

## Lived Body, Intersubjectivity, and Intercorporeality

### THE BODY IN PHENOMENOLOGY

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How would it be possible to think the reality of the mind, of the I-subject, without a lived body?<sup>1</sup>

—E. Husserl

My body is the common fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my “comprehension.”<sup>2</sup>

—M. Merleau-Ponty

No phenomenology of life, of body and the flesh, can be constituted without basing itself on a phenomenology of touch.<sup>3</sup>

—J.-L. Chrétien

### THE BREAKTHROUGH DISCOVERY OF EMBODIMENT IN PHENOMENOLOGY

Twentieth-century and, indeed, contemporary analytical philosophy of mind, has for the most part (with some notable exceptions) ignored the body, even in discussions of perception and agency that are clearly body-dependent. The phenomenological movement, on the other hand—especially through the groundbreaking research of Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty—was the first philosophical tendency of the twentieth century to really insist on the centrality of embodiment and to make

it thematic in their analyses of consciousness and subjectivity.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, their original discoveries continue to be mined for insights that drive current research into embodiment.

To begin, phenomenology approaches the phenomenon of embodiment in a holistic way. From the outset the language is distinctive. Husserl speaks variously of “embodiment” (*Leiblichkeit* and *Verleiblichung*),<sup>5</sup> but also of “incorporation” (*Verkörperung*)<sup>6</sup> and “humanization” (*Vermenschlichung*),<sup>7</sup> whereas Merleau-Ponty speaks primarily of “incarnation” (*incarnation*).<sup>8</sup> Incarnation expresses the historically situated, localized, temporal, finite, and intentionally constituted nature of human existence. Embodiment locates us in a specific place and time but has its own inner trajectory in regard to its development, its aging, its gaining or losing characteristics, and so on. To express both the fragility and the “thickness” (*Epaisseur*) of incarnation, both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty invoke the notion of “flesh” (*la chair*), understood as the living membrane of our bodies that is our constant point of contact and exchange with the surrounding sensible and intersubjective world. Merleau-Ponty speaks of the flesh palpating in the world.

Phenomenology offers, moreover, still relevant important descriptions not just of the lived body in its relation to its immediate here-and-now environment, but also of the embodied subject’s complex relations to other embodied subjects, and indeed the phenomenon of “interweaving” (Husserl: *Verflechtung*; Merleau-Ponty: *l’interlacs*),<sup>9</sup> of embodied subjects in mutual understanding, in intercorporeal relations (including sexual relations) that Merleau-Ponty names “intercorporeality” (*l’intercorporeité*), and in the constitution of the entire social, historical, and cultural world. This phenomenological emphasis on embodiment, intercorporeality, and intersubjectivity provides an important corrective to approaches taken by analytic philosophy of mind and, indeed, through the work of Hubert L. Dreyfus,<sup>10</sup> Shaun Gallagher,<sup>11</sup> Dan Zahavi, and others, has influenced analytic philosophers of mind such as Alva Noë.<sup>12</sup> But the full riches of the phenomenological heritage regarding embodiment remains to be explored, and in this chapter I shall seek to articulate some aspects of corporeality and intercorporeality deserving of further analysis.

## EMBODIED BEING-IN-THE-WORLD AS AN OVERCOMING OF CARTESIAN DUALISM

For the phenomenological tradition generally, embodiment is the basis of our entire “being-in-the-world” (*In-der-Welt-Sein, être au monde*), of our perceptual,

conceptual, voluntary, and motor capacities, but also of our understanding of other living beings<sup>13</sup> in what the phenomenological tradition termed “empathy” (*Einfühlung, Hineinversetzen*),<sup>14</sup> as well as of our “co-existence” (*Mit-Dasein*) with other beings (*Mitsein*) sharing a common world (*Mitwelt*), to use Heidegger’s terminology.<sup>15</sup> Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and the phenomenological tradition more generally, reject the classical, dualistic descriptions of human beings in terms of soul and body and narrowly naturalistic scientific efforts to inscribe the body entirely within the discourse of natural science, in favor of recognizing the primacy of intersubjectivity and sociality. Humans always exist in an already constituted social world, the world of what Heidegger calls “*das Man*,” the anyone, the “they,” the anonymous public, for which the anonymous collective publicity of language is a good example. There are, strictly speaking, as Husserl says, no “first” humans—humans are always encountered as members of a sociality, a community.

For phenomenology, the *unity* and *plasticity* of the body-subject are paramount. As, Merleau-Ponty writes in his groundbreaking *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945): “The union of soul and body is not an amalgamation between two mutually external terms, subject and object, brought about by arbitrary decree. It is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence.”<sup>16</sup> Merleau-Ponty goes on to speak of the body as a “subject-object” ( *sujet-objet*),<sup>17</sup> who is projected into a world and, as it were, palpates and interacts with it. It is not always appreciated that Merleau-Ponty’s own hugely influential discussion was largely inspired by, and is essentially a creative reprise of, his reading of Husserl’s *Ideas II*, the Freiburg philosopher’s phenomenological meditations on the body. Merleau-Ponty draws heavily on Husserl’s analysis of the reflexive “touching-touched” relation.<sup>18</sup>

