In the history of modern thought, there can be and indeed are two approaches to the understanding of the human subject. One is said to be the empiricist or rationalist account of the human and the other is distinctively Phenomenological or Existentialist. The empirical study of human subject begins with the consideration of him/her as an object. It tries to avoid every reference to one's consciousness, so to say, the inside. Accordingly, an empirical study of the human subject begins with the consideration of him/her as a specimen of the behavioral set and therefore is a fully analyzable system. One of the most eminent scientific philosophies in which this has happened is Gilbert Ryle’s theory of human Mind. Ryle’s method of accounting for the nature of mind is said to be behaviorist. He discards the notions like non-materiality and self-consciousness whereas, the design of the phenomenological-Existentialist approach point toward the ontological structure of human consciousness.

To understand the phenomenological and existentialist approach to human subject vis-à-vis experience, it is essential to realize that the image of the human subject which is projected is that of a being whose presence in the world is a unitary reality in which the human subject and the world are integrally grounded in consciousness. The second chapter of the thesis is an attempt to analyze and explicate the human subject and the concept of freedom in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty within the contours of phenomenological account.

I

Human Subject in Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy

Paradoxicality in man’s knowledge of himself

From the point of view of both the inner structure and the outer expression there is nothing more enigmatic in the world than the human subject. No theory about the nature of the human has ever claimed to be complete. There is something basically
paradoxical regarding human’s knowledge of himself/herself: he/she finds himself to be there as a knowing consciousness and at the same time discovers, while he/she is in the knowledge situation, that there is an expanse of the unknown spread around what is known. Our knowledge of ourselves and of the world is shrouded in an ocean of ignorance. Our pursuit of self-knowledge is a sort of dog-running-to-catch-its-own-tail game. We escape from our own act of knowing: we know a thing and yet do not know enough what we know of it, somewhere our knowledge retains an eternal lack. Whether it is directed outward or inward, the knowing mind makes certain things stand out under its flash light as it were, but an infinite number of other things linger as unclear along the borders of the known, waiting to enter the zone of knowledge. These latter things, however, may never enter the region of clarity but may fleetingly disappear into total obscurity into some unfathomable primordial darkness.

Socrates: A novel Conception of Man

Socrates introduced a novel conception of the soul quite distinct from all the preceding theories, which has exercised an important influence on the western view of man ever since. The soul is neither an arrangement of atoms nor a super-personal agency endowed with super-human knowledge and capacities. It is rather the primary guiding part of the human subject, by which he understands and consciously directs his life. Like God himself, the human subject is immaterial, invisible and known only through his effects. This part of man can oppose and govern the body. It retains its identity throughout physical change, and even survives the complete disintegration of the body at death. Hence as Socrates constantly asserted, the chief obligation of every man is first of all to tend his own soul, and then so far as this is possible, to help others in tending theirs. This new view of the human soul gave rise to two results which have played an important role in western thought as a problem and as a cultural attitude. The human person as such is more than an important role in western thought as a problem and as a cultural attitude. The individual as such is more than an organized body, extended in space. He is compound of such a body, together with a knowing, planning agency. This agency can unite with the stable forms of things as they really are, and can direct its activities in the light of such knowledge, which no physical thing can do. Hence man is a union of
physical body with non-physical soul. How can two such diverse elements be united in one single being? This has given rise to look at the problem of human body and soul in a different way and has played an important role in western thought from the time of Socrates.

**Human Subject: The Manifold Phases**

In common with all the beings of nature, the human subject has a physical body composed of the basic elements, which grows, decays, and interacts with other processes. In common with plants, this body is animated by a moving principle that nourishes and reproduces itself. With the other animals, it is capable of locomotion, and is endowed with sensory organs which enable him to direct his acts by an awareness of external things and his own pleasures and pains. In addition to these he possesses freedom which makes him the master of his own life by deliberation and choice. Finally he is, as Proclus said, a praying animal, who is able to enter into communion with a being higher than himself.

It is possible to single out each of these phases, and to regard the whole of human nature from certain points of view. Thus we have an astronomical view of man which looks at him as a tiny physical process lost in the vast encompassing spaces of galactic universe. There is the biological view of man which focuses him as a living being and regards him as the last stage of a protracted planetary evolution. There is again the animalistic view of man which concentrates upon his awareness of pleasure and pain and his elementary appetites. Sharply set off from these are the libertarian view of man which focuses his freedom of choice, and sees him as the master of his history. Finally there is the religious view of the human subject which interprets his/her whole being in terms of one’s relation to an eternal spirit.

In the earliest pre-Socratic phase of the Greek thought, the concept of human was not sharply focused. Noteworthy remarks were made about man. But the chief object of speculative interest was the order of nature as a whole. Man was simply a part of the cosmos, and attention was never concentrated on his peculiar nature as an object of special concern.
Of all visible beings, man alone possesses the faculty of rational insight, weak though it is. Hence Socrates was led to a new conception of soul and a radically novel theory of human nature. Human subject is not a cosmic accident, but a culminating phase of the whole natural order with a peculiar and important function to perform. He alone can bring nature into the light of understanding, and consciously direct his life and activities into voluntary harmony with this order. This explains the intense passion with which Socrates urged upon himself and his contemporaries, wherever he met them and at every situation, even as an old man at the time of his trial, the supreme importance of not sinking down to the level of dumb creatures, but of tending those precious souls which they alone possess, in order to perform the unique and essential function for which they were brought into existence. He differed sharply with the sophist view that men once lived dispersed without the bonds of society. This is sheer fantasy, for the human subject is too weak, especially in infancy, to live alone by him/her. Human person needs a family for mere survival and the family is a society, indeed the root of all society. Hence human is understood as a social animal by nature. The human subject needs society not only to survive, but also to satisfy many other basic needs of his nature.

Subjectivity and Embodied Consciousness

A critical examination and understanding on the concept of human subject in the philosophical account of Merleau-Ponty underlines the idea that the theme is related to the fundamental concept of subjectivity or consciousness. In fact, such an understanding of consciousness is said to be the real complex ordinarily referred to as person, (denoted in another way as ego) for, subjectivity is intelligible only in the context of a human subject or person as embodied subjectivity in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. Following Merleau-Ponty, we argue that it is not possible to describe the human world fully without referring back to the human body. That is why the concept of body has such a central place in the existential phenomenology of Merleau Ponty. It is not the thing body, but rather the immediately experienced and experiencing, lived and living body of everyday life that Merleau-Ponty gave emphasis. I do experience my body as the means, the instrument by means of which consciousness is situated in the world. Thus for Merleau-Ponty, the study of consciousness is a study of consciousness as embodied, and
hence a study of the body as experienced or what Merleau-Ponty sometimes calls the lived body or body proper. I only exist in bodily form that I can be in the world. Through the body I am able to act upon the thing and persons and conversely they are able to act on me.

The Ontological Structure of the Human Subject: Two Approaches

To understand man is to be able to encompass through thought and words the entire field of his consciousness. As Prof. Ramakant Sinari \(^7\) opines there can be, and indeed are, two distinct approaches to the understanding of human reality: one outside-in and the other inside-out. Although ultimately the answer to the question what is man? Will have to comprehend explanations of all the factors that go to constitute the entire human reality, the outside-in approach is the basis of all empirical studies and rational analyses and the inside-out approach is crystallized in ontologies. The empirical studies of human phenomena begin with the consideration of man as an object, an incarnate and observable thing, i.e., one that can be dissected, experimented on, manipulated with instruments, measured and X-rayed. The empirical view of man, therefore, tries to avoid every reference to his inside, his feeling self. It is the basic requirement of this view to objectify man, to investigate him by divorcing him from his inwardness to attempt not to state the un-satiable existential meaning of “being human”. For this view, man must be explained outside in, i.e., he must be regarded as a specimen of the behavioural set and brought under scientific laws. According to the outside-in approach, man as a biological, physiological, psychological, chemical and social entity, is a fully analyzable system.

The outside-in explanation for the phenomenon of man, so far as their logical character is concerned, is invariably flawless because they make it a point not to construct unwarranted or trans-empirical hypotheses. They try to strictly adhere to the principle of stating only what is observed or observable, of establishing the truth of every proposition strictly empirically. Hence, in many of the scientific philosophers today, where solutions to problems seek to be outside-in, every statement referring to man’s inside is translated into the statement of behavior. Statements about mental acts, about consciousness or ego, existential experiences, statements of private meanings, are all reached through the behavioural and physical formulations. In the process, man’s
subjectivity—his “inner space”—one of the eternal mysteries into which our inward-seeking sensibility continually runs—is lost.

The Inside-out Approach and the Structure of Consciousness

The design of the inside-out study of man centers on man’s consciousness and hence is intended to bring out the ontological structure of man. In fact this study is more than scientific, for, it proceeds from the “roots” of consciousness’s very act of experiencing. To the inside-out view, man’s experience of the world manifests his intensionality. Man sees his own life and his presence in the world as significant realities. His sense of being in the world, of having a body extended in space and “open” toward various impressions about the physical world, his awareness of occupying a certain locus amidst things and along flow of time, his being conscious and alive, are fundamental to his ontological being. Man is directed toward some meaning or other, some impression or other—he not only perceives himself as experiencing but also registers what he experiences as his.

The Intentionality Thesis and the Inside-Out Approach

The thesis that human consciousness is intentional—originally put forward by Edmund Husserl and now unhesitatingly accepted by phenomenologist and existentialists—suggest that it is perhaps the most primordial quality of man’s existence. Consciousness is always the “consciousness-of”. The awareness I have of the physical world and of myself as an embodied mind cannot be separated from my being. To be conscious as man is to be worldly, i.e., to have a psychic structure directed towards objects, to contain and know that the world is there. Thus “being intentional” is “being directed towards the world”: both the expressions point out what can be termed the arrowhead character of man’s entire psycho-physical existence.

