

BODY HEALTH AND SOCIETY

Body and object-subject
distinction

FINAL ESSAY

- FAQ!!!
- Deadline of the final version of the topic and sources: December 15th

REVIEW

MURPHY AND THE CONCEPT OF EMBODIMENT

- The Body Silent (1987)
- position of the author
- relation among individual (body) and society / culture
- body: not an object, but a subject... of a culture
- perception - preobjective



READING REFLECTION

- How were the texts for reading?

Situating the reading

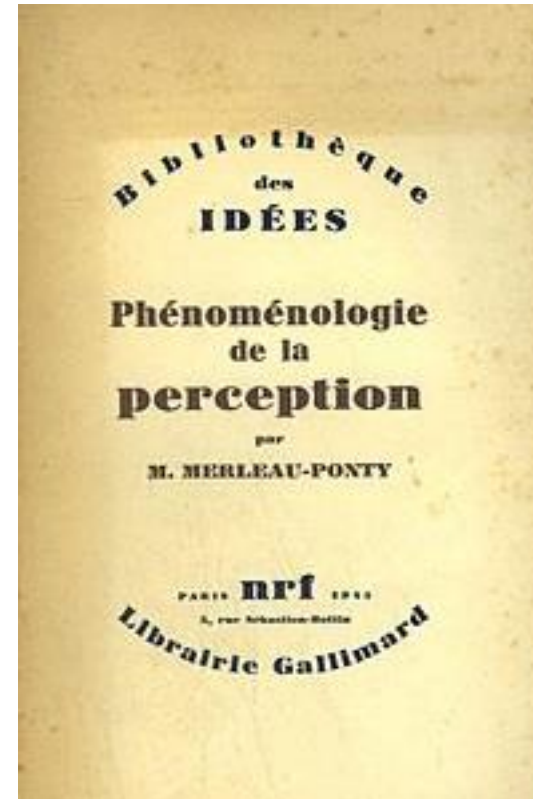
- time
- space
- discipline
- methodology
- vs. mainstream (ego cogito)

- What is the text about?

- What is the main argument?

- Questions/ Comments?

- ✓ (what do we already know)
- + (what information is new)
- - (what we do not agree with)
- ? (what are we interested in)

