

Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenological Itinerary From Body Schema to Situated Knowledge: On How We Are and How We Are Not to "Sing the World"

Stephen H. Watson
University of Notre Dame

This paper addresses a number of issues concerning both the status of phenomenology in the work of one of its classical expositors, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and the general relation between theoretical models and evidence in phenomenological accounts. In so doing, I will attempt to explain Merleau-Ponty's departure from classical transcendental accounts in Husserl's thought and why Merleau-Ponty increasingly elaborated on them through aesthetic rationality. The result is a phenomenology that no longer understands itself as foundational and no longer understands itself in the strict opposition of intuition and concept. Rather both emerge from an operative experience generated in the exchange between situated embodied knowing and historical knowledge.

The whole question amounts to...not making language into a product of consciousness on the excuse that consciousness is not a product of language (402).

Philosophy is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but, like art, the act of bringing truth into being (xx).

The argument that emerges from the early chapters of Merleau-Ponty's early major work, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, seemed to mount a classical defense of Husserl's account of passive synthesis and embodiment. Accordingly, phenomenology arises as a descriptive rational undertaking based upon the habitual experiential manifold to which it has access in virtue of our lived embodiment. For Merleau-Ponty, this 'access' had largely been misconstrued by classical versions of empiricism and rationalism. Empiricists, he believed, reduced the *habitus* of an embodied subject to an irrational flux of associated habits while rationalists subsumed it beneath the possessive agency of intentional acts. The results denied the lived or motivated efficacy of embodiment itself in a world intrinsically (or always already) meaningful. The significance of this is twofold: on the one hand, the lived experience of the body cannot be understood as a simply represented (or actively constituted) 'manifold.' It arises temporally, that is, as associated within the temporal horizons that a prereflective 'body-synthesis' or schematism makes possible. On the other hand, the body cannot be understood as a set of associated images or causal events. It still remains linked to voluntary action, an *Ich Kann*, one that unfolds within an intelligible field

—as a motivated *sequencing* of events. Like the horizontality of time itself, this field remains an open-ended, and indeterminate or “unfinished work (*ouvrage inachevé*),” dependent upon the lived intervention and articulation of embodiment itself (406).

Now while Husserl himself thought that the status of such descriptions amounted to eidetic or essential analyses that were phenomenologically exhibited through a rational intuitive seeing of experiential essences (*Wesensschau*), Merleau-Ponty demurred from Husserl’s overly idealized account of rational reflection for their grasp. He thus similarly regarded phenomenology as an “unfinished” work (*inachèvement*) (xxi). Corresponding to his overly intellectualized (and idealized) notion of agency, Merleau-Ponty thought Husserl remained too Kantian, bifurcating experience into matter and form in holding that consciousness would bestow meaning upon experiential contents (243n). Reflection accordingly might initiate a ‘static’ phenomenological analysis of such givens. Still, the relationship between the world as an intrinsically meaningful embodied field and consciousness’s bestowal of such meanings (*noesis* and *noema*) remained both ambiguous and problematic. The results were thought to be indeterminately or inadequately conceptualized—as for example was the case of the account of their ‘motivation’ itself, a concept that remained explicitly and famously fluid (*fließende*) in Husserl’s work (49). Indeed, Merleau-Ponty believed that when further emphasis on the temporal horizons of consciousness emerged, Husserl came steadily to abandon this form of Kantianism. In effect however (as the notions of passive synthesis or bodily synthesis attest) both thinkers still acknowledged the Kantian claim that all analysis presupposes synthesis, the problems of ‘pure synthesis’ or productive imagination (152: 192). Merleau-Ponty, nonetheless, believed it forced the implicit abandonment of the disembodied “philosophy of essences” to which Husserl had been initially committed (49n).

From the outset, Merleau-Ponty also insisted on understanding such intuitions not only as “adumbrations,” but more proximate to experiential inductions, always dependent upon their context or structure for their intelligibility. Such ‘inductions’ however would be inadequately conceived simply enumeratively but would, in depending upon their genesis or ‘situation,’ also “consist in correctly reading the phenomena, in grasping their meaning” within experiential contexts (108). Yet it was unclear what this would theoretically entail.

This is an attempted resolution of an ancient problem for phenomenology. As early as 1901, Paul Natorp had insisted that Husserl's account of ideality needed to be articulated through "the Concept of Time itself" (sic), at risk of turning the real into a ungraspable surd.¹ For Natorp, it was instead a question of articulating or "constructing" subjectivity within a preconstructed field of objectivity. Throughout, Merleau-Ponty insisted on understanding phenomenology not simply by pure description but also in reference to the science of his time. He similarly found an account of a lived logic (*logique vécue*) or operative rationality (*raison opérante*) revealed in various phenomena of the human sciences: sociology, history, psychoanalysis, linguistics, economics and even in the relativity theory in physics (49). But, following Aron Gurwitsch, he especially singled out the contributions of Gestalt psychology to explain perception, again revealing a situation and a tacit knowledge already meaningful—and beyond the Kantian distinctions, already 'informed' (60-1). Such an experiential setting (or "lifeworld") escapes the conceptual or constitutive imposition of theoretical form.

Here is where the complexity of the issue becomes pointed. As Gurwitsch had also intimated, even "the concept of the 'lifeworld,' world of daily existence, etc., is after all a polemical concept...If we didn't have science we wouldn't need this concept."² This meant that the conceptualization of such experience would not involve a simple return to the 'silence' of lived experience, succumbing to what philosophers of science like Wilfred Sellars regarded as the myth of the given.³ Instead an "operative intentionality" is revealed that, to use ancient terms still at stake in Husserl's account of adumbrated motivation, is experientially both 'explicated' and 'complicated.'⁴ That is, it involves an experience that unfolds (*an explicatio*) not only as experientially situated or embodied but always articulated or bound up (*a complicatio*) within a theoretical context which remains unintelligible outside of the 'readings' of its conceptual horizons.

Notoriously, Merleau-Ponty's own phenomenological descriptions seemed to many very unscientific and lacking in rigor, especially concerning how the experiential and the conceptual would be schematically joined together: the problem of how such situated or virtual *knowing* is to be related to knowledge itself. Such a "lived logic" revealed that perception was already prereflectively attuned to the meanings of the perceptual field, without needing an interpretive act nor being reducible to perceptual stimuli. The question of knowledge was not however without links to inference and

interpretation (37). Even though it was clear that he thought them to be related and that “in no case can consciousness entirely cease to be what it is in perception, that is a fact,” and “that it cannot take full possession of its operations,” the relation between situated knowing and situated knowledge was unclear (50).⁵

Having declared that “rationality is not a problem,” the *Phenomenology's* Preface described true philosophy as consisting “in relearning to look (*rap-prendre à voir*) at the world” (xx). At the same time such ‘relooking’ (also a kind of “rereading,” recall) would be a complicated matter; such seeing is not apprehendable as the *Schau* of reflective constituting or *Sinngebung*, since it relies upon a prereflective embodied work that has always already taken place. It involved less a synthesis than a ‘synopsis,’ to speak Kant’s language; it is more an articulative ‘joining together’ that exhibits a meaning as it emerges within the horizons of lived experience than an active categorial subsumption (276n).

