses they anticipate. This maximum distinctness in perception and action defines a perceptual *ground*, a basis of my life, a general *milieu* for the coexistence of my body and the world (*PP*, 250).

The situatedness of our bodies in perception is not at bottom an object of judgment, inference, or even conscious awareness. It is instead the spontaneous, self-correcting, precognitive background of intentionality: “our body is not the object of an ‘I think’: it is an ensemble of lived meanings that finds its equilibrium” (PP, 153).

The “natural signs” mediating our embodied perceptual experience, then, are neither transparent mental contents interior to consciousness nor objective external events, but lie instead in our precognitive bodily engagement with the world. Perceptual experience incorporates the movements of the body and spontaneously takes them into account in opening us onto a stable external world. Perception is always informed, that is, by what Merleau-Ponty calls a “body schema” (*schéma corporel*), which consists neither in a mental attitude nor in a mere physiological state.

MERLEAU-PONTY’S CONCEPT OF THE BODY SCHEMA

What is a body schema? Regrettably, with a few unaccountable exceptions, Colin Smith renders *schéma corporel* as “body image” throughout his translation of *Phenomenology of Perception*. The error is crucial, since Merleau-Ponty inherits his terminology from Henry Head, who distinguishes explicitly between the body *schema* and an *image of the body*.²⁷ What is the distinction between a schema and an image?

The schema-image distinction itself can be traced at least as far back as the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The notion of schematism provides Kant with the solution to a problem posed by his own strict distinction between understanding and sensibility, between pure concepts and sensible intuitions. “Now how,” he asks himself, “is the *subsumption* of the latter under the former, thus the *application* of the category to appearances possible?”²⁸ We cannot directly intuit number, possibility, causality, or substance, he thinks, yet we experience things as *exhibiting* or *instantiating* those concepts. How is this possible?

Kant concludes that “there must be a third thing, which must stand in homogeneity with the category on the one hand and the appearance on the other, and makes possible the application of the former to the latter.” The mediating representation that acts as a bridge or link between the category and the intuition is what he calls “the *transcendental schema*.” The schema of a concept, then, is the “representation of a general procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image.” Consequently, “the schema is to be distinguished from an image.” This is because, whereas images are always particular, schemata must as it were sketch out in advance or anticipate an enormous range of possible cases. So, for Kant, “it is not images of objects but schemata that ground our pure

sensible concepts,” indeed it is only in virtue of the schemata defining them that the imagination can produce images at all.

Schemata, then, are rules or procedures that issue from the faculty of imagination and specify the construction of sensible images adequate to pure concepts of the understanding. It is the imagination that carves out the space of possibilities within which objects can appear to us at all as objects of knowledge. What allows schemata to mediate the discursive categories of the understanding and the passive intuitions of sensibility, moreover, is the fact that they exhibit the *a priori* condition underlying all representation, both conceptual and intuitive, namely time. For time is both the form of inner sense, to which all appearances must necessarily conform, and the sequence or duration that makes intelligible the implementation and execution of a rule or procedure.²⁹ This, in short, is why the term “body image” is liable to wreak havoc in philosophical accounts of embodiment, for we conceive of images as *objects of awareness*, whereas schemata are the capacities or dispositions that sketch out in advance and so structure our *awareness of objects*.

Understanding Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the body schema therefore presupposes some understanding of the Kantian schematism, the point of which is that the application of concepts rests on a kind of action, a procedure unfolding in time. Of course, Merleau-Ponty rejects Kant’s intellectualist conception of schemata as explicit formal rules, since of course the very intelligibility of such rules would in turn depend on precisely the kind of embodied perceptual experience whose phenomenological features Merleau-Ponty is trying to describe. What is essential to the concept of the body schema, and what it shares with its Kantian predecessor, rather, is the notion of an integrated set of skills poised and ready to anticipate and incorporate a world prior to the application of concepts and the formation of thoughts and judgments. This kind of embodied poise or readiness, which Merleau-Ponty calls “habit,” consists in a kind of noncognitive, preconceptual “motor intentionality” (*PP*, 110). Habit is not a function of reflective thought, nor is it transparently accessible to reflection in pure consciousness, rather it manifests itself in the perceptual body as such: “it is the body that ‘understands’ in the acquisition of habit” (*PP*, 144).

