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**INTENTIONAL PRESENCE
IN *PHÉNOMÉNOLOGIE DE LA PERCEPTION***

Is there any principle that guarantees subject's relation to the world? Merleau-Ponty holds that there is not. Instead there is a kind of function, that works spontaneously, without a ready-made pattern and by means of this function the subject is primordially situated in the world. "There is always something before him, a being to be deciphered, an *omnitude realitatis*".¹ What are then the constitutive moments of our situational presence in the world?

I start from the effective presence (first part). Then I talk about the non-effective i.e. intentional presence (second part) and its aspects the primary time and space. The aim of the study of space and time is (Merleau-Ponty says) to "describe the phenomenon of the world, its birth for us".² In the third part there are compared the hallucinatory and perceived world. The concluding remarks show the consequences of characteristics of the subject – world relationship as only intentional.

1. The effective presence

The presence that is based on the aforementioned *a priori* principle Merleau-Ponty calls "effective" or "actual". It connects the subject to the world as a whole. He presents Kant's and Husserl's statements to this effect.

¹ M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris 1945, p. 379. Hereafter cited as P.

² See P 296.

Here is, in short, Kant's line of argumentation:

Human mind comprises faculties of understanding, sensibility, desire and, feeling. The function of understanding is to think i.e. deliver rules, laws for synthesis of the content given to it by senses (sensibility). It is a discursive faculty i.e. it cognizes by means of the categories (substance, cause, community etc), sets appearances into space and time. It makes the world present for us. Kant supposes unity of understanding. He gives the name "transcendental apperception" to the source of synthesis that guarantees a coherent, unified world of experience (A106-107). According to Kant the activity of the synthesis should be homogenous (*einig*) and, strictly speaking, it makes possible the very concept of unity of the experienced world (A111).³ Kant holds that it is not the unity listed in the table of categories, and describes it as "qualified". Apperception "contains the ground of the unity of diverse concepts in judgments, and so of the possibility of the understanding even in its logical use" (B131).

More precisely apperception is a representation (*eine Vorstellung*) that embraces the whole of representations. Kant calls it also "I-think representation". Its activity consists in maintaining relation with the manifold of representations and their unity. It is entirely void of all content and objective import. The I-think representation comprises a pure form of concept, a possibility of universal attribution. Kant says: "I-think must be capable of accompanying all other representations and can be applied to the manifold delivered by empirical consciousness (B132). The unity of consciousness, becomes the condition of thought. In Kant's terms the condition of connection of given representation with another, the individual and the universal, of detecting in a given example, in experience, the instantiation of a law, rule or regulation. When categories of understanding are treated as rules for combing (*Verbindung*) representations, one may clearly see, that unity of I-think consciousness is nothing but a condition of connecting representations by means of categories so that one may become conscious of an object.

Apart from connecting representations, I-think is also the capacity to sustain those representations despite the changing states of subject. Without relation of the latter (Kant calls it "empirical") to the former ("transcendental") there would not be any unity of cognition. Loosely speaking, we would be conscious of a "rhapsody" – of incommensurable perceptions, representations that do not fit to any context, that do not produce any cognition. It means in Kant's words: "that the representation would either be impossible or at least be nothing for me" (B152). There would not be any system of experience.

Kant finally believes that the homogeneous, logical structure of conceptual forms, *a priori* determines objects possible for consciousness.

Now it is easy to grasp the task, Kant assigned to the critique of knowledge, namely to show the scope and limits and justify these universal and necessary structures of understanding. Is it also clear that consciousness (the understanding) does not experience the world in any sense, but only itself, i.e. the changing status in which it actually is. It only organizes experiences on the basis of already made and *a priori* given structure of possible connection - rules and principle of synthesis for all of possible objects of experience. The effective unity, thought in the concept of "world in general" serves as the basis for identity and unity of subject and correlatively its experienced world.

³I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, nach ersten und zweiten Original-Ausgabe herausgegeben von Raymond Schmidt, Hamburg 1990.