It is not surprising that Merleau-Ponty’s account takes in this Kantian archive. Not only was he attempting to surpass French neo-Kantianism (e.g., Brunschwig), Husserl himself had invoked genetic analysis in responding to Natorp’s charge that he had failed to provide any account of the emergence of intentional contents from the subjective flux of experience.⁶ Husserl too (following Natorp) had thought of experience as a kind of Heraclitian flux. Still, he had declared that reflection was adequate enough to penetrate its essential structure. To account for this he sought, behind Kant commitments to finitude (and perspectivism), the clarity and distinctness of Cartesian precedents for phenomenological intuition. By the time of the *Krisis* he admitted that this Cartesianism suffered from a great “shortcoming” in that “it brings the ego into view as apparently devoid of content (*Inhaltsleer*)” and would thus need to be augmented by historical reflection and interpretation (K:155). Again it was not at all clear how this “zig-zag” between concept and intuition would entail.⁷ Some thought, for example, that this emphasis upon the factual transcendence of history required that he had given up the priority of the noesis-noema polarity. They wondered (as would Merleau-Ponty) whether Husserl had begun to waver in these final writings, questioning whether ultimate adequation could be had, granted the “horizontal” character of experience.

Merleau-Ponty nonetheless had apparently found some agreement with Kant. The Preface’s own account of phenomenology as a “relearning to see” had compared phenomenological intuition to aesthetic judgment in Kant’s

third *Critique*, in which “I am aware of a harmony between sensation and concept, between myself and others, which is without any concept” (xvii). Moreover, the model of aesthetic rationality was constantly invoked in the conceptual exhibitions of the lived body itself. For example:

The body is to be compared, not to a physical object, but rather to a work of art. In a picture or a piece of music the idea is incommunicable by means other than the display of colors and sounds. Any analysis of Cezannes’ work, if I have not seen his pictures leaves me with a choice between several possible Cezanne’s and it is the sight of the pictures which provides me with the existing Cezanne, and therein the analysis find their full meaning (150).

His own articulemes for operative intentionality derived from this domain in ways that conflicted later interpreters. For example, the ‘tragic hero’ of *The Phenomenology*, a brained-injured patient named Schneider, lacked the immediacy of a meaningful being in the world. “Schneider’s abstract movements have lost their melodic flow,” exhibiting a behavior that is lacking in our ordinary ‘attunement’ to the environment (116). Against this, Schneider’s world is impoverished, disrupted and mechanical; his gestures lack their “kinetic melody” (134).

We might agree that such aesthetic articulemes capture an account of embodied perception that is after, namely, the intuitive, non-reflective experience that dynamically attends (and is intentionally fulfilled through) our lived involvement in the world. We can affirm that “my life is made up of rhythms which have not their *reason* in what I have chosen to be, but their *condition* in the humdrum setting that is mine” (84). Still, both the conceptual status and the conceptual implications of such claims remained oblique. On the one hand, Merleau-Ponty wanted to continue Husserl’s theoretical regime, especially after *Experience and Judgment* of analyzing concepts through their genesis from primitive ‘aesthesiological’ contents, a new form of transcendental aesthetic. On the other hand, he himself had given up the account of reflective adequacy. In these very pages, we see Merleau-Ponty worrying about whether there would be decisive experiments in psychology, whether a certain underdeterminacy threatened such results, raising the problem of their interpretation and again the problem of their reading (118;108). But what does this imply phenomenologically?

Certainly a Husserlian could affirm the importance of the lived body. Indeed, many of Merleau-Ponty's descriptions were simply lifted from Husserl's account, such as in *Ideas II*. Consequently the phenomenology of the lived body didn't seem like the work of first philosophy but of its regional application. The latter text had simply been subtitled "studies in the phenomenology of constitution." *Ideas II* also contained constitutive discussions concerning material nature, animal nature and the spiritual world, grounded in a reflective transcendental ego. This was the move Merleau-Ponty had denied. But what was doing the philosophical work? Was it still simply a matter of describing the experience? The same could be said even of his new understanding of the *Wesensschau*. Acknowledging its insufficiencies seemingly left Merleau-Ponty with no place to ground its employment. Indeed, things seemed even more strained than the classical objections concerning its inferential shortcomings that haunted Husserl's own account, beginning with neoKantianism.

Such objections continually dogged phenomenology. The claim had always been, as Natorp insisted, that only objectivities can beget objectivities and that "subjectivity" would need to be constructed out of objectivity.⁸ Husserl's attempt to phenomenologically provide such a 'construction' through his genetic method seemed to beg the question. As Schlick would put it, the question was not whether one could perform the *Wesensschau* (or even whether it was an intentional matter), the question was whether it amounted to knowledge.⁹ Sellars would later restate the case more forcefully: the idea of conceptually content-dependent synthetic necessity could not be explained "in terms of 'intuition', 'Wesensschau' or the like."¹⁰ Phenomenological 'analyticity' on its own, "evidence is evidencing," remains potentially (tautologously) vacuous, simply a logic of transcendental illusion detached from conceptual inference. Even *The Phenomenology of Perception's* critique of "analytical reflection" also seemed to have few resources to reply to this (xii). Its appeal to reflective judgment seemingly had lost Kant's (and neoKantian) claims about determinate objectivity.

As the invocation of the very term 'situation' attests, Merleau-Ponty, like other 'existentialists' (eg. Heidegger or Adorno), had explicitly joined Kierkegaard in the critique of objective thought (71). He had reaffirmed the account of Husserlian genesis in arguing that Kant had himself not provided an account of categorial genesis, calling Kant's position a mythic faculty construction. For Merleau-Ponty, this implied that Kant had missed the insufficiency or transcendence of lived experience with regard to reflection,

the operative experience of the world as an open and indefinite unity. In fact, in this regard he claimed that “what Kant shows in the Transcendental Dialectic” he seems “to forget in the Analytic” (304). Indeed, “do we know whether plenary objectivity can be conceived? Whether all perspectives are compossible?” (220). The task was, rather than presupposing the objective categories of transcendental experience (or even “to follow Kant in his deduction of one single space”), to experientially reveal its ‘genealogy’ (220). Here in defining “our cognitive powers in terms of our factual condition,” he claimed that the strict distinction between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori*, like that of form and matter, cannot be maintained. It is precisely at this point that Husserl had turned back to Hume, albeit to articulate the eidetic structures that underlie phenomena “on the hither side of any formation of ideas” (220: cf. FTL:256ff).

Yet how would such a “hither side” of concept formation emerge? Granted Merleau-Ponty’s own demurals from Husserl’s strict reflective investments, what is the theoretical status of his own ‘aesthetic’ descriptions? As one commentator questioned at Merleau-Ponty’s defense of *The Phenomenology* before the Société française de philosophie, why doesn’t this “philosophy result in a novel?” Why aren’t Merleau-Ponty’s “ideas better expressed in literature and in painting than in philosophy” (PP:31)?¹¹ Merleau-Ponty was always interested in both, and framed his own descriptions with many references to them. But that only begs the question. Why isn’t this not just a turn toward, but a collapse into “non-philosophy,” to use a term from his later works?

Critical to the problem of the theoretical status of descriptions is the problem of their conceptual expression, the problem of language, where these descriptions become further ‘complicated’ within our conceptual “webs of beliefs.” Husserl seems to not have this conflict since he claimed to be able to constitute (conceptual) language anew from its essential origin. Merleau-Ponty, claiming that “consciousness cannot take full possession of its operations” has given up such reflective baptism (*Sinngebung*). So he will need to tell us more about the language of our theories. As he later admitted, *The Phenomenology* here had been insufficient in not including language in its account of transcendental experience (VI:179). This insufficiency was not only a question of a regional description, but of its own philosophical and rational bases.