Both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty wish to overcome *naturalistic* prejudices inherent in the tradition of empirical psychology, especially the then current behaviorism,<sup>19</sup> and the “sensualistic atomism” inherited from British Empiricism (and still present to a degree in Brennano’s analyses). Naturalism is now almost a dogma in the sciences and in philosophy of science. It is therefore important to understand how the experience of the lived body in the humanized lifeworld cannot be captured in naturalistic third-person description.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology initially took up this interrogation of the “lived body” (*Leib*) partly in response to discussions prevalent in the nascent empirical psychology of the late nineteenth century, and in part remains bound to that language, although its account of the lived body departs radically from the psychophysical accounts. Husserl’s sources in this respect include the “psychophysics” of Gustav Fechner (which itself developed from the psychological

laws of Weber concerning the degree of perceptibility of different sensory stimuli,<sup>21</sup> the “physiological psychology” of Wilhelm Wundt,<sup>22</sup> and, in particular, the “descriptive psychology” (as opposed to “genetic” or physiological psychology) of his mentor Franz Brentano. Brentano’s psychology was itself deeply informed by his interest in Aristotle’s *De anima*.<sup>23</sup> Brentano and his school<sup>24</sup> discussed in very fine detail (and indeed engaged in psychological experimentation) the nature and proper objects of the senses, especially the experiences of seeing, but also the particular nature of remembering and imagining, and other “psychic” activities (including the constitution of the sense of space and time) that all involved embodied subjects and contribute to the process of understanding and knowing. Brentano’s student Carl Stumpf, for instance, who taught the Gestalt psychologists Wolfgang Köhler and Kurt Koffka, investigated the apprehension of sounds and tones.<sup>25</sup> Gradually descriptive psychology evolved into phenomenology, and first-person experience came to be explicated in its own right and in its own nonreductive language.

Besides giving him the feel for close, nonreductive psychological description, Brentano’s main contribution to Husserl’s phenomenology was his rediscovery of the concept of intentionality as the mark of the mental in his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874).<sup>26</sup> Intentionality allowed Husserl to consider all human conscious behavior (perceptual, emotional, and cognitive) as meaning-establishing or “sense-giving” (*sinngebend*). All mental “acts,” including not just perceiving and judging but also hoping, fearing, or loving, are *directed* toward an object (which does not have to exist—I can long for the perfect lover without there being such a one), and this object-directedness informs the intending act and also determines the manner in which the object presents itself to the subject (the “mode of givenness,” *Gegebenheitsweise*). Even supposedly pure physical or “biological” drives, such as hunger and thirst, are configured meaningfully and in quite a defined manner, in human beings—we are craving a *cup of coffee* or an *Indian curry*. We are intentionally oriented toward objects that we have meaningfully configured (though not necessarily consciously). One may love someone, in part, because her generosity *reminds one of one’s mother*, and so on. Meaning is layered on meaning, and we live in the sense-constituted world that our embodiment has configured for us and predetermined in distinct ways.

For phenomenology, then, the human existential insertion into the world is in the form of intentional comportment or enactment.<sup>27</sup> Both Husserl and Heidegger use the term “*Verhalten*,” comportment, precisely because they are suspicious of the term “behavior.” Indeed, in the *Crisis*

of *European Sciences*,<sup>28</sup> Husserl denounces what he terms the “exaggerations of the behaviorists” (*Behavioristen*, the English word “behavior” is crossed out),<sup>29</sup> meaning thereby the mechanistic stimulus-response understanding of behavior as opposed to true intentional comportment toward sensible objectivities and states of affairs. Furthermore, on Husserl’s account (and here, of course, he is followed by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty), this comportment always takes place against the backdrop of an ever-present, meaning-loaded “lifeworld” (*Lebenswelt*), a lifeworld whose “horizontality” outruns all possible intentions and which is also always experienced in a unified manner. Human beings are essentially meaning-weavers comporting themselves corporeally and intentionally in the context of a living, temporal world, always already invested with significance. The body is itself already a complex network of relationships and openings outward to the world. Merleau-Ponty, for instance, in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, speaks of the body as a “nexus of living meanings” (*un noëud de significations vivantes*)<sup>30</sup> comparable to a work of art. As Heidegger says, in *Being and Time*, we see that the boat is used by someone or other for leisure, the field is plowed by some farmer, and so on. We are always already in a world where others have established meanings in advance. The park bench is not just encountered as a physical thing in space but as a *place to rest during a walk*.

Husserl’s student David Katz (1884–1953)<sup>31</sup> greatly advanced this notion of a perceptual world encountered as already meaningful through active embodied exploration in his studies of touch and color. Influenced by Katz, the psychologist James J. Gibson proposed the idea of the world as offering “affordances,” a concept that has gained wide currency in recent years.<sup>32</sup> Katz was one of the pioneers of the psychology of touch and the role of hand movements in perception.<sup>33</sup> For Gibson, environments have properties for action that are relative to the needs and actions of organisms. For instance, a seabird may see the surface of the ocean as something on which to rest; another bird may choose a letterbox as a nesting place. These properties are, for Gibson, neither objective nor subjective. They are relative to the concerns of the organism in question.<sup>34</sup> The world unfolds its properties in collaboration with the living beings that dwell in it.

Husserl’s research manuscripts in particular offer extremely detailed and intricate analyses of embodiment in relation to being-in-the-world. Taking up and correcting Kant’s discussions, Husserl in his Göttingen lectures of 1907, for instance, *Ding und Raum* (*Thing and Space*)<sup>35</sup> was particularly interested in mapping the manner in which the lived body contributes to the

constitution of the experiences of lived space and time (from which scientific conceptions of space and time are extracted by a process of formalization and emptying of meaning). He also discussed perception in detail, and especially touch in relation to sight, but his phenomenological studies included analyses of memory, fantasy, and time consciousness, and inspired a whole tradition of phenomenological exploration of the senses, the emotions, and the embodied constitution of space, time and the historical world of culture and tradition.<sup>36</sup>

