Introduction

1.

When we reflect on ourselves we often borrow concepts and thoughts from the natural sciences. The rise of modern science and its commitment to truth motivate us to integrate scientific views in our reflection on our personal lives, society, and generally all the things we care about. We are, for instance, increasingly inclined to explain our character, our behavior, and our experiences in terms of neural processes or genetic blueprint. There is no doubt that it is worthwhile to learn from science about certain aspects of our lives, but this does not relieve us of the task to reflect on the fundamental relationship between the scientific view of human beings and the view we have of ourselves before we adopt a scientific perspective. What are the similarities and differences between the presuppositions of science and those of the prescientific point of view we normally have on our own lives?

Let me give an example to make this problem more concrete. When Hillary Clinton was running for president against Obama in 2008, CBS reported: "During a campaign stop in the hometown of the woman who started the celebration of Mother's Day 100 years ago, Hillary Clinton said that being a mother and a woman have uniquely prepared her for taking on the presidency. 'I've come to believe that hard work, determination and resilience are encoded in our DNA', she said. 'We know we have the "worrying gene", we know we have the "put your coat on because it's cold outside gene", but we also have the "stand up and fight for what you believe in gene".'"[1]

Clinton's speech illustrates the way that scientific conceptions become part of the way we see ourselves. This evokes several questions. It is a myth to think that for every human talent or other kind of property there is a gene which corre-

1 Fernando Suarez, "Clinton Says She Has the Right Genes To Be President", CBS, 11 Mai 2008, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-502443_162-4086447-502443.html.

lates one-to-one with that property, but this is not my main interest—geneticists can dispel that myth much better than I can. Another question is: do we have a genetic makeup and does it (besides other factors) determine our physiological constitution and our talents? We can be very short about this: of course we do, and of course it does: there is absolutely no reason to call these scientific insights into question. But the truly philosophical question is: what *other* conceptions of the self does the genetic perspective compete with? The molecular structures called genes do not occur in our ordinary experience and they are virtually absent from our life stories. We can take any biography and we will see that reference to genes is almost always non-existent or futile. Assuming that there is truth in the stories we tell about ourselves, we have to ask how this truth about human existence is reconcilable with the scientific truth that genes are an important factor in determining what and who we are.

Consider another example of the influence of science on our self-reflection: Derek Thompson's article in The Atlantic about consumer behavior.[2] Thompson states that we, consumers, are not very good at making rational decisions. Part of the problem, he says, is that very often we simply do not calculate what a price reduction or an offer of a free extra quantity of a certain product amounts to. He presents eleven ways in which "we are not good at math".[3] Although Thompson's insights are certainly worth paying attention to, I am here more interested in something else: the author in passing refers to the *brain* as responsible for our lack of a critical attitude. Thompson tells us that most people prefer a free extra portion of a certain product over a reduction on an unchanged quantity of the same product, even if the reduction makes the purchase relatively cheaper: "Consumers don't know what the heck anything should cost, so we rely on parts of our brains that aren't strictly quantitative."[4] In addition, we would rather buy something which costs $99.99 than something priced $100.00, although the difference between the two prices is negligible. Thompson explains: "In the number 9, the bargain-hunter/discount-gatherer corner of our brain spots a pluckable deal."[5] Thompson apparently thinks that *we* do not spot a beneficial deal: our *brain* spots it. Or do the brain and the person whose brain it is *both* spot the deal?

2 Derek Thompson, "The 11 Ways That Consumers Are Hopeless at Math", The Atlantic, 6 July 2012, http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/07/the-11-ways-that-consumers-are-hopeless-at-math/259479/.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

Thompson's story is not emphatically about brain functioning, and he also refers to us, consumers, as *persons* who make choices on the basis of certain narratives: "If you can't sell a product, try putting something nearly identical, but twice as expensive, next to it. It'll make the first product look like a gotta-have-it bargain. One explanation for why this tactic works is that people like stories or justifications. Since it's terribly hard to know the true value of things, we need narratives to explain our decisions to ourselves."[6] We see that Thompson sometimes refers to the brain as the decision maker, at other times to the person as the one who decides. But it is not clear what criteria Thompson uses to refer either to the "consumer-brain" or to the "consumer-person". Could he also have said, in the latter quotation, that "the *brain* needs narratives to explain its decisions to itself"? In other words, are "brain" and "person" interchangeable in such sentences? Or do we tacitly shift from a first-person perspective to a scientific, third-person point of view in these cases?