The Phenomenology addressed the cogito as a linguistic and cultural acquisition, but contained very little about how such a reading enters into

our experience. Instead, Merleau-Ponty insisted again on its collapse, that language “promotes its own oblivion,” that the read cogito (*Cogito lu*) is an invitation for us to reach the true silent cogito (401-2). Instead of a transcendently conceptually clarified experience, he argued for “a retreat (*un réduit*) of not-being, a Self” behind such experience (400). Such silence had a lingering ‘existentialist’ edge to it. Almost combining Heidegger and Sartre, Merleau-Ponty claims the tacit cogito “knows itself only in those extreme situations in which it is under threat: for example in the dread of death or another’s gaze upon me” (404). We are left with the relation between this ‘knows’ and knowledge; or between this knowing and the language in which it becomes a “cogito only when it has found expression for itself” (404).

The Phenomenology had initially grounded language in the inherent meaningfulness of gesture, an originary expressiveness analogous to “singing the world” (*chanter le monde*), to use its aesthetic metaphor (187). While, perhaps more than any other phenomenologist, he was adept at incorporating the aesthetic into his text, here his language had grown oblique. In his discussion of the evidence of child psychology, he had claimed that “language takes on a meaning for the child when it establishes a situation (*il fait situation*) for him” (401). Still, the relation between situated *knowing* (or ‘evidencing’) and situated (and historical) knowledge gives rise to an almost endless series of questions. What is the relation between the “read” cogito and the “silent” cogito? How does the silent cogito emerge from the “read” cogito, and, shorn of reflective transcendental adequacy, how would such a silence acknowledge the legitimacy of the purported transcendental claim? If language establishes a situation, what is the relation between this situation and the situated experience that is its virtual counterpart? What is the relation between evidence and evidencing, beyond a naïve reduction of the one to the other?

Husserl himself had sought to give an account of the transcendental as a structural or historical a priori in his final writings. In “The Origin of Geometry,” he specifically concerns himself with the transcendental as a cultural and linguistic acquisition. In *The Phenomenology*, Merleau-Ponty remained remarkably silent on this issue. The only reference to “The Origin of Geometry” claims that there Husserl provided an account of how the other “enriches my thought,” rather than how my thought emerges from a cultural a priori. Similarly what he calls already the “*intermonde*” of intersubjectivity is based on the model of how “I enter into a pact with the other person, having resolved to live in an interworld in which I accord as much place

to others as to myself” (357). Neither of these is an apt characterization of the intersubjective constitution of language. Language is not simply a “pact” into which I enter, since I always presuppose it, nor is it reducible to the contents of my idiolect—or any discrete speaker’s intentionality for that matter. Thus *The Phenomenology* is open to the charge of still assuming the standpoint of the reflective stronghold Merleau-Ponty has rejected in Husserl: historical reflection, like the true cogito, is a result of reflection (*Besinnung*) or interrogation not its origin. But Merleau-Ponty still seemed to be of two minds here. Even *The Phenomenology’s* account of the cogito had appealed to the passage of tradition for the experience of truth:

...as Descartes maintained, it is true both that certain ideas are presented to me as irresistibly self-evident *de facto* and that this fact is never valid *de jure*, and that it never does away with the possibility of doubt arising as soon as we are no longer in the presence of the idea. It is no accident that self-evidence may be called into question because *certainty is doubt*, being the carrying forward of a tradition of thought which cannot be condensed into an evident ‘truth’ without my giving up all attempts to make it explicit (396).

But neither Descartes, who would overcome such uncertainty in the idea of God, nor Husserl, who would claim precisely that the transcendental ego is capable of making this all strictly explicit, could follow him here. If this operative account were the ultimate account, as he later acknowledged, it remained strangely disconnected from the prereflective “stronghold” by which I am in contact with my mute experience (VI:171).

Thus the analogies may need to be disarticulated. Merleau-Ponty had a sophisticated grasp of the constructive character of scientific theory. Yet, having just declared that science does not simply “translate a truth relating to nature in itself,” that “modern criticism of the sciences has clearly shown the constructive element in them,” Merleau-Ponty declares that “speech is as dumb as music, music is as eloquent as speech” (391). The analogy is that children speak in the same way that they sing, that is, naturally, the result of an incarnate expressability. Similarly, babbling is claimed to reveal a spontaneous expressivity at work in speech. In all analogies however there are differences at stake. Perhaps language does not establish an expressive situation in the same way that the ‘prelinguistic’ body does for the child. The leap from the “silent language whereby perception communicates with us”

to culture, 'natural history' to the history of institutions, is perhaps further complex (48).¹² While the body is "the possibility of situations" perhaps not all of the situations which it enables are expressively the same. The body may well never stop being what it is in perception, in which "I am not tied to any one perspective," like the gestalt switch in an ambiguous and indeterminate figure (407). But the situation established in language may not be as flexible or 'fluid' to use Husserl's term. As we have seen, whatever else we have to say about the cogito it would not be meaningful had Descartes not written the *Meditations* and moreover not simply proceeded by an ambiguously 'perceivable' meaning or even a semantic invention, but an argument: "By following the meaning of the words and the argument (*le lien des idées*), I reach the conclusion that because I think, I am" (400).

Still, Merleau-Ponty maintained that this is only the spoken cogito (*parole parlée*), not the constitutive or silent cogito upon which it is always parasitic. Yet without the spoken cogito what would the silent cogito mean aside from the strange limit experiences by which it is analogized to "know itself" (*se connaît*) as a "presence of oneself to oneself" that occurs "anterior to any philosophy" (404)? Such 'claims' and even such experiences still seem part of "the full thickness of cultural acquisition" (402). They resonate with (if not depend upon) not only the 'culture' of Husserl's 'European science' or the 'culture' of existentialism, but that of surrealisms like Bataille's. Merleau-Ponty once referred to a nascent "perceptual syntax" that "preceding objective relationships," and "before any word is uttered" structures perception (32,36). He also theorized it as a "pretext" or "silent language" (48). The latter was claimed to be a "text which our knowledge tries to translate into precise language" (xviii).¹³ But it was not at all clear—as he later acknowledged—how this silent 'syntax' and the logical syntax of an argument like that of the *Meditations* (or the 'argument' of the *Phenomenology's* chapter on the *Cogito* itself) interrelate (VI:175-6). He acknowledged, as has become evident, that even perception itself involves a tradition; in the same way that concepts depend upon historical sedimentation, so too the person who perceives "has historical density, he takes up a perceptual tradition and is faced with a present" (238). But now we are left with the question of the relation between these two 'traditions.' Even in *The Phenomenology* it was clear that in some sense it was tradition all the way down, that the present is not constituted but emerges, like the perceived object, as already meaningful. This is not only true of perception but of his chosen models such as the musical aesthetic: both are always already 'traditionalized.' Singing too is

historical and cultural; even atonal music, in its attempts to break away from traditional forms, depends upon the tradition of classical music (190).