Husserl's most influential discussion was his analysis in *Ideas II* (a text that he and Edith Stein struggled to bring to published form) of the way a living body can experience itself in touch.<sup>37</sup> Touch has a reflexive movement; if I touch one hand with the other hand, there is the sense of both touching and being touched. Each hand has its own touch sensations. As Husserl writes:

If I speak of the *physical* thing, "left hand," then I am abstracting from these sensations . . . If I do include them, then it is not that the physical thing is now richer, instead *it becomes Body, it senses* [*es wird Leib, es empfindet*]. "Touch"-sensations belong to every appearing objective spatial position on the touched hand, when it is touched precisely at those place. The hand that is touching . . . likewise has its touch sensations at the place on its corporeal surface where it touches (or is touched by the other).<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, Merleau-Ponty will take up this precise Husserlian remark, *es wird Leib, es empfindet* ("it becomes Body, it senses") as a kind of slogan or shorthand for the nature of lived sensitive, self-reflexive embodiment.<sup>39</sup> The body, as it were, comes to life, through its ability to sense, and indeed the self-reflexivity of touch is seen by Merleau-Ponty, invoking another of Husserl's phrases, *eine Art von Reflexion* ("a kind of reflection"),<sup>40</sup> as a better way of thinking about self-conscious thought than the formulations used by Descartes and the modern philosophical tradition. Merleau-Ponty writes in his celebratory essay on Husserl "The Philosopher and His Shadow":

There is a relation of my body to itself which makes it the *vinculum* of the self and things. When my right hand touches my left, I am aware of it as a "physical thing." But at the same moment, if I wish, an extraordinary event takes place: here is my left hand as well starting to perceive my right, *es wird Leib, es empfindet*. The physical thing

becomes animate. Or, more precisely, it remains what it was (the event does not enrich it), but an exploratory power comes to rest upon or dwell in it. Thus I touch myself touching: my body accomplishes "a sort of reflection." In it, through it, there is not just the undirectional relationship of the one who perceives to what he perceives. The relationship is reversed, the touched hand becomes the touching hand, and I am obliged to say that the sense of touch here is diffused into the body—that the body is a "perceiving thing," a "subject-object."<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, in this passage, Merleau-Ponty is invoking the concept of "subject-object" directly from Husserl's *Ideas III*<sup>42</sup> where he speaks of "*das subjektive Objekt*": "Interwoven with the psychic subject as it is, it is the subjective Object to which all other objects are 'vis-à-vis' or surrounding Objects."<sup>43</sup> Interwoven with the psychic subject is the "subjective object" through which external objectivities are experienced. Husserl's point is that bodily movement and action is essential to perception and to the constitution of various forms of "objectivities." Correlatively, all perceivable things have a relationship to the lived body and its organs. Merleau-Ponty draws heavily on this supplementary text of Husserl's, which was specifically written around 1912 to transition between the projected volumes, *Ideas II* and *Ideas III*, of the originally envisaged tripartite *Ideas* project.

Husserl's phenomenological explorations (especially combined with Merleau-Ponty's creative underscorings and sympathetic elaborations) of embodiment continue to have an enduring influence, for example, on the research of the neurologist Oliver Sacks,<sup>44</sup> the neuroscientist Francisco Varela, and the philosopher Evan Thompson.<sup>45</sup>

In general, however, the phenomenological analysis on embodiment (including the way the body is an obstacle, a limitation, a disruption, hiatus, or finitude) does not support the claim that *all* bodily activity (including gender) is socially constructed as a kind of "performance," since this would be to reduce the complexity of embodiment to one of its features.<sup>46</sup> Although the lived body is constituted, many of its experiences belong to the sphere of passivity. Furthermore, for Husserl, the lived body is a "remarkably incompletely constituted thing"<sup>47</sup> and, for Merleau-Ponty, too, the constitution of the body is always ongoing and, in a sense, "unfinished"<sup>48</sup> and ongoing. Interestingly—and this is confirmed in Beauvoir's memoirs about Sartre—the body, in Sartre's phenomenological descriptions, is more often than not experienced as an impediment to action and the fulfillment of desire.

As Sartre writes in *Being and Nothingness* (1943), “[t]he body is necessary again as the obstacle to be surpassed in order to be in the world; that is, the obstacle which I am to myself.”<sup>49</sup> Sartre speaks of the notion of surpassing. I need to overcome myself—shake off the feeling of lassitude, make the effort to walk faster, and so on. At these times, the body intrudes itself between me and my surrounding world. In normal functioning, I experience mastery or governance over my body, but in cases of illness the body stubbornly intrudes on my agency.

### THE KEY PHENOMENOLOGICAL DISTINCTION: LEIB VERSUS KÖRPER

Phenomenology begins from the distinction between the physical body (*Körper*)—the body as an object subject to the laws of nature (gravity, force), the body understood, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, as *partes extra partes*<sup>50</sup>—and the body as lived (*Leib*), as experienced from within, the experience of the embodied consciousness. *Leib* signifies the animate, living body, the living organism—the body that is experienced in a specifically subjective, first-person way but which is more than just what Husserl frequently calls “the psychic subject” (*das seelische Subjekt*). Husserl writes about *Leib* in his *C Cartesian Meditations* (1931) as something uncovered in the reduction:

Among the bodies belonging to this “Nature” and included in my peculiar oneness, I then find my animate organism [*Leib*] as uniquely singled out namely as the only one of them that is not just a body but precisely an animate organism: the sole Object within my abstract world-stratum to which, in accordance with experience, I ascribe fields of sensation (belonging to it, however, in different manners a field of tactual sensations, a field of warmth and coldness, and so forth), the only Object “in” which I “rule and govern” immediately, governing particularly in each of its “organs.” Touching kinaesthetically, I perceive “with” my hands; seeing kinaesthetically, I perceive also “with” my eyes; and so forth; moreover I can perceive thus at any time. Meanwhile the kinaesthesias pertaining to the organs flow in the mode “I am doing,” and are subject to my “I can”; furthermore, by calling these kinaesthesias into play, I can push, thrust, and so forth, and can thereby “act” somatically immediately, and then mediately.<sup>51</sup>