I think we do, and this raises a number of further questions. What motivates such shifts of perspective? When are we justified—not morally, but logically—to choose our usual "I did this"-perspective, and when should we instead turn to the "the brain decided"-point of view? Can we say at all that the brain decides something? It is undeniable that good brain functioning is a precondition for perception, action, and decisions, including consumer choices. It is also undeniable that we can (at least under lab circumstances) correlate decision making with specific brain processes. But do these observations imply that it is actually the brain that makes the decision?

Both the genes example and the "consumer-brain" example raise the question of which perspective we should adopt in our everyday self-reflection, and this question refers us to the mind-body problem. Let us suppose for now that human beings have bodies which are potentially scientific objects, and that they also have minds. What, then, is the relationship between this objective human body, including our genes and the brain, and the mind that is in some sense (and to some extent) the master of that body? When Thompson refers to the stories we tell ourselves, he intuitively ascribes these stories, not to the brain, but to us, persons. Perhaps Thompson felt it was a step too far to say that the brain would explain its decisions to itself by telling itself stories. As regards the first example, Clinton does not always talk about her genes: the campaign speech quoted above was in this respect exceptional. Both examples illustrate that, although we are inclined to integrate a scientific way of thinking into our self-reflection, we are for some reason not inclined to adopt the scientific perspective as our default

6 Ibid.

point of view. Even if it is true that we increasingly have recourse to scientific explanations in order to understand our behavior, there is always a point at which we return to our first-person perspective and say, for instance: "The offer looked good to me, so I bought it." Or: "Women are in some respects more talented than men."

What is a person and her narratives in relation to her body and her brain? The question pertains to what we consider to be the scope of human *reality*. What is our ultimate reality: is it the body as an objective part of nature or is it the person who refers to herself as an ego, an I? Is it the physical and organic body or is it the first person of experience, and the world as she experiences it in her own life—what in philosophy we call the *phenomenal* world? The question is: what do we regard as real, this phenomenal world including ourselves as inhabitants of that world or objective reality, including our bodies as part of that reality—or somehow both?

If we feel the need to choose at this point we might be tempted to endorse a materialist position. According to materialism, the way we experience the various worlds that make up our lives (our working environment, family, the activities we enjoy, the world of art, politics, entertainment, and so forth) are nothing but an illusion caused by natural processes within the external world and our own bodies. The materialist argues that his position draws on scientific knowledge, the truth of which is based on its relationship to an objective reality. This objective reality might include living and non-living things, but from the scientific perspective the non-living is more fundamental than the living: the existence of the organic (including human life) depends on a preexisting inanimate world, not vice versa. There is certainly truth in this way of thinking, but as I will show, this truth needs to be complemented by an account which treats the phenomenal world as more fundamental than physical reality. Materialism does not accept this complementary view: it thinks only physical reality can have a fundamental ontological status.

It is important to note that not all physical realism is reductionistic and materialistic: if you believe that physical reality is indeed *real*, this does not automatically mean that you reject the reality of the phenomenal world. You might still also want to embrace some form of *phenomenal* realism. The phenomenal realist says that the world as we experience it from our first-person perspective is real. He says that the consumer's decision to buy this or that product cannot be reduced to the objective processes within his own body. In this view, the phenomenal world cannot be reduced to physical reality because it is of a fundamentally different kind: the phenomenal world does not have the same *structure* as physical reality. The latter view is my own position: I argue that in order to un-

derstand our being in the world we need to endorse both physical and phenomenal realism. One of the main aims of this book is to show how we can reconcile both views.[7]

But what does it mean to say that the phenomenal world has a different "structure" than physical reality? I address this question by distinguishing between two concepts of "transcendence". Let me introduce this distinction, for now in a sketchy manner, by restricting myself to the way the external, *natural* world is present to us.

Phenomenal nature is characterized by an inexhaustible richness of colors, shapes, sounds, smells, landscapes, weather conditions, minerals, organisms, and so forth. It is organized by spatial orientations: every landscape has a higher zone (e.g. above the horizon) and a lower zone, a left and a right, a zone close to us and a zone far away from us—regardless of where exactly we would draw the boundaries. Accordingly, every object appears with one side up, the other side down, with a left side and a right side, and with a front and a back. The phenomenal world is furthermore constituted on the one hand by primary properties like mass and volume, and on the other hand by secondary properties like sound and color. However, our ordinary perception does not distinguish between these two types of properties. Insofar as primary properties like mass are perceived, physical reality is *integrated* in the phenomenal world. The coldness of the snow really tells me something about a physical property of the snow that science, in a different way, also has access to. One stone feels heavier than the other: if we are not tricked by a perceptual illusion, a scale will affirm that the stones have different masses within physical reality. In our prescientific perception of the phenomenal world, primary and secondary properties are all the same to us.