The Phenomenology thus had ‘unknowingly’ brought Merleau-Ponty to a philosophical impasse. His commitments to an operative rationality had not been adequately parsed at the conceptual level. As a result, the same tension that he found in Husserl’s writings between phenomenology and historicity, remained still at work in his own. And he slowly perhaps came to recognize it. The later writings more openly involved an extended meditation on historical knowledge, its institution, and the interrelation between experience and language.

The next time the concept of the *intermonde* emerges in Merleau-Ponty’s text a transformation has occurred. The *intermonde* is not a contractual community but one of symbolic interactions and institutions, one that eludes the model of a contract between agents (AD:198:200). As he put it in his 1951 inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, “Philosophy is in history, and is never independent of historical discourse” (IPP:57). This alludes back to *The Phenomenology*’s account of the cogito as a “cultural being” (369). It would now be redefined and developed without simple reference to a simple founding, precultural, or silent cogito. First, as is evident in both of these texts, Merleau-Ponty’s account of meaning is being developed in relation to Saussure’s diacritics; meanings and texts are not distinct intentional productions but divergent cultural institutional events. Meaning always arises against a significative structure (AD:141:200). Like Saussure’s formal (i.e. functional) account of the relation between speech and language, there results a certain logic in contingency whose genesis belies simple parsing. Instead, Merleau-Ponty claimed it “implies a conception of historical meaning which gets beyond the opposition of *things* versus *consciousness*” (IPP:54). Here again the result is a “lived logic” albeit one that involves not simply the silence of the perceived world. Instead it reveals (again, against a backdrop of meaning already constituted) how the speaking subject bears witness both in tone and style to his autonomy and “yet at the same moment, and without contradiction, he is turned towards the linguistic community and is dependent upon language” (IPP:55).

Such a lived logic is still understood as an intentional history—and now explicitly with reference to Husserl’s *Crisis*. Husserl himself had traced the emergence of the phenomenological *cogito* as a formation exhibiting “a structural or cultural a priori,” a rational “tradition producing tradition out of itself” (K:371; 374). Moreover its intentionality emerges not in reflec-

tion but precisely in an operative intentionality whose ultimate meanings are not necessarily immanently or immediately available to its participants. Indeed this was Husserl's general claim, that "the true meaning of these theories—the meaning which is genuine in terms of its origins remained and had to remain hidden from the physicists" of Galilean science and its successors (K:53). The constitutive meaning of these theories might remain unconscious, requiring further analysis of its depths or sedimentation to make its operative context (or lifeworld) manifest—and ultimately its originating transcendental bestowal. Still, philosophers from the beginning had trouble with this account. Some, like Walter Biemel, simply adjudicated the project of the *Crisis* period and its attempt to thematically grasp historicity to be a failure.¹⁴ Biemel notes in a number of late manuscripts that Husserl was still asking why philosophy should need history.

Merleau-Ponty's 1951 own gloss on this issue is significant:

It is a question here not of empirical history, which limits itself to the gathering of facts on the one hand and texts on the other, but rather of an "intentional history," as Husserl called it, which, in a given assemblage of texts and works (*un ensemble de textes et de travaux*) tries to discover their legitimate sense (*le sens légitime*) (PP:45).

This *ensemble* of texts and works is more than a simple intentional analysis and a return to the silent perceptual sources. Meaning emerges through a 'reading' of (and *as*) a set or ensemble of texts. But it is equally thereby a formal matter. Indeed the word 'ensemble' is an ambiguous one with formal overtones, as in formal set theory (*théorie des ensembles*). Such formal connections had come to light not only in his discussion of constructivism in scientific theory, as we have seen, but equally in his reading of Saussure. Thus understood, meaning has both intentional (and historical) and structural (and formal) implication. The account will involve less a return to the 'pre-text' of the perceptual world than both an analysis of (received or sedimented) surface meaning and its potential critical evaluation and transformation. The same logic must then preclude an isolated intentional foundation (an *Urstiftung* or *Endstiftung*). Merleau-Ponty denies their possibility when he explicitly returns to lecture on Husserl's "Origin of Geometry" just before his death: "reactivation" of past meaning is always transitional, context specific and transformational (HLP:32).

The proximity of all this to more recent accounts stressing formal coherence (eg. Foucault or Badiou in ‘continental’ philosophy, or Quine and Sellars in ‘analytic’ philosophy) is doubtless evident—and I have deliberately stressed it. This too is part of the denial of Husserl’s ‘Kantianism’ and is another argument in which form and content are inseparable. This is true not only ‘perceptually’ but conceptually: categorization too has its ‘functional’ ties. Moreover, while this was perhaps true of categorizations linked to the forms (functions) of synthetic finite understanding in Kant, it is surely true of the forms of language in Merleau-Ponty’s own post-Saussurian accounts. For the latter, individual speech acts (*la parole*) become functionally (ie. formally) linked to language (*la langue*), an interplay of the synchronic and the diachronic. Still, these formal links do not fully exhaust (or determine) meaning, insofar as they neither prevent nor rule out the possibility for transformation: here too the ‘world’ is unfinished. At the same time such proximity does not rule out intentional analysis or its evidence. But it would entail that knowledge is situated or bound (and again ‘complicated’) by coherence in ways that the classical phenomenological approaches had denied.

Husserl claimed an unrestricted or “unbound” range for transcendental “unbounded” ideality. Merleau-Ponty had denied this of perceptual knowing (which is never in full possession of itself) and here he is denying it of ideality (and its knowledge) as well. Glossing Saussure (but surely with Husserl’s account of motivation as the foundation of the phenomenology of reason in mind) he states, the intentional involves a “domain of the *relatively motivated*: nothing rational can be found therein unless it is derived from some mode of chance which has been taken up and elaborated as the means of systematic expression by the community of speaking subjects” (CAL:100).¹⁵ To put it simply; if Merleau-Ponty began by saying that there is a “surplus of the signified over the signifying” (390), he had come to see that it was also true that there is “an excess of signified by the signifier (that is) essential to ‘reason’” (VI:168).

But critically, if Merleau-Ponty had declared that philosophy is an historical discourse (and that consequently all philosophical coherence, qua coherence, involves the history of philosophy), he had equally denied that philosophy could be reduced to simple historical analysis. In the Working Notes to *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty explores the confluence of history and philosophical coherence. He denies Martial Geuroult’s

attempt to reduce philosophy to the simple analysis of problems and their solutions. If he had already acknowledged that we arrive at the cogito's conclusion by following Descartes' argument (the *Cogito parlé*, versus the *Cogito tacite*) he denies reducing its experience to a strictly inferentialist account, an account that strictly distinguishes the "that" and the "what," the historical and the factual. The result has inferential implications but also emerges experientially as part of a history of intentional "implication" and "historical motivations" (VI:185-198). Indeed, at stake is "the truth of Descartes, but on condition that one reads between the lines" (VI:188). Doing so acknowledges that the intentional depths of sedimented history may not only accompany but overdetermine propositional analysis: hence, the proximity of 'psychoanalysis' in the later writings. We must then "follow them in their problems (Geuroult) –but their problems within the problem of being." And to do this one proceeds according to "the history operative in us" (VI:198). Alluding again to the structural field in which history would be constituted, he states, this sedimented history is articulated within a specific "interrogative ensemble" (VI:187). Still, what does this entail?

