

CHAPTER 3

THE “INNER WEAKNESS”—MERLEAU-PONTY ON INTERSUBJECTIVITY, SUBJECTIVITY AND HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY¹

LUÍS AGUIAR DE SOUSA

I

Intersubjectivity (or intercorporeality) is one of the most studied and positively assessed contributions of Merleau-Ponty's thought. What is usually emphasized is how Merleau-Ponty (not unlike the later Wittgenstein) helped us to free ourselves from the “other minds” problem by showing that it relies on false philosophical presuppositions.² Although interpretations tend to reflect how pivotal Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodied subjectivity is to his account of intersubjectivity, much less emphasized is the fact that this conception of subjectivity ensues from Merleau-Ponty's views on the specific nature of phenomenological thought, and especially from his interpretation of the inner, but hidden, tendencies of Husserlian phenomenology. Accordingly, in this paper, my focus will be on the relation of Merleau-Ponty's views on intersubjectivity to his views on subjectivity. I will show that his views on intersubjectivity are intrinsically dependent on his views on subjectivity and that a proper understanding of the latter, in turn, depends on a correct understanding of his conception of phenomenology and his reading of Husserl.

For Merleau-Ponty, a true account of intersubjectivity involves a radical transformation of the notion of subjectivity inherited from the intellectualist, idealist and transcendental tradition, which he often associates with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, or at least with some interpretations of it. For the French phenomenologist, the very fact that something like the *other* can mean something to us, the fact that we are in principle opened to the other, entails that the subject of experience must be conceived not only as radically finite but also as emerging from the depths of an embodied, pre-reflective, even anonymous awareness. It is only insofar as we find ourselves as bodies engaged in worldly behaviors, with the capacity not only to manifest but also to create meaning out of ourselves, that we are in a position to recognize the behavior of others' bodies as being similarly meaningful.

The fact that the problem of the other, of intersubjectivity, entails my embodied existence is at the crux of Merleau-Ponty's reading of Husserl and his ambiguous relation to Husserlian phenomenology. On the one hand, Husserl appears as the perfect embodiment of the excesses of the “transcendental tradition” (a term I borrow from Carr 1999). For Merleau-Ponty, the transcendental conception of subjectivity is overly intellectualist, preventing *the other* from becoming a genuine problem. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty wants to show that the very fact that the *other* was a problem for Husserl entails that the latter's conception of subjectivity is radically different from the transcendental idealist one, which he identifies with Kant and the Kantian tradition. The problem of the other in Husserl attests to the fact that the latter's concept of subjectivity must be seen as different from the transcendental one. In other words, the problem of intersubjectivity points to a specifically *phenomenological* concept of subjectivity, distinct from the transcendental one. It is of course debatable whether Husserl ever fully realized the implications of his account of intersubjectivity for his notion of transcendental subjectivity.

Because interpretations tendentially focus, as indicated, on Merleau-Ponty's overcoming of the problem of other minds as ordinarily understood, that is, under the presupposition of a false dichotomy between body and soul, they tend to overlook the extent to which intersubjectivity was, in fact, a problem for Merleau-Ponty, and an insoluble one at that. Thus I conclude by showing that, according to Merleau-Ponty, the relation with the other that obtains insofar as we are embodied beings still falls short of being a genuine intersubjective relation. The latter indicates a relation between different egos, whereas the former takes place at a pre-personal level, deserving to be called intercorporeal rather than intersubjective. As was already the case with Husserl and Sartre, the other subject appears in my perceptual field as an *absence*, this being the source of all the problems that come up in our concrete relations with others. To the extent

¹ This research was funded by a Research Grant (SFRH/BPD/97288/2013) from the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology.

² See, for example, Carman (2008, 148-162), Romedhn-Romluc (2011, 141-154), Hass (2008, 100-123), Priest (1998, 179-195), Matthews (2002, 89-109 and 2006, 114-134) and Langer (1989, 97-106).

that we are the subjects of our experience and do not coincide with other subjects, Merleau-Ponty claims that there is a “lived solipsism.”

One word more regarding the scope and method of the present paper: my guiding thread throughout will be the chapter on intersubjectivity from the *Phenomenology of Perception*. This decision is bolstered by my belief that it is in this chapter that Merleau-Ponty lays out his position on the topic with a higher degree of explicitness and clarity. However, I am well aware that there are some differences and nuances in the way Merleau-Ponty communicates his position. For that reason, I will also take into account other texts by Merleau-Ponty whenever doing so is justified. This means that I will not presuppose that there is a deep gulf dividing the early Merleau-Ponty (of the *Phenomenology of Perception*) from the late Merleau-Ponty (usually represented by *The Visible and the Invisible* and his last working notes). That there is a deep continuity regarding the topic of intersubjectivity (pace Barbaras 1991) can be appreciated if one compares his position in the *Phenomenology of Perception* with one of his last writings, the essay “The Philosopher and his Shadow,” from *Signs* (Merleau-Ponty 1964).

II

As already briefly indicated, my main aim in this article is to show that Merleau-Ponty’s views on intersubjectivity are closely linked to his views on subjectivity, and these, in turn, to his views on the nature of phenomenology and his reading of Husserl. In fact, it is my belief that since its inception, right through to its very end, Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy can be read as a reflection on the nature of human subjectivity. Merleau-Ponty thinks that the philosophical tradition, at least since Descartes, has been afflicted by false oppositions and dichotomies, having their origin in the way we tend to be led astray by certain abstract conceptions. These include the idea of the human body, which culminates in the Cartesian conception of the human body as a mere mechanism. This Cartesian conception is shared by empiricist and purportedly “scientific” attempts to reduce human consciousness and subjectivity to physiological, biological, chemical, or even purely physical mechanical phenomena. The other main abstraction is, of course, the seemingly opposite idea, also harking back to Descartes: the idea of the soul as a *res cogitans*, that is, as a thinking substance and thus as completely different from the body. In Merleau-Ponty’s view, the latter abstraction helped to pave the way for intellectualist, transcendentalist, and idealist philosophies.

We can only understand the inner thrust of Merleau-Ponty’s lifelong intellectual project if we see it as an attempt to overcome these oppositions, in particular that between body and soul. This does not mean that both conceptions should be outright rejected on account of their purported falsehood. Rather, it implies that we should see them for what they really are—abstractions from a phenomenon that is more primordial than each of them. In this regard, Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy can be viewed as similar to the Hegelian approach in that it consists in an internal critique of other positions, one that includes but also simultaneously overcomes them. Of course, the more original phenomenon in which Merleau-Ponty wishes to root the Cartesian ideas of body and soul is what he, in Husserl’s wake, calls the *lived body* (Leib), or what he later in his last, unfinished work *The Visible and the Invisible* refers to as the *flesh*. This is the idea of the body as a subject, or at least a proto-subject—that is, as self-aware, as not only exhibiting and producing intentionality and meaning in the technical, phenomenological sense, but also as its ultimate source and root.

Nonetheless, Merleau-Ponty does not claim to have created the idea of embodied subjectivity. According to him, this idea is already at play in Husserl’s phenomenology. In fact, this idea plays a central role not only in those volumes—some of which must have remained unknown to Merleau-Ponty—in which Husserl is explicitly concerned with the body (for example *Ideas II* [Husserl 1989] and lecture courses like *Thing and Space* [Husserl 1997] and *Phenomenological Psychology* [Husserl 1977]), but also in Husserl’s analyses of the pre-predicative sphere, the domain of the so-called passive syntheses (for example, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses* [Husserl 2001] and *Experience and Judgement* [Husserl 1973]).³ Besides this, Merleau-Ponty thinks that Husserl created a new, specifically phenomenological concept of subjectivity, which contrasts with the one inherited from the idealist and transcendental tradition. The latter are also referred to by Merleau-Ponty under the labels of “intellectualism” and “reflective analysis.” One can assume that under these labels the French phenomenologist has in mind Kantian and neo-Kantian philosophy.⁴ However, we should not be misled into thinking that Merleau-Ponty wholly rejected Kantian

³ For general accounts of Husserl’s phenomenology of the body and embodied subjectivity, see, for example, Behnke, n.d. and Zahavi 1994.

⁴ Merleau-Ponty’s view of Kant as a thoroughgoing idealist may have been influenced by his reading of Lachièze-Rey’s interpretation, as witnessed by Merleau-Ponty’s references to it, in particular at the beginning of the chapter on the *cogito* (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 388-94 [428-34], 554-5n2-18). He may have taken the idea that Kant’s transcendental project is completely different from Husserl’s from Eugen Fink’s article “Die phänomenologische Philosophie Edmund

philosophy. Not only did he think that Kant's transcendentalism and "reflective analysis" were a necessary step in the progression that starts with the natural attitude and that culminates in the phenomenological point of view, but he was also somewhat ambiguous regarding the significance of Kantian philosophy: he held the *Critique of Judgment* in high esteem precisely for having anticipated much of what he himself would end up defending (for proof of this, see, for example, Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxxii [18]).

It is not only with regards to Kant that Merleau-Ponty maintains an ambiguous stance. Although he sees Husserl as the forerunner of the idea of embodied, existential and finite subjectivity, he still situates him, in particular the phase of *Ideas I*, in the intellectualist, transcendentalist, idealist tradition. Despite this, he thinks that the inner thrust of Husserl's thought and its actual development in later years already exhibits traces that point to an overcoming of his early position.⁵ As a result, Merleau-Ponty views his own phenomenology as the self-realization of the inner tendency of the Husserlian one. For that reason, Merleau-Ponty's reading of Husserl makes the latter seem much closer to subsequent phenomenologists than is usually acknowledged, in particular those usually associated with the so-called "existentialist" tradition, such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty himself.