Aristotle observed, for example, that if you forcibly cross your fingers around a small marble, you will seem to feel two marbles instead of one. “Aristotle’s illusion,” Merleau-Ponty suggests, “is primarily a disturbance of the body schema” (*PP*, 205). For it is not just that your fingers are only rarely ever in such an awkward inverted position, it is rather that they cannot get themselves there by their own effort: “The synthesis of the object here is thus effected through the synthesis of one’s own body” (*PP*, 205). Your perception of objects is structured by your body and by what it senses that it can and cannot do.

Our primitive understanding of bodies is therefore rooted in our bodily understanding of ourselves: “I can understand the function of the living body only by enacting it myself, and only insofar as I am a body” (*PP*, 75). The bodies

of others, too, are intelligible to me not by an analogy I entertain in thought, but through my own spontaneous bodily skills. I can mimic the gestures of another, for example, without thinking about our respective positions in objective space. I immediately sense my own movements as equivalent to the movements of the other, and I experience my own body

as an open system of an infinite number of equivalent positions in the orientation of the other. What we have called the body schema is precisely this system of equivalences, this immediately given invariant whereby the different motor tasks are instantaneously transposable (*PP*, 141).

In copying someone's gestures, I do not have to think about our orientations in space, since my body adjusts itself to the other, and to the situation at large, as part of the perceptual background conditions that first make it possible for me to think about things explicitly at all. The body schema is the crux or reference point that establishes a stable perceptual background against which I perceive and respond to changes and movements in my environment, and thereby opens me onto a world of other selves. As Merleau-Ponty would say later, "It is the *hinge* of the for itself and the for the other."³⁰

The concept of the body schema also sheds light on phantom limb phenomena and related pathologies. For such syndromes are neither simply false beliefs nor meaningless sensations, rather they point up distortions in the subject's sense of orientation and bodily possibility: "the awareness of the amputated arm as present, or of the disabled arm as absent, is not on the order of 'I think that ...'" (*PP*, 81). Moreover, the tendency of such conditions to dissipate or correct themselves with the passage of time suggests a kind of recalibration of a long-term with a short-term sense of bodily position and capacity: "our body comprises, as it were, two distinct layers, that of the habitual body (*corps habituel*) and that of the body at this moment (*corps actuel*)" (*PP*, 82). If you have ever stood up and tried to walk on leg that has "fallen asleep" for lack of circulation, you know the sense of disturbance in your ordinary awareness of where your leg is and what it can do. The body schema, then, is the bundle of skills and capacities that constitute the body's precognitive familiarity with itself and the world it inhabits.

As Merleau-Ponty conceives it, then, the body schema is not a product but a condition of cognition, for only by being embodied am I a subject in the world at all: "I am conscious of my body *via* the world," he says, just as "I am conscious of the world through the medium of my body" (*PP*, 82). My body is not a mere container or instrument of my agency, rather it comprises "stable organs and preestablished circuits" (*PP*, 87) that function according to their own logic, as it were, below the threshold of conscious intention. Moreover, like Kantian

schemata, “our reflexes translate a specific *a priori*,” and we respond to and anticipate familiar situations as typical instances or “stereotypes” (PP, 87).

The body schema is therefore “neither the mere copy nor even the global consciousness of the existing parts of the body.” Rather, it is “dynamic,” that is, “my body appears to me as an attitude with a view to a certain actual or possible task” (PP, 100). Putting the point more vividly, Merleau-Ponty writes, “If I stand in front of my desk and lean on it with both hands, only my hands are stressed and the whole of my body trails behind them like the tail of a comet” (PP, 100). And it is a practical background familiarity with the world itself that informs our intentional familiarity with our bodies: “I know where my pipe is with absolute certainty, and *thereby* I know where my hand is and where my body is” (PP, 100). The body is not an object of which I have an internal image or internal representation, rather “it is polarized by its tasks, because it *exists toward* them, because it gathers itself up to reach its goal, and ‘body schema’ is in the end a way of saying that my body is in the world” (PP, 101).