One of the most puzzling constituents of our inside is that our sense of being conscious is uninterruptedly fastened, so to say, to the process of our meaning-intuiting. Existence itself is a meaning. That I am here and now, that the world is there as a sort of abode of mine, that the objects and persons around me engage my senses and attentions, are all expressions of certain basic meaning-experiences. How these meaning-experiences
or meaning-intuitions arise in consciousness is one of the perennial problems in metaphysics. We know, for instance, that our awareness of existing in the world is the residual meaning behind all meanings as such, that even if we succeed in annulling all other meaning, the “meaningfulness” of our being worldly cannot be annulled.

In a sense nominalists are right when they say that the ultimate constituents of the universe are names. However, the word ‘name’ must be understood in a broad sense—it must refer to that fundamental import which consciousness runs into by its position in the world. The very bodily being of mine, the fact of my living in space and time, objects around me—the books, pencils, the walls, the trees and roads and houses outside my window—are all meanings in the sense that they are intuited by me as definite “spots” through which my awareness journeys. There is no experience which is totally devoid of meaning.

The intentionality of consciousness and the emergence of meaning are thus strangely inter-connected. Both display a kind of inside-out directedness of the human self: they point at something and leave the consciousness as its experiencer, it’s “meaner”. Just as every meaning situation implies the presence of a mind, a cognitive being; it also shows itself as a meeting-point of the latter with something. It is impossible to conceive of a context where an absolutely meaningless experience prevails. In this sense, to be is to be meant for someone-to a ego that posits itself as an I-locus. This chair, for instance, is “caught” by my consciousness as a meant thing; it is, so to say, a “prey” to my meaning consciousness. Indeed, the world that is perceived as a meaning or assembly of meanings can be analyzed into simple individual nuances, somewhat like Noesis-Noema structures; but even when so analyzed, meanings still remain the basic constituents of our existence in the world. One is then, inclined to say that man is the origin of all meanings.

Since all meanings are intended, so to say, apprehended by consciousness, and since there is no possibility of their being self-subsistent, it is the intentional character of consciousness that seems to generate them. To say that man is the creator of the world, that the world comprises a pattern of meanings secreted by the I-loci, contains,
therefore, greater truth than might appear. Ontologically i.e., looking at the inside-out
direction of it, human consciousness is both worldly and non-worldly. The worldliness is
not something extraneous to us-it is a natural habitat of our existence. As Heidegger says,
temporality or being-in-the-world belongs to the very structure of man. It is by being-in-
the-world, or rather because of it, that our sense of existence becomes a reality, an
impregnable truth. Unless therefore a special endeavor is made to disconnect our inside
from its environing outside, i.e. the world of psychic impressions as such, we necessarily
remain world-conscious, world oriented, world based. But while living as world based we
do not succumb to the world. Nothing that is given to consciousness is such that it holds
on to it rigidly. Different horizons of meaning arise in consciousness as clear, semi-clear
and unclear are nuances of what stands out as prominent. The self escaping disposition
seems to be innate to the very essence of man.

Phenomenological Method and the Primordial State of Consciousness

Husserl’s famous phenomenological method, which is a self-explorative
technique in modern existentialist philosophers, has for its aim the withdrawal of
consciousness from its world-experience. Husserl’s plan, like that of the Yoga philosophy
and Sankara Vedanta, was to “catch” the primordial state of consciousness-i.e., the state
at which consciousness is pure and immune from all presuppositions. While
phenomenologist is following Husserl and support the possibility of consciousness
attaining what have been called the “essential” or “eidetic” meanings, the existentialists
at no stage alienate the phenomenon of being –conscious from that of being-in-the-world.
According to them, “worldliness” belongs to the very structure of consciousness. It is the
expression of its basic disposition. All meaning – intuitions or meanings-experiences
form the very way consciousness is in the world. Had there been a region in which
consciousness could realize total absence of the world impressions, the whole outside
could be regarded as a superimposition which may be an accident in relation to
consciousness. But the very fact that we do not perceive the world as “unnatural” do not
want to vanish from it (by dying, for examples), shows that being-in-the-world defines
the fundamental structure of the human subject.
However, our inside has dimensions that cannot be exhaustively fathomed. We reach them by an act of transcendence. In its inward journeys, consciousness can see itself running into a volley of meanings, nuances, perspectives, each of which appears like a creation, an occurrence from nowhere. Actually the unfolding of the archaeology of these meanings is one of the most interesting but difficult-tasks in the ontological studies of consciousness. Creativity is the very core of our inner life; it is the very spirit of man.

Self transcendence is the essence of human consciousness. In every experience or act of oneself, the human subject surpasses himself-as-given, figures as something more than his cognitive self. It amounts to saying that human consciousness does not contain itself like an object. Being a ceaseless flux, its inward movement is without any boundaries. This is why its precise characterization is not possible. It constantly creates its views toward the given, generates and re-constructs meanings and throws them on to the given. There is thus no preconceived rational scheme which our inside adheres to. It is a passion, an urge, a pure spontaneity, so to say, freedom. Unless our view of the inside of man is complete, we cannot claim to know human life and human behavior fully. The elementary pre-conscious sphere which borders on a void or nothing impinges on our notion of the empirical reality and becomes the subjectivity-stuff that we basically are. It is the sphere of freedom, creativity and Being of which we are ordinarily unaware, or only intermittently aware.

Consciousness, as it is directed toward something or other, figures as a kind of gleam discovering whatever it falls upon. It is a capacity to radiate meanings, to present itself to itself. It is this activity of discovering by radiation concerning man’s inside that was most perspicuously suggested by Sankara—one of the most wonderful inside-out theoreticians in the world by characterizing the self as light. It is the very nature of human reality to discover itself by discovering the world, to find itself to be there as a watchful witness of itself, to reveal itself by revealing itself—in-the-world. If we are able to define the exact nexus between consciousness’s act of experiencing and that toward which this act is directed the noesis and the Noema, we will have found and answer to the question why the world is there as it is. Indeed, the Noesis—Noema structure is epistemically positive; it has an experimental purview, a colligation of meanings grasped.
as present in time, a solid nucleus around which the meaning-consciousness keeps on hovering. This meaning-consciousness need not express itself in a linguistic behaviour; its manifestation in language is something contingent, and very often directed toward a social purpose.

**Human Subject and its Primordial Nature**

Understanding the human subject, then, comprehends him/her in his/her primordial nature. This may be one of the reasons why Merleau Ponty speaks of the three strata of human behavior as consisting of a) the physical b) the organic or the vital or the physiological and c) the symbolic. These are not three aspects of human existence, but only three attitudes with which we approach the study of man from the phenomenological point of view, they are in a sense only paradigms. The investigations by phenomenologist have shown that man’s nature cannot be exhausted by the first two. They take the study of man into the realm of creativity. Phenomenology then must probe into the inner life of man, in the sense that it is concerned with the modes of his inner life; perceiving, imagining, feeling, willing, thinking, striving etc. it is these inner modes of human consciousness that give meaning and value to experience. This is the significance of the phenomenologist’s interest in subjectivity, though metaphysically the phenomenologist steer clear of the subjective and objective distinctions in reality as they are not ontologically committed. The phenomenologist is also interested in things in which the scientist (Scientifically-oriented positivist) is not interested in questions of value and meaning.

On the basis of this characterization of consciousness as intentionality, it is now possible to re-characterize the sense in which consciousness is self-knowing, is Being-for-itself. Consciousness is essentially aware of itself, but not as an ego. Consciousness is necessarily conscious of itself as consciousness (of) an object. According to Sartre, this is even a necessary feature of consciousness. It is not to be confused with the reflexivity of the Cartesian cogito. There is no self in this consciousness (of) an object, and all of this is still pre-reflective. The cogito is based on this “second-order” consciousness (the term comes from Merleau Ponty) but it is only a “necessary possibility”. Consciousness can then be characterized as “being-for-itself” because its existence consists in its
dependency on objects, its knowledge of its own dependency on objects, and the possibility of explicit recognition of itself in the Cartesian cogito.

**Merleau-Ponty: Phenomenology of Perceptual Consciousness**

Merleau-Ponty's understanding on the concept of "consciousness" is much more difficult to summarize, largely because he avoids the term as much as possible, usually using "consciousness" as an equivalent of ‘knowing’ or ‘reflective’. He rejects the traditional Cartesian definition of consciousness as immediate self-knowledge. In "Phenomenology of Perception", the discussion of consciousness is centered on the problem of perception.