This phenomenal world is characterized by an ambiguity of immanence and transcendence. On the one hand the appearing world correlates with what we actually perceive on the basis of our familiarity with the environment; this is the world's immanence to experience. On the other hand, since the phenomenal world is always only partially given in perception, we can say that it has a depth of qualities which goes beyond, which *transcends* its actual appearance to us. Because the world transcends us it always invites further exploration and can keep surprising us. This is the first concept of the transcendence of nature I distinguish.

7 By "reconcile" I do not mean that I bring the two realisms to a synthesis, but rather that I present a view which *accommodates* both physical and phenomenal realism while at the same time respecting the fundamental discontinuity between these two perspectives.

In contrast with the phenomenal world, physical reality does not possess secondary but only primary properties. Among these primary properties are the properties which render possible that, on a phenomenal level, *secondary* properties (also) appear as part of the phenomenal world of human beings. As just noted, we experience the phenomenal world as organized by spatial orientations, but if we adopt a more theoretical point of view we know that spatial orientations cannot be ascribed to physical reality. Since the outer world is nonetheless present to us according to these structures (unity of primary and secondary qualities and spatial orientation[8]), physical reality is not only integrated in the world as it appears: it also has an aspect which is, as it were, turned away from the phenomenal world. The obscure side of physical reality is not the same as the phenomenal depth of qualities referred to above, since the latter qualities are all *potential* phenomenal appearances. This is the second way in which we can speak of the "transcendence" of nature: physical reality transcends the way in which the external world is present to us in perception. From this perspective, the phenomenal world *as such* is immanent to perception. In other words, when we concentrate on the relationship between physical reality and the phenomenal world, we necessarily lose sight of the depth of qualities, i.e., of the dimension of transcendence *intrinsic* to the phenomenal world. We can only be oriented towards one of these two kinds of transcendence at a time, because the one always makes the other invisible. This also means that it makes no sense to say that one of these realities is "more transcendent" than the other.

Let me illustrate the two meanings of "transcendence" by giving an example. Take a single natural object: a boulder in a shallow stream. We know that it has many aspects, a texture which is smooth at one place, rough and gritty at another. As an aesthetic object the rock can be studied indefinitely. The rock shines through all its appearances, and it continues to invite new points of view. We attribute transcendence to the rock insofar as it possesses a richness of properties which can in principle be perceived but which goes beyond its actual appearance here and now (first concept of transcendence). The boulder in the stream appears with a top and a bottom, a front, a back, a left and a right. If we say that it does not really have these spatial orientations, because the rock up side down looks quite the same, then we still have to admit that after the turn we *see* the top in the side which used to be the bottom. This is necessarily so, because the phenomenal world, the landscape of which the rock is a part, is always organized by spatial orientations. But when we reflect on these matters on a more theoretical level

8 For the sake of simplicity I am, for now, leaving out the motivational structure of the phenomenal world, which I turn to later.

and we abstract from the structure of perception, we realize that, in some sense, neither the rock nor the surface of the earth possess a top or a bottom, a left or a right. We are then contemplating physical reality as it is in itself, and we find that the physical is not characterized by these orientations, or that they are merely relative. Insofar as physical reality in itself does not possess spatial orientations, it can be said to *transcend* the phenomenal world, because the phenomenal is characterized by these very orientations (second concept of transcendence).[9]

I have distinguished between two concepts of transcendence: the transcendence of the phenomenal (intrinsic to the phenomenal world) and the transcendence of physical reality (extrinsic to the phenomenal world). The main emphasis in this book is on the concept of the transcendence of physical reality, i.e., on the relationship *between* physical reality and the phenomenal world. Let me return for a moment to the question of why this is an important topic. As noted, the attempt to get some grip on the relationship between natural science and our prescientific experience leads to the question regarding the truth of scientific knowledge—its possibility and its limitations. In my view, acknowledging the possibility of scientific truth depends on physical realism: physical reality is the *ontic* condition for the possibility of scientific truth. However, if the world of first-person experience has a different structure than physical reality but is no less real, then there are at the same time *limitations* to the scientific domain. Scientific truth competes with, for instance, the truth conveyed by the stories we tell about ourselves. When I speak of the "truth" of stories I do not mean the details of our narratives, but rather the basic presuppositions of storytelling with regard to what we, human beings, are. Taking someone seriously by listening to her story means that we approach her as a person, who makes choices and gains some understanding of herself through self-reflection and conversation. It means that we approach the other person as a being who is situated in a natural and a social world, which means that she is *free*—not in an absolute but in a relative sense.