Leaving aside the question of the extent to which Merleau-Ponty's Husserl can actually be found in the real Husserl, in the latter's vast and numerous published and unpublished writings, Merleau-Ponty's Husserl is, of course, Merleau-Ponty himself—or a reflection of how the latter sees Husserl's phenomenology as developing towards, and turning into, his own. It is not my intent here to go into all the aspects of Merleau-Ponty's very deep and important relation to Husserl's phenomenology. I broach this topic because, as mentioned above, my claim is that an understanding of Merleau-Ponty's views on subjectivity and its relation to Husserlian phenomenology is central to grasping his views on intersubjectivity.⁶

As I briefly pointed out in the introductory section, according to Merleau-Ponty one of phenomenology's most distinctive features in relation to the transcendental tradition is the fact that for the latter there is in principle no problem of the "other," whereas phenomenology views itself as being faced with that problem: "for Husserl, however, we know that there is indeed a problem of others, and the alter ego is a paradox" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxvi [12]).⁷ Thus, according to Merleau-Ponty's view, intersubjectivity cannot be taken as a specific area of research in phenomenology alongside others. Rather, it concerns the very kernel of the phenomenological project. Historical proof of this, in Merleau-Ponty's view, is provided by the fact that the problem of the other makes its first explicit appearance in *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (Husserl 1969) and in his more famous treatment of it in the last of the five *Cartesian Meditations*, where Husserl seems to want to distance himself from the shadow of solipsism.⁸ Merleau-Ponty believes that, if Husserl were in fact a thoroughgoing transcendental idealist, the other could never have become a problem for him. The fact that it did means that Husserl somehow recognized that human subjectivity must have an external side, must be embodied, must have a place in nature, history and culture (although it remains controversial whether Husserl himself ever drew these consequences with regard to his conception of transcendental subjectivity):

If another person is truly for-himself, beyond his being for-me, and if we are for-each-other and not separately for-God, then we must appear to each other, we both must have an exterior, and there must be, besides the perspective of the For-Oneself (my view upon myself and the other's view upon himself), also a perspective of the For-Others (my view upon others and the view of others upon me). Of course, these two perspectives cannot

Husserls in der gegenwärtigen Kritik" (Fink 1933), in which Fink, with Husserl's acquiescence, tries to draw a strict boundary between Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and Kant's transcendental philosophy (see Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxvii [14], 494n30 [14n1], 504n20 [55n4], where Merleau-Ponty explicitly refers to Fink's article).

⁵ It is also in the context of a footnote referring to Lachièze-Rey's interpretation of Kant that Merleau-Ponty (2012, 539n2 [290n1]) explicitly associates Kant's transcendental idealism with what he calls Husserl's "second period," that is, the period of *Ideas I*. On Merleau-Ponty's conception of Husserl's philosophical development in three distinct periods, see Seeböhm (2002, 56-7).

⁶ For proof of this, see, for example, Merleau-Ponty's later essay "The Philosopher and His Shadow" (1964, 159-181), where Merleau-Ponty returns to the topic of Husserlian phenomenology, once again making intersubjectivity a central issue.

⁷ On the fact that the other was not a problem for Kant, see also Merleau-Ponty 2010, 435.

⁸ In his unpublished writings, Husserl introduced the topic of intersubjectivity in his lectures as early as 1910. See his lecture course translated as *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Husserl 2006). See also the other, early texts on intersubjectivity in *Husserliana XIII* (Husserl 1973).

⁹ As a parenthetical remark, let me mention that, besides Husserl, Sartre (1966, 270) likewise claims that intersubjectivity entails my embodiment, although in Sartre's view this is tantamount to my being turned into an object for the other. Although Merleau-Ponty argues for the correlation between the "other" and embodiment, we will see that this does not mean that I should be taken solely as an object. For Merleau-Ponty, Sartre's exclusive alternative between either taking myself as "for-itself" or as "in-itself" does not hold, as I hope will become clear in what follows.

be in each of us merely juxtaposed, *for then others would not see me and I would not see others*. I must be my exterior, and the other's body must be the other person himself (Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxvi [12]).

At the same time, the fact that the other is truly a problem for phenomenology, in a way that it is not for Kantian transcendental idealism, is intrinsically linked to the former's view of subjectivity. Below I will have the opportunity to develop in more detail Merleau-Ponty's argument in this regard. Suffice to say that, according to Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology discovers a sphere of consciousness prior to reflection, to the "I think," to the cogito. Not only does this pre-reflective sphere precede and make reflection possible, but it is in this sphere, before any other, that it is possible to find not only my original relation to the world but also my relation or openness towards others.

"Pre-reflective" or "phenomenological" subjectivity is not absolute. It encompasses the world as much as the world encompasses it; it is a bodily perspective on a world in which it at the same time inheres or is rooted. It is the finitude of phenomenological subjectivity, this "inner weakness," in opposition to the putative absolute character of transcendental subjectivity "that prevents me from being absolutely individual and that exposes me to the gazes of others as one man among men or, at the very least, as one consciousness among consciousnesses" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxvi [12-3]).

III

Before we consider Merleau-Ponty's views on intersubjectivity more closely, it is necessary to discuss the exact context and sense in which the question of the "other" is raised by Merleau-Ponty. In Husserl, for example, at least in the *Cartesian Meditations*, the problem of the other comes up in the context and development of the so-called phenomenological reduction. It could be said, in a very brief and superficial manner, that the latter consists in suspending our constant and tacit belief in the existence of the world; that is, it entails performing the phenomenological *epoché*. This means that, according to Husserl, when doing philosophy qua phenomenology, we should abstain from making use of the thesis of the natural (and scientific) standpoint that the world exists. Thus, the problem of the other is so important for Husserl in part because it threatens the whole phenomenological project with the ghost of solipsism—that is, the threat that the phenomenological ego may be the one and only existing ego.¹⁰ This notwithstanding, the way Husserl introduces the problem of the other, at least in the *Cartesian Meditations*, seems designed to baffle readers. After having introduced the phenomenological reduction in the first two Cartesian meditations, Husserl introduces a further reduction in the fifth and last meditation. The latter meditation is the one that is explicitly concerned with the problem of the other. What may come as a surprise is that this further reduction, which Husserl calls a reduction to the sphere of ownness (*Eigenheit*), seems to be superfluous, for after having performed the phenomenological reduction, the phenomenologist has allegedly already abstained from giving assent to belief in the existence of the world, which seems to include the existence of other egos besides my own. Here is not the place to enter into much detail on the intricacies of Husserlian scholarship. Suffice to say that I read the "new" reduction that is at stake in the fifth *Meditation* as drawing a distinction that is internal to the world as phenomenon, the "reduced" world. In other words, the new reduction presupposes that the previous one is still in place.

The reduction to the sphere of ownness "puts out of play" not only the phenomenon of others as such, but also everything that is somehow connected with or made possible through them. For example, the appearance of cultural things to the extent that they are made by or for others is therefore "reduced," put out of play. The same happens with animated bodies other than my own. When I say that they are "put out of play," here, I mean that I cease to view a shoe, for instance, as something that was made by others and for others. I proceed to view shoes, artefacts in general, and animated bodies in general, only as pure material things. Of course, someone could object, I do not cease to view shoes as shoes or other organisms as organisms, but much like physical science, I do not take heed of those aspects with which reality appears to me when I am engaging in the reduction to the sphere of ownness.

According to Husserl, one of the most important aspects of reality that falls prey to reduction to the sphere of ownness is the very notion of objectivity. Insofar as the latter means something that is valid for everyone, it presupposes the notion of the other as well. This is an idea that runs throughout the fifth *Meditation*: the other ego is the first non-ego (Husserl 1960, 137) in that it is the other ego that makes possible the appearance of something alien to me (*Fremdes*), that is, something that goes beyond my own stream of consciousness: "Accordingly the intrinsically first other (the first 'non-Ego') is the other Ego.

¹⁰ On this interpretation of the meaning of Husserl's endeavor in the fifth *Meditation*, see Smith 2003, 248-9. Smith claims that what distinguishes Husserl's approach to the problem of the other in the fifth *Meditation* from other approaches in his manuscripts is that his concern in the former is to describe the appearance of the other to "the transcendently meditating philosopher" who is engaging in the *epoché*.

And the other Ego makes constitutionally possible a new infinite domain of what is ‘other’: an Objective Nature and a whole Objective world, to which all other Egos and I myself belong” (Husserl 1960, 137).¹¹ Husserl’s reflection on the other is thus far from being a “topic” among others in the framework of transcendental phenomenology. It lies at the center of the phenomenological endeavor insofar as the latter concerns the very possibility of there being objects for us, the transcendence of the subject towards an object—in sum, intentionality.