There is no doubt that Merleau-Ponty is following certain of Husserl's themes, and indeed making them the central concerns of his own phenomenology. The debatable question is the claim that making them central exclusively is itself authentically Husserlian, that the raising of these themes such the notion of perception, life-world etc to prime importance is in fact, representative of the essential thrust of Husserl's own development in phenomenology. What is to be understood here is that there is a distinctive character to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology though he is indebted to Husserl in many ways. It is important to see here exactly what Merleau-Ponty understands 'the phenomena, living experience layer' or perceptual experience. A major part of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology has to do with criticizing and rejecting certain positions and conceptions in order to let the matter in question be seen purely as it is primordially. Throughout both "The structure of Behaviour" and "Phenomenology of Perception", Merleau-Ponty reaches a positive formulation out of a closely worked critique of two positions which he calls the 'empiricist' and the 'intellectualist'. The first he characterizes as attempting to account for the validity and properties of perceptual consciousness in terms of the interaction of physical objects-eg; nerve stimulation, cerebral impulses, optical refraction and focusing etc. According to Merleau-Ponty, both the positions-empiricist and intellectualist- are based upon the same conception of the process of perception, one that mistakes or is not even aware of what perception in fact is as it is actually lived. Both are guilty of the dual error. (1) that of conceiving the world as it comes to be given, as an objective, determinate, ready-made, fully made universe.; (2)
that of conceiving perception itself as sensible, to take place within this universe of science, so that the structure and elements of perception itself are all thought to be fully determinate and unambiguously set in themselves. In other words, perception is the process whereby elements of that universe transmit to the interior of one of its members means in which the pattern and wave of the unambiguously objective universe can be presented. The basic phenomenon of perception eludes the categories of objective thought because it is a phenomenon that gives rise to those very categories. To put into technical terms, the center of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is perception as primarily the phenomenon of passive constitution, passive genesis of meaning.

The Body Image

One of the distinct features of the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty is his emphasis on the analysis of the human body. From our discussion, so far, it should be evident why they think such an investigation is necessary. Traditional philosophers, Descartes for example, had simply distinguished material objects from consciousness; my body was one among other material objects. My body according to the traditional thesis was no different philosophically than the chair in which I sit. We ought to ask, “Who is this body?” and as soon as we do, we see that there is something very peculiar about thinking of my body as a physical object. The peculiarity is initiated because I think “myself manifested to the other and the other manifested for me as a body”. We then tend to think of the body as, a certain thing having its own laws and capable of being defined from outside.

Once we think of the body as an object, as an object of physiology, there are “insurmountable difficulties” in trying to “reunite” consciousness with this physiological system. According to Sartre, I never “apprehend the contingency of my body as body for me”. My body is not an object in the world. My body, however, is primarily me, not an object of mine. My body is an instrumental center of instrumental complexes, a point of view and a point of departure. My body is “lived and not known”. For Merleau-Ponty habit is a matter of “enlarging” our body; habit expresses our power of dilating our being into the world, or changing our existence by appropriately fresh, instruments. To get used to a hat, a car, or a stick is to be transplanted into them or conversely to incorporate them
into the bulk of our own body. It is literally true that the subject who learns to type incorporates the key-blank space into his bodily space.

**Body Image and The theory of Perception**

Body is not simply another object in the world to which I am mysteriously attached; my body and I are indistinguishable; my body is an object which does not leave me. The theory of the body is already a theory of perception. One could not grasp the object without the mediation of bodily experience. External perception and the perception of one’s own body vary in conjunction because they are two facets of one and the same act.

This theory of bodily perception will allow an answer to a most puzzling question in Husserl. When we speak of “looking at an object in its different aspects” and from different viewpoints, how are we to make sense of the notion of “different aspects” and “different viewpoints” after bracketing the world, including my own body? If my body is bracketed, what sense does it make to say that I ‘walk around the object’? Merleau-Ponty has dispensed both with this problematic “bracketing” of existence and rejected the claim that my own body is just another object. Thus he is able to assert that it is by conceiving my body itself as a mobile object that I am able to interpret perceptual appearance and construct the cube [I am walking around] as it truly is. It is worth commenting that Merleau-Ponty has turned these insights concerning the peculiar place of my body in the world into a basis for a theory of perception.

In so far as the body comes into the reality of the world, the subjective venture is a situation defined by the objectivity of the body. The essential presence of the subject in the world is ‘one’ with his body as lived; and, the object which his body is in the world exists as that same essential presence. In this sense, ‘philosophy is indeed and always a break with objectivism and a return from construct to lived experience, from the world to ourselves’. This is to say, ‘the lived experience can no longer recognize itself in the idealizations we draw from it’. In short, the lived body experience is the spontaneous and primordial presence at the world which is the phenomenal body.
Human Subject as the Body Subject

Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the lived body is the conception that existence is the perception of essences in their primordial or immanent structure. It is this immanence that is taken up in the act of transcendence to become the ‘presence’ that is existence. In short, the essential spontaneity is the material of existential analysis through a phenomenological method. ‘To experience a structure is not to receive it into oneself passively, it is to live it, to take it, assume it and discover its immanent meaning’. The phenomenal body which is the lived experience is primordial structure that is itself temporality. This is to suggest that the existential presence of the body is the common structure that is manifest in the on-going immanence and transcendence that is spatiality in genesis. It is only through this structure that the lived experience is manifest. The flesh is the visible-seer, the audible hearer, the tangible touch-the sensitive-sensible. The lived body experience can be illustrated in the grasp of your right hand with the left. For each instant of time that this union of hands creates, one hand is object and one hand is subject. Yet, they are reversibly subject and object only with the union to each other. This is the immanence and transcendence that is the phenomenal presence. Each such presence creates the limits of its own spatiality and the movements of the phenomenal presence within those limits are their time. It is obvious that the clasped hands do not remain static in their roles as subject and object, each hand is first subject, then object, then subject, and so on. In any event, the felt or lived phenomena is known and expressed through the agency of the body. In addition, the perception or expression that takes place is an intentional act. The elements of experience that become relational through dialectic of immanence and transcendence constitute a presence only when the intent of the body-subject directs the composition of that structure. “In order to perceive things, we need to live them”.

To have a body is to possess a universal setting, a schema of all types of perceptual unfolding and of all those inter-sensory correspondences which lie beyond the segment of the world which we actually perceive. A thing is, therefore, not actually given in perception, it is internally taken up by us in so far as it is bound up with a world, the basic structures of which we carry with us, and of which it is merely one of many
possible concrete forms. Although a part of our living experience, it is nevertheless
transcendent to our life because the human body, with its habits weaving a human
environment, has running through it a movement towards the world itself. There is no
ideal or arbitrary limitation that exists to guide the dialectic of perception in the lived
body experience; it is present with the individual himself. At times the ‘lived distance’
between the person and the world fluctuates so as to allow the body subject to exist in a
realm of absolute freedom which has the negative effect of a forced choice of continuing
to be. On the other hand, the lived distance may become so great or so small that events
cease to have significance with those closest to one-self, thus becoming an obsession.
‘They enshroud me like night and rob me of my individuality and freedom. I can literally
no longer breathe; I am possessed’. It is in this structure of perception that the lived body
becomes totally subject, object, or other. The lived-body experience is fundamentally the
recognition by the person that his body is the agency of his psyche so that one is a body
subject in the phenomena of living.

Lived Body as a Unitary Agent

Lived body is the unitary agent through which the reception of the world and
others, as well as oneself, is accomplished. And, through it one is known to others as ‘at
the world” and known to oneself in expression. There is no doubt that the lived body is
the semiotic agency of perception and expression alike. We are not, then reducing the
significance of the word, or even of the percept, to a collection of ‘bodily sensations’ but
we are saying that the body, in so far as it has ‘behavior patterns’, is that strange object
which uses its own parts as a general system of symbols for the world, and through which
we can consequently ‘be at home in’ that world, ‘understand’ it and find significance in
it. Thus, the body-subject in the lived body experience is the semiotic of being and
existence that is manifest, and thus known, through the essential agencies of perception
and expression. In the first reflection of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological method there
is indeed a primacy of Perception that is the lived body experience.

Merleau-Ponty neither separates man’s body from his mind nor looks upon the
former as a mechanical sequence of actions and reactions. For him one of the clearest
evidences of the primacy of the body is that when we are in the course of experiencing
something-its direction, magnitude, location etc. we are as if spread over the parts of that thing and collide with it every instant. Our bodily existence and the things it experiences constitute, according to Merleau-Ponty the entire bulk of what is called our ‘being-in-the-world’. Man is a ‘body subject’, an ‘ego-body’, a ‘body image’, a body itself. What he suggests by the pre-eminence of the reality of our body is that no consciousness deprived of the consciousness of being a body would have access to the world, and therefore, whatever meaning we attach to our encounter with the world, we can account for this meaning by first apprehending the configurational power of the body.

The body is not an object, for its presence to one’s consciousness results from the mysterious union of one’s inner life and one’s communication with the world. I can move away from the book shelf, but I cannot move away from my bodily being. My life is so united with it that I cannot refer to myself without referring to “I” as a body; and when referent with continuity I posit myself in my thought and language as a body. He says that without the sense of permanence of one’s own body one would not be able to comprehend the permanence of objects and persons around oneself.

**Body Subject: The Environing Character**

It is through our body that our consciousness of living amidst things in the world emerges. On account of its solidity and position, the body subject plays the role not only of an environed creature but also of a project making and volitional planner. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes upon what he terms as the ‘Manipulatability’ of objects and says that this quality presupposes a kind of dynamism and motility in one’s own body. When I look at an object, I know that I am unable to have more than one view of it at a time, and that I can walk, if I want, around it in order to have all of its possible facets. Dynamism and movability of man’s physical being is at the very basis of what most of the phenomenologists call the consciousness’s potentiality to ‘Suspend’ the entire range of its psychic and epistemic experience. According to Merleau-Ponty, the most immediate impression a person gets of his bodily existence is when he adopts an attitude towards certain activity. I may stand, for instance, with an erect pose, or stoop down to pick up a coin, and thereby feel that I am an existence moving with a certain psycho-physical purpose. It need not be imagined, however, that this purpose is an estrogenic factor, nor
need it be considered to be a characteristic, imposed on the natural ‘schema’ of the body. What he points out is that although we are not at all times aware of different parts of our body, we carry a pre-conscious perceptive ‘sense’ that we are postures eternally subject to change. This is why a twinkle of eyes may be performed to convey a whole meaning or attitude. Of course, this attitude need not be interpreted as strictly physical or strictly mental. Merleau-Ponty speaks of postures as essentially resulting from a total psycho-physical motivation directed towards the world. The body is the manifest representation of this motivation. Merleau-Ponty suggests that human body learns a movement only when the whole of it displays an understanding attitude towards it and incorporates it. A movement is an active functioning of the body medium in contact with the world. The body must become the movement in order to learn and adopt it. On the other hand, if by some inner attention I isolate myself as moving from the world I would never learn the movement. My having a body implies that when I act in the world, in space and time, I belong to them and thereby enjoy a limitless number of relationships synthesized into a whole by my consciousness. Merleau-Ponty writes ‘I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time, I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them. My body has its world, or understands its world, without having to make use of my ‘Symbolic’ or ‘objectifying function’.