I experience my body as sensory fields, as capacities of movement I can exercise, as a range of abilities I control. Note that Husserl puts many of the key words describing the living body in quotation marks. I am not literally “in” my *Leib*, when I perceive using my hands, I am not literally perceiving “with” my hands, and so on. Husserl is clearly signaling the need for a new vocabulary for our somatic experience (something the late Merleau-Ponty will try to provide with his conception of “chiasm”).

The objective body (*Körper*), on the other hand, is the body as disclosed in the objectifying medical gaze, the body as *corpus* (from which comes the word “corpse”), the body without vitality, the body as object of physiological and biological understanding. It is, as Sartre puts it, the “body-for-others” (*le corps pour autrui*).<sup>52</sup> It is not that we have, as it were, two bodies, a physical and a psychical one, but rather our experience fluctuates between one pole and another of the one composite and multilayered plastic entity. In good health, my body is almost invisible, transparent; it simply enables my movement and activities, but in illness or tiredness, it is a weight that I drag around. As Husserl writes in *Ideas* III:

In the apprehension of the lived body accordingly there is determined the distinction between passive movements, of the purely mechanical movements of the lived body as a physical thing and the free movements of the lived body, which are characterized in the mode of “I perform a movement of my hand,” “I lift my foot,” and so on.<sup>53</sup>

This key distinction between *Leib* and *Körper* is found not only in Husserl, but also in Max Scheler,<sup>54</sup> Hellmuth Plessner,<sup>55</sup> and Edith Stein,<sup>56</sup> among others. It is further taken up and modified in French phenomenology by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty as the distinction between “body” (*le corps*) and “own body” (*le corps propre*) or “flesh” (*la chair*). Indeed the phenomenologists prefer to say: “I am my body” (*je suis mon corps*), rather than that “I have a body.” Sartre, for instance, has another similar formulation: “the body-as-existed” (*le corps-existé*), and he offers a new locution: “I exist my body” (*j’existe mon corps*).<sup>57</sup> For Sartre, this lived body is best described as “flesh” (*la chair*), a term taken up by Merleau-Ponty and the French tradition generally, including Michel Henry.<sup>58</sup> This fleshly body is responsible, in Sartre, for “the pure co-tendency of presence.”<sup>59</sup> Phenomenological analysis begins from my experiences as located in and mediated through *my own* body, what Merleau-Ponty calls “*le corps propre*,” that is, the body that is proper to oneself, that is properly

oneself. As Merleau-Ponty writes in his *Phenomenology of Perception*: “One’s own body (*Le corps propre*) is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system.”<sup>60</sup> The lived body constitutes, intrudes into, and regulates our experience. For Husserl, there is a sensuous (“hyltic” in his terminology) substructure (*hyltische Unterlage*) that constitutes the lived body; it has a continuous passive flow of sensings and drives; it is localized and temporalized through its body. In his *Thing and Space* lectures, particularly, he recorded how bodily changes can modify our sensuous experiences, how our eye movements reveal the movements or stasis of the visible. Or, as he discusses in *Ideas II*, one can take a drug (santonin, a common powder to treat worms) that makes all visible objects seem to be tinted yellow.<sup>61</sup> There is a complexity here: the world seems yellow, but one does not infer that the world is yellow—rather, the coloring is referred back to being caused by the drug. This is not an invocation of scientific causality (the objective causality underlying the process in “nature”) but experienced causality, a part of motivated experiencing or what Husserl calls “experiential motives.”<sup>62</sup> There is a conscious experience of the total change of color as being a change not in the objective world but in the subject (presumably on the basis of an assumption of an underlying “normality”). One can touch something with a sore finger, and the very manner of one’s touch will be impeded and the object itself modified. Then again, there is, as in the phenomenon of the ingestion of santonin, a strange complexity in touch (as David Katz showed). Touch sometimes reveals even when its normal function is displaced. For instance, I can touch something with a gloved hand and still have the sensation of the smoothness of the surface such as I would have had without the glove. But if it is not the smoothness, but the sensation of touch that is sought, then the glove will be experienced as impeding it.

In the case of touch, furthermore, there are different degrees of depth that can be experienced; I can press my hand on my flesh and trace the line of the bone in my hand.<sup>63</sup> In this case, I am touching not the surface but what lies beneath the surface. Vision, on the other hand, cannot penetrate beneath surfaces. It is literally a superficial sense faculty. In *Ideas II* § 36, Husserl explores the lived-body as constituted as a “bearer of localized sensations.” “Localization” means, for Husserl, as for the psychological tradition of that time, both that the sensations are somehow marked out with regard to a certain place in the body (I feel my toes) and are recognized as belonging phenomenally to it.<sup>64</sup> Ernst Mach, for instance, characterizes emotions as not

well-localized sensations; and William James in his *Principles of Psychology* speaks of self-consciousness as largely localized in the head. Husserl terms these localized sensations “sensings” (Husserl’s neologism: *Empfindnisse*),<sup>65</sup> since they are not directly sensed in our sensory awareness but can be brought to attention by a shift of apprehension.