It comes therefore as no surprise that Merleau-Ponty's conclusion is to the effect that: Kant sets conditions of experience, as it were, "from outside", and that is why he loses the chance to understand actual relationship of subject with the world. Merleau-Ponty points out that Kant should have taken into account that corporality belongs to the concept of the I and its identity, and, what is important, even to subject's identity for himself.

Similarly Merleau-Ponty judges Husserl's standpoint, but, at the same time he gives Husserl merit for explaining the phenomenon of immediate communication with the world, that makes the world exist for a cognizing subject. Husserl diverged from Kant by not deducing the formal structure of cognition from the types of judgments. Apart from the formal structure of consciousness Husserl described different modi of experience, and noticed that conceptual thinking was established on the pre-reflective level of the passive experience. He demonstrated also a role of body proper in the constitution of the world of experience. He saw the world of perception as indeed constituted by senses, as coherently structured by intentionality of human body, the body which does not only passively receive impressions but actively engages itself in its surroundings⁴. According to Merleau-Ponty, Husserl nonetheless had treated the level of passivity as a deep categorical structure, he therefore "intellectualized" sensibility, made it dependent on conceptual consciousness. Even his concept of body as a kinesthetic faculty was not of much help. In consequence Husserl spoke about the constituted, the thought world, and not the life-world.

Finally, Husserl like Kant excluded truly reciprocal relation of the subject to the world. They both held that the world was present to subject because unity of different kinds of experience had been guaranteed by the transcendental principle. Kant and Husserl, Merleau-Ponty says, did not notice that conceptual consciousness did not decide on the phenomenon of the world's presence to the subject.

2. The non-effective (intentional) presence

2.1. The primary space

Before we are able to render our position in the world of objects, we already have at our disposal an oriented space. A spatial level must be assumed by bodily subject before objects can become conspicuous in their individual orientations, similarly to colors that can only reveal themselves by differentiating themselves from the dominant shade of the lighting. The perceptual field is shaped to make it possible for bodily subject to act, to comport themselves. The field is structured according to directions: up-down, left-right, front- behind. It is oriented accordingly to the opposite determinations: straight-distorted, clear-unclear, close-far, big-small and so on. The orientation is intimately connected to the level of articulation – the field perspicuity and distinctness, richness and determinability.

The actual orientation of the field presupposes a previous level. Merleau-Ponty says that there is a primordial level or field that is the original bond between body and world. It is a global adjustment of all the capabilities of body-subject's to its present field. The actual orientation is possible through a rebalancing of this general grasp, which is "already at work" and spatial-

⁴E. Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. D. Carr, Evanston 1970, p. 106.

ity “already acquired” (P 293). A particular grasp is then an articulation of this initial grasp, the execution of “a most ancient pact between a natural self and the world in general” (P 293). Original spatiality is correlative to bodily potentialities; it is a global adjustment of all the body-subject’s capabilities to its actual situation, to its present field. It is also the source of motivation and condition of possibility of other types of spaces.

Passing from immediately lived space to space of perceiving subject gains a distance from the world, is never totally engaged in any particular situation and is always capable of switching to another. Other types of space: abstract, imaginary, mythic, religious, enable the subject, to be more than in his present actual situation, they enlarge the domain of his freedom. They are different types of consciousness but they constantly motivate each other. The mythic consciousness is experienced at the background of perceptual one, the space of dream is given on the background of natural one. Remnants of natural space can be found even in the most deformed worlds of schizophrenics.

Before we comprehend our position we are already in the world determined by spatial directions and relations. The space in which we can move and act is already outspread at our disposal, is present due to the immediate communication of the bodily subject with the world. Although our capacities to constitute and live into different types of space (perceptual, social, mythic, religious) take us still farther from the primordial contact, we do not lose the motivation which flows from it. “The subject cannot retreat to a private realm, for even during a sleep or the most intellectual activity he is still in contact with the perceptual world” (P 465) The primordial space is like a scene - other types of space *resp.* consciousness are placed within it. The “motivation” speaks for possibility of relationship between different spaces. Thus, there is no need to look for any general principle. The aforementioned spaces are simply different aspects of human existence, stages of its becoming conscious and autonomous and, correlatively of constituting of its world.