It is never our objective body that we move, but our phenomenal body, and there is no mystery in that, since our body, as the potentiality of this or that part of the world, surges towards objects to be grasped and perceives them. ‘My body is that meaningful core which behaves like a general function, and which nevertheless exists, and is susceptible to disease’, Merleau-Ponty has compared body with the work of art. ‘I am not in front of my body, I am in it, or rather I am it’. ‘The body is to be compared, not to a physical object, but rather to a work of art. In a picture the idea is incommunicable by means other than the display of colours and sounds.

According to Ponty, “the theory of the Body image is implicitly a theory of perception”. The phenomenal body is the matrix of human existence. It is the center around which the world is given as a correlate of its activities. Through the phenomenal
body we are open to a world of objects as polarities of bodily action. The phenomenal body is the Archimedean point of action and neither a passive agency of sensory perception nor an obstacle to idealist knowledge. The status of my body is privileged. I can never be detached from it, nor even in the attitude of objectivity. “to say that it is never really in front of me, that I can’t array it before my eyes, that it remain marginal to all my perceptions, that it is with me”. My body is the vantage point from which I perceive all possible objects. It is the body which is the vehicle of my perception and movement in the world.

**Human Body as an Expressive Space**

According to Merleau-Ponty, the human body is an expressive space which contributes to the significance of personal actions. The body is also the origin of expressive movement, and is a medium for perception of the world. Bodily experience gives perception a meaning beyond that established simply by thought. Thus, Descartes’ cogito (“I think, therefore I am”) does not account for how consciousness is influenced by the spatiality of a person’s own body. Space may be defined as a form of external experience, rather than as a physical setting in which external objects are arranged. The relationships between objects in space are revealed by the experience of the perceiving subject. A perceptual field is a field in which perceptions are present in time and space. Space is modified and restructured by time.

Merleau-Ponty also argues that existence and substance presuppose each other. Substance expresses existence, and existence realizes itself through substance. However, substance is not merely a form of signification or expression of existence and existence is not merely what is expressed as substance. Existence and substance explain each other. Hence Merleau-Ponty says that thought precedes speech, in that speech is a way of expressing thought. Thoughts which cannot be expressed are temporarily unconscious. Thoughts which can be expressed can become conscious. Whether or not thoughts can become conscious may depend on whether or not they can be expressed. But we can become conscious of thoughts even if they have not previously been expressed. Speech can express the thoughts of the person who is speaking, and the listener can receive thoughts from the sounds of spoken words. Thoughts may exist through speech, and
speech may be the external existence of thought. But speech is not merely the expression of thought, because speech may have a power of signification of its own.

Existence is a condition that includes the existence of conscious beings and of non-conscious things. Bodily experience is an ambiguous mode of existence because the idea of the body cannot be separated from the experience of the body and because mind and body cannot be separated as subject and object. Mind and body have their own being, and the perceptions of the body influence what is perceived by the mind.

Every sensation belongs to a sensory field. The concept of a sensory field implies that all senses are spatial, and that all sensory objects must occupy space. Every object which is perceived belongs to a field of other objects which are not perceived. Every perceived sensation belongs to a field of other sensations which are not simultaneously perceived by the subject. Memory is a capacity to recall or recognize the past, and may be influenced by changes in perceptions. Perceptions may be true or false. An illusion may be a false perception or a perception of something in an unreal way. A hallucination may be a perception for which there is no causative stimulus in the external world.

Merleau-Ponty argues that consciousness is transparent in that it is not concealed from itself. The unconscious may be concealed from the conscious, but the conscious can be revealed to itself. Both appearance and reality are phenomena of consciousness. Appearances may be true or false, and may or may not be the same as reality. The false appearance of a perceptual object may conceal its true reality. However, the actual appearance of a perceptual object may also manifest the object’s true reality. Thus, phenomenology is concerned both with appearance as a perceptual phenomenon, and with reality as a perceptual phenomenon.

**Existence of Body as a Pre-conscious subject**

This question brings us to one of the most remarkable problems raised by Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy. He has discovered a mode of being that hitherto had largely escaped man’s attention. He makes it quite clear how difficult it is to approach this mode of being, viz., the existence of the body as a preconscious subject. Nevertheless, he
penetrates into this hidden mode of being—and this is one of the chief merits of his work, especially of his book, Phenomenology of perception. His main importance lays not so much in this that he analyzes our conscious acts precisely insofar as they are conscious. True, he makes valuable remarks about this matter, but others have investigated this realm more extensively. But his great achievement is that he did not only discover the hidden dialog between body and world but also managed to penetrate into it.

According to Merleau-Ponty, meaning is not absolute but constituted. The first thing to realize is that the meaning originating in the dialog of body and world has a constituted character. As consciously living human beings we find this meaning, we find oriented space, sexual meaning, colors, sounds, flavors etc. thus we are very easily induced to see this meaning as something absolute, which lies ready-made waiting for us. Realism is inclined to see this meaning as a given reality that is independent of us. Certain forms of intellectualism see it as a projection of absolute ideas that are present in us and which we uncover through reflection. Both these interpretations have something in common—namely, the meaning in question is given either in objective reality or in our absolute ideas. Both, however, labor under an illusion, for this meaning is constituted with in the dialog between body and the world. It follows, then, that the analysis of the given, as it is given to us, does not lead us anywhere. The phenomenological method has often been understood as the faithful rendition of the given as it de facto appears to us. In that case the given becomes the absolute starting point of scientific thought. Merleau-Ponty, however, does not have recourse to such a phenomenological method, for the given itself is constituted; it has a “history.” Accordingly, it has to be understood from the viewpoint of its becoming.12

Such an understanding on becoming, however, does not directly reveal itself to our consciousness and, on the other hand, it is, of course, entirely inaccessible to external perception. We cannot perceive how colors are formed within the dialog of the body and the world. This dialog has remained undiscovered so long by scientific thought precisely because it lies hidden from our gaze. Thus we are inclined to be satisfied with the result of this dialog and to forget about the dialog itself. The consequence is that the roots of our entire field of existence remain concealed to us.
Uncharacteristic Dialectics of Body and World

Occasionally, it happens that the dialectics between body and world reveals itself to some extent. This happens when this dialectics is disturbed. So long as this dialectics runs its course undisturbed, we take its result for granted and are inclined to see this result as a “natural world.” But when the relationship between body and world is disturbed, man’s entire field of existence is shaken and thus reveals its constituted and changeable character. Such disturbances may be the effect of illness and psychical deviations, or they may be the effect of illness and psychical deviations, or they may be caused artificially through experiments. In Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty draws attention preferably to the disturbed bodily existence. He has been reproached sometimes for this because it creates the impression that he wants to penetrate into normal existence by means of the abnormal. The analysis of deviations fills so many pages of his book that the reproach may seem justified. Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty’s interest is centered on the normal dialectics between body and world. He studies disturbed existence only because, in it, the dialectics in question reveals itself to some extent, because the hesitations and groping of the disturbed dialog offer him an opportunity to observe the body in its dialog with the world. In other words, the disturbed existence is for him only a kind of approach permitting him to penetrate into the communication of the body and the world.

Merleau-Ponty begins his analysis of the sexual character of our existence with a discussion of a famous German disabled soldier, the Schneider case. This man is no longer able to take sexual initiatives, but his sexual mechanism begins to operate when the situation is such that his own initiative is no longer needed. He then quotes the studies of Steckel and Freud concerning frigidity, followed by the clinical experiences of Binswanger. In connection with this subject matter, he speaks about the phenomenon of aphasia. In this way he endeavors to throw light on sexual existence. Sexuality is a zone of our existence and, as such, it is at the same time and inseparably both of a bodily character and a free “taking up” of our bodily being. It is possible that an entire zone of our existence may be practically eliminated. In that case the corresponding bodily behavior no longer occurs, but the relevant images and free initiatives likewise disappear.
The behavior of the body and the life of the mind reveal gaps. According to Merleau-Ponty, we should not seek the cause of the one in the other, for both gaps are parts of one and the same phenomenon. Because of the bodily aspect of the disturbance, the phenomenon of the illness in question becomes a condition in which we simply exist. Because of the body, the so-called inner phenomena become an existential situation.