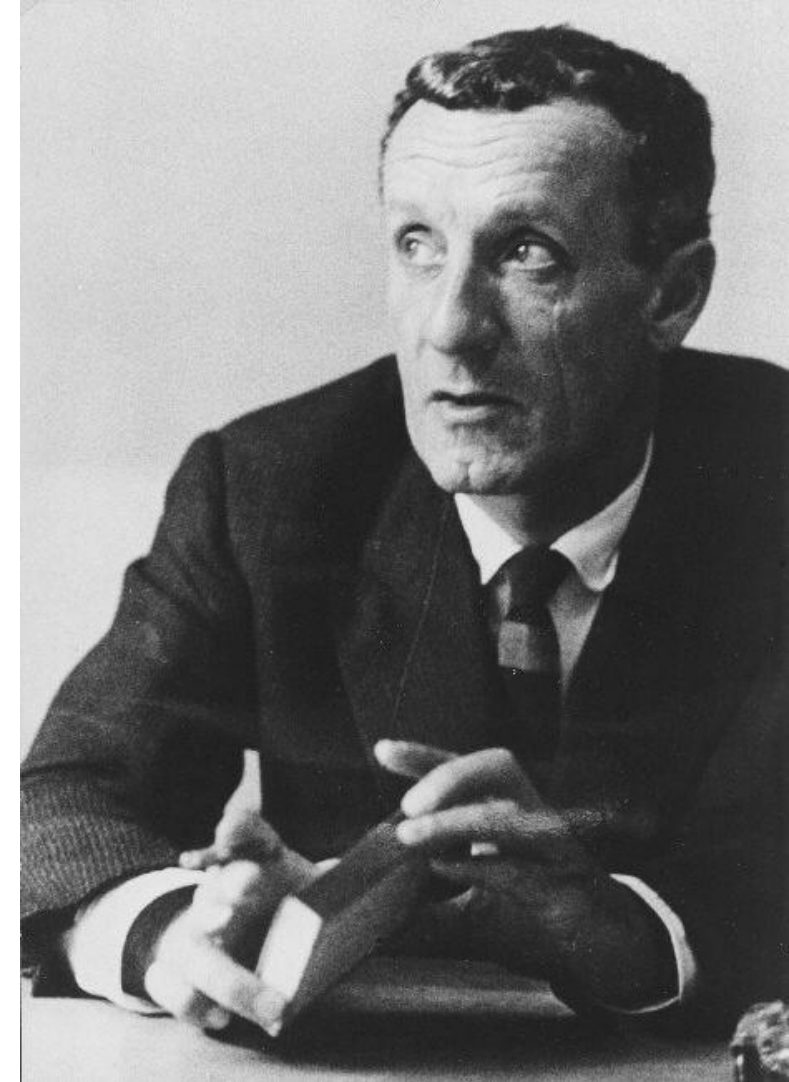


MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

([HTTPS://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/MAURICE_MERLEAU-PONTY](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice_Merleau-Ponty))

- 1908-1961
- French phenomenological philosopher
 - but engaged in descriptive psychology and cognitive science
- follower of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger
- main focus: the constitution of meaning in human experience

- work
 - *The Structure of Behaviour* ([1942] 1963)
 - *Phenomenology of Perception*. ([1945] 1962)
 - *The Visible and the Invisible*. ([1964] 1968)



INTRODUCTION P. 139

A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is to say at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made upon it independently of any representation. Motility, then, is not as it were a handmaid of consciousness, transporting the body to that point in space of which we have formed a representation beforehand. In order that we may be able to move our body towards an object, the object must first exist for it, our body must not belong to the realm of the „in-itself“. Objects no longer exist for the arm of the apraxic and this is what causes it to remain immobile. Cases of pure apraxia in which the perception of the space remains unaffected, in which even the „intellectual notion of the gesture to be made: does not appear to be obscured, and yet in which the patient cannot copy a triangle; cases of constructive apraxia, in which the subject shows no gnostic disturbance except as regards the localization of stimuli on his body and yet is incapable of copying a cross, a v or o, all prove that the body has its world and that objects or space may be present to our knowledge but not to our body.

UNDERSTANDING THE MAIN CATEGORIES:

READING DISCUSSION

- **Body**
 - Is I.
 - A mediator of the world.
 - Grouping of lived-through meaning.
- **Subject**
 - I am (acting and perceiving) body.
- **World**
 - Our way of using the body (perceiving + moving).
 - Objects existence conditioned by our body.
- **Perception**
 - Bodily way of being in the world, meaning creation.
- **Movement**
 - Bodily way of being in the world, meaning creation.
- **Habit**
 - Process of grasping meaning performed by the body.
- **Meaning**
 - An act of thought?
 - Created by the way, we relate to smth through our body.

SOME IMPORTANT QUOTES

„139: body inhabits space and time

144: habit – neither a form of knowledge, nor involuntary action; it is the body which understands in the acquisition of habit

145: body a mediator of a world

146: body is essentially expressive space; the body is our general medium for having a world

150: I am not in front of my body, I am in it, or rather – I am it

151: our body is comparable to a work of art (poem)

152: habit enables us to understand a general synthesis of our own body; habit is both, motor and perceptual, because it lies between explicit perception and actual movement

153: every perceptual habit is a motor habit and here, equally the process of grasping a meaning is performed by the body; our body is not an object for „I think“ it is a grouping of lived-through meanings“

CONCLUSION P. 147

The Cogito was the coming to self-awareness of this inner core. But all meaning was ipso facto conceived as an act of thought, as the work of a pure I, and although for the variety of experience, for the element of senselessness in it, for the contingency of contents. Bodily experience forces us to acknowledge an imposition of meaning which is not the work of a universal constituting consciousness, a meaning which clings to certain contents. My body is that meaning core which behaves like a general function, and which nevertheless exists, and is susceptible to disease. In it we learn to know that union of essence and existence which we shall find again in perception generally, and which we shall then have to describe more carefully.