2.2.The primary time

The primary space is also a field of presence. Thus spatiality and temporality are then aspects of the body-subject and correlatively its world. The movement of temporalization is also the manifestation of consciousness (P 485-86). Merleau-Ponty sets the factual situation of the bodily subject against transcendental consciousness as a source of lived space and also time. The bod-subject does not stand behind time, behind the ever changing flux of lived experiences. It is “a single temporality that progressively explicates itself from its birth and confirms it in each present” (P 466). It creates and arranges its own temporal phrase – the now towards the future and the past - a temporal unity of subject and also possibility of arranging the horizon of its time-dimension. The lived world and the subject become parts of the same structure called “presence”.

The temporal aspect of the relationship between the self and the world is explicated in the constitution of temporal phases of experiences and correlatively the lived-world. In experiencing our existence, we experience the world. The present, says Merleau-Ponty, is not an instant but a “field”. The past, the present and the future are therefore the three dimensions of the field of presence. Time is a unique movement, because every present contains all of time. Merleau-Ponty uses Husserl’s terms of protention and retention. The protentions trace out in advance,

determinate of what is to come, they constitute the future. The past consists in retentions of previous presents. These two collapse into the present, the point or our present field, which anchors the system of retentions and which is putting forth the most up-to-date “system of protentions”.⁵ Merleau-Ponty says: “Time maintains what it has brought into being, at the same moment that it chases it from being, because the new being was announced by the preceding as destined to be, and because it was the same thing for the preceding moment to become present and to be destined to pass” (P 480).

In every now of experience there is a tension between retentional and protentional consciousness. Due to the tension lived experiences do not push each other out by chance but are ordered as: previous-now-later. The field of presence has a double horizon of past and future and also open infinity of past and possible present fields (P484). The very place where experiences can appear in the double horizon of past and future is created by the body-subject. Making out of that place Merleau-Ponty calls “taking possession” (*prend possession du temps*) of time and “secreting” time (P277). “In every movement of fixing [attention] my body gets together a present, a past, a future, it secretes the time, or better to say – it becomes that place of nature, where for the first time, events instead of pushing each other out, they project around the present a double horizon of past and future and receive a historic orientation” (P 277).

Although Merleau-Ponty uses Husserl’s notions of retention and protention, he does not accept his thesis, that consciousness *nulla re indigeat ad existendum*, which means, that is not independent and autonomous. “That which in sensory exploration gives a past to present and drives it toward a future, it is not I as an autonomous subject, it is I inasmuch as I have a body and I am able to look.” (P277). The body-subject spreads some duration, produces time and ensures its continuity. Time as a chain of fields of presence actualizes itself little by little, time is the “transitional synthesis”, that means, that series of presents interlock and issue one from the other. Our present, then, re-develops and re-orientates the gestalt of the intentions of the preceding present. That is why each present has the inner and outer horizons, and must have also a direct connection with past and future moment. It is never without motivation. The body-subject guarantees continuity of time – the transition of now into the past and, future into the now; it guarantees duration of experiences and also connection of different temporal dimensions.

Merleau-Ponty, like Husserl describes passing time as a flux of actual moments (nows), which is a unified movement of transferring nows into past and also anticipation of future. There is a subjective ground to differentiate, in the world we perceive, previous and subsequent processes and events. The classification according “before/after” is made relatively to each “now”. But Merleau-Ponty is not close to Husserl’s understanding of the very source of the “now”. The former demonstrates the coming of temporality of experience as work of the body-subject. Thus, to understand temporal dimensions of human existence it is necessary to make explicit ways of being of the body-subject). The latter sees the essence of temporality in its retentional dimension. For Husserl finally the retentional consciousness makes possible for us to be conscious of object and guarantees unity of consciousness as such. Therefore Husserl defines it as transcendental and absolute.