Whereas for Husserl the problem of the other is very closely linked to the performance of the phenomenological reduction, in Merleau-Ponty things are different. This is not to say that Merleau-Ponty does not perform his own sort of “reduction.” At least in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty does present his own version of the “reduction”—one which, unlike the Husserlian version, does not entail bracketing our belief in the existence of the world, setting us up in our “transcendental consciousness” and seeing the world exclusively as a phenomenon for the former. In Merleau-Ponty’s version, the “reduction” consists, rather, in putting aside our theoretical beliefs concerning the world in order to highlight how the world appears from the “natural standpoint.” According to Merleau-Ponty, the reduction does not consist in a departure from the “natural standpoint.” Rather, the latter is the very theme of phenomenology. The difference may seem subtle, but it is crucial. Merleau-Ponty’s “reduction” consists in returning to what he calls the “phenomenal field” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 53ff. [77ff.]), or to the “lived world” (*ibidem*, 57 [83]). The “lived world” (*monde vécu*) is in fact Merleau-Ponty’s translation of Husserl’s notion of *Lebenswelt*, a term which is often also translated as “life-world.” Merleau-Ponty’s reduction to the “lived world” is not an injunction to philosophize in a naïve way. Rather, as indicated, the task of phenomenology is, for Merleau-Ponty, to focus on and bring to light what makes up our most primitive relation to the world, our “being in the world”:

Because we are through and through related to the world, the only way for us to catch sight of ourselves is by suspending this movement, by refusing to be complicit with it (or as Husserl often says, to see it *ohne mitzumachen*), or again, to put it out of play. This is not because we renounce the certainties of common sense and of the natural attitude—on the contrary, these are the constant theme of philosophy—but rather because, precisely as the presuppositions of every thought, they are “taken for granted” and they pass by unnoticed, and because we must abstain from them for a moment in order to awaken them and to make them appear. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxvii [13-4])

Phenomenology is needed because what is most immediate and unquestioned from the point of view of our natural immersion in the world, of our *Lebenswelt*, is far from being a matter of course. In fact, to gain access to and uncover our “being in the world,” we need to engage in a special kind of reflection, which in the *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty calls “radical reflection” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxviii [14], 227 [264], 250 [288]), and which he later, in the *Visible and Invisible*, calls “hyper-reflection” (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 38, 46). The latter does not simply mean putting ourselves in the position of mere onlookers of our own conscious life. Rather, radical reflection makes us aware of reflection’s own restrictions and distortions and of its origin and inherence in, and dependence on, a pre-reflective life.

If we attend to how we most immediately find ourselves in the life-world, we find that we are always already surrounded by others and by cultural- and value-objects that implicitly refer to them. In fact, as we saw, for Husserl, the very notion of “objectivity,” of something other than me, something alien, is intrinsically related to the fact of there being other subjects.¹² Let me add that, besides Husserl, and before Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger also stressed that: 1) each of us (or as he puts it, our respective *Dasein*) does not exist in isolation from others, and thus that our *Dasein* should be conceived as *Mitdasein*, as a “Being there with others”;¹³ 2) our notion of the other is not tied to actually existent others, and our actual encounter with them depends on our being previously opened to a horizon of “otherness”;¹⁴ and 3) ordinary things

¹¹ See Smith’s (2003, 214) very fortunate choice of words in making this same point: “the ultimate concern of this final meditation is with objectivity, or the sense of something—anything—existing in a way that does not reduce to facts concerning my consciousness.” On the close link between intersubjectivity and objectivity, see also Husserl 1960, 123, 123-4, 126, 137. Cf. also Merleau-Ponty 1964, 168 and Zahavi 2003, 110, 115, 119.

¹² On the fact that the world is a public world and that the other is a condition of objectivity, see also Barbaras 1991, 41.

¹³ On the original character of the other (their being there with me in the same world), see Heidegger 1962, 118: “By reason of this with-like [*mithaften*] Being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of Dasein is a with-world [*Mitwelt*].” See also Heidegger 1962, 123 and Sartre 1966, 280.

¹⁴ “The phenomenological assertion that ‘Dasein is essentially Being-with’ has an existential-ontological meaning. It does not seek to establish ontically that factually I am not present-at-hand alone, and that Others of my kind occur. If this were what is meant by the proposition that Dasein’s Being-in-the-world is essentially constituted by Being-with, then Being-with would not be an existential attribute which Dasein, of its own accord, has coming to it from its own

already make implicit reference to possible others: for example, the bicycle is seen by us as something of use that refers to certain possible projects of human beings with a certain physical configuration, etc.¹⁵ In a certain sense, this can be seen as an answer to the question of the other in the epistemological sense of “how can I know about the existence of other egos or minds beside my own?” Insofar as I make the *Lebenswelt* the source and touchstone of all philosophical problems, the so-called problem of “other minds,” as it is usually understood, shows itself to be nonsensical. Others are always already there with me, such that even to formulate a question about their possible existence or non-existence presupposes if not their actual then at least their possible givenness. The question regarding the existence of others presupposes the very notion that it attempts to put into question. If I were not already opened to the notion of the “other” as such, it would never cross my mind to ask about his or her existence.

The sequence of Merleau-Ponty’s presentation in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, in which he considers the “natural thing” before the other, may speak against the idea that the world, my world, is always at the same time a world for others, a shared world. As a result, it is an open question how much Merleau-Ponty presupposes the givenness of pure nature to the exclusion of others as a primordial layer of meaning upon which the meaning of others, that is, the “intersubjective world,” is built. Since Merleau-Ponty discusses our openness to the physical world before introducing the “other” and the “cultural world,” it may seem that the former has a more primordial character: “And in some respect, each object will at first be a natural object; if it is to be able to enter into my life, it must be made of colors and of tactile and sonorous qualities” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 363 [404]). Passages such as these suggest that Merleau-Ponty seems to think of the cultural world as a layer of meaning superadded onto a purely natural one.

The division between the purely “physical world” and the “cultural,” “intersubjective” world was surely inspired by Merleau-Ponty’s reading of Husserl.¹⁶ It is no surprise that Husserl calls the former the “solipsistic world” (Husserl 1989, 79). This notwithstanding, as commentators like Barbaras (1991, 37-8) and Langer (1989, 97ff.) have already noted, the “other” keeps creeping into the discussion of the “natural thing,” such that we may doubt whether the introduction of the natural world before the cultural world in the *Phenomenology of Perception* was not perhaps merely done for the sake of presentation. In fact, Merleau-Ponty is quick to point out that, in addition to natural things, we find ourselves surrounded by cultural objects: “Not only do I have a physical world and live surrounded by soil, air, and water, I have around me roads, plantations, villages, streets, churches, a bell, utensils, a spoon, a pipe. Each of these objects bears as an imprint the mark of the human action it serves” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 363 [404-5]). Here is not the place to go into much detail on this topic, but let it be said that the relation between the cultural thing and the natural thing is probably understood by Merleau-Ponty as what he calls, in Husserl’s wake, a relation of *founding* (*Fundierung*)—although what is founded (the cultural thing) presupposes and in a sense comes after the founding element (the natural thing), the latter is incorporated and transformed by the former so that the pure natural thing is in a sense an abstraction.¹⁷ Although from a genetic point of

kind of Being. It would rather be something which turns up in every case by reason of the occurrence of Others. Being-with is an existential characteristic of Dasein even when factually no Other is present-at-hand or perceived. Even Dasein’s Being-alone is Being-with in the world. The Other can be missing only in and for a Being-with. Being-alone is a deficient mode of Being-with; its very possibility is the proof of this. On the other hand, factual Being-alone is not obviated by the occurrence of a second example of a human being ‘beside’ me, or by ten such examples. Even if these and more are present-at-hand, Dasein can still be alone. So Being-with and the facticity of Being with one another are not based on the occurrence together of several ‘subjects’. Yet Being-alone ‘among’ many does not mean that with regard to their Being they are merely present-at-hand there alongside us. Even in our Being ‘among them’ they are there with us; their Dasein-with is encountered in a mode in which they are indifferent and alien. Being missing and ‘Being away’ [Das Fehlen und ‘Fortsein’] are modes of Dasein-with, and are possible only because Dasein as Being-with lets the Dasein of Others be encountered in its world. Being-with is in every case a characteristic of one’s own Dasein; Dasein-with characterizes the Dasein of Others to the extent that it is freed by its world for a Being-with. Only so far as one’s own Dasein has the essential structure of Being-with, is it Dasein-with as encounterable for Others” (Heidegger 1962, 120).

¹⁵ On this see Heidegger 1962, 117: “In our ‘description’ of that environment which is closest to us—the work-world of the craftsman, for example,—the outcome was that along with the equipment to be found when one is at work [*in Arbeit*], those Others for whom the ‘work’ [*Werk*] is destined are ‘encountered too’. If this is ready-to-hand, then there lies in the kind of Being which belongs to it (that is, in its involvement) an essential assignment or reference to possible wearers, for instance, for whom it should be ‘cut to the figure’. Similarly, when material is put to use, we encounter its producer or ‘supplier’ as one who ‘serves’ well or badly.” On the fact that cultural objects already presuppose the constitution of others see also Husserl 1960, 124, 127. On the reference of the thing of use to others see also Sartre 1966, 233-4. For Heidegger’s account of sociality in *Being and Time*, see Heidegger 1962, §§25-27.

¹⁶ On the pre-objective and pre-social phenomenon of nature, “mere nature” (*blosse Natur*), see Husserl 1960, 126-7, 128.