Because of the body, I am open to the world, but am also able to close myself to the world. The body is my entry into the world, and all the ways in which the world is accessible to me are connected with the body. It is precisely the disturbances in the normal conditions which disclose the function of the body. In normal conditions we use the body without realizing its importance. The body is “the hidden form of self-being” and the bearer of conscious existence. While we cannot develop these ideas here more fully, the preceding remarks may serve to give the reader an idea of Merleau-Ponty’s procedure.17

Merleau-Ponty repeatedly appeals to the above mentioned Schneider case, e.g., in connection with language, sex[18]uality, the experience of space[19] and sense perception. He does not merely mention the case, but makes an extensive analysis in which he tries to come to an understanding from the perspective of phenomenology. Schneider, says Merleau-Ponty, is a disabled soldier, showing a multitude of symptoms of illness, in which it is difficult to find a pattern. His perception remains limited to that which is connected with his actual occupation, and his attention is not at all drawn to anything else. For this reason his attention is not at all drawn to anything else. For this reason his attention shows little mobility. When something new is placed before him whose meaning a normal human being would see at once, Schneider begins by hesitatingly attributing all kinds of abstract meanings to it and in this laborious way he finally discovers the object’s meaning. His field of perception has disintegrated, and many transitions have become impossible for him. The broad world of experience offers him no new meanings. He moves to the point where he is supposed to go, but pays no attention to what he encounters on his way. He does not recognize his own letters. He cannot copy a design, but has, as it were, to reconstruct the design himself. The interconnected meaning of a story escapes him, so that the story disintegrates into a collection of facts.
He is unable to play with numbers, i.e., he cannot use them in all kinds of directions but can work with them only according to standardized methods. He can grasp but he cannot point, i.e., he is able to execute all the holds belonging to his actual occupation, but he cannot point to anything. He is wholly incapable of playing because he cannot place himself in an imaginary situation. A riddle and a problem of life are just the same for him.

How can we, Merleau-Ponty asks, find unity in all these symptoms? Schneider reveals himself endowed with a rather good intelligence, so that we cannot simply say that he has lost his mind. Likewise, not a single one of the sensitive functions is missing, so that the symptoms cannot be explained on the basis of such a defect. Yet there is a certain unity in all these symptoms. With hochheimer, Merleau-Ponty remarks that Schneider is wholly bound to the actual. He lacks the freedom to move from the actual to the possible and therefore to make something else the center of his field of presence. He clings to an actual meaning, an actual occupation, an actual schema of behavior. It is useless to ask him in summer how he feels in the winter. He is not sexually impotent, but he cannot “visualize” the sexual situation when he is not actually in it. Thus he is likewise incapable of being bored.

The “Intentional Arc”

From the above illustrated analysis, Merleau-Ponty manages to penetrate into a fundamental function which makes a normal life possible but usually remains concealed from us. Both intellectual and perceptive life is supported by a fundamental possibility to turn our existence in the most divergent directions. Using a metaphor, Merleau-Ponty calls this function a projector which can be turned in all directions, through which we are able to direct ourselves to everything within us and outside us, and which enables us to assume an attitude toward all this. However, He continues, the metaphor of the projector is not very good, for it presupposes objects which, as wholes of meanings, exist independently of the light but can be illuminate. The function, on the other hand, of which there is question here makes all objects exist for us in a mysterious way and makes them meanings before we know them in the proper sense. Our conscious life, as it actually is, is made possible by an “intentional are,” which projects around us our past,
future, our human milieu, our physical situation, our ideological situation, our moral
situation—briefly put, it makes us be situated in all these respects. Thanks to this
intentional are, our life is not an arbitrary succession of actual moments but really a unity.
In this way unity enters into the life of behavior, sensitive life, and here also lies the
source of the unity of the senses and the intellect. In Schneider’s illness this are broke
down, so that he remained a captive of actuality.22

The Body Organizes its World

Sometimes Merleau-Ponty appeals to the experiments of others, interpreting them
from his own perspective. A case in point is Stratton’s following experiment.23 A subject
is made to wear a pair of spectacles, covering his entire field of vision. These spectacles
neutralize the inversion of the images on the retina. The subject has to wear these
spectacles uninterruptedly for a series of days. At first, he sees an “upside down world,”
in which he has, of course, great difficulty in moving about. The subject evidently knows
that the world has been turned upside down and on the basis of this knowledge he
manages to interpret the world rationally; for instance, what he sees “up” is really
“down.” After some time, however, the field of vision becomes unsettled and,
surprisingly, after a number of days have lapsed, everything is straightened out. The
subject again sees the world as it is.

Merleau-Ponty asks himself how this end result is possible. It cannot be the result
of the intellectual interpretation. For in this way one cannot explain why the subject, who
at once interprets what he sees intellectually, needs several days before he begins to see
the world again in a normal way. It remains especially unexplained why the subject’s
seeing itself becomes again normal. Likewise, there can be no question of an association
between the field of vision and the field in which the subject moves, for such an
association again does not explain why the subject sees the world as he used to before.
Merleau-Ponty’s conclusion is that the body itself actively organizes the field of vision.
This field does not result from the causal relationship between body and the world but
rather originates in a bodily project. The project in question is not fully determined by
external stimuli and, accordingly, our field of vision is not a mirror-like reflexion. It is
our body which gives us the world, in an interplay, of course, with the world, but in such a way that our body organizes its world.

In this fashion Merleau-Ponty analyzes many borrowed from others, giving them, however, a new interpretation.24 Again and again he arrives at the same conclusion, albeit constantly in a different way—namely, that our body itself is already subject, an existence, an intercourse with the world, that the body gives us a world, that the world’s structure depends on the structure of our body. The reason is not that the body causally influences the world, but that the body, precisely as body, gives meaning to the world. The body is intimately permeated with meaning. Therefore, the body is not closed upon itself, as a thing is. It is where something has to be done. The body is a possibility of a meaning—giving activity and it is only in this giving of meaning that it really is a body. When its meaning-giving activity ceases, the body is dead.

**Body and the “Natural World”**

It is through the body that there exists for me, as conscious subject, a “natural world.” This natural world is not, as has been sometimes asserted, an “in itself” (“en soi”), a reality existing independently of us. This world is the whole of meanings resulting from the dialog between body and world. As conscious subject, I take up this world but I do not constitute it. As conscious subject, I take up this world but I do not constitute it. As conscious subject, I find a world, which I experience as natural and necessary. The body plays a role in this perception and, consequently, there is naturalness, necessity, in the perceptively given.

As long as the dualistic way of thinking prevailed and thing-like existence was opposed to conscious existence, the so-called “natural world” had to be conceived either in a realistic fashion as an “in itself” which we get to know or in the spirit of rationalism as a materialization of an idea. Merleau-Ponty, however, managed to penetrate more profoundly and to find a new explanation—viz., the natural world is the result of the dialog between body and world, a dialog which precedes existence insofar as it is conscious. That which we in ourselves call “existence” is sometimes submerged in the body and at other times rises to the level of consciousness. Yet there is question here of one and the
same existence. The body already dwells in the world, and my conscious dwelling in the world is a taking-up of the preconscious, bodily dwelling in the world. If I identify existence with consciousness, I am no longer able to understand myself.25

**Dialogue between Body and the World: Phenomenological Account of human Behaviour**

To some extent I am able to perceive how my conscious plans originate, but not how colors originate. Even the most profound self-observation does not make me a witness of the dialog between body and the world.26 Inductive Method, likewise, cannot help us. First of all, according to Merleau-Ponty, ‘methodology has shown that no induction is properly founded in the strict sense of the term.’27 Induction wants to pass from facts to law. This transition, however, demands that the man of science form an idea allowing him to arrange and coordinate the facts.28 But such an idea is never found a crucial experiment.29 Accordingly, in that which is called the result of an induction a role is always played by an element which does not come from inductive thinking itself. For this reason inductive thought does not find its foundation in itself.

Secondly, inductive thinking is not suitable for the realm to be investigated. Induction seeks causal connections. The law formulated in induction states that, if factor A is given, factor B has to be present also. The relationship, however, of the body-subject to its surroundings is not a relation between cause and effect. The body-subject and its surroundings constitute a connected whole of meaning, a gestalt. The body comes to be itself through its surroundings, and these surroundings are surroundings precisely as meaning for but all factors have to be understood within the connected whole of meanings. The totality cannot be reconstructed from isolated factors, but these factors have to be understood at once within the totality. Induction presupposes that the various factors can be isolated, and this possibility is not present here.30

The same idea may be expressed by saying that the body enters the world not as one of the elements of a causal connection but as an *intentional existence*. It is only from the standpoint of this orientation that we can understand whether and to what extent the things around the body have meaning for it. The body does not simply undergo the
influence of things in a purely passive way, but it situates itself while it undergoes the influence, so that it is active in undergoing it. When the body ceases to situate itself and therefore simply undergoes such influences passively it, strictly speaking, ceases to be a body. While the dialectics of the body and the world is an event that can be analyzed, the analysis in question has to be performed within the understanding of the whole.

An example may serve to illustrate the point. If light is bright, the pupils of the eye contract. Certainly, this bodily event does not occur independently of factors outside the body, for the contraction does not take place when the brightness remains the same, and there is, moreover, a controllable connection between the brightness and the contraction. What happens in the body influences the appearing world, for it is because of this bodily event that the visible world arises. But the entire event has a meaningful character and, separately from the meaning, it becomes wholly unintelligence. The body behaves in such a way that that optimal “vision” becomes possible the light makes the body seek the optimal attitude. This “seeking” of the body is more than the effect of a physical influence, and that which is effectuated by the body’s attitude is not so much an “effect” of the body as a “meaning” for the body. The aspects of the event can be understood only within the whole.