⁵ Comprehensive description of time as “structure of all structures”, see: S. B. Mallin, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy*, New Haven and London 1979, pp. 91-107.

For Merleau-Ponty subjective time, this coming into being of a new now, is the intrinsic rhythm of coming to be of intentionality of body. This “time” is involved into a broader context of subject’s fitting itself into the world around and into process of its articulation. The body-subject actively projects its time horizons and strives to objectivity. The temporal dimensions perpetually overlap, confirm one another, and ever confine themselves to making explicit what was implied in each, all express a single bursting forth (*éclatement*) or a single thrust (*poussée*) that is subjectivity itself (see P 482).

Merleau-Ponty says, that the movement of temporality is essential for becoming a conscious subject that is able to articulate his world as the world of different kinds of things, given in temporal and spatial relations. The body-subject (*l’*on**) then makes possible our conception of time and space and also autonomy of conscious subject and objectivity of the world. It is a process of making itself, of coming to be of consciousness, and at the same time of constituting subject’s world. But if the situation is considered more dialectically in the Hegelian manner it is “self manifestation”, “unveiling in the process of making itself, “making visible” of Being.⁶

3. The hallucinatory world and perceived world

Merleau-Ponty explicates the crucial moment of immediate presence of subject in the word by comparing hallucination and perception.

Hallucinations, he says, do not have any connection with normal perceptions. They are not inter-subjective, open to everyone. They do not fluently come into temporal structure of experience, they interrupt connection of motivation, mutual indicating of experiences at each other and their continuity. Hallucinations are parasitic on normal perceptions. They do not have background, depth and aspects of the field of perception. Their modes of existence depend heavily upon subject’s activity. They are not triggered and actualized by contact with demands of the present situation.

As opposed to hallucinations the world of normal perception is an inter-subjective spectacle, where a particular point of view may also be the point of view of other person. The perceived-world consists of mutually motivated and harmonized perceptions, aspects. It is a chain of concordant experiences, they smoothly follow one by one and point at those which are just to come.

Hallucinations have their origin in deformation of the very basic relation between the world projected by the body-subject and his real situation. Intentionality of the body cannot create the field of sensual and temporal connection with the world. Because it is not directed to the word, and “runs idle”, it produces only its pseudo-presence, creates private, one-dimensional objects: voices, silhouettes, sparkles without any connection to demands of the present situation. The potential structures of the body-subject are not actualized properly, but used to produce out of remnants of this world only an apparent, illusory world, that is a manifestation of subject’s disordered relationship with the world. The world (and its objects) is really the correlative of my body and more generally of my existence. It constitutes itself in the hold of my body on it. Because its articulations are those of our existence, the disturbances of the existential relation with the world leads to its disintegration (compare P 369).

⁶M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible*, Paris 1964, pp. 125, 127.

The aim of hallucination and perception is similar: constitution of the surrounded world as fictive and as real. That is the reason, why Merleau-Ponty supposes that the same function is here at work and, hallucination and perception are its *modi* (P 394). Due to this function we have at our disposal a stabilized and definite world. The function may put the subject in the totality of the world or at its border. When it weakens, the real world gains a characteristics of a dream, the experience of reality is not longer immediate and, serious doubts arise about what we really see.

The function that may guarantee indubitable communication with the world or keep us captive in a private world, a private realm, Merleau-Ponty defines as: “perceptual faith or opinion” (P 372). With Husserl’s terms *Urdoxa*, *Urglaube* he describes indubitable certainty of our inherence in the world, that is prior to any reflection, any doubt (P 395). To hallucinate means primarily to lose this faith and, not to cooperate with the immediately experienced world. Taking into account the lived space and time, it means to be separated from the inter-subjective “spatiality”: natural, cultural, religious and also from “temporality” of collective history, of social horizon. Only by retaking and assuming them human existence may become individual consciousness, responsible and relatively independent subject.