¹⁷ See Merleau-Ponty’s observations to this effect on Husserl’s notion of *Fundierung* (2012, 128 [159]; 414 [454]). See also Dillon’s (1988, 52-3, 137, 172 and passim) very instructive discussion of it.

view I have to presuppose that I am only able to constitute the meaning of others after I have constituted the meaning of the “material thing.” I find myself already surrounded by natural things in the framework of a social world. When we enter into Merleau-Ponty’s more substantive claims about how our relation with others is constituted, we will have further opportunity to see how, at its roots, the world appears inextricably as a social world, not just a natural one.

Despite holding that the other is already there with me in my *Lebenswelt*, Merleau-Ponty maintains that it is also phenomenology’s task to locate the origin of this evidence. As we have just seen, this does not consist in proving the existence of the other via arguments. We already saw that those kinds of proofs always end up presupposing what they are trying to accomplish. It consists, instead, in looking for the experiential, phenomenological root of that belief.¹⁸ Merleau-Ponty thinks that our encounter with the other through objects of use, tools and in the cultural world takes place “in the mode of the one (*on*)” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 363 [405]), that is, through a “veil of anonymity” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 363 [405]).¹⁹ Cultural objects are traces of human behaviors and endeavors. Our access to the other via cultural objects prompts the question of how it is possible for the human being to manifest him- or herself in external, material things in the first place. For Merleau-Ponty, our acquaintance with cultural objects is to be traced back to our acquaintance with the human body and its behavior. For him, just as for Husserl, the experience of cultural objects points to, and presupposes, the perception of the other’s lived body (*Leib*): “the very first cultural object, and the one by which they all exist, is the other’s body as the bearer of a behavior” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 364 [406]). It is only in the light of this “original encounter” that cultural objects make sense for me. Translated in Husserl’s parlance, this means that in the order of constitution, before I am able to intend a cultural, historical world and its objects, I must previously experience the other’s body as what bestows sense to the former experience.²⁰ Although in this regard Merleau-Ponty was certainly inspired by Husserl, he also deviates from him in certain respects (as we will see). First, however, we must consider more closely what this experience of the other’s body consists in.

IV

Hitherto, it may seem that Merleau-Ponty does not add much in the way of novelty beyond what can already be found in Heidegger’s, Sartre’s and, on some readings, even Husserl’s analyses of intersubjectivity. To start appreciating what is new in Merleau-Ponty in relation to his predecessors, we must first consider what he says regarding the subject or the ego in connection with the problem of intersubjectivity. As we have already indicated, Merleau-Ponty is particularly opposed to the idea that we can broach the problem of intersubjectivity by starting with the notion of a transcendental ego. In Merleau-Ponty’s view, this idea does not belong exclusively to Kant and Husserl. Different versions of the idea of the “transcendental ego,” whether they bear this name or not, can be found in philosophers as diverse as Descartes and Sartre. The notion of the ego that Merleau-Ponty attacks consists in the idea that the ego, by its nature, can only be a subject; that is, it can only be apprehended from a first-person perspective, never from a third-person, objective perspective. It is not the case that this notion is false (we still have to determine the extent to which Merleau-Ponty himself endorses it); rather, by starting with this idea of the ego, it becomes impossible, according to Merleau-Ponty, to in any way apprehend or relate myself to an ego other than my own. The latter case would entail that I must literally become the other in order to experience that other as a subject, which of course would dissolve the very notion of “otherness,” hence the idea that the *alter ego* is a “paradox” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxvi [12], 365 [407], 383 [424]).²¹

Merleau-Ponty draws the ultimate consequences regarding the “transcendental” approach to the problem of the other. According to Merleau-Ponty, if we add to the notion of the ego as something that is genuinely only given from the first-person point of view the idealist viewpoint according to which the world

¹⁸ Just as for Sartre, for example, our knowledge of a concrete other presupposes an original acquaintance with him or her through the experience of what Sartre calls the “look” (*le regard*). My acquaintance with the other as object, which for Sartre has only a probable character, presupposes the experience of the “other” as an original presence (see Sartre 1966, 253ff.) The latter amounts, in Sartre’s view, to the experience of being seen by the other: “‘Being-seen-by-the-other’ is the truth of ‘seeing-the-other’” (Sartre 1966, 257).

¹⁹ Echoes of Heidegger’s notion of the “They” (*das Man*) can certainly be heard in Merleau-Ponty’s idea of the anonymous other. On the idea of *das Man*, see Heidegger 1996, 126ff.

²⁰ On the other’s body as the first “object,” see Husserl 1960, 153.

²¹ An almost identical view can be found in Sartre 1966, 234. Sartre’s views on the intrinsically troubled nature of intersubjective relations reflect precisely the nature of this problem: insofar as I am a subject, I must, of necessity, view the other as an object. Of course, according to Sartre it is also possible to have an immediate experience of the other as a subject, but this entails experiencing myself as an object: “However that other consciousness and that other freedom are never given to me; for if they were, they would be known and would therefore be an object, which would cause me to cease being an object” (Sartre 1966, 271).

and its entities (or at least their meaning) are somehow “constituted” is in some way dependent on my ego, it is impossible for there to be two or more transcendental egos:

If the subject’s only experience is the one I obtain by coinciding with it, if the mind, by definition, eludes the “outside spectator” and can only be recognized inwardly, then my Cogito is, in principle, unique—no one else could “participate” in it. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 391 [431]; on this topic see also Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxv [12], 365 [407])

According to Merleau-Ponty, ultimately, something like the transcendental ego should be seen as absolute, as one with God itself, for it does not logically allow for the existence of another one alongside it:

The Cogito ultimately leads me to coincide with God. If the intelligible and recognizable structure of my experience, when I recognize it in the Cogito, draws me out of the event and places me within eternity, then it simultaneously frees me from all limitations and from this fundamental event that is my private existence, and the same reasons that oblige us to pass from the event to the act, from thoughts to the I, also oblige us to pass from the multiplicity of I’s to one solitary constituting consciousness and prevent me—in an attempt to save in extremis the finitude of the subject—from defining it as a “monad”. The constituting consciousness is, in principle, singular and universal. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 392 [432])

Of course, since Merleau-Ponty challenges the notion of transcendental ego in all its manifold versions, this does not entail for him that intersubjectivity is nonsensical or impossible, but only that we should forsake taking the transcendental subject as our starting-point when it comes to the problem of the other, replacing it with another, more suitable one. In fact, as I have already pointed out, he seems to suggest that one of the reasons we should not hold Husserl too strictly to the notion of the transcendental ego is that, in fact, intersubjectivity became a real problem for Husserl. Seemingly implied in Merleau-Ponty’s view is the idea that, had Husserl been truly coherent with the notion of transcendental ego, he would have found no place for another ego.

Correlated with the idealist version of the “transcendental ego” we have just introduced is the idea that my own body is just one more object among others, that there is nothing distinctive about it. This same view of the body is shared by empiricism, in particular by the view that the body is a mere mechanism.²² The idea that the body could be taken as a mere object is, in fact, uncovered by Merleau-Ponty as a fundamental assumption common to both intellectualism and empiricism. Of course, one of the main traits of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy is to put into question this assumption by way of challenging the idea that my body could ever be taken exclusively as an object (in fact, my body, the body that I live as my own, is never fully constituted as an object for Merleau-Ponty). The overthrowing of this assumption has a tremendous impact on the way we should regard the problem of intersubjectivity:

If I do not learn within myself to recognize the junction of the for-itself and the in-itself, then none of these mechanisms that we call “other bodies” will ever come to life; if I have no outside, then others have no inside. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 391 [431])

If it were a constituting consciousness, in relation to whom only the world has meaning, my body would be nothing but an object among objects. In this case, as we saw, the “other” becomes unintelligible, for his existence would imply that I must “constitute” him or her, and that he or she must in turn “constitute” me.

There is no room, then, for others and for a plurality of consciousnesses within objective thought. If I constitute the world, then I cannot conceive of another consciousness, for it too would have to have constituted the world and so, at least with regard to this other view upon the world, I would not be constituting. Even if I succeeded in conceiving of this other consciousness as constituting the world, it is again I who would constitute it as such, and once again I would be the only constituting consciousness. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 365 [407])

If my body is not reduced for *me* to the condition of being an object among objects, if I am my body, if the latter is endowed with powers traditionally ascribed to subjectivity and mind, then the problem of the other is deeply transformed. For when I encounter the other, it is no more a matter of asking how I know that his or her body is the manifestation of an invisible and intangible mind. I immediately take the other’s body as I take mine: as a conscious, meaningful, expressive body: “If my consciousness has a body, why

²² On the fact that realism is unable to account for the existence of the other and views his or her body as any other material object, see Sartre 1966, 224ff.

would other bodies not ‘have’ consciousnesses? This is obviously to assume that the notion of the body and the notion of consciousness have been deeply transformed” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 367 [408]).