An article, "Operative Concepts in Husserl's Phenomenology," by Eugen Fink, greatly influenced Merleau-Ponty. There Fink had already stressed an operative history that subtended and shadowed Husserl's own conceptual development. He wondered moreover whether such a 'shadow' weren't operative in all philosophy.¹⁶ On this view no philosophy can be viewed simply as a set of inferences. Instead, as Kant had already realized, finite rationality involves an interplay of subjective and objective horizons.¹⁷ In Merleau-Ponty's terms, the rational always involves the interplay between (already constituted) structures and signification (429). In that case a purely inferential account devoid of experiential depth would be equally illusory; presupposing the operative and intuitional or observational contexts both accompanying and articulated through discourse itself.¹⁸

The theoretical import for phenomenology of all this is the following: while 'overdetermining' propositional accounts such operative intentionality is neither the ground of their meaning nor necessarily their ultimate meaning. The rational extends beyond any experience as both its development and its justificatory 'network,' a tradition that is not simply experiential but conceptual. The concepts of this development cannot be simply reduced to their simple perceptual 'meaning.' Indeed, as has been seen, he had acknowledged that one always take up a perceptual tradition. Of course, it does not follow that experience and concept go separate ways,

either. There remains a constant zig-zag between experience and concept, an event Husserl's *Crisis*' historical perspective described, in accord with the archive of dialectic, as a *Wechselspiel* in which "relative clarification on one side brings some elucidation on the other" (K:58). Yet Husserl believed that the reduction would sufficiently intervene here, that reflective experience itself might simply constitute objectivity rather than being generated in its midst, as if the concept of 'experience', too, were not conceptually embedded and historically developed.

Why does the appeal to the body or to embodied practices augment such situated knowledge? The answer that the body (or that embodied experience) simply founds the latter as an independently or purely accessed presence has eroded. The notion that we have simple conceptual ('indexical') access to immanent bodily-present evidence remained everywhere part of the myth of 'analytic reflection.' Clearly Merleau-Ponty was not denying that we have non-conceptual or preconceptual experiential contents. It is true: sometimes words fail me, but sometimes I fail them in insufficiently following their conceptual implication. Both must be kept in mind, since his commentators have often been forced into antinomies: as a result they are forced either to retreat to the silence of the Husserlian world or to the 'poststructuralist' claim that there is nothing outside the text. The relation between such an "extended notion of perception" and its conceptualization is more complex (40). Experience is an event from which we are neither closed off nor epistemically (i.e. adequately) self-enclosed. It involves a conceptual history and the event such a conceptual history opens up—precisely in accord with what Husserl had called the *fließende* character of "adumbrated motivation."

Thus understood, the concept of experience is, to speak Nietzschean, an "explosive concept" in mining an operative intentionality that always accompanies the conceptual (HPL:42). It is in this sense for example that Emmanuel Levinas pairs Husserl and Nietzsche in his own reworking of the history of philosophy, a certain development that relies upon the term 'experience's tacit interplay between equivocity and univocity, the old and the new.¹⁹ Such speculations are as "experimental" as they are historical, reaffirming with Heidegger (among others) the semantic and conceptual proximities between experience and experiment in the history of science, both transformations on the Greek '*experiri*.'²⁰ But then phenomenology cannot be a simple return to origins: no theoretical language is innocent. The phenomenologist ultimately claims that 'phenomenology' involves both

a concept and an historically generated experience. As Merleau-Ponty put it, the origin is not simply behind us to be repossessed in a *Rucksfrage*: “the originary goes in several directions, and philosophy must accompany this break-up, this non-coincidence, this differentiation” (VI:124).

Husserl’s mistake was to think that the *Lebenswelt* was a determinate realm that defied, but at the same time reductively contained, all theoretical description. The opposite was the case: any ‘description’ of the *Lebenswelt* is always historically generated and embedded. Granted Husserl’s strong claim, this is why it looked to most of his rivals like just a renewal of Aristotelianism. Merleau-Ponty himself responded to such charges that the lived body is not a besouled organism but a body “for us” (IP:166).

If this means that the observations of phenomenology are as historically incarnate (or “theory laden”) as any other, how are we to understand all this? The semantic space opened by experience itself articulates the *écart* or difference between structure and significance. Said otherwise, in Heideggerean terms, the difference at stake between the ontic and the ontological exceeds simple conceptual delimitation: this is what makes experience an ‘explosive’ concept with respect to its historical origins. This is also what makes Merleau-Ponty’s continuing references for the need for a phenomenology of ‘phenomenology’ more than a tautologous statement, an “infinite task” always historically ‘regulated’ by its structural coherence, its *Vorhabe* (e.g. 365).

The response of his 1946 defense of *The Phenomenology* to the charge of the inadequacies of such a perceptual standpoint was the following:

Phenomenology could never have come about before all the other philosophical efforts of the rationalist tradition, nor prior to the construction of science. It measures the distance between our experience and this science. (PP:29)

This measuring is none other than the zig-zag Husserl had described throughout his works, beginning with the *Logical Investigations*. Its ‘*Wechselspiel*’ is still invoked in the *Krisis* as its historical methodology, ultimately intended still to be surpassed in the pure eidetics of the *Wesensschau*. As much as he had denied its purity, Merleau-Ponty, too, continued to invoke such a *Wesensschau*, tying it to history and to language. We are reminded again that the *Wesensschau* for him remained a kind of reading. The ‘measuring’ that phenomenology undertakes in the above passage is intrinsic to the experi-

ence that accompanies the conceptual: phenomenology (as the articulation of its possibility) is never anything more than such a ‘measuring.’ It need not involve a ‘category mistake’ as Husserl’s advocates (following Natorp) had charged when they defined the experiential syntax that articulated the *Wesensschau* to be simply a linguistic (‘grammatical’) effect of the natural language. As Merleau-Ponty stated in the Sorbonne lectures:

It is possible for me to believe that I am seeing an essence when, in fact, it is not an essence at all but merely a concept rooted in language, a prejudice whose apparent coherence reduces merely to the fact that I have become used to it through habit. The best way of guarding against this danger would be to admit that, though a knowledge of facts is never sufficient for grasping an essence and though the construction of “idealizing fictions” is always necessary, I can never be sure that my vision of an essence is anything more than a prejudice rooted in language—if it does not enable me to hold together all the facts that are known and which may be brought into relation with it (PP:75).

How is all this possible? First, because the rationality at stake is not foundational (or foundationally static) but genetic. How is that possible if it still remains confounded with a linguistic horizon? It opens upon a motivated series that in turn enables “idealizing fictions.” It involves again a complicated experience that protentionally extends beyond perception in the narrow sense through the “thickness of duration” (40). How is all this possible as bound to a linguistic horizon? All usage is not only conventional but the variation of a convention, and which, seen from the conceptual side, proceeds according to what he called at one point in his later lectures “the hypothesis of non-language” (HLP:39). It is important to see that such a hypothesis emerges not before language but as its historical (fictional) *Entstiftung*, to use Husserl terms—to speak Kantian, a synthesis *in indefinitum*.