Consider again the visual illusion resulting from the paralysis of the eye muscles. As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of the illusion draws on Husserl’s notion of perceptual motivation, yet the substance of their respective accounts differs crucially. For Merleau-Ponty, it is precisely the phenomenological dovetailing of our bodily movements with our visual orientation in the environment that constitutes our positive sense of being embodied perceptual selves. Far more than Husserl’s various appeals to hypothetical inferences and associations among kinesthetic and outward-directed sensations, Merleau-Ponty’s thick conception of perceptual agency already implicates the body in all perceptual acts. Our ongoing background perception of our own bodies is nothing like an object-directed awareness focused on any of its distinct parts, as for example when we locate tactile sensations on our skin or in our joints. Our sense of embodiment is bound up instead with a primitive understanding of the body as a global and abiding horizon of perceptual experience. For Merleau-Ponty, my body simply “is my point of view on the world” (PP, 70).

The body, then, is a permanent structure of perception, over and beyond the peculiar features of any one of the five traditionally differentiated senses. Indeed, as J.J. Gibson has argued in his “ecological” theory of perception, all the senses play a role in the combination of kinesthesia and perception of external objects, that is, between proprioception and exteroception: “Proprioception or self-sensitivity is seen to be an overall function, common to all systems, not a special sense.”³¹ Like Gibson, for example, Merleau-Ponty insists that “all the senses are spatial, if they are to give us access to some form or other of being, if, that is, they are senses at all” (PP, 217). Perception is holistic, and the body’s background self-awareness is one of its permanent horizons: “External perception and the perception of one’s own body vary in conjunction because they are the two facets of one and the same act” (PP, 205). Consequently, “Every external perception is

immediately synonymous with a certain perception of my body, just as every perception of my body is made explicit in the language of external perception” (*PP*, 206). Unlike pure transcendental consciousness, as Husserl conceives it, “the body is not a transparent object,” rather “it is an expressive unity that we can learn to know only by actively taking it up.” In short, “The theory of the body schema is implicitly a theory of perception” (*PP*, 206).

When Merleau-Ponty refers explicitly to the “double sensation” I supposedly feel when I put my hands together, his position again sounds remarkably close to Husserl’s. His description of the experience, however, and the conclusion he draws from it, are again crucially different. When I touch one of my hands with the other, he writes,

the two hands are never touched and touching at the same time with respect to each other. When I press my two hands together, it is not a matter of two sensations felt together as one perceives two objects placed side by side, but of an ambiguous arrangement in which the two hands can alternate in the role of “touching” and “touched.” What was meant by talking about “double sensations” is that, in passing from one role to the other, I can recognize the hand touched as the same one that will in a moment be touching (*PP*, 93).³²

It is not as if I feel two sensations, side by side. When one hand is actively touching the other, its own localized sensations recede or vanish from consciousness entirely. But, one might object, is Merleau-Ponty not acknowledging here that it is precisely in alternating between its active to passive roles that I acquire the sense that this is my hand? Is this not simply a reiteration of Husserl’s argument that the localization of passive sensation, together with a kinesthetic sense of voluntary movement, is what constitutes my body as my own? Is this not where the intentional constitution of the body itself occurs?

No, for Merleau-Ponty does not assign to this sort of experience the founding significance it has on Husserl’s account. He says only that “I can recognize the hand touched as the same one that will in a moment be touching.” This is not to say, as Husserl does, that I have a body at all, intentionally speaking, *only because* I can do so, that the body “becomes a *body* only through the introduction of sensations in touch” (*Id II*, 151). On Merleau-Ponty’s account, the shift in attitude from an embodied sense of agency to a perception of my body as a mere “bearer of sensations” amounts instead to a kind of privative modification of our prior bodily self-understanding. Indeed, as I argued above, subjective awareness of my body as a locus of sensation cannot be the foundation of bodily intentionality, since any quasi-objective recognition of the hand as my own in its purely passive function presupposes a prior identification of myself with it in the spontaneity of my action. For Merleau-Ponty, then, the body is not a kind of

quasi-objective thing with which I identify thanks to the localization in it of my subjective sensations, rather the attribution of sensations to myself in the first place presupposes my own prior identification with my body.