As Merleau-Ponty suggests, the idea that I can only intend the other if I myself am embodied is already implied in Husserl.²³ In his analysis in the fifth Cartesian Meditation, Husserl thinks that the fact that we are not merely the transcendental ego and that the latter appears embodied in nature is key to addressing the problem of the other. It is only insofar as my body is not a mere object for me—in other words, insofar as I live my body from the first-person point of view—that is it possible for me to gain access to the other, for the latter is, at first, only accessible to me via his or her body. The question for Husserl is how I come to view the other’s body as the outward manifestation of subjectivity and not merely as a material thing. According to the account he gives in the *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl 1960, 121ff.), I come to view the body of the other as other by viewing it as analogous to mine in that it appears to me not only as a material thing among others (a mere *Körper*) but also as an animated, lived body (*Leib*). In other words, I see the other’s lived body as the outward manifestation of his or her conscious subjectivity—this, however, without any explicit or implicit reasoning, in the most instantaneous and immediate of manners. Similar to how material, inanimate things present only one of their profiles (*Abschattungen*) to me (even though I always intend the thing as a whole, not just the momentarily presented sides), when the body (*Leib*) of the other is present to me, his or her conscious subjectivity is, as Husserl says, indirectly presented to me (or as he also puts it, “appresented” to me) in much the same sense that the thing as a whole, with all its sides, is always co-presented to me together with the presentation of one of them.²⁴ Of course, although I can never grasp a material thing as a whole, with its inner and outer horizons completely laid out before me (which would require a God’s-eye perspective, if such a perspective were possible), I can always in principle uncover the material thing’s hidden sides, whereas the other as such can in principle never really be given to me, always announcing itself through its absence.²⁵ According to Husserl, the phenomenon we have here is one of association through passive synthesis. When I see the other’s body, I immediately “pair it” associatively with mine and take it, just like mine, as an animated body. What breathes life into my “analogizing apprehension” of the other ego is the phenomenon of my own conscious subjectivity, which is constantly, even if only tacitly, given to me.²⁶

Husserl’s influence notwithstanding, Merleau-Ponty introduces ideas that go far beyond Husserl’s thought horizon. Whereas for Husserl I am fundamentally the transcendental ego, which, as embodied, is the result of a mundanizing self-apperception (*verweltlichende Selbstapperzeption*, cf. Husserl 1960, 130) on the part of the transcendental ego, Merleau-Ponty for his part thinks that I am ultimately the lived body. There is no further dimension behind the lived body to which I can trace myself. The ego, which is reached via reflection, through explicitly turning attention towards myself, already presupposes my bodily engagement with the world. As already indicated, Merleau-Ponty’s theory of subjectivity is central to an understanding of his account of intersubjectivity. For him, insofar as we take ourselves as transcendental egos, the relation among transcendental egos, that is, intersubjectivity, is unintelligible. Merleau-Ponty thinks that the transcendental ego is what results from our reflection on ourselves and from taking ourselves to be the source of all synthetic and constituting activity. As such, its objective correlate would have to be the world viewed in full transparency as the result of the constituting activity of the transcendental ego. Merleau-Ponty thinks that it is only insofar as I am a finite—that is, a bodily—perspective on the world that other perspectives or points of view besides my own are even thinkable. Another way to put this is to say that it is only insofar as I am not wholly transparent to myself that there are aspects of my being that the cogito cannot fully grasp, that others are conceivable: “others can be evident because I am not transparent for myself, and because my subjectivity draws its body along behind itself” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 368 [410]). Merleau-Ponty thinks that the fact that I am a perceiving body—that is, a perspective or a point of view on the world, as he also puts it—already pre-figures if not the actuality, then at least the possibility, the horizon, of *otherness*. The existence of others is a matter of course for me because I am, at my very core, a point of view on the world, a finite being. This is not only because things appear to me in certain adumbrations and orientations in correlation with the position of my sense organs, but also because I am a temporal being; my different perspectives of things succeed and pass into each other. When I reflect

²³ Although it falls outside the scope of this article, I cannot fail to mention here that the correlation between my embodiment, my “facticity,” the fact that I have a “nature,” and the Other is one of the mainstays of Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*: “if there is an Other, whatever or whoever he may be; whatever may be his relations with me, and without his acting upon me in any way except by the pure upsurge of his being—then I have an outside, I have a nature. My original fall is the existence of the Other.” (Sartre 1966, 263). See also Sartre 1966, 270, where Sartre claims that the other is a condition of my being an object. For Sartre, the “other” is indubitable to the same extent that my being an object is (Sartre 1966, 271).

²⁴ On “appresentation,” see Husserl 1960, 139.

²⁵ On the other as absence, see Husserl 1960, 139, 142 and Sartre 1966, 223, 228.

²⁶ On analogy, see Husserl 1960, 140-41. On pairing, see Husserl 1960, 141-2.

on my previous perspectives on a certain thing, I become, in a certain sense, another to myself. Previous perspectives are, even if only to a minimal extent, already alien to me. The very fact that there is always more of the world to see, that everything can be seen from different perspectives, already announces the possibility of the other.

Merleau-Ponty's overcoming of both empiricist and intellectualist (idealist and rationalist) approaches to the notion of the body allows him to put into question the traditional problematic of the other, which relies on the Cartesian idea that I only have access to the other's body, understood as a piece of extended matter, but that his or her mind constantly eludes me, and thus that the other remains forever problematic. If my starting point is the body as it naturally presents itself to me, as a body able to express intention and meaning and to externalize them through its behavior, then the problem of the other that is generated by a strict distinction between body and mind appears to be completely mistaken. In fact, to see how we are able to perceive others, it is enough to attend to the way we naturally encounter them. To our pre-reflective being in the world, the other presents him- or herself quite immediately to me through the way his or her body behaves. This behavior is immediately meaningful to me since I myself am a body that behaves in ways similar to those that can be observed in the other. This does not mean, of course, that there is some kind of argument by analogy at play here (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 367-8 [409]). As in Husserl, the fact that the lived body is paired with that of the other does not ensue from an explicit inference or reasoning; thus, for Merleau-Ponty, the way my body is opened or related to that of the other is not mediated through any sort of reflection. Knowing the other is problematic only for accounts that start with a subject that has to come out of his or her own private conscious realm in order to reach out into the other's private conscious realm. At the level of my intercorporeal relation with the other, I access him or her in an immediate manner. In fact, this is how children and babies interact, both among themselves and with adults, a fact that Merleau-Ponty points out (2012, 371 [412]) and that was later independently explained by neuroscience through the discovery of mirror neurons.²⁷ The phenomenon of imitation in babies is very significant for a Merleau-Pontyan approach to intersubjectivity, for it shows that the identity between inner and outer does not ensue from our learning to compare, say, the external perception of the other's mouth with the internal feeling of opening my own mouth. Rather, babies seem equipped with the ability to "translate" the adult's exterior behavior into their own "internal" behavior. In fact, when describing the intercorporeal basis of intersubjective relations, Merleau-Ponty often relies on empirical examples having to do with the way babies and children relate with others. It is no surprise that one of his most cited texts on intersubjectivity has as its theme child psychology (see the essay "The Child's Relation with Others" [Merleau-Ponty 2010, 434ff.]).

There is something in Merleau-Ponty that, however much he wishes to bring his position close to Husserl, deviates from the Husserlian account. As we saw, although the fact that I and the other are embodied consciousnesses is absolutely crucial for getting Husserl's argument off the ground, the experience I have of my body is still granted primacy in the face of the experience of the other's body. We can say that there is still a trace of reasoning by analogy, although implicit rather than explicit, in Husserl's account of the perception of the other. In Merleau-Ponty's case, this scheme of things is blurred inasmuch as the experience I have of myself—and this entails, before anything else, the experience I have of my body—already prefigures the experience of the other.²⁸ Merleau-Ponty relies on the notion of "body schema" to characterize in a new way the experience or awareness I have of my body. The notion of body schema is as crucial as it is difficult, and for that reason I cannot trace its details in the present context. I will limit myself to pointing to certain features that are relevant to an understanding of the view that the experience of my body entails experience of the other. The notion of body schema was taken by Merleau-Ponty from the debates of his time.²⁹ However, he does not limit himself to making use of an already-established notion; he transforms and makes it his own. What Merleau-Ponty means when he refers to the body schema is, firstly, that the experience of my body is not that of a heap of sensations, but that of a unitary whole that precedes its parts, of a *Gestalt* (2012, 100-2 [127-9]). As Merleau-Ponty himself admits, however, this is still insufficient to characterize the body schema (2012, 102 [129]). The latter is the experience of my body in the world³⁰ as involved in certain tasks and projects (and not only in a certain spatial situation in relation to the rest of the world). One of the aspects of the body schema that Merleau-Ponty emphasizes throughout the *Phenomenology of Perception*, in particular in its first part, which is

²⁷ On the relation between the discovery of mirror neurons and Merleau-Ponty's insights into the nature of intersubjectivity, see Carman 2008, 138 and Romdehn-Romluc 2011, 141-2.

²⁸ Of course, there are Husserlians who say that in Husserl, too, the other is already inscribed in my self-experience. See Zahavi 2003, 113. However, in my view, this is not the account that can be found in *Cartesian Meditations*.

²⁹ Here I will not discuss the difference between the notion of body image [*image du corps*] and body schema [*schéma corporel*]. On this distinction see, for example, Gallagher 1995, 225ff. and Carman 2008, 102-111, esp. 105.