Conclusion

We trust the world and its objects not because we are intellectually certain of their existence, but because the conceptual, reflective consciousness affirms and presupposes the spatial and temporal structure of embodied consciousness and correlatively the perceived-world. The life-word (*die Lebenswelt*) is always already “pre-given” and taken for granted (*immer schon vorgegeben*) as a background of any and all conceptual thought and all human cultural endeavor. It is the horizon against which all things stand out. We trust the world because between the body-subject and world there is a dialog prior to any intellectual positing. The immediately lived world, the life-word (*le monde vécu*) presents itself from the outset as undifferentiated whole, unity, or background on which appear particular objects: sensations, qualities, individual entities and relations between them. A conscious subject sets itself in the context already delivered by a bodily subject (*l’ou*), or intentionality of the body. Consciousness, because it is founded on bodily intentionality, may develop its competence: perceiving, thinking and linguistic. There is no need then to constitute the world “from above”, referring to any general principle.

That world and body are two sides of the same unity, it is shown by coexistence of the inner and outer horizon of thing, of the effective and intentional given, of the human body as object and subject of knowledge. Actually, we cannot make thematic the horizon of experiences – process of cognition seems to have no end. It shows us only an aspect of object, it gives a piece of knowledge. It is obvious that the transcendental apperception does not have the efficacy Kant hoped for. A presence of subject in the world is intentional, it is an ability to develop time and space horizon. In other words, consciousness creates an order of coexistence and consequence of different moments of lived spectacle; it is a place “here and now” where what we experience now and what is not effective goes away, connects and differentiates. In this peculiar movement the world lived by us passes away - “temporalizes”. Consciousness constitutes its temporal unity, organizes the system of experiences and indicates its limits, it co-operates with the surrounding world, with something that is not experience, concept or idea. The unity (system) has its roots in the dynamics of bodily subject. Ego is a special part and a faculty of the unity as well. By

reflection consciousness may regulate its functioning, find reasons of the distortions, build and preserve its personal identity and partial independence from the world. It is not easy for it to keep its unity. Current modifications of experiences, their passing and coming, brings about that inclusion, conducting and selecting of experiences are only partly determined. In consequence there may appear some inconsistent experiences with the given context and the lived world becomes unfamiliar and strange. It provokes ways of behavior, which consciousness on the basis of its history cannot generate. This situation leads to a crisis of identity, a loss of consequence in the way consciousness works.⁷ By reflection consciousness may investigate the reasons of the distortions, may leave them out, or organize unity of the system one more time. In case of a loss of stability there may appear some pathological phenomena. Ultimately, it is reflectivity that responds for personal identity of the system and relation to the world outside.

I have started from the question: is there any principle that guarantees subject's relation to the world? Now I may answer that there is not. But there is a peculiar means, the body-subject, that spontaneously ensures the communication with the world, and is a foundation for human existence (*être-au-monde*) and all its references: perceptive, cognitive, and practical. "Through my perceptual field ... I am present to my surroundings, I coexist with all the other landscapes that stretch beyond... I am present ...to the whole past that has preceded it and to a future. And at the same time, this ubiquity is not actual, it is manifestly only intentional." (P 381-82). The established bond of the subject and the world is only intentional, temporal and conditioned. That means it may strain, weaken and break.

Intentional Presence in *Phénoménologie de la perception*

ABSTRACT. The main questions concerns possible principle that may guarantee subject's relation to the world. Merleau-Ponty holds that there is not. Instead there is a kind of function, that works spontaneously, without a ready-made pattern and by means of this function the subject is primordially situated in the world. The paper shows how bodily subject creates intentional presence to make possible the phenomenon of the world, its birth for us. Concluding remarks show the consequences of characteristics of the subject – world relationship as only intentional. Because consciousness is founded on bodily intentionality, it may develop its competence: perceiving, thinking and linguistic. there is no need then to constitute the world "from above", referring to any general principle, as in the Kantian tradition

KEYWORDS

Merleau-Ponty, intentionality, consciousness, perception, bodily subject, experience, primary time and space

⁷ E. Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie*. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1925, herausgegeben von Walter Biemel, Den Haag 1968, Hua IX p. 212.