Ambiguous Character of Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy

The dialog between body and the world which, as it were is the undercurrent permeating my entire existence is not directly accessible to my gaze. Merleau-Ponty penetrates into it through all kinds of by-ways. He does not succeed in presenting a clear picture of this dialog, so that there is no possibility of summarizing his conclusions in a lucid synthesis. All he can allow us is to have an inking of something which we do not grasp. Our existence is, at least at a certain level, illuminating, but this light rises out of a darkness with which it is inseparably united. Anyone who detaches our existence as an illuminating event from the dark abyss from which it arises will never be able to understand this existence. For its fundamental lines are already laid down in the dark zone pertaining to its very essence. To express the matter paradoxically to which it essentially refers.
This may be said to be the major reason, we may say, for the obscure character of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy. That which in our existence may be called “light,” is not intelligible in itself. We may have some inking about the dark soil in which we are rooted, but a clear synthesis cannot be offered. “Systematization” is not possible here. One who would attempt to present a systematic survey of Merleau-Ponty’s ideas regarding the body-subject would merely succeed in making it obvious that he does not understand his philosophy. As Merleau-Ponty writes in the preface of his Phenomenology of perception, “there is no thought which encompasses our entire thought.” At first this statement may seem strange. Isn’t thought conscious of itself? Don’t we know that we know? “Radical reflection,” says Merleau-Ponty, “is the consciousness of its own dependence on an “un-reflected” life, which is its beginning, its lasting source and its goal.” This “un-reflected life” is also a bodily existence, also the life of the body as subject. Human thought presents itself as a light so long as we do not reflect too profoundly on it. But as soon as we penetrate into the root of thought, thinking appears based on a darkness resisting all attempts to synthesize it rationally.

Merleau-Ponty is acquainted, of course, with Husserl’s reduction. The Austrian philosopher had come to the conclusion that our current conceptions, even those accepted in the life of science, are not the original form of knowing. He wanted to bring these conceptions back to our original way of seeing and called this bringing-back “reduction.” Merleau-Ponty’s idea of reduction, however, is quite different from that of Husserl. Husserl thought, at least for many years, that the original experience would have the character of conscious knowledge, which, therefore, could really be brought to light. That which we would have to reach through the reduction would be a light. Merleau-Ponty, however, does not think so. According to him, our conscious life is borne by our preconscious existence; it has to be reduced to this existence and to be understood through it. But the preconscious existence neither is a light nor allows itself to be adequately brought to light. Thus his philosophy ultimately refers us to a chiaroscuro in which it is extremely difficult to penetrate. This difficulty is an added reason why Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy is “the enemy of the system.”
**Merleau-Ponty and the Body-Schema**

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology illustrates as to how alternative possibilities are rooted in our bodies. In addition, his work allows us to make connections between the structures of embodiment—structures that potentially open us to new life possibilities—and through the active transcendence, or active engagement of one’s lived bodily experience. The body understood in this Merleau-Pontian way figures the utopian in a non-conventional way, which Merleau-Ponty himself captures when he writes that “the future is only probable, but it is not an empty zone in which we can construct gratuitous projects; it is sketched before us like the beginning of the day’s end, and its outline is ourselves”.

**Merleau-Ponty’s Concept of the Body-Schema**

What is a body schema? Regrettably, with a few unaccountable exceptions, Colin Smith renders *schema 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. 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?” 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.

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).

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 (corpshabituel) 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 pre-established 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 kinesthesis and perception of external objects, that is, between proprioception and exteroception: “Proprioception or selfsensitivity is seen to be an overall function, common to all systems, not a special sense.” 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 selfawareness 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).

Concept of Freedom in Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy

It should not be surprising to discover that Merleau-Ponty’s treatment of freedom follows a similar pattern as in the case of the human subject. The contemporary perspective seems to insist that one is either free or not. It is almost as if there is a natural logic that forces us to radicalize our conceptions. And yet everyday experience reveals that we feel the burden and responsibility for what we have done while at other times we
feel like a leaf being pushed this way and that by circumstances totally beyond our control. What philosophy and the social sciences have done is the radicalization of such experiences. For example, Sartre has done a masterful job of showing how, because of bad faith that we make ourselves think that things are beyond our control when deep down we are free, maybe better, we are freedom, absolute freedom. At the same time, the human sciences attempt to explain human reality in terms of nature or nurture or some strange combination of both never leaving any room at all for human freedom. Many scientists would even be shocked if someone asked them about freedom. For these social scientists, freedom is not one of those things that even enter into their study of human reality.

Concept of Freedom and the Lived Perception

Merleau-Ponty proceeds to understand the concept of freedom by going back to lived perception. In addressing the human sciences, he tries to make us aware of our experience of freedom and responsibility for what we have done. Even very young children seem to have this experience at least to the extent that they can answer a question as “Did he deliberately hit you?” Sometimes their reluctant ‘yes’ answer is a testimony to the force of this experience. Indeed, determinists can argue that it may appear like this, but it is only an appearance since one is not really free. No matter what data you present to such determinists, they can always assert that this is mere appearance. For someone who is not open to experience, there is little that one can do. One could try and show as to how the scientific perspective with its emphasis on objectivity goes all the way back to Descartes and is only a perspective, a dated one at that. One could, as Merleau-Ponty does, show how this perspective creates certain odd phenomena; but if this does not make his opponent more aware of the limits of his perspective, there is nothing one can do. What we see here is an example that is just as true of Rationalism and Empiricism. Merleau-Ponty insists that there are no crucial experiments that can show that they are wrong and no ultimate argument that will work if they are not willing to question their assumptions. Sometimes a philosopher needs to know that what he has said is all that can be said and that there is nothing else that can be done.
Concept of Freedom in Merleau-Ponty

Merleau-Ponty’s reaction to claims like Sartre’s is much more temperate. Sartre claims that there is human freedom and that it is absolute. Probably nowhere in the history of philosophy has there been such a radical claim about the nature of freedom. While Merleau-Ponty attacks the “radicalness” of this claim, his major concern is with the conception of freedom itself. For Sartre, freedom is independence and freedom from restraint. You are free only to the extent that there are no forces making you do this or that. This is the kind of independence that teenagers seek and think will fulfill their lives only to find out as they mature that it is an illusion. But it is this conception of freedom that is not only behind Sartre’s absolute freedom but also determinism. Merleau-Ponty argues that they both have a piece of what is given in experience. When we set out to our lived experience, we always find conditions that somehow restrict freedom and yet such experiences disclose freedom at the heart of what it means to be human. But when these elements of lived experiences are radicalized, one ends up in determinism or absolute freedom. There is a sense in which freedom is fundamental to human reality but not in the way that Sartre describes it. There is also a sense that experience always shows us factors limiting our freedom. In order to make sense out of our experience we need to question our perspectives and transform our way of looking at them.

The source of the problem is conceiving freedom as “freedom from” this or that obstacle. As long as this is how freedom is conceived we are left with either absolute freedom or determinism. Merleau-Ponty proposes that we conceive of freedom as “freedom to” do this or that. To be able to drive down the street of a large city requires that we follow the rules of the road. If we had to fear that the driver coming towards it would become impossible to drive down a street. The restrictions, but in fact make it possible. Merleau-Ponty is not claiming that all obstacles make action possible, since there are clearly cases in which we are not free. Sartre’s analysis, however, does not even allow for such a possibility. What Sartre is claiming in developing this idea of freedom is not even a possibility because obstacles are always the ground of our freedom.

But we have been dealing with this issue in a rather superficial way. Remember that Merleau-Ponty agreed with Sartre that there was something fundamental about
freedom. Freedom exists because human reality is a self-transcendence. In fact, Merleau-Ponty will argue that freedom in its most fundamental sense is nothing other than human reality in its self-transcendence. This is not the absolute freedom of Sartre because human reality is very different for Merleau-Ponty. Human reality goes beyond what it has become and moves to what it is not. This movement is always situated because human reality is always situated and yet it is always going beyond. It is in this dynamic character of human reality that we find truth and time. It is also the domain of freedom.

II

Concept of freedom: Human subject in the World

For Merleau-Ponty, the concept of freedom is the linch-pin of a phenomenological description of the human subject in the world. Man’s life is not the product of physical or social determinism, but dialectic enacted between man and his environment. Merleau-Ponty has questioned the concept of freedom as suggested by Sartre and suggested that since consciousness is nothingness and absolute freedom can find no anchor in the world; it makes action impossible. According to him, freedom is not absolute but embodied. We can talk about freedom only in a situation, in a field, in a social space which is not of our own making or choosing. It is limited to our capacities, knowledge and situation.

Existential or incarnated freedom is not to be confused with freewill. The traditional arguments about freedom were conducted as a debate between determinism and freewill. But Merleau-Ponty has questioned such an understanding of freedom. For him, freedom is not an unconstrained act of the will; in fact it has nothing to do with the will. But it is the quality of whole action whether it is actively realized or not. In short, freedom is not opposed to determinism but co-extensive with it. Freedom in a word is determinate because existence is determinate. It is synonymous with transcendence. It is praxis, the ability of man to work on and shape his world. The most profound meaning of existential freedom is that man can change his situation and change his existence by changing its significance. In other words, it is endowed with a figurative meaning beyond.
its real one. Freedom understood in this way is a creative repetition. It is a rooted creativity.

Merleau-Ponty’s Conception of freedom: A Criticism of Empiricism and Rationalism.

Merleau-Ponty’s conception of freedom is centered on a criticism of objectivism and rationalism. The intellectualist account of freedom is that human action is free because it results in the acts of constituting consciousness, intentions or acts of will. It depends on deliberation which implies that all that one has to do is to change one’s view of oneself and one change accordingly.