³⁰ "This is to say that the body schema is not merely an experience of my body, but rather an experience of my body in the world (...)" (Merleau-Ponty 2012 176 [142]).

dedicated to the body, is the fact that the corporeal schema is a “system of equivalences” (2012, 141 [175]; see also 2012, 243-4 [281] and 2010, 247). This means that, for example, a certain task, say, striking a football, immediately translates into certain postures, movements and performances on the part of my body. This aspect of the “body schema” is also related to the body’s expressive nature and to the fact that the body not only translates information from one sense to the other, for example the visual correspondent of a certain tactual sensations (in Merleau-Ponty’s parlance, it “translates” sensorial data across the senses (2012, 243-4 [281])), but also translates bodily and worldly relations into each other. The body schema assures the equivalence between my “internal” feeling of moving my hand (what Husserl called *cenesthesia*) and the visual image of my moving hand. The body schema is thus the ultimate foundation of the relation between inner and outer. In order for this relation to obtain, it is not enough to have a subjective experience of my body; the latter must be the experience of my body as both subjective, lived, and as objective, in the world (a point that is very well emphasized by Dillon 1988, 122-3). It is the body schema as this “system of equivalences” or of “translation” that allows each of us to grasp the significance of the other’s gesture, to apprehend “the correspondence between what he sees done and what he does” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 370 [411-2]). Since the world of perception is the world that is “familiar” to the body, and since one of Merleau-Ponty’s main tenets is that everything that is (which also means everything that exists and is meaningful to me) must be so on the basis of that primordial relation of my body with the world of perception (linguistic and intellectual relations are conceived of as the outcomes of expressive operations that are performed on the basis of perceptual relations, which of course does not mean that they should be seen as reducible to them), the body schema is “the common texture of all objects” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 244 [282]). In a sense, it encompasses the whole world in that all things acquire meaning only in relation to it. On these grounds, Merleau-Ponty sometimes suggests that our relation with others must be understood in the same sense as the relation between our sense organs among themselves—to the extent that these require a unity that precedes them, such that I and the other are in a sense part of an encompassing unity that precedes our differentiation. As an example, take the following passage: “henceforth, just as the parts of my body together form a system, the other’s body and my own are a single whole, two sides of a single phenomenon, and the anonymous existence, of which my body is continuously the trace, henceforth inhabits these two bodies simultaneously” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 370 [411]).³¹ This of course generates certain issues and possible conflicts with other parts of his theory of intersubjectivity. I will return to this issue in the next section, where I will examine the extent to which it is possible to harmonize the idea of the primordial indistinguishableness of me and the other with other aspects of Merleau-Ponty’s views on intersubjectivity.

V

What I have presented is still far from providing the whole picture of Merleau-Ponty’s account of intersubjectivity. First of all, the experience of the other’s body as I have hitherto described still falls short of being a genuine intersubjective relation: “this only establishes another living being, and not yet another man” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 370 [411]; on this see also Dillon 1988, 122). Although in a way I am my body in the sense that the latter is the locus of my personal existence, for Merleau-Ponty the body is first and foremost a pre-personal and even anonymous entity: “if I wanted to express perceptual experience with precision, I would have to say that *one* perceives in me, and not that I perceive” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 223 [260]; on the body’s anonymous nature see also 2012, 86 [113], 362 [404] and *passim*). I have argued elsewhere (Sousa 2018) that, on this point, Merleau-Ponty has been influenced by Sartre’s idea, to be found in the essay *The Transcendence of the Ego* (Sartre 2004), concerning consciousness’s anonymous and pre-personal character. Briefly, in that essay, Sartre claims that instead of being personal, endowed with an ego, consciousness is impersonal. According to Sartre, there is no need for an ego to unify or make consciousness individual. (It should be held in view that in *Being and Nothingness* this idea gave way to the influential

³¹ That Merleau-Ponty thought of the other in terms of an “extension” of my body schema and of both of us as members of a single system is also quite explicit in this passage from “The Philosopher and its Shadow”: “my right hand was present at the advent of my left hand’s active sense of touch. It is in no different fashion that the other’s body becomes animate before me when I shake another man’s hand or just look at him. In learning that my body is a ‘perceiving thing,’ that it is able to be stimulated (*reizbar*)—it, and not just my ‘consciousness’—I prepared myself for understanding that there are other animalia and possibly other men. It is imperative to recognize that we have here neither comparison nor analogy, nor projection or ‘introjection.’ The reason why I have evidence of the other man’s being-there when I shake his hand is that his hand is substituted for my left hand, and my body annexes the body of another person in that ‘sort of reflection’ it is paradoxically the seat of. My two hands ‘coexist’ or are ‘compresent’ because they are one single body’s hands. The other person appears through an extension of that compresence; he and I are like organs of one single intercorporeality” (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 168; see also 2010, 247).

notion of “pre-reflective consciousness.”) In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty viewed this idea of consciousness as anonymous and located it in the body (as can be witnessed by his similar idea of the *tacit cogito*).³² According to this view, it is only against the backdrop of its impersonal, anonymous basis that the body acquires a personal dimension. However, if this is so, if my relation with the other consists in a relation between our respective lived bodies, this entails that the relation between me and the other that I just characterized is not a genuine relation among two subjects: “if the perceiving subject is anonymous, then the other self that he perceives is anonymous as well” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 372 [413]).

According to some interpretations (Zahavi 2014, 78ff., 85ff., 203ff. and Dillon 1988, 119ff.), Merleau-Ponty (in particular in the lecture course “The Child’s Relation with Others” [Merleau-Ponty 2010, 241-315], but also in later writings like “The Philosopher and his Shadow”) defends the position that an intersubjective relation can only come about on the basis of a previous identification of myself with the other (or at least their indistinction). According to Barbaras (1991, 48), Merleau-Ponty’s starting point is Husserl’s arrival point, that is, the phenomenon of “coupling” (*ibidem*). Merleau-Ponty does not try to reconstruct the other starting from a private sphere of ownness (*ibidem*, 48-9). We already saw, in the previous section, that Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the “body schema” seems to include the idea of a systematic unity between me and the other. In that lecture course, Merleau-Ponty even traces a psychogenetic account of the progressive development of the consciousness of self, starting from a state of indistinction:

We cannot perceive the other if we make a distinction between ego and other. On the contrary, this becomes possible if the psychogenesis begins in a state where the infant ignores differences. I am little by little conscious that my body is closed around me. Correlatively, this produces a modification of the other’s image that appears in its insularity.

The first stage is the existence of a kind of precommunication, an anonymous collectivity with differentiation, a kind of group existence. The second stage is the objectification of one’s body, segregation, distinction between individuals. (...) Individual consciousness only appears later, along with the objectification of one’s own body, establishing a dividing wall between the other and me and the constitution of the other and of me as “human beings” in a reciprocal relationship. (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 247)³³

However, the idea of a primal indistinction or even identity between me and other is problematic and in need of reconciliation with other things Merleau-Ponty also says when it comes to describing the genesis of intercorporeality and intersubjectivity. In the first place, the idea of a primal state of identity between me and the other precludes there being a relation that could merit being called intercorporeal. Dillon (1988, 120-1) speaks of the prior indistinction and even identity that is at the basis of intersubjective relations but at the same time uses the idea of a “transfer of body schema” in his account of Merleau-Ponty. Surely if there is indistinction there would be no need to transfer my body schema. It only makes sense to speak of intercorporeality when the child reaches the stage where there is a distinction, however minimal, between her body and the others’ body. Instead of “transfer of body schema,” I prefer to think in terms of an extension or even incorporation of the other’s body. Just as, to use Merleau-Ponty’s analysis of habit (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 144-7 [178-81]), the cane or the piano can be appropriated in such a way that they become one of its organs, the body of the other is to be seen as an extension of mine. Hass (2008, 111), for example, emphasizes that while rejecting a strict dualism between self and other, Merleau-Ponty also rejects all monist positions. Barbaras (1991, 55-6) likewise criticizes the idea of a primal indistinction between me and the other on the grounds of its insufficiency in accounting for the experience of the other. Just as I am never identical with myself, I am not identical with the other. There is always some divergence (*écart*) between me and the other. This may be why, in his lectures on child psychology, Merleau-Ponty characterizes the first stage of the baby’s social development as “a kind of precommunication, an anonymous collectivity with *differentiation*, a kind of group existence” (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 247; my italics). The second stage of development is characterized, according to Merleau-Ponty, by “the objectification of one’s body, segregation, distinction between individuals” (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 247).

³² In this regard, see Merleau-Ponty’s working note from January 1959: “The Cogito of Descartes (reflection) is an operation on significations, a statement of relations between them (and the significations themselves sedimented in acts of expression). It therefore presupposes a prereflective contact of self with self (the non-thetic consciousness [of] self Sartre) or a tacit cogito (being close by oneself)—this is how I reasoned in Ph. P” (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 170-1). The fact that Sartre’s pre-reflective cogito shaped Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the tacit cogito was also noted by Dillon (1998: 104-5): “Sartre’s influence is manifest here. Merleau-Ponty’s tacit cogito is modelled upon Sartre’s pre-reflective cogito [...]”

³³ In the context of a discussion of Guillaume, Merleau-Ponty quite clearly lays out that “the child begins with a total identification with the other. How, out of this primitive identification with others, is the child able to realize himself and his aptitude for reproducing behavior? How can we explain the appearance of imitative consciousness? And, in general, how do we explain the passage from identification to the distinction between me and others?” (2010, 24).