This phenomenology then involves not simply a return to a perceived silence. It is equally a mining of the silence on the “hither side” of ideas and is generated, like all such post-Kantian accounts, through “productive imagination” (192). Here perhaps we should mark Merleau-Ponty’s citations. Again the latter is said to be “an art hidden in the depths of the human soul, one which like any art is known only by its results” (429). The operative body synthesis is indeed then a “schema of all possible being, a universal setting in relation to the world” (429). This is no more a return to innatism

than it was to naturalism: “we do not, following Kant, understand thereby a system of invariant relations to which everything would be subject in so far as it can be known.” It involves a fluid typology or ‘style’ generated again through the sequence of events (328). He came increasingly to think that such variations emerge only through an historical imaginary and the structure of an historical or cultural “historical imagination” (AD:17; IP:163n). Thus the body synthesis takes place not simply at an independent level, but through an “operative imaginary, which is part of our institution, and which is indispensable for the definition of Being itself” (VI:85). Being, that is, becomes articulated, that is, as a *fließende* typic beyond and between its cultural or institutional types. If Merleau-Ponty had originally thought of the tacit or lived cogito as “the condition of the *reading* of the *cogito* (*condition du Cogito lu*),” we have argued, for the sake of this *Wechsel* itself, that this condition would make no sense outside of the reading itself, the historical and inferential structure that opens up such an experience (402).

This *Wechselspiel* was continuously referred by Merleau-Ponty to Kant’s third *Critique* as a cohesion before the concept, albeit one we have argued erupts only from within a certain conceptual matrix. Merleau-Ponty likewise came to see, “there is no vision without the screen,” yet not without ‘envisoning’ its excess or possibility (VI:150). For Merleau-Ponty, this linked it not only to the harmonies of reflective judgement but the creative transformations (and deformations) of the work of art. Not in the literal sense; the speaking that ‘sings the world’ is not a literal ‘singing’ after all, which is why the translators took the liberty of placing it in scare quotes. It is not simply or readily conceptually expoundable either: the point of the aesthetic ‘analogue’ was a metaphor, after all. As Sellars once remarked, the question of analogy is as important in science as it is in theology.²¹ In this regard, both the aesthetic and the philosophical are similarly rationally motivated experiences. They share in common the exploration of this imaginative potential, the movement of ‘essentialization.’

As philosophers of science have long understood, metaphor has a role to play in science as well.²² It seems particularly difficult to incorporate Merleau-Ponty’s expressivism on this point: his metaphor of singing the world seems to have lost the inferential role of conceptual content in the *Phenomenology* (187). He admits that “former acts of expression, establish between speaking subjects a common world, to which the words being actually uttered in their novelty refer as does the gesture to the perceptible world” (186). By including the poetic and emotional aspects of the word we are

to see that “words, vowels, and phonemes are so many ways of singing the world,” that prior expressions are thus to be understood as a “keyboard of acquired meanings” (186-7). Still, he ultimately realized that language could not be sufficiently accounted for simply as the effect of natural expressivity, or a founding gesture through which I seize the possibilities of the linguistic keyboard “in an undivided act which is as short as a cry.” (186). Such a “cry” again would underlie language like the tacit cogito in “extreme situations.” He ultimately understood instead that the idea that “beneath our stammerings there is a golden age of language in which words once adhered to the objects themselves” would have to be foregone (Prose:6).

How is all this still phenomenological if it has continually insisted on exchanging immanence for transcendence, intuition for concept: if the transcendental field, has become structured through “a field of transcendencies” (VI:172)? Merleau-Ponty has finally removed phenomenology from static intuition or “analytic reflection.” Phenomenology has moved from an insight into essence to a reading, as Merleau-Ponty put it, “holding all the facts together.” It involves less a science of ultimate foundations than a practice, in accord with Husserl’s “science of infinite task,” a field of exploration and continual refinement. The reasons for phenomenology’s being “unfinished,” its “*inachèvement*” are internal to it. The claim is no longer that phenomenology makes ultimate sense of it all, but only of that which can’t make sense without it. Even its fundamental intentional relation, *Funderierung*, could no longer be understood foundationally but would be seen as a “bidirectional” relation (simultaneity) in which concept and intuition are mutually implicated and complicated or “intertwoven” (HLP:54).²³ Finally, the insistence on lived experience, on situated knowing, involves less the occasion for essential insight into our conceptual foundations than a lived dimension that accompanies all knowledge, an operative (and oneiric) field that facilitates its understanding—and perhaps, more importantly, its critical transformation.

Now it will still be replied that the articulations of phenomenology are not explanatory; they remain in this regard both without external justification and tautologous, as Husserl’s detractors had argued. Husserl referred to his account of genetic phenomenology as explanatory and took it in this regard to be a sufficient response to objections like Natorp’s (PAS:631). It isn’t: phenomenological descriptions are descriptions and, no different from any other description, they remain insufficient on their own. The same must be said of chains of descriptions (genetic descriptions). This is precisely why

Merleau-Ponty stated early on that “until phenomenology becomes genetic phenomenology, unhelpful reversions to causal thought and naturalism will remain justified” (126). But how does a genetic account help Husserl? Why would he think that more ‘chains’ of sequential description “explained” anything? Moreover, why does Merleau-Ponty think there is more to be said here? He knows that more than simply ‘phenomenological’ facts are at stake. His claim is that phenomenology is justified to the extent that it assists us in holding the facts together: it enables “me to hold together all the facts which are known and which may be brought into relation with it” (PP:75).

Merleau-Ponty has given up on phenomenology as a strictly foundational science in order to articulate phenomenology as part of our conceptual history and coherence, a situated knowing and a situated knowledge. If phenomenological descriptions are not explanations (neither strictly apodictic nor ‘scientific’) this does not preclude their playing a justified role within our web of beliefs. They get their justification, after all, not simply by appealing to direct facts perhaps inaccessible in any other sense, but also by reading between the lines of our received knowledge and by ‘measuring’ and articulating their “sense-history.” The latter is not simply a matter of static description, but a matter of articulating an inferential and experiential (motivated) genesis. This is precisely how Merleau-Ponty ultimately characterized our engagement of Descartes’ cogito, as the task of investigating the history and the experience that we are. Thus understood, phenomenology is precisely this endless transitional synthesis (*Uebergangsynthese*) between situated knowledge and situated knowing, its *Wechselspiel*. We are reminded of Heidegger’s forward to Husserl’s *The Phenomenology of Inner Time Consciousness*: “even today, this term ‘intentionality’ is no all-explanatory word but one which designates a central problem” or his understanding of the transcendental schematism as exploratory.²⁴

Here we can finally adjudicate the *Phenomenology’s* appeal to Kant’s third *Kritik*, with its affirmation of a harmony between imagination and sensation (in the case of the beautiful) “which is without any concept” (xvii). This appeal remained onesided. It retrieved only one moment of the Kantian aesthetic. As a result the account lacked the *Wechselspiel* of intuition and concept, identity and difference or *écart*—and thus the experience of the sublime (Husserl’s moment of withdrawal or “cancellation”).²⁵ Here again Merleau-Ponty’s early account perhaps remained overly static. It insufficiently acknowledged the genetic interplay of identity and difference through which, beyond the simple opposition of concept and intuition, we

articulate the development from the implicit to the explicit. He ultimately came to further understand it as ‘reading’ itself.²⁶

Gadamer once claimed that in the third *Kritik*, Kant had recaptured the ancient problem of being as *analogia entis*.²⁷ In retrospect, this retrieval is underway in Merleau-Ponty’s itinerary too. It remains at stake in the transcendence he had encountered both in the event of the lived body and our embodied or operative practices more generally—even at their most theoretical. That was the point of his criticism of modern thought.