Furthermore, for Husserl, the body is a constituted unity<sup>66</sup> but it is “a remarkably imperfectly constituted thing.”<sup>67</sup> It is experienced as having “gaps” (*Lücken*), blind spots, areas not immediately accessible to vision or touch. The body has a certain plasticity that allows it to be further developed. I can write a telephone number on the back of my hand, using it as a convenient notepad. I can acquire tattoos or other forms of body modification. The body is a malleable entity, self-forming, self-protecting, always changing, not always for the better. I can develop muscles through running, swimming, or skiing, but they can waste away in disease or due to infirmities of old age. I am enclosed within a body that, however, is not a hard shell but has openings. The lived body has pre-delineated pathways along which it can develop or decline (I can gradually go deaf or blind and my experiences are modified accordingly). The body has its internal and external horizons. But, Husserl recognizes that even if I experience gradual blindness and no longer experience colors, for instance, I am not motivated to conclude that things in the objective world have lost their color. Rather I am more likely to think that things still have their colors and I can no longer see them, analogous to the situation of seeing colored things in the dark.<sup>68</sup> This is because our embodied-ment constitutes a certain “normality” that prevails in our experience.<sup>69</sup>

### BODILY MINENESS: THE UNIQUELY PERSONAL “POSSESSION” OF MY BODY

Husserl and Merleau-Ponty emphasize the peculiar first-person manner in which we “own” or inhabit the body (*le corps propre*), something that gets passed over in third-person naturalistic scientific descriptions. My experience has a peculiar “mineness.” Mineness (*Jeneigkeit*) is a crucial existential of *Dasein* in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*,<sup>70</sup> but, interestingly, he does not there associate “mineness” directly with the body. This seems a strange omission. One of his most original followers, however, the psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger, has sought to interpret this mineness as something that can be disrupted in conditions of “self-disturbance” (*Ich-Störung*), such

as schizophrenia.<sup>71</sup> This mineness should not be considered as modeled primarily on one's sense of self-possession that one has of one's own thoughts (as in current analytic formulations) but is a kind of egoic-dwelling that permeates one's emotions, actions, and even the occupation of space ("personal space"). There are undoubtedly zones of my body that I appreciate more as "mine" than others.

The *phenomenological* concept of one's personal experience of owning one's own body should not be confused mistakenly with a purely objectivist sense of ownership (as is often done in cases discussing one's "right" to ownership of a body). One can, for instance, while still alive, donate a kidney, or bone marrow, or sell one's body for the use of another in sex. But the concept of *legal* ownership of or right to control one's body is not actually what is at issue in the phenomenological discussion. Rather, the phenomenologist is interested in *how* I consciously—and even pre-consciously—experience my body *as mine*, how I mark off the zones (mine/other) of my own incorporation, how my body establishes and mediates my "being-in-the-world" through my body schema, how I relate "in the personalistic attitude" (*die personalistische Einstellung*, as Husserl calls it in *Ideas II* § 49) to other living embodied subjectivities, and how together we constitute the embodied intercorporeal cultural world. In his phenomenological investigations, Husserl places great emphasis of the "I/not I" (*ich/ich-nicht-ichlich*) character of my experience of my own body.<sup>72</sup>

Connected with the sense of "mineness" of my embodied experience is the complex issue of "body schema" or "body image" (*le schéma corporel*), originally discussed by the Austrian psychiatrist and psychoanalyst—and pupil of Freud—Paul Schilder<sup>73</sup> and taken up and adapted in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*.<sup>74</sup> The phenomenologist and cognitive scientist Shaun Gallagher has proposed to draw a distinction between "body image" and "body schema" (the terms were more or less interchangeable in the literature—especially in Colin Smith's English translation of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*; furthermore, Schilder, who wrote in both German and English, used the terms interchangeably). According to Gallagher's distinction, "[a] *body image* consists of a system of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs pertaining to one's own body. In contrast, a *body schema* is a system of sensory-motor capacities that function without awareness or the necessity of perceptual monitoring."<sup>75</sup> On this account—which is stipulative—body image is, broadly speaking, conscious or pre-conscious, and saturated with intentionality, whereas body schema is primarily unconscious, and primarily constituted as a

set of motor functions (among which Gallagher, however, includes habits and posture, which seem to involve intentionality).<sup>76</sup> While there are definitely conscious and unconscious elements in one's sense of one's bodily map, hard distinctions are difficult to set down. Some muscle systems seem inaccessible to conscious control yet can be accessed consciously (e.g., some can waggle their ears; others cannot—it can be learned by some; for others, the muscles cannot be accessed or activated). It is possible that the digestive system can be affected by emotions, and so on. Acrobats can access and train their sense of balance in ways that perhaps others cannot. The whole area of one's sense of "ownness" in relation to one's body image or body schema needs much more detailed phenomenological investigation.<sup>77</sup>

## THE TECHNOLOGICALLY ENHANCED BODY

Just as the peculiar sense of the mineness of one's body is a matter for serious philosophical and phenomenological analysis, so also is the question of the relationship between the body and other objects, especially *tools* that are external to the body and extend it in various ways, or technological insertions into the body.<sup>78</sup> Phenomenologists have tended to focus on tool use, but more recently posthumanists have become fascinated with various technological enhancements of the body. The sense of "ownership" here is even more complex.<sup>79</sup> Don Ihde has written, for instance, of the new plasticity of the body in relation to technological modifications and enhancements: "We are our bodies—but in that very basic notion one also discovers that our bodies have an amazing plasticity and polymorphism that is often brought out precisely in our relations with technologies. We are bodies in technologies."<sup>80</sup> The manner in which this incorporation takes place is still a matter of great interest not just to phenomenologists but also to those working at the forefront of medicine.<sup>81</sup>