Phenomenological description of human action does not support the claim that reason is the determining factor in action. Merleau-Ponty has questioned Immanuel Kant’s account of freedom in three ways. (i) Kant accepts causal determination (objectivism) (ii) freedom as unconditional (absolute) and (iii) Kant sees freedom as being autonomous and as a rational determination of human action. Ponty does not agree with the assertion that freedom is either total or non-existent. For him, history and sociality, and also rational deliberations are the background for every free act. He agrees with the Sartrean position that all human beings are free to the extent that they are open to different possibilities. According to Merleau-Ponty, there is some openness in any existential project. Ponty is arguing against the Sartrean description of ontological freedom which emphasizes more on consciousness and some times tries to identify it with the subject. Such an approach results in conceiving consciousness as having unlimited potential of freedom and all other features are considered to be the objects of consciousness. Such an understanding and perspective in Merleau-Ponty’s view is absolutizing the role of consciousness which has infections of Cartesian Cogito. Merleau-Ponty has dissolved the dichotomy between ‘free-will’ and ‘determinism’ by giving the examples of different persons’ mode-of-being-in-the –world and by establishing that human actions are neither caused nor uncaused but ‘intentional’ as they are enacted for reasons and purposes which are in no sense arbitrary as claimed by ‘free-will’. It amounts to saying that freedom is always freedom in a situation. Therefore, we can speak about freedom as incarnated or embodied. In other words, to choose is to choose something; for
this reason, Ponty says that “there is free choice only if freedom comes to play in its
decision, and posits the situation chosen as situation of freedom.

Merleau-Ponty concludes by defining freedom as a mode of consciousness in
which personal actions and commitments can be chosen within a situation or field of
possibility. Freedom is always within a given field of possibility. Freedom is always
present in a situation, unless we lose our belonging to the situation. Freedom is a mode of
being-in-the-world which enables us to transcend ourselves.

Merleau-Ponty's Concept of Authenticity

To understand the notion of authenticity we should understand the difference
between true and false feelings. False love is not unreal but is not centered. It affects me
only at the periphery of my existence. It concerns only a part of me, or has only a certain
role. But in the case of true love, it involves my whole being. False love is more of a
projection of my feelings, on the loved person so that my love will disappear when I
change. True love is genuinely intentional.

The pseudo-intentionality of false love implies that I love qualities of the person.
False or inauthentic love represents a breakdown in my communication with myself.
Inauthentic emotions are disembodied. It is a permanent threat to authenticity. There is no
pure authenticity as there is no pure freedom, but only degrees of authenticity being
achieved on the ground of inauthenticity or incarnation.

If an action is completely intelligible in terms of outside pressures or is
transparently motivated, then it suggests that it did not spring from a spontaneous or
authentic impulse of the actor but is an expression of a situational value affecting only the
periphery of the man’s being. Spontaneity is the cash value of authenticity. It is the
opposite of control.

Self-deception and Inauthenticity

According to Merleau-Ponty, self-deception and inauthenticity are very closely
allied since both involve a failure of self-revolution and embodiment. Sartre’s bad faith
would seem to cover both inauthenticity and self-deception. The simplest distinction
between an expression of authentic and in-authentic discourse is to suggest that the subject has two modalities of being-in-the-world. First, the subject has original or primordial experience with objectivity. Authentic person allows the synthetic transcendence of subjectivity into objectivity by the person’s encounter (as subject) with an external objectivity that suggests the person’s objectivity. Thus, existence as both subject and object is the primordial or authentic status revealed by authentic discourse.

However, idle talk is more of a probability in our encounters within the world. Discourse tends to enclose and pass along not the experience of the primordial encounter, but the understanding that is secondary. Idle talk reveals an experience in the absence of perception; it is as an appearance-intelligible, yet lacking complete meaning. Idle talk is thus an in-authentic form of communication that does not convey authentic existence. The existential distinction that Heidegger is advancing will become more explicit in Merleau-Ponty’s theory of authentic or existential speaking and sedimented speaking. Merleau-Ponty’s theory of primordial communication, it will be advantageous to briefly review Jean-Paul Sartre’s use of the en-soi/pour-soi (in-itself/for-itself) dualism as it is manifest in the use of language. Sartre conceives of a divided Being in the sense that Being-for-itself (être-en-soi). Being-for-itself is the lack of Being that requires the use of Nothingness to make itself stand apart from Being-in-itself. Language is a modality in which this dualism operates at a manifest level of consciousness.

Sartre’s explanation of existential communication follows Kierkegaard in that he affirms the authentic or primordial communication must be indirect, since a direct encounter can never be known via the other person. But in addition, Sartre’s position leads him to say that even the subject cannot know his existence from communication, except insofar as it fails to produce meaning. Communication is thus recognition of the subject/object duality where the subject is primordial I reference to the object, but there is also a duality of the subject which cannot be known primordially. The existent subject is that response to Nothingness by which the subject affirms his possibility. Yet, the subject never affirms that he is by his communication.
Sartre’s philosophy of communication asserts a dualism within a dualism. There is a duality of the For-itself or Consciousness and the In-self or Being, and, there is a duality within the For-itself: indirect communication and lack of communication. Communication, then, when it occurs is a synthesis of the dualism at either level and it is a synthesis that necessitates and posits the pre-existence of the dualisms.

Merleau-Ponty denies the existence of the Sartrean dualisms. He maintains that we are a presence-at-the-world or being-with-the-world [être-au-monde] in which the pour-soi and en-soi are a unitary presence. Second, he denies the dualism of direct and indirect communication by suggesting that direct communication is a primordial or existential communication of our presence-at-the-world. This communication can become “sedimented” in the sense that its meaning can be recalled, realizing that such a recollection is no longer primordial and therefore a secondary or indirect communication. This indirect communication is positive in nature by suggesting the essence of the primordial communication, rather than negative in the Sartrean sense of suggesting the lack of primordial essence in the recalled communication.

A further point to be made is that for Merleau-Ponty, primordial communication is an authentic communication of existence, whereas a sedimented communication is inauthentic in the sense of not being existential. The extent and meaning of Merleau-Ponty’s theory of communication will become apparent as his phenomenological method and concept of existence as gesture are explained in some detail. The actual theory of speaking as existential phenomenology still requires an examination of semiology as a prelude to the parallel systems of perception and speaking.

According to Merleau-Ponty the concept of freedom is the linch-pin of a phenomenological description of man in the world. Man’s life is not the product of physical or social determinism, but a dialectic enacted between man and his environment. Mealeau-Ponty has questioned the concept of freedom a suggested by Sartre and suggested that since consciousness is nothingness and absolute freedom can find no anchor in the world; it makes action impossible.
Existential or incarnated freedom is not to be confused with freewill. The traditional arguments about freedom were conducted as a debate between determinism and freewill. But Merleau-Ponty has questioned such an understanding of freedom. Freedom is not an unconstrained act of the will; in fact it has nothing to do with the will. But it is the quality of whole action whether I is actively realized or not. Freedom is not opposed to determinism but co-extensive with it. Freedom in a word is determinate because existence is determinate. It is synonymous with transcendence. It is praxis, the ability of man to work on and shape his world. The most profound meaning of existential freedom is that man can change his situation and change his existence by changing its significance. In other words, It is endowed with a figurative meaning beyond its real one.

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if freedom comes to play in its decision, and posits the situation chosen as situation of freedom.

To understand the notion of authenticity we should understand the difference between true and false feelings. False love is not unreal but is not centered. It affects me only at the periphery of my existence. It concerns only a part of me, or has only a certain role. But in the case of true love, it involves my whole being. False love is more of a projection of my feelings, on the loved person so that my love will disappear when I change. True love is genuinely intentional.

The pseudo-intentionality of false love implies that I love qualities of the person. False or inauthentic love represents a breakdown in my communication with myself. Inauthentic emotions are disembodied. It is a permanent threat to authenticity. There is no pure authenticity as there is no pure freedom. If an action is completely intelligible in terms of outside pressures or is transparently motivated, it suggests that it did not spring from a spontaneous or authentic impulse of the actor but is an expression of a situational value affecting only the periphery of the man’s being. Spontaneity is the cash value of authenticity. It is the opposite of control. According to him, self-deception and inauthenticity are very closely allied since both involve a failure of self-revolution and embodiment. Sartre’s bad faith would seem to cover both inauthenticity and self-deception.

By Way of Conclusion

Merleau-Ponty has pointed out that “genuine philosophy is a relearning to see the world” and he claims to do just that in his two major works, "The structure or Behavior" and "Phenomenology of Perception". His aim is to make a phenomenological study of man, of the world, and man-in-the world. This seems, at first, to present no particular problem, for, our experience is precisely of the world and we find ourselves in the world. However, since description is so basic to phenomenological reflection, we are bound to encounter some difficulties when we come to man who is at once subject and object of this phenomenological analysis.
Man is in the world, part of the world, yet he is also the one who experiences this same world and describes it in all its multiform manifestations. Aliquié compares the analysis of Sartre to that of Merleau Ponty that the world of the latter is far more cheerful and simple than that of Sartre, wherein struggle between the ego and the other largely prevails. In Merleau –Ponty one can enjoy the simple beauty of the child’s world wherein there are no problems; this vision should make the philosopher aware of reality as it is in its primordial manifestation, it should lead him to the root of his thoughts – a root which goes back to childhood. However, one must not think that Merleau Ponty’s approach is merely a confusion of the orders of reason and of emotion, on the contrary, while he admits the relation of the two in the ambiguity of the body, he is very much concerned with the basic problems of philosophy i.e., the true foundations of knowledge and of values. His phenomenological investigation is not aiming at a pure and simple description of the given, without qualifications or without further reflection, but at discovering in the immediate, such as it offers to consciousness, “the reason of all that which will follow. His return to the immediately given is always accompanied by the cares of problem solving”.