Writing fast in the wake of the *Positiviststreit* everywhere, “Eye and Mind” proclaimed somewhat mournfully that in the modern world “nothing is left of the oneiric world of analogy” (PP:171). As Sellars himself observed in responding to the positivist myth of the given, this was not simply true: science too (analogically) creates a new language (“a new way of schematizing categories”) in order to redescribe (and explain) the old.²⁸ Husserl too sought to understand himself as the true positivist (I:39). Merleau-Ponty insisted that our ‘realisms’ are temporal—though real nonetheless: the point is that our ‘hold’ on Being, like that of the lived body its world, is never “all embracing” (297). What is ‘poetic’ even in science is the problem to which Merleau-Ponty alluded: the conceptualization and reconceptualization of the particular (the ‘world’ we encounter). Such an experience, as Kant’s third *Kritik* outlined, exceeds conceptual (or linguistic) determinability and yet (problematically) provokes conceptuality.²⁹ Hence again the musical figure that Merleau-Ponty hoped at one point still might capture all this, that in language we ‘sing the world.’

We must conclude that on its own phenomenology is not explanatory. It attains no explanatory ‘role’—certainly not that of determining our concepts—without being brought together with the facts and their history. The relation of structure and sense remains. When phenomenology has been brought into relation with the facts (or explanatory nexus) then the figurative character of its articulemes can appear *as* metaphors. In Heidegger’s terms, it thus renders their hermeneutic “*als*” explicit. This is even true of the aesthetic articulemes perhaps most dear to Merleau-Ponty: even those regarding the melodic character of the body schema.³⁰

This is not to cheapen metaphor or to claim that the explanatory account simply exhausts its meaning. The metaphorical overdetermines literal reduction: this too is part of the legacy of the ‘analogical’ character of theory (HLP:65). It problematizes an event (our being-in-the-world) that remains both theoretically and phenomenologically irreducible. We can

see how Merleau-Ponty's commentators become conflicted over the result. No explanation exhausts this event. Yet it is wrong to say that it belies explanation, that it cannot be articulated in conjunction with the facts. Like being-in-the-world, singing the world is something we will never exhaust. It has its reason inherent to it, and yet it is not without expressive history, conceptual implication, physiological or neurological connection.

Notes

Abbreviations

Works by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (unless otherwise abbreviated all parenthesized paginations derive from *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, trans. Colin Smith (revised by Forrest Williams) (London:Routledge&Kegan Paul, 1962). Other works by Merleau-Ponty:

- AD *Adventures of the Dialectic*, trans. Joseph Bien (Evanston:Northwestern University Press, 1973).
- CAL *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language*, trans. Hugh J. Silverman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).
- HLP *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, ed. Leonard Lawlor with Bettina Bergo (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002).
- IP *L'Institution/Passivité: Notes de cours au Collège du France 1954-55*, ed. Dominique Darmaillacq, Claude Lefort, Stéphanie Menasé (Paris: Belin, 2003).
- IPP *In Praise of Philosophy*, trans. John Wild, James M. Eide (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963).
- N *Nature: Course Notes from the College de France*, trans. Robert Vallier (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003).
- PP *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).
- Prose *The Prose of the World*, trans. John O'Neill (Evanston:Northwestern University Press, 1973).
- Signs *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

Works by Edmund Husserl

- FTL *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978).
- I *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982).
- K *The Crisis of the European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).
- PAS *Analysis Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, trans. Anthony J. Steinbock (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001).

¹ See Paul Natorp, "On the Question of Logical Method in Relation to Edmund Husserl's Prolegomena to Pure Logic," in *Readings on Edmund Husserl's Logical Investigations*, ed. J.N. Mohanty (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), p. 66.

² Aron Gurwitsch and Alfred Schutz, *Philosophers in Exile: The Correspondence of Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch, 1939-1959*. ed. Richard Grathoff, trans. J. Claude Evans (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 233.

³ See Wilfred Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, reprinted with an Introduction by Richard Rorty and a Study Guide by Robert Brandom (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997). For remarks on Sellar's connection with phenomenology, See Patrick Heelan, *Space-Perception and the Philosophy of Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1983), p. 188ff). Sellars claimed that overcoming this myth entailed a reduction of the manifest image to the scientific image, which was in principle not perceivable. Heelan denies the latter claim and argues, as had Merleau-Ponty before him, for a version of "horizontal realism." A further study integrating phenomenology and Sellar's work to be noted is Joseph Claude Evans, *The Metaphysics of Transcendental Subjectivity: Descartes, Kant, and W. Sellars* (Amsterdam: Gruner, 1984).

⁴ Husserl uses the former term but not the latter. As Derrida, following Fink notes, Husserl links explication (*Verdeutlichung*) to clarification within constituted sense, thus preserving the anteriority of static analysis. See Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, trans. John P. Leavey p. 55n. (Stoney Brook NY: Nicholas Hays Ltd.: 1978), p.55n. For a discussion of the history of these terms (*explicare* and *complicare*) as they emerge from neoplatonism see Gilles Deleuze, *Expressivism in Philosophy: Spinoza* trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1990), p. 174ff. I am suggesting that the two terms are similarly at stake in extensionalist and intentionalist accounts, and that, moreover Husserl's attempt to preserve the priority of static and intentionalist analysis becomes increasingly problematic.

⁵ Admittedly, this 'ambiguous' link between knowledge and tacit knowing was not unique to Merleau-Ponty's case: it equally accompanied discussion of similar accounts of 'tacit knowledge' in Polanyi or Kuhn or the later Wittgenstein's similar appeals to gestalt psychology to ultimately understand scientific practice. The problem seemed to reduce to a question of how to understand such 'operative intentionality' as necessarily accompanying conceptual knowledge without reducing the latter in turn to the former, losing thereby its link with rational objectivity.

⁶ For the effect of Natorp's discussion of his work on Husserl's development, see M. Kern, *Husserl und Kant* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964), pp. 326-373.

⁷ K: 58. Husserl had used the term "zig zag" in earlier works; now it was linked to the problem of historical interpretation.

⁸ See Paul Natorp, "On the Objective and Subjective Grounding of Knowledge," trans. Lois Phillips, David Kolb, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 12, 1981, pp. 245-266.

⁹ See Moritz Schlick, *General Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Springer Verlag, p. 139ff. For further discussion of Schlick's objection see my "On the Agon of the Phenomenological: Intentional Idioms and the Foundations of Justification," *Extensions: Essays on Interpretation, Rationality, and the Closure of Modernism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992). Ch.4.

¹⁰ Wilfred Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics*, New York: Humanities Press, 1968), p. 68.

¹¹ Compare Derrida's remarks concerning Husserl's purported platonism : "If we admit

for just one instant, even were it an irreducible presumption, that there is in Husserl what perhaps there was not even in Plato (except in the literalness of his myths and pedagogy)—namely, a ‘Platonism’ of the *eidōs* or the *Idea*—then the whole phenomenological enterprise, especially when it concerns history, becomes a novel.” See *Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, p. 144.