## THE INTERTWINING OF THE SENSES: MERLEAU-PONTY'S "CHIASM"

Phenomenologists write not just about the experience of embodiment or "incarnation"; they are also interested in the peculiar fused *unity* of experience in the singular flow of a conscious life, and in particular in the intertwining

of the senses whereby sight, touch, and bodily movement all combine to give the experience of a single undivided person in a single, shared world. In a manner typical of phenomenologists generally, Husserl understands *intersubjectivity* (*Intersubjektivität*) as constitutive for the phenomenological experience of objectivity, of the oneness of the world. The world is what it is because it is experienced as a world in which other subjects are encountered against a common backdrop. Moreover, each person co-experiences other persons as experiencing the same world. He writes in one of his meditations on intersubjectivity: "In any case, embodiment is the condition of possibility of a passivity in the subject, through which an intersubjective world is passively constituted and can be actively controlled."<sup>82</sup> Phenomenologists insist that this phenomenon of the experience of *one, common* world, a world that transcends forever each of our perspectives and yet it given through our embodied perspectival apprehension, has never been properly appreciated, never mind properly analyzed, by the very objective sciences that assume the existence of the world. Merleau-Ponty expresses this paradox of being embedded in a world constituted by our senses and at the same time transcending them:

We understand then why we see the things themselves, in their places, where they are, according to their being which is indeed more than their being-perceived—and why at the same time we are separated from them by all the thickness [*épaisseur*] of the look and of the body; it is that this distance is not the contrary of this proximity, it is deeply consonant with it, it is synonymous with it. It is that the thickness of flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication.<sup>83</sup>

The world can only be disclosed in its transcendent thickness because our flesh itself has the same kind of "thickness" (*épaisseur*).<sup>84</sup>

The lived body unites its experience into a single complex, even though there are separate streams (visual, tactile, kinetic, and so on). Merleau-Ponty discussed the intertwining of the senses in his famous chapter "The Intertwining—The Chiasm" in *The Visible and the Invisible*.<sup>85</sup> As Merleau-Ponty emphasizes, vision discloses an organized world: "I do not look at a chaos, but at things."<sup>86</sup> He writes:

We must habituate ourselves to think that every visible is cut out [*taillé*] in the tangle, every tactile being in some manner promised to visibility, and that there is encroachment, infringement [*empiétements, empièvements*], not only between the touched and the touching, but also between the tangible and the visible, which is encrusted in it, as, conversely, the tangible itself is not a nothingness of visibility [*un néant de visibilité*], is not without visual existence. Since the same body sees and touches, visible and tangible belong to the same world.<sup>87</sup>

This "intertwining" of sight and touch was already discussed by Husserl as early as his *Thing and Space* lectures and later in what became known as *Ideas II*. Husserl's term is *Verflechtung*, and he further emphasizes that although the senses intertwine, there is a priority to touch as that sense that gives embodied spatiality its constituted character. For example, Husserl writes in *Ideas II* (in a way that will greatly inspire Merleau-Ponty):

Everything that we see is touchable and, as such, points to an immediate relation to the body, though it does not do so in virtue of its visibility. A subject whose only sense was the sense of vision could not at all have an appearing body. . . . The body as such can be constituted originally only in tactuality.<sup>88</sup>

This intertwining of vision of touch, and indeed of all the senses, is a major phenomenon but much overlooked except in the rather narrow psychological literature on synaesthesia.<sup>89</sup> For Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, synaesthesia is not just the rare phenomenon of people who can taste colors or see sounds, but is an essential feature of embodied being in the world since all the senses intercommunicate to disclose the nature of things. This radical reflexivity characterizes all the senses; indeed, it prefigures and founds the reflexivity of thought. In his late essay "Eye and Mind,"<sup>90</sup> Merleau-Ponty—citing the testimony of painters—evocatively expresses this intertwining as it is found in sight, such that just as the seer *sees* the visible so too the visible in a sense *sees* the seer.<sup>91</sup> In *Visible and Invisible*, he writes:

This . . . as many painters have said, I feel myself looked at by the things (*je me sens regardé par les choses*), my activity is equally passivity—which is the second and more profound sense of the narcissism: not to see in the outside (*dans le dehors*), as the others see it, the

contour of a body one inhabits, but especially to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captured, alienated by the phantom, so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another (*se réciproquent*) and we no longer know which sees and which is seen.<sup>92</sup>

Indeed, Merleau-Ponty elevates the double sensation to be the central characteristic of what he calls "Flesh." The flesh is characterized by what he calls the "chiasm" (*le chiasme, le chiasmal*),<sup>93</sup> or "interlacing" (*l'interlacs*)<sup>94</sup>, "overlapping" (*l'impiètement, EM 162; 13*), "blending" (*recroisement*)<sup>95</sup>, "coiling over" (*l'enroulement*), "inversion" (*renversement*), and even the "metamorphosis" (*metamorphosis*) that he says "defines" flesh.<sup>96</sup> For Merleau-Ponty, this "duplicity" (*duplicité*) and "reflexivity of the sensible" (*réflexivité du sensible*)<sup>97</sup> has ontological significance and expresses the ambiguous character of human embodied being-in-the-world (*l'être-au-monde*). He even speaks of the "flesh of the world" (*la chair du monde*)<sup>98</sup> and the "flesh of things" (*chair des choses*)<sup>99</sup> to indicate the reciprocity and communality between our lived bodies and the vibrant sensuous world in which we inhere. The very flesh of the external world, embodied in sensuousness, mirrors the embodied subject's own flesh: "It is already the flesh of things that speaks to us of our own flesh."<sup>100</sup> There is not just a remarkable correlation between the world's availability to perception and human perceptual systems, but the human subject itself part of this world and is also the perceived.