CONCLUSION

What is at stake in Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's account of bodily intentionality is neither an essentially psychological question, nor a narrow technical disagreement on the margins of phenomenological inquiry. One's actual identification with one's own body is a psychological accomplishment that occurs in the first few months of life, and its details are best left to empirical research in developmental psychology. Our mature understanding of ourselves as embodied agents, by contrast, is not merely an ongoing cognitive achievement, as Husserl supposes, but a primitive and abiding structure of perceptual experience. For the phenomenological issue has to do not with the causal conditions of our acquisition of intentional attitudes toward our own bodies in infancy, but with the intelligible structure of our perceptual self-understanding once we have mastered and taken for granted a fully developed sense of embodied agency.

So, when Merleau-Ponty contends that in "intellectualist psychology and idealist philosophy" (*PP*, 146), "all meaning was *ipso facto* conceived as an act of thought, as the work of a pure I" (*PP*, 147), the indictment must apply as much to Husserl's conception of transcendental subjectivity as to Cartesian rationalism and Kantian idealism. For Merleau-Ponty, "Bodily experience forces us to acknowledge an imposition of meaning that is not the work of a universal constituting consciousness" (*PP*, 147). We do not understand ourselves first as pure egos, only then identifying ourselves with the bodies in which we locate our sensations. Rather, by the time we are in a position to ascribe experiences to subjects at all, whether ourselves or others, we already understand them in primitive bodily terms.

Notwithstanding their superficial similarities, then, and in spite of the undeniable influence Husserl's later writings exerted on Merleau-Ponty, their positive accounts of the body and its role in perceptual experience differ in subtle but profound ways. The differences are evident in fine points of phenomenological detail, but more importantly in the broad outlines of their respective conceptions of intentionality, subjectivity, and philosophic method.

For Husserl, bodily intentionality is a kind of intermediary phenomenon bridging what remains in his eyes a conceptual "abyss" separating consciousness from reality. The body is no mere thing, no discrete object of outer perception, but a kind of quasi-object that an essentially disembodied transcendental ego *has* or *owns* as the locus of its subjective sensations. The body is not itself

constitutive of intentionality, for Husserl, but is instead a noetic achievement of transcendental subjectivity.

For Merleau-Ponty, by contrast, the body is a primitive constituent of perceptual awareness as such, which in turn forms the permanent background of intentionality at large. The intentional constitution of the body is not the product of a cognitive process whose steps we might trace back to the founding acts of a pure I. Rather, the body in its perceptual capacity just is the I in its most primordial aspect. For Merleau-Ponty, then, strictly speaking, we do not *have* bodies, rather “we are our body,” which is to say, “we are in the world through our body, and insofar as we perceive the world with our body.” In effect, “the body is a natural self and, as it were, the subject of perception” (*PP*, 206).

NOTES

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- ¹ Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution. Husserliana IV*. M. Biemel, ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952). Quotations from the First and Second Books of *Ideen* (hereafter *Id I* and *Id II*) will be cited in the body of the text. The full citation of *Id I* is Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch. Husserliana III*. K. Schuhmann, ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976). Page references to *Id I* are to the first edition. All translations of Husserl are mine.
- ² Dasein’s “corporeity” (*Leiblichkeit*), Heidegger says curtly, “contains a problematic of its own, not to be dealt with here.” (Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 15th ed. [Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1979], 108.
- ³ Merleau-Ponty, “The Philosopher and His Shadow,” in *Signs*, trans. R. McCleary (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 167.
- ⁴ Translators’ introduction to *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), xvi. (Only someone educated in the French academic philosophy of the early twentieth century could describe the experience of reading Husserl as even “almost” voluptuous.)
- ⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge & Degan Paul, 1962), 92n. (hereafter referred to as *PP*). Later Merleau-Ponty refers less specifically to “Husserl’s unpublished writings” (*PP*, 137). I shall henceforth cite *PP* in the body of the text. Page references will be to the English translation, though I have modified it slightly throughout.
- ⁶ An evocative half-truth, since of course it is not as if my body presents itself to me as if *headless!*
- ⁷ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. D. Carr (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970), §60.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, §67.
- ⁹ Husserl therefore regards Hobbes as no less naive than his rationalist contemporaries. *Ibid.*, §11.