¹² The question of “natural” culture even further complicates things: philosophers of biology have sought to understand culture itself in terms of biological factors that remain strictly preintentional. Nonetheless biologists have been able to transfer the musical idiom here as well, as the work of J. von Uexkull demonstrates. Merleau-Ponty comments on this work in his 1957-58 lectures published as *Nature*. (N:178). The idea is that beyond simple causal relations behavior is ‘attuned’ to its environment and the “theme of the animal’s melody is not outside its manifest realization; it is a variable thematization that the animal does not seek to realize by a copy of the model, but that haunts its particular realizations” (N:178). Now how this gets expressed (not only scientifically) but as regards language is obscure. Nonetheless his comment on cybernetics at this point is interesting (and consistent) concerning the argument I am making here: “Hence the positive value of cybernetics. It invites us to discover an animality in the subject, an apparatus of organizing perspectives. The subject that we find as a residue must be defined by a physical or cultural placement from which we have perspectives by divergence” (N:166). The point in both cases is the same: “The structure of language, like the structure of the living being, is not a distribution of facts that would (allow) representing by a combination of possibles once and for all” (N:164). This entails not that such recursive models cannot be formulated but rather that they are insufficient: “the code is no more a language than is the automaton a life” (ibid). In both cases it involves an actualization that exceeds any fixed “combination of possibles once and for all.”

¹³ See my “Pre-texts: Language, Perception, and the Cogito in Merleau-Ponty’s Thought,” in *Merleau-Ponty: Perception, Structure, Language*, ed. John Sallis (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981).

¹⁴ See Walter Biemel, “Les Phases decisive dans le developpement de la philosophie de Husserl,” in *Husserl, Cahiers de royaume*, Philosophie No. 3 (Paris: Minuit, 1959) p. 50.

¹⁵ For Saussure’s discussion of the arbitrariness of the signs and its account of degrees of motivation. See *Course in General Linguistics*, trans Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), p.131ff. On Husserl’s account of rational motivation as the “original basis” for the phenomenology of reason, see I:328f.

¹⁶ Eugen Fink, “Operative Concepts in Husserl’s Phenomenology,” trans. William McKenna in *Apriori and World*, ed. W.McKenna, R.M. Harlan, L.E. Winters (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), p.64. See Merleau-Ponty’s own “The Philosopher and his Shadow” in *Signs*.

¹⁷ See Immanuel Kant, *Logic*, trans. Robert Hartman, Wolfgang Schwarz (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974), p.44.

¹⁸ This point has been made by neo-Sellarsian philosophers like Robert Brandom: “Purely theoretical concepts do not form an autonomous language game, a game one could play though one played no other. For one must be able to respond conceptually to the utterances of others in order to be talking at all. So one could not play the game of giving and asking for reasons at all unless one could apply at least some concepts noninferentially in the making of observation reports.” See Robert Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002) p. 366. The

point being made here is that such an operative interactional account will ultimately involve a thicker descriptive context than the Sellarsian restriction of methodological behaviorism's abstractions. Building all this up from "reliable differential responsive dispositions" will become more complicated both theoretically—and phenomenologically, which is, after all, what Sellars had proposed his theory attempted to replace or "explain". See W. Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics*, p. 68. What in effect Sellars was proposing concerning the *Wesensschau*, that it could not explain the conceptual content of synthetic a priori truth, from Merleau-Ponty's standpoint—and without denying this proposal (in effect a 'static' account)—still remains insufficient while lacking an account of the operative, genetic, or 'ecstatic' intentionality that accompanies it. The latter (again without denying its inferential links) accounts both for the excess of imaginative experience over convention—and consequently both its interpretation and critique (or as Brandom the puts it, the possibility of "the telling of more stories" (Tales: 16). The question, as Rorty once put it, is whether such an 'intuition' is such that it might be redescribed within Brandom's account in which intention is always parasitic upon intersubjective or communal norms or whether, on the contrary, it derives from a different intuition in which, without denying the inferential roles at stake in conceptual content, the relation between such norms and intentionality is more complex. See Richard Rorty, "What Do You Do When they Call You a 'Relativist'?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. LVII, No. March, 1997), p. 173.

¹⁹ See for example, Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff: 1991), p. 8. The 'explosive' character of experience no doubt is what makes it possible for Levinas to make such claims as "Transcendence owes it to itself to interrupt its own demonstration" (152). What has been argued here is that experience remains inevitably connected nonetheless to an inferential structure: Levinas' account of the ethical as excessive with regard to the theoretical still remains Kantian in this respect (if only in this respect). For further discussion of this issue see my *Tradition(s) II Hermeneutics, Ethics and the Dispensation of the Good* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), ch 5.

²⁰ See Martin Heidegger's etymological interpretation of 'experience' in *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* trans. Parvis Emad, Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.111ff). Heidegger's antitheoreticism is clearly not being affirmed here. On Natorp and the origins of Heidegger's antitheoreticism, see Heidegger's parsing of the arguments between Husserl and Natorp in his 1919 lectures, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (New York: Continuum, 2000), p. 85: "Until now Natorp is the only person to have brought scientifically noteworthy objections against phenomenology." I have further discussed this issue in my "Why Phenomenology? The Long Farewell to Subject Centered Rationality."

²¹ Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics*, p. 18.

²² The classic discussion of the role of metaphor in science remains Mary Hesse, *The Structure of Scientific Inference* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), ch. 4-5

²³ Hence Merleau-Ponty's lectures on Husserl question: "Is it necessary to say that circularity has been substituted for the unidirectional noesis-noema relation...? Circularity a dangerous word. Circularity of Heraclitus, yes: to go in one direction is truly to go in the other. A thick identity exists there, which truly contains difference. True Husserlian thought: man, world, language are interwoven, verflochten" (HLP:41).

²⁴ See Martin Heidegger, Editor's Forward to Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,

1964), p. 15. On Heidegger's account of the transcendental schematism as "exploratory," see M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 127. Merleau-Ponty refers to both of these works in the *Phenomenology of Perception*.

²⁵ See my "Cancellations: Notes on Merleau-Ponty's Standing Between Hegel and Husserl, Research in *Phenomenology*, Vol. XVIII, 1987.

²⁶ See for example IPP:19:20: "It is proper to intuition to call forth a development, to become what it is, because it contains a double reference to the mute being which it interrogates, and to the tractable [maniable] meaning which is derived from it. It is the experience of their concordance; it is, as Bergson happily said, a reading." In addition to Bergson, one should also note Merleau-Ponty's reliance upon Cassirer's account of expressive experience (*Ausdruckslebnisse*) anterior to sign experience (291). The point, as he came to realize, is that what is at stake is not simply a silent 'stratum' but a theoretical Wechsel. For further discussion of this issue see my "Reading the Barbarous Source: Merleau-Ponty's Structural History and Schelling," forthcoming.

²⁷ See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinscheimer, Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989), p. 75.

²⁸ Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics*, p. 49.

²⁹ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), para. 49.

³⁰ Here two papers, by Maxine Sheets-Johnston and Sean Gallagher, that refer to Merleau-Ponty's concept of body-schema are enlightening. See Sheets-Johnston, "Kinesthetic Memory" *Theoria et Historia Scientiarum: International Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies* (Special issue on Phenomenology and Cognitive Science, ed. N. Depraz, S. Gallagher) Vol. VII, 1, pp. 69-72, and Gallagher, "Dynamic Models of Body Schematic Processes," in *Body Image and Body Schema*, ed. H. De Preester, V. Knockaert (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005), pp. 233-250.

Author's note: Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Stephen Watson, Philosophy, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556.