The body is the site of the confluence of the channels of the senses, but the senses in turn are tuned and transformed by the body's corporeal movements, gestures, and the overall integrity of the body. The senses overrun their proper boundaries and overlap. We live in a multisensorial world that has precisely the properties to which our senses are finely tuned.

## THE LIVED BODY AS EXPERIENCED IN FANTASY, DREAM, AND ALTERED STATES

Traditionally, the phenomenology of embodiment, especially in the writings of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, has concentrated primarily on sensuous perception, motility, and bodily agency. The body has an undeniable fleshly presence, a location, gravity, an embeddedness in the perceptual domain. It is our "zero-point of orientation." It literally grounds us to the earth. But

the lived body also enters in very peculiar ways into imagination, fantasy, erotic reverie, dreams, memories, and all kinds of what Husserl generally calls "calling to mind" (*Yergegenwärtigung*), the general name that he gives for all representations that are not direct perceptions of something bodily given "in the flesh" (*leibhaftig da*).

It is a basic presupposition of Husserlian phenomenology (accepted also by Merleau-Ponty) that the body is inextricably (but not necessarily noticeably) present in all perceiving, but it is also present in dreams, reveries, fantasies, daydreaming, flights of imagination, and various kinds of temporal displacement. The body does not just unify the sensory modalities but also lives in a continuous stream of consciousness, interwoven with fantasy, memory, desire, sleep, dreaming, and other forms of "absence."<sup>101</sup> The manner in which the body occupies this imaginary space is the reason why Sartre, for instance, speaks of the body as a "psychic" object. He writes: "The body is the psychic object par excellence—the only psychic object."<sup>102</sup> In vivid dreaming, even of the most passive kind, the scene unrolls *in front of* an observer, and the dreamer can sense *being moved or moving*, running or falling, looking up and down, approaching and receding, and so on. There is the added complication of the relations between the sleeping body (prone, passive) and the active dream-body. Sometimes, for example, dreamers report experiencing both moving their bodies and looking down on their sleeping body *from above*. All this involves perspective taking that implies a corporeal position and motility, without even adverting to the fact that dreams involve a visual and auditory experiential dimension. The body, then, extends from the sensuous and perceptual realm into the imaginary realm in very complex ways that are only beginning to be explored in the cognitive sciences.<sup>103</sup> There is a kind of "doubling" of the body in fantasy and dream situations. The sleeping body can continue to be experienced passively, whereas the dream-body can be active. Similarly, it is reported that persons with limb paralysis can still dream of running and moving such that they have some way of activating these sensuous "hyletic" feelings relating to bodily movement. Imagining (visualizing, mentally imaging, simulating, rehearsing) bodily movements in advance of carrying them out is a standard part of athletic training since it is considered to affect positively the unconscious processes controlling the movements, reduce anxiety, and improve the time taken to effect the action.<sup>104</sup> There has to be an active subjective exploration of the body through mindful focusing, concentrating, and imagining of bodily actions. Here imagining and agency are intertwined.

## INTERSUBJECTIVITY, INTERCORPORALITY, BEING-WITH-ONE-ANOTHER (MITEINANDERSEIN)

So far, this account has concentrated on the phenomenological description of the first-personally experienced lived body, what Husserl sometimes refers to as the body “in solipsistic experience” (*Ideas* II § 42). This first-person phenomenology needs to be supplemented with the much less well-described phenomena of *intercorporeality*, the manner in which lived bodies interact with each other, in the overall context of intersubjectivity and “being-with-one-another” (*Mitbeingsein*). Gail Weiss has written (following Merleau-Ponty): “To describe embodiment as intercorporeality is to emphasize that the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and nonhuman bodies.”<sup>105</sup> From the point of view of genesis, all humans experience the original intercorporeality of living and experiencing within the womb of the mother. The mother’s pre-natal infant relation is well documented in recent psychological literature on fetal psychology and neonatology, and recent investigations by Yasudevi Reddy,<sup>106</sup> Colwyn Trevarthen,<sup>107</sup> and others confirm what earlier phenomenologists postulated regarding the richness of early mother-child experiences. It is well known that the mother can experience the child, move, kick, sleep, or be awake and lively within her. There is already here one body apprehending another lived body—at literally a deep personal, even visceral level. Furthermore, there is also conscious communication between mother and fetus in the womb—the mother may speak or sing to a baby of massaging the baby in the womb.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, it is well documented that the fetus can respond and recognize the mother’s voice. These are merely examples of the intercorporeal nexus out of which individuality comes to be. Early Freudian theory claimed that even after birth, mother and child lived in a kind of undifferentiated communion, but this does not seem to accord with the phenomenological evidence.<sup>109</sup> For many years, psychology disputed the claim that neonates apprehend their mother’s as subjects, denied that neonates experienced pain, and so on. This put supposedly scientific psychology in conflict with human experience. Mothers have a distinct sense of the individual personality of the newborn and her individual patterns of behavior, sleep, feeding, fascination with objects, and so on. It is therefore interesting to see empirical psychology becoming informed by phenomenological insights.<sup>110</sup>