- ¹⁰ See *Id I*, §§31–34 and §§56–64.
- ¹¹ The reduction is called “transcendental” in virtue of the reflective standpoint on consciousness that it affords, not because it excludes things “transcendent” to consciousness.
- ¹² See *Id I*, §§59–60.
- ¹³ P. F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen, 1959), 105.
- ¹⁴ Descartes, *Meditations*, VII, 81. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Cf. *Discourse on Method*, VI, 59, in *ibid.* References are to the volume and page numbers of the Adam and Tannery edition, printed in the margins of the translation.
- ¹⁵ *Individuals*, 101.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.
- ¹⁷ I can, of course, feel *pain* in my eyes if the light is very bright, or in my ears if the sound is very loud. But pain is a tactile sensation: “the eye is *also* a field of localization, but *only for touch sensations*” (*Id II*, 148).
- ¹⁸ Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969), vol. 1: §18.
- ¹⁹ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, *Husserliana I*, 2d ed., ed. S. Strasser (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1963), §44: 128. Translated as *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. D. Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1960), 97.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1980), vol. II, pt. 1:25. Translated as *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 271.
- ²² *Logische Untersuchungen*, vol. II, pt. 1: 25–28; *Logical Investigations*, 270–73.
- ²³ Having written that “unexperienced but experienceable” objects are “*motivated* in the context of experience,” Husserl later added in the margin: “rationally motivated” (*Id I*, 89). See F. Kersten’s translation of this in *Id I, Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book* (The Hague: Martinij Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), 107n.
- ²⁴ See *Id I*, 86, 109–110, 150, 160–61, 192, 253; *Id II*, §§22–29; *Cartesian Meditations*, §§8, 11, 16, and Fourth Meditation.
- ²⁵ For a different attempt to assimilate Heidegger’s notion of being-in-the-world to Husserl’s phenomenological reductions, see Ernst Tugendhat’s *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1967), 263. Whereas Merleau-Ponty suggests that it was Husserl who eventually moved closer to Heidegger’s position, Tugendhat argues that the concept of being-in-the-world never amounted to a substantive departure from Husserl’s project, as Heidegger insisted it was.
- ²⁶ The conflation of intentional objects and mental contents is perhaps most explicit in Berkeley, who ingeniously carries the assumption to its logical – and disastrous – conclusion.
- ²⁷ See Shaun Gallagher, “Body Schema and Intentionality,” in *The Body and the Self*, ed. Bermúdez, et al., eds. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), 226–29.
- ²⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. P. Guyer and A. W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), A137/B176. Page references to the A and B edition hereafter appear in the body of the text.

- ²⁹ So, for example, unlike the Arabic symbol 3, the Roman numeral III can be considered an image of three, since it is a product of the rule for exhibiting the number in the diachronic procedure of counting.
- ³⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. A. Lingis (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 189.
- ³¹ James J. Gibson, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), 320, cf. 33–38, and *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 115–16, 182–88, 203–08.
- ³² Merleau-Ponty recounts this example in “The Philosopher and His Shadow,” 166, and in his notes for lectures he planned to give in 1957–58 on “Husserl’s Concept of Nature,” but did not, and which were to draw heavily on *Ideas II*. By the end of his notes Merleau-Ponty reluctantly admits the incompatibility of what he considers Husserl’s valuable insights on the one hand with the doctrine of the transcendental ego on the other:

Phenomenology proper, after the reduction, would concern itself with the pure I and its intentional correlates, the pure I as the final subject of all subordinate constitutions. All would be constituted and produced by the acts of this final phenomenological consciousness, which is responsible for the acts of the natural attitude. This seems in contradiction with the previous account. If everything correlates with the act of an I, we return to transcendental idealism. (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Texts and Dialogues*, ed. H. J. Silverman and J. Barry, Jr., trans. M. B. Smith, et al. [New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1992], 168).