Merleau-Ponty also identifies this phase with the ability on the part of the infant to identify his or her image in the mirror (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 250ff.; Dillon 1988, 123-5). This is also purportedly the beginning of the formation of my idea of myself (which in order to be fully accomplished has to reach yet another stage). The child does not possess any idea of him- or herself to begin with: “the child lives in a world that he believes is immediately accessible to everyone around him. He is unaware of himself and, for that matter, of others as private subjectivities. He does not suspect that all of us, including himself, are limited to a certain point of view upon the world” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 371 [412]). This is problematic, however, for before the child is able to objectivate herself she must at some point already acquire her own body schema and thereby a pre-reflective awareness of her own body. This is a point that Dillon (1988, 123) grasps very clearly: “the body image is at once an externalization and an objectification of the corporeal schema. In order for the infant to see himself as a separate being, he must learn to see himself ‘from the outside’ as a body like the other bodies he sees-but different from them insofar as it is his own. [...] In order for me to develop a thematic body image, however, the tacit identification must become explicit: I must thematize my body-as-object as the body-subject I am. The body image is thus the thematization of the corporeal reflexivity underlying the corporeal schema” (1988, 123-4). Thus, I take Merleau-Ponty’s passages above to mean that the child has no *explicit* awareness of being a point of view. Yet surely when Merleau-Ponty describes the way in which children are related to others, this presupposes that children are pre-reflectively conscious of themselves as being bodily individuals that are distinct from the other bodily individuals with whom they relate. My previous point regarding the fact that Merleau-Ponty takes up Sartre’s notion of anonymous and impersonal consciousness and identifies it with the body aimed precisely to show that, on Sartre’s model of pre-reflective consciousness, which I believe greatly influenced Merleau-Ponty, there is no need for an ego to make one consciousness different from other consciousnesses (however problematic this may be from a philosophical point of view).³⁴

Beyond the two stages of development already sketched, Merleau-Ponty allows for yet another, which corresponds to the formation of the explicit representation of myself, of the ego, that is, to performing the Cartesian cogito. I become capable of thematizing my own point of view as my own and (eventually) of ceasing to identify myself with my body. My idea of myself becomes more abstract and completely detached from my bodily and other factual circumstances.³⁵

As I said at the beginning of this section, intercorporeality does not tell the whole story of Merleau-Ponty’s account of social relations. Intersubjectivity remains a problem. Husserl’s and Sartre’s efforts to account for our relation to other subjects were not misguided. They were rooted in a deep and genuine philosophical comprehension of the problems underlying sociality. The fact that I only relate to the other insofar as both of us are bodies has the consequence that intercorporeality is then a relation between two anonymous entities and not a proper intersubjective relation, that is, a relation between two egos: “if the perceiving subject is anonymous, then the other self that he perceives is anonymous as well” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 372 [413]). Through his behavior, I can never attain the other’s ego as such, his ownmost subjectivity. On this point, Merleau-Ponty refers explicitly to Husserl’s idea that the other ego is merely appresented through his lived body (*Leib*), that is, co-intended in each of his body’s presentations—in much the same way that the spatial object as a whole is always presupposed and co-intended in the perception of one of its sides—but never really properly given to me in the way my own ego is:

But ultimately, the other’s behavior and even the other’s words are not the other himself. The other’s grief or anger never has precisely the same sense for him and for me. For him, these are lived situations; for me, they are appresented. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 372 [414])

As I wrote above, for the other ego to be given to me adequately, I would have to be him, and thus the otherness of the other would disappear.³⁶ It is for this reason that, for Merleau-Ponty, intersubjectivity presents us with an unavoidable “paradox.”

³⁴ It was at least problematic for Sartre, who felt the need to revise the idea for his magnum opus *Being and Nothingness*, turning pre-reflective consciousness into personal consciousness. On the difference between *The Transcendence of the Ego* and *Being and Nothingness* with regards to the personal or impersonal character of consciousness, see Gardner 2009, 90ff.

³⁵ Again, the idea of there being three different stages in the formation of the ego is very well put by Dillon (1988, 124): “The tacit cogito is prethematic corporeal reflexivity; the body image involves thematic corporeal reflexivity; and the Cartesian cogito is thematic reflexivity that short-circuits and ignores its corporeality, mistakenly conceiving itself as pure interiority.”

³⁶ See Merleau-Ponty 1964, 171: “The other person’s life itself is not given to me with his behavior. In order to have access to it, I would have to be the other person himself.” This idea is recurrent not only in Merleau-Ponty and Husserl but also in Sartre. See, for example, Sartre 1966, 234.

Since for Merleau-Ponty the cogito, reflection, is a cognitive “act” founded on our primary thrownness into the world via the body, it is no surprise that the problem of intersubjectivity in the proper Husserlian and Sartrean sense only comes to pass when we are able to reflect on ourselves as subjects of experience: “the perception of others and the intersubjective world are only problematic for adults” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 371 [412]). Following Piaget, Merleau-Ponty locates the beginnings of this experience in adolescence. In other words, the problem of intersubjectivity, and in particular the problem of solipsism, only comes about when we reach a stage of mental development in which we are able to perform the cogito, to expressly think of ourselves as an ego. In this regard, however, two things should be borne in mind. First, adults, just like children, spend much of their time immersed in the world, so that only rarely, and often only when engaging in philosophical reflection, do we have the opportunity to think of ourselves in the manner of the cogito. In a way, we remain “children” in the relevant sense, that is, philosophically naïve, for much of our adult years. This is why the experiences of children should not be seen as totally removed from our own:

But in fact, children must in some sense be correct against adults or against Piaget and, if there is to be a unique and intersubjective world for the adult, then the barbarous thoughts of the initial stage must remain like an indispensable acquisition beneath the thoughts of the adult stage. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 371 [413])

Even though the analysis of children can be paradigmatic and illuminating when it comes to difficult philosophical issues, their experience, for the most part, is on a continuum with ours. Curiously enough, it is this child-like naivety that prevents our full retreat into our inner world, our fall into complete madness.

Merleau-Ponty thinks that there is a kernel of truth in solipsism, which it misapprehends and misstates (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 373 [414]). However, solipsism misunderstands its own position in that it views the statement of the irredeemable loneliness of the subject as referring to myself as the subject of my thoughts, as the Cartesian cogito, or as what Merleau-Ponty also calls the *spoken cogito* (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 423-6 [463-5]). What solipsism wants to say is instead that only I can live my own point of view, or alternatively, that I cannot live the point of view of another. Along the lines of Husserl and Sartre, Merleau-Ponty does not provide any ultimate solution to this problem. It is an ultimate fact concerning what it is for each of us to be conscious and self-aware selves: “here we see a lived solipsism that cannot be transcended” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 374 [415]). This latter passage may puzzle readers who mistake the problem of “other minds” for the phenomenological problem of the other and who, as a result, by the point he asserts this in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, think that Merleau-Ponty has already gotten rid of the problem of the other, thereby failing to see that the problem of the other, phenomenologically understood, does not admit of such a resolution (and it is for that reason that the other is a living paradox): “Consciousnesses present the absurdity of a solipsism-shared-by-many, and such is the situation that must be understood” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 376 [412]). The problem of the other is not even a purely epistemological problem in that it lies at the root of all the problems we experience in our concrete life when dealing with others: not only cultural and social conflicts, but also conflicts and differences among individuals, be they friends, family or lovers.

The closest Merleau-Ponty gets to attempting a proof of the existence of others is via the analogy between my experience of the other and the pre-reflective experience of myself in the world. For Merleau-Ponty, the pre-reflective sphere is primordial in that it includes my original relation and openness to the world. Via reflection, I can manage some distance from this experience, putting it into question, although only abstractly, as we will see, just as Descartes did via the evil genius hypothesis, but this reflection still feeds off that pre-reflective experience. To doubt something only makes sense on the grounds of a primordial belief or faith in the world, and this, according to Merleau-Ponty, is that of my pre-reflective existence (see Merleau-Ponty 2012, 393-6 [433-6]). For the French phenomenologist, I simply couldn’t have made up the latter pre-reflective experience of my existence in the world with others. There is in fact an analogy between the “certainty” I have of my pre-reflective life and the “certainty” I have of the existence of others. Just as my mistaking myself for my body and for my pre-reflective existing self would be inexplicable if I were the ultimate subject of thought (the transcendental subject, the subject of reflection) (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 215-6 [252-3]), so I would not have the faintest notion of the other if the latter were not somehow already announced to me in a pre-reflective manner:

we must say about the experience of others what we have elsewhere said about reflection: that its object cannot absolutely escape it, since we only have a notion of the object through that experience. Reflection must, in some way, present the unreflected, for otherwise we would have nothing to set against it, and it would not become a problem for us. Similarly, my experience must present others to me in some way, since if it did not do so I

would not even speak of solitude, and I would not even declare others to be inaccessible. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 376 [417]; translation modified)³⁷

It must be said that what Merleau-Ponty accomplishes with this “argument” is not much different from what Sartre does in *Being and Nothingness* when he introduces the category of “being-for-others.” Just as Sartre’s argument does not ensure the existence of any concrete other (I could always be mistaken that the look [*le regard*] of the other is in fact of the other and not just, say, that of a wax figure),³⁸ so Merleau-Ponty’s argument guarantees only that there is an irredeemable horizon of otherness, that we are at root opened to the other, but not that I cannot be mistaken that a concrete other exists. But ultimately, according to Merleau-Ponty, although we certainly exist in the world, there is no guarantee that nothing in particular exists, for perception is forever revisable.

In general, Merleau-Ponty views sociality as very closely tied to how we are immersed in the world in a pre-reflective manner. This is why I believe that, as indicated above, it would be misleading to separate the natural world from the social world. The world of perception, the lived world, is at once a natural and a cultural world. Thus, what Merleau-Ponty says about our most primitive and fundamental relation to the world can also be said about our immersion in the social world—it is an ultimate fact that we cannot account for, since it is the very condition of the possibility of our own questioning of it. Sociality is thus a dimension of our individual existence: even our attempts to theoretically deny it or to practically live in isolation presuppose that we always already find ourselves situated in it: “Thus, we must rediscover the social world, after the natural world, not as an object or a sum of objects, but as the permanent field or dimension of existence: I can certainly turn away from the social world, but I cannot cease to be situated in relation to it” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 379 [420]).

Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between the social as a dimension (or as he also says, as a *milieu* of our existence) and sociality as an explicit object of knowledge. According to him, the former is primordial and enables the latter. Our attempts to know society, for example, to determine the traits of a certain culture in a certain historical time, presuppose our previous openness to our pre-thematic social horizon. Accordingly, it could be objected that this only begs the question, that his “descriptions” only lead us to an ultimate fact and leave us without any explanation of precisely this fact. This is, in fact, a problem that can be raised against the foundations of Merleau-Ponty’s enterprise in the *Phenomenology of Perception* as a whole, and he himself recognizes this (witness his admission of this at the end of the chapter on intersubjectivity, Merleau-Ponty 2012, 423-4 [382-3]). I believe that Merleau-Ponty’s answer to this problem would be that perception ultimately opens us to a world shared by others, and it is this evidence that should form our starting-point when it comes to the problems of others, intersubjectivity and sociality. This is because, firstly, we can only question this evidence because we already find ourselves in possession of the distinction between truth and illusion. Secondly, trying to get behind this first evidence is tantamount to asking what makes the world possible (Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxx-lxxxi [17]), and even if it were possible to give an answer to this question, it would fall outside the scope of phenomenological investigation.

VI

In conclusion, Merleau-Ponty thinks that the problem of intersubjectivity is inextricably linked to how we conceive of subjectivity. If we hold the right, phenomenological conception of subjectivity (on his view), we will be led to a certain correlated view of intersubjective relations. On the contrary, if we hold onto a purely transcendental view of the ego, it is not possible to account for intersubjectivity and sociality. By its nature, the transcendental ego does not allow for another ego to stand beside it. This means that in order for there to be other egos, I must be a certain finite perspective on the world, and must thus be an embodied subject. In other words, Merleau-Ponty shows that we can only intelligibly introduce the problem of the other in the context of phenomenology if our starting point is not the transcendental ego and, vice-versa, that it is only because we are an embodied, finite, subject in the world that the very idea of another perspective, co-existing with ours, is possible. Thus, like other phenomenologists before him, Merleau-Ponty holds that, from a phenomenological point of view, there is no problem of “other minds” as ordinarily understood. In the realm of the *Lebenswelt*, I find myself, as a lived body, in meaningful relations with

³⁷ The original French text reads: “Il faut dire de la expérience d’autrui ce que nos avons dit ailleurs de la réflexion: que son objet ne peut pas lui échapper absolument, puisque n’en avons notion que par elle.” Landes takes *elle* to refer to *réflexion* and translates the text as “we only have a notion of the object through reflection.” However, I think that that construal of the sentence conveys the exact opposite of Merleau-Ponty’s meaning. I take *elle* to refer to *expérience*, and I hope that my interpretation of the sentence will be justified by my interpretation in what follows.

³⁸ The concrete other has a merely probable character: “In a word what is certain is that I am looked-at: what is only probable is that the look is bound to this or that intra-mundane presence. Moreover there is nothing here to surprise us since as we have seen, it is never eyes which look at us; it is the Other-as-subject” (Sartre 1966, 277).

other lived bodies. The body of the other presents itself to me as behaving in meaningful ways without its ever becoming the object of an express comparison or analogy with mine.

The fact that intersubjectivity was a problem for Husserl, one with which he was confronted again and again, entails, according to Merleau-Ponty's reading, that Husserl should have revised his notion of the transcendental ego. We saw that it is doubtful, to say the least, whether the real Husserl ever forsook the primacy of the pure, transcendental ego in favor of embodied subjectivity. However that may be, Merleau-Ponty was firmly convinced that this was at least an unexpressed tendency of Husserl's thought. As the latter puts it in one of his later writings, "The Philosopher and its Shadow," "Husserl wanted to say [...] that there is no constituting of a mind for a mind, but of a man for a man" (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 169).

As we saw, Merleau-Ponty's view of subjectivity as embodied does not amount to erasing the problem of intersubjectivity and the threat of solipsism, but rather makes us aware of their respective, genuine, meaning for the first time. The original or primal experience of the other should properly be described as intercorporeal rather than intersubjective, for there is no genuine access to the other's subjectivity as such. The latter forever eludes our grasp. In this, for Merleau-Ponty, lies what may be viewed as the truth in solipsism. This "truth" is partial, however, not only because I am confronted, as a matter of fact, with many subjects with whom I co-exist in the world, but also because I can only think of myself as a subject against the background of my primordial "thrownness" into the world; in other words, by reflecting on myself as someone who acts, perceives and interacts with others in the world.

Merleau-Ponty's view has the great merit of making a very strong connection between subjectivity and intersubjectivity—of showing, in other words, that it is only possible for us to form the idea of other subjects because our self is radically different from the Cartesian self, and vice-versa. As a result, Merleau-Ponty manages to turn Husserl's account of intersubjectivity on its head, undermining the foundations of Husserlian phenomenology (even if this remains polemical from a Husserlian point of view).

References

- Barbaras, Renaud. 1991. *L'être du phénomène*. Grenoble: Éditions Jérôme Millon.
- Behnke, Elizabeth A. n.d. "Edmund Husserl: Phenomenology of Embodiment." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Accessed December, 5, 2018. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/husspemb/>
- Carman, Taylor. 2008. *Merleau-Ponty*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Carr, David. 1999. *The Paradox of Subjectivity. The Self in the Transcendental Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dillon, M.C. 1988. *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Fink, Eugen. 1933. "Die phänomenologische Philosophie Edmund Husserls in der gegenwärtigen Kritik." *Kantstudien* 38: 319–83.
- Gallagher, Sean. 1995. "Body Schema and Intentionality." In *The Body and the Self*, edited by José Luis Bermudez, Anthony Marcel and Naomi Eilan, 225-244. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Gardner, Sebastian. 2009. *Sartre's Being and Nothingness. A Reader's Guide*. London: Continuum.
- Hass, Lawrence. 2008. *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1962. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson. Oxford, UK: Blackwell. Originally published as *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1927. Page numbers refer to the German edition and are also reproduced at the margins of the English translation.
- Husserl, Edmund. 1960. *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Translated by Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. Originally published as *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*. Vol. I of *Husserliana*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950. Page numbers refer to the German edition, which are also reproduced at the margins of the English translation.
- . 1969. *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. Translated by Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- . 1973. *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Erster Teil: 1905-1920*. Edited by Iso Kern. Vol. XIII of *Husserliana*. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.
- . 1973. *Experience and Judgement. Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*. Revised and edited by Ludwig Landgrebe. Translated by James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- . 1977. *Phenomenological Psychology. Lectures, Summer Semester, 1925*. Translated by John Scanlon. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- . 1989. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book. Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and Andre Schuwer. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. Originally published as *Ideen zur einer reinen Phänomenologie und zu einer phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch*. Edited by Marly

- Biemel. Vol. IV of *Husserliana*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952. Page numbers refer to the German edition and are also reproduced at the margins of the English translation.
- . 1997. *Thing and Space. Lectures of 1907*. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- . 2001. *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis. Lectures on Transcendental Logic*. Translated by Anthony J. Steinbock. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- . 2006. *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Translated by Ingo Farin and James G. Hart. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Langer, Monika. 1989. *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception. A Guide and Commentary*. Hampshire: Macmillan Press.
- Marratto, Scott. 2012. *Intercorporeal Self. Merleau-Ponty on Intersubjectivity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Matthews, Eric. 2002. *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*. Chesham: Acumen.
- . 2006. *Merleau-Ponty: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1964. *Signs*. Translated with an Introduction by Richard C. McCleary. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- . 1968. *The Visible and the Invisible Followed by Working Notes*. Edited by Claude Lefort. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- . 2010. *Child Psychology and Pedagogy. The Sorbonne Lectures 1949-1952*. Translated by T. Welsh. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- . 2012. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Donald A. Landes. Abingdon, UK: Routledge. Originally published as *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Paris: Gallimard, 1945. Page numbers refer to the English edition followed by references to the French edition in square brackets. The latter are also reproduced at the margins of the English translation.
- Priest, Stephen. 1998. *Merleau-Ponty*. London: Routledge.
- Romdenh-Romluc, Komarine. 2011. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Merleau-Ponty and Phenomenology of Perception*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1966. *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*. Translated by H. Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press. Originally published as *L'être et le néant*. Paris: Gallimard, 1943.
- . 2004. *Transcendence of the Ego. A Sketch for a Phenomenological Description*. Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- Seebohm, Thomas. 2002. In *Merleau-Ponty's Reading of Husserl*, edited by Ted Toadvine and Lester Embree, 51-68. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Smith, A.D. 2003. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*. London: Routledge.
- De Sousa, Luís Aguiar. 2018. "The Lived Body as Pre-reflective consciousness: Merleau-Ponty on the Cogito", *Studia UBB. Philosophia*, 63 (1): 7-20.
- Zahavi, Dan. 1994. "Husserl's Phenomenology of the Body". *Études phénoménologiques*, 29, 63-84.
- . 2003. *Husserl's Phenomenology*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- . 2014. *Self & Other. Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.