Human embodied life is, then, essentially intercorporeal from the womb onward. In a way, the question as to which comes first—monadic egoic consciousness or intersubjectivity—is a false question. The child’s ego and sense of self can grow only in communication with other selves, which themselves had an interconnected communality of selves to draw on. It is not the case that egos or consciousnesses are in communion in their own right—as Husserl’s misleading talk of the “community of monads” might suggest. Rather, intersubjectivity is founded on intercorporeality. Intercorporeality is a phenomenon even less studied than intersubjectivity. There is, already in everyday experience, a vast repertoire of intercorporeal experiences. Sartre, in particular, has focused on the experience of the caress, the loving touch. He writes in *Being and Nothingness* that the touch is that which brings alive the other’s lived body for me and for the other person: “The caress reveals the Other’s flesh as flesh to myself *and to the Other* . . . it is my body as flesh which causes the Other’s flesh to be born.”<sup>111</sup> There is a vast field of intercorporeal activities, from shaking hands (discussed by Merleau-Ponty), kissing, massaging, to having sex, dancing, wrestling, and so on. In each, the other’s body comes to appear and is experienced in a particular way by my body. One learns to anticipate the other, to respond to the other’s timing, distance, speed, and so on. In everyday life, although this is heavily inflected by local cultural traditions, a handshake can disclose something about another person, even if it is only their warmth or level of energy (a firm or limp handshake), as well as being an act of decisiveness, symbolizing a personal greeting, the expression of agreement, the closing of a deal, and so on. To give just one example, the refusal of some men in some cultures, for religious/cultural reasons, to shake hands with women in business situations discloses a field of contestation that was hitherto invisible. It illustrates how meaning-loaded shaking of hands can be and how different kinds of hand-to-hand contact can constitute the intersubjective relationship in crucially different ways (the unwelcome touch is another example).

The first encounter with the other is through intercorporeal contact in the womb. Subsequent discussions of the “experience of the other” (*Fremderfahrung*) have concentrated on perception and the engagement with others through what Sartre calls the “look” (*le regard*). As described by Husserl, the understanding of others involves a living body to living body relation, a *Leib-Leib* relation. For Husserl, “[t]he body, the living body of the other, is the first intersubjective thing.”<sup>112</sup> In other words, it is through

experiencing the other's experiences that one comes to recognize that there is an intersubjective world, a world on which we have different experiences.

Within the overall problematic of intersubjectivity, the phenomenon of intercorporeality is even more complex, since the manner in which embodied human subjects cooperate and intertwine with one another is enormously varied, and there is also the hugely underexplored area of human relations with animals (riding horses, petting cats and dogs, not to mention more controversial relations such as zoophilia).<sup>113</sup> Intercorporeality takes many forms, from the double body of pregnancy, through the caress (which Sartre discusses), the kiss, the embrace, the handshake, sexual intercourse, to corporal punishment, sado-masochistic relations, team sports, martial arts, wrestling, dancing with a partner, even singing together (harmony of voices), joint chanting, and other forms of intercorporeal blending. Medicine has many forms of intercorporeal practice, including various forms of massage. There are intercorporeal emotions—shyness, shame, sexual attraction, for instance—that relate one person's body to another. One very complex kind of intercorporeality is the case of conjoined twins—some rare few of whom live entire lives as conjoined, such as the Minnesota twins Abby and Brittany Hensel, now in their twenties, who have separate upper bodies and stomachs but share their digestive tract and reproductive organs.<sup>114</sup> This case of conjoined twins challenges the classic assumptions of bodily integrity and unity and even puts in question the usual medical procedure of separating conjoined twins.<sup>115</sup>

In discussing intercorporeality, Merleau-Ponty himself introduces another new term, "interanimality,"<sup>116</sup> which has a wider scope and includes, presumably, interspecies animal–animal relations (both within and between species). The late Merleau-Ponty considered the human insertion into the living, organic world to be a kind of intertwining and intercorporeality.

It is not possible within a short chapter to offer detailed explications of the extraordinarily rich heritage of phenomenological discussions of embodiment. I have tried simply to show how the first-personal experience of one's lived body in fact opens out, as both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty recognized, into much wider reflections that include the relations between embodied subjects, other animals, and in the very constituted of the spatiotemporal, natural, cultural, and historical world, which is why both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty link the interconnected *Ineinander* of human embodied subjectivities with the very experience of "worldhood"<sup>117</sup> itself. I hope to have at least woken

an interest in what the phenomenologists have to say on these matters and what vast regions remain to be explored.

## NOTES

1. "Wie wäre geistige Realität, Ichsubjekt denkbar ohne Leib?" Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke. Husserliana XIII. Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Erster Teil. 1905–1920*, Iso Kern (ed.) (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 229. Edmund Husserl, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology. From the Lectures, Winter Semester 1910–1911*, Ingo Farin and James G. Hart (trans.) (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 157.
2. "Mon corps est la texture commune de tous les objets et il est, au moins à l'égard du monde perçu, l'instrument général de ma compréhension," Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 272. Maurice Merleau-Ponty *Phenomenology of Perception*, Colin Smith (trans.) (London: Routledge, 1962), 235. Hereafter followed by the text of the English translation and then the French original.
3. Jean-Louis Chrétien, *L'Appel et la réponse* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1992). Jean-Louis Chrétien *The Call and the Response*, Anne Davenport (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 86.
4. Joonas Taipale, *Phenomenology and Embodiment: Husserl and the Constitution of Subjectivity* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014) and Taylor Carman, "The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty," *Philosophical Topics* 27(2) 1999: 205–226.
5. Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke. Husserliana XV. Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Dritter Teil. 1929–1935*, Iso Kern (ed.) (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 289.
6. Husserl, *Husserliana XIII*, 139.
7. E. Husserl, *Husserliana XV*, 705.
8. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, Claude Lefort (ed.) (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 51. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Alphonso Lingis (trans.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 31. Hereafter cited with English pagination preceding French pagination.
9. See Dermot Moran, "The Phenomenology of Embodiment: Intertwining (*Verflechtung*) and Reflexivity," in *The Phenomenology of Embodied*