It must not be thought, however, that for Merleau Ponty reflection is defined as an activity of the intellect, as a pure “Cogito”. Nothing would be further from his thought. Reflection comprises life, because it is contained in it. Merleau-Ponty refuses all idealistic construction and maintains that my experience involves my body as well as my spirit, and therefore no reflection is divorced from the materiality of the world, or from the existential condition of man. Hence, to understand the philosophy of Merleau – Ponty, we must first of all grasp the meaning he gives to the body as body-subject and to the world as horizon of our perception, and primordial data of phenomenological reflection. The body plays an important role in the dialectical relation between the self and the world, and between the ego-subject and the other. In order to clarify this unique role of the body in behaviour, Merleau –Ponty studies in detail the phenomena which disclose a body to another; he investigates the findings of psychology. In the introduction to “The structure of Behaviour”, Merleau-Ponty indicates his aim; he wants to show the relation of nature to consciousness by investigating structure or form.
At the level of reflexive experience it is impossible to separate definitively consciousness from the lived body and from the lived world, for none of these elements of man’s experience exists in isolation; the very diversity of the senses and their unity of operation suggests an interrelation between them and the living body in the world. But even at the reflexive intellectual level one cannot separate the consciousness from the body, because the reflexive is resting on the ir-reflexive; secondly, because the subject is never perfectly transparent to itself; lived experience is not without ambiguity. Moreover, intellectualism, as seen by Merleau Ponty, implies the hypothesis of a transcendent subject which is incompatible with the finiteness and passivity of knowledge and makes it necessary to identify man with God. It would also make it impossible for many “Selves” to exist as independent and autonomous; hence the danger of Solipsism would appear. Actually, if there are empirical subjects, then the transcendental is a useless duplication—because, according to Merleau-Ponty it is this empirical subject which knows, and, loves, and is known. In short, intellectualism forgets the interrelatedness of consciousness with the body, of the body with the world, of reflexion with the irreflexive in a temporality which is ambiguous because it is multiform and always new; it is always in process and in a dialectical relation without transcendence. Needless to say, for different reasons, empiricism falls into the same contradictory position, equally unjustifiable, according to Merleau Ponty.

Merleau-Ponty introduces consciousness not as a psychic reality, not as a cause, but as a structure—which is given in its appearance—and inquires into the mode of existence of such a structure. This is the burden of the structure of Behaviour, in the words of Merleau-Ponty himself. His notion of human freedom in phenomenology of perception is somewhat different from that of Sartre. Merleau-Ponty admits that man, being in a situation, is never totally free; he is already committed to the human involvement in the world, hence his choice is within a milieu over which he has no power or control, further, man’s choice is not totally conscious; it is rather pre-conscious. Because of our interdependence with the worlds, it is never easy to distinguish that which is choice from that which is situation. However, it is quite true that I have always the freedom to stop one project and begin another, but I always choose from what is available so to speak. But one must choose, or rather he chooses even when he refuses to choose—
in the sense that one always expresses something, since one cannot remain in the void—indeed, one always expresses something, since one cannot remain in the void—indeed, one cannot remain in the void—the choice, however, is not always an act: to remain what one is to continue in a previous choice incessantly. This is the notion of Sartre for whom without a continual choosing of oneself one is not existence before essence. 48

Moreover, the importance of his writings, according to Prof. Lauer is the introduction of dialectic into transcendental phenomenology. Like Husserl, the experience he chooses to describe is primarily perception, but the mutual conditioning of world and perceptive consciousness is a far cry from Husserl’s purely constitutive phenomenology. The advantage of this is that it enables Merleau-Ponty to describe man’s body not as an object but as a condition for objectivity, as the point of contact between consciousness and the world. Meanings are contributed by consciousness, it is true, but these are based on the pre-given world, whose givenness is mediated by the body. 49 If man is radically contingent, if he is immersed in materiality, if his consciousness is utterly dependent on his relation to others, and if his condition in the world is determined by the very structuration of his being, it is no wonder that man cannot ultimately be defined with any semblance of finality—and therefore no abstract and general notion can be applied to him absolutely and without qualifications. Notwithstanding the fact that Merleau-Ponty does not consider man as a pure possibility—as is the contention of other existentialists—and therefore recognizes in him a basic “essence”, still this “essence” is not to be taken abstractly, nor as co-extensive with “man”. Hence man can never be defined except in his milieu, in a given spatial configuration, and in a concrete relational existence with other men. An examination of the phenomenology of perception shows how Merleau-Ponty situates man through his body in the maze of intentions and relations which make up this universe. Body is a phenomenon of special importance. That is the reason why he investigates the body so thoroughly: we could almost say that his whole study is directed to clarify the significance of the body in relation to self, to the world, and to others. There is, in short, no relation and no aspect of his phenomenology which does not imply the body.

For Merleau-Ponty, as mentioned earlier, the body itself is a subject. To justify this thesis, he has to begin by changing the accepted meaning of “Subject”. This term has
a long and involved history. In Greek and medieval philosophy it possessed a dual meaning, one logical and the other ontological. It had, first of all a logical meaning, for it was used to indicate the subject of proposition expressing a judgment and as such functioned in both the linguistic and philosophical analysis of the judgment. Any such proposition consists of two essential components, for through it, we say something about something. That “about” which the statement is made is the “subject” and “that which” is stated is the predicate. Alongside this logical meaning, however, we find also an ontological meaning. Subject as Person—the term “Subject” came to mean personal being in-so-far as it is distinct from purely thing-like being. It is in this sense that the term is used today in philosophy. When we speak of “subjectivity” we intend to express that our mode of being transcends the purely thing like character. He does not quite deny consciousness to human subjectivity. He says as for example that if consciousness is not co-original with subjectivity, it would be impossible to understand how the subject could ever become conscious. But, at the same time he says that consciousness in its deepest level is so obscure that it cannot be verified, even though human existence is always, even on its deepest level, already of a subjective nature. In other words, consciousness is no longer the central characteristic of subjectivity and becomes more or less marginal. The question which arises here is this: if according to Merleau Ponty consciousness is more or less marginal to subjectivity, what then is the fundamental characteristic of this subjectivity? It may be understood as the dialectic relationship to surroundings.

If something has a subjective character by virtue of the fact that it has a dialectic relationship to the reality around it, then it changes into its own “environment” and gives it a meaning for itself. Dialectic relationship alone does not suffice to constitute subjectivity. For the gestalt also which exists for a subject is characterized by the dialectic relationship, by “Circular causality”, as Merleau–Ponty often expresses it when he speaks of this dialectic relationship. Subject at the same time is both a part of the whole of the dialectic relationship and its center. It belongs to the whole of the reciprocal relationships and simultaneously is the center of all these relations. The most important thing is to know that the world and the view of the world are inseparable: If we understand this we can understand subjectivity as inherent in the world.
Merleau-Ponty always viewed the world only in relation to man and man only in relation to the world. The relationship which exists between man-world is dialectical, i.e., it is a continual and progressive relation which permits the access of one to the other but does not reduce them to a single entity. To understand Merleau-Ponty's ontology we gain access to the founding principles which permit man to have a world. Merleau-Ponty's last philosophical investigation returns to his original search for that which institutes and grounds man and world. In the last analysis man is at home in the world because both world and man share in the same basic element; both are made of the same primordial stuff; both share in flesh. Because the world is of us and we are of it, our common flesh—the flesh of our conscious incarnation and the flesh of the thing—provides a meeting place for man and world. Flesh is the ultimate metaphysical category and the final dialectical mediator which grounds the man-world relation. From this discussion we conclude that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy provides a phenomenological description and analysis of the world as we live it—through perception, with others, in corporeal expression and because of our common flesh. Secondly, it is also concluded that his philosophical works are, in fact, a unified phenomenological analysis of world. Few philosophers capture the concerns and the mood of his times as accurately as he did. Existential realities taught Merleau-Ponty the meaning of history, its contingency and ambiguity, the intersubjective nature of freedom and truth, the mutual permeations of world and man, and necessity for political action. These ideas form the central issues of his philosophy.
There was a man in the army named Xenophon, an Athenian, who was neither general nor captain nor private, but had accompanied the expedition because Proxenus, an old friend of his, had sent him an invitation to go with him; Proxenus had also promised him that, if he would go, he would make him a friend of Cyrus, whom he himself regarded, so he said, as worth more to him than was his native state.

1 John Wild, The concept of Man in Greek Thought -- U.S.A. Prentice Hall, 1963, P. 56
3 Ibid., p. 4
9 Ibid.,p.158
10 Ibid.
12 Ibid., pp. 184-187
13 Ibid., pp.187-191
14 Ibid.,p.191
15 Ibid.,p.228
16 Ibid.,p.181 f.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.,p.158
19 Ibid.,pp.282-287
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.,p.127
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.,p.250.
24 Sens et non-sens, p. 195.
25 Phenomenology, p. 133-34
26 Evans, G. The Varieties of Reference. Oxford: Oxford University Press,
1982.p. 87
32 Ibid.
and B edition hereafter appear in the body of the text.

37 Aliquie, The Philosophy, p.59
38 Aliquie, The philosophy, P. 59
39 Aliquie, The philosophy, P. 61
41 Merleau-Ponty, P.P., Parts I-II; PP. 172, 231, 241ff, 418.
42 Cf. P.P., Part III, Chapter I ; PP. 424-468.
43 Merleau-Ponty, P. 427
44 Ibid., P. 150.
45 Cf Ibid., PP. IV, VI, 35,43-77,150,231,247,274,423-468.
47 Merleau-Ponty, P.P., PP. 510-511.
48 Ibid., PP.515-516.
50 Merleau-Ponty, P.463.