MGR. LENKA POLČOVÁ

MY ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH OF AUTISM

- During my two years long fieldwork I was dealing with **autism**
- It took place in four “**playrooms**” and mapped the **material practices** of the alternative therapy Son-Rise
- Focus on mutual interactions through which we were becoming **different/similar, autistic/non-autistic, authentic/unauthentic**
- My position was **hybrid** (therapist and ethnographer at the same time) and my informants were **non-verbal**



CONCEPTUALIZATION OF AUTISM

Biomedical definiton:

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a range of mental disorders of the neurodevelopmental type, which causes difficulties in social communication and interactions and restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities

Collapse of dichotomic categories (nature/culture, body/mind, subject/object)

My research definition

the emphasis on processes through which autism is enacted, negotiated, differentiated from others (bodies) – „*being on the spectrum*“



„Being on the spectrum mean being entangled in a number of specific situations, conditions, settlements, intricacies and (in)-coherences. Being on the spectrum also meant that some transitions/passes are smooth for you, others more challenging and some cause enormous difficulties“

SON – RISE PROGRAM FOR AUTISM

The Son-Rise Program innovated an educational **treatment modality** which included **joining children** instead of going against them

based on radical acceptance, deep understanding and love, which is obtained **through bodily mirroring motor and perceptual habits**

Main practise is „**mirroring**“ (imitation of **behavior, gestures, movements**)

Key is **follow repetitive and ritualistic behavior** which is which is fundamental part of being on the spectrum



JOINING

Joining in a child's repetitive and ritualistic behaviors supplies the key to unlocking the mystery of these behaviors and facilitates eye contact, social development and the inclusion of others in play.



UTILIZING MOTIVATION

Utilizing a child's own motivation advances learning and builds the foundation for education and skill acquisition.



TEACHING THROUGH PLAY

Teaching through interactive play results in effective and meaningful socialization and communication.



THE "THREE E's"

Using energy, excitement and enthusiasm engages the child and inspires a continuous love of learning and interaction.



EMPLOYING A NONJUDGMENTAL ATTITUDE

Employing a nonjudgmental and optimistic attitude maximizes the child's enjoyment, attention and desire throughout their Son-Rise Program.

...PASSAGE FROM ETHNOGRAPHIC DIARY

We were spinning around. Every time after a short spin, he paused to check if I was spinning too. In the moment I stopped, he smiled at me and started spinning again. It was a signal to continue. At first, I felt dizzy almost immediately. Not only my body, but my head was spinning too. Over time, it improved. I even found a solid ground under my feet faster after I finished spinning and stabilized in space. Spinning together was also a way of embodied communication. We expressed ourselves that we were „listening“ not only with our ears, but especially through our bodies. We were in touch.

(Ethnographic diary, 18. 10. 2016).

BEING ON THE SPECTRUM

SUBJECT-OBJECT DISTINCTION

The body occupies space in many ways

Different bodies create different worlds?

The body is expressive space

The body is medium

Becoming similar/different comprises of multiple practices, including **assuming** other (autistic) **sensitivity** and **inventing similar (body) competencies**

body – subjectivity – sociality



DISCUSSION

- body – subject – world – perception – movement – habit - meaning
 - autism
 - organ
 - stick
 - poem

NEXT CLASS

Body as a negotiation of a discourse

Reading

- Martin, E. (1991) The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles, *Signs* 16 (3), pp 485-501.

Guiding question

- What is a discourse in the case of Martin's approach?
- What is the relationship between cultural notions and scientific discourse as introduced by Martin?
- Is the scientific discourse of gender influenced/influencing the unequal distribution of power in society? How?
- How the nature-culture dichotomy in relation to body works in Martin's example?

Discussion question

- Relation to the Goffman's, Foucault's and phenomenological approach to the body?