9 We can attribute a third meaning to the expression "transcendence of nature". This meaning is located on the phenomenal level, but it cannot be defined merely in terms of the world's qualitative depth. It refers to the otherness and to the intrinsic value of nature, which makes itself felt *in* and *through* the specificity of its qualities. Charles Taylor discusses the Romantic background of this concept of transcendence and he also seems to endorse that tradition when, referring to nature and other moral sources, he calls on us to engage in "the search for moral sources *outside* the subject" (Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 510). I leave this conception of nature's transcendence aside. I mention it in order to avoid the misunderstanding that my current use of the word "transcendence" would have this moral or existential significance.

We do this all the time in the practice of our daily lives. Even in extreme cases, if a person's life is full of adversity so that the person's freedom is constantly restricted, the tragedy of this life consists precisely in this person's *real* freedom being minimized. We can only make sense of such tragedy if we accept a non-reductive concept of freedom. The crux is that by speaking of freedom as a reality we do not judge on the question of *how* free we are.[10]

Since my introduction of the concept of a phenomenal world above was restricted to nature, it did not yet include a notion of freedom. Even if it is only my secondary aim to contribute to the classic freedom-determinism debate, I still need a broader concept of the phenomenal world, so that it includes our inner world and the social world. I will return to the different senses of "phenomenal world" in Section 3 of this introduction. In addition, in the chapters to come I will try to show that the attempt to reconcile physical realism and phenomenal realism not only serves the aim of understanding our relationship to the outer world, but also of doing justice to the person, her freedom, and the social character of her life.

On the one hand we should take seriously the truth claim of science; on the other hand science cannot tell the whole truth about human existence. The attempt to reconcile physical realism and phenomenal realism is an attempt to argue that very point. Finally, this attempt also entails the necessity of dealing with the problem of how a human being can be both a mind and a body (or have a mind and a body). But, as I argue, the mind-body problem can only be addressed properly if at the same time we change its traditional Cartesian formulation in these very terms: mind (res cogitans) and body (res extensa). This formulation implies that the mind is something immaterial and accessible to a first person, that the body is something purely material and mechanical, and best described by science, and that mind and body are thus *divorced* from one another.

This book will put forward several objections to the Cartesian view. Firstly, the body is not only an object of science but also a thing that is part of our everyday world. My body is an object of everyday perception (whether I am the subject of perception or not) and, as we saw above, a phenomenal object is not

10 For this reason I am critical of Dick Swaab's way of reasoning about freedom (Swaab, *Wij zijn ons brein*, 379-382/ *We Are Our Brains*, 326-329). Step by step Swaab tries to show that we are not as free as we are inclined to think. This attempt to "dispel the myth" of freedom is logically flawed, because Swaab confounds two questions. The primary philosophical question is: are we in any respect, and to any extent, free beings? The degree of freedom and our possible overestimation of it is secondary to that question.

the same as a physical object. Secondly, the mind is not purely immaterial: it is itself *embodied*. The mind is primarily an engaged, sensorimotor openness to the world. It is the subject of bodily perceptions and actions in the external world, or of immediate bodily self-expressions within the social world. It is the same body that performs the act of thinking, even though thinking seems at a distance from the body. We need to replace the "mind-body problem" by the question of how these various aspects of our existence, i.e., embodied subjectivity and the various senses in which the body is "objective", are interconnected. This question follows from the question of how the scientific and the first-person perspective are interrelated. A philosophy of the body is the key to understanding the relationship between physical reality and the phenomenal world, as my body is both part of and relates to this reality and this world.

Because of this focus on the body, a large part of this book is devoted to Merleau-Ponty, who is widely regarded as the philosopher of the body par excellence. But I will draw even more strongly on the less well-known Helmuth Plessner. Both Merleau-Ponty and Plessner have developed a philosophy of embodied subjectivity (although, in relation to Plessner, we should actually speak of "embodied personhood"[11]), and both defend the primacy of first-person experience and self-understanding over scientific perspectives. Finally, they have in common a thorough knowledge of natural science. Plessner was not only a philosopher but also a biologist. Both Plessner and Merleau-Ponty base their views on detailed interpretations of research in the fields of biology, behavioral sciences, neuroscience, physiology, and psychology.

As regards the historical background of these two philosophers, Plessner's main work, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch*,[12] was published 14

11 According to Plessner, human beings are not only subjects but also persons, and "person" is the more encompassing concept. I agree with Plessner's distinction, but in phenomenology the word "subject" predominates and, in addition, it is often interchangeable with "person". We speak, for instance, of the subject as a first person. Therefore, until the discussion of Plessner in Chapter 5, I will follow this flexible usage.

12 Hereafter: *Stufen*. A translation of this work into English is forthcoming. References to the *Stufen* will first mention the page number from the De Gruyter edition, then the one from the Suhrkamp edition (separated by a forward slash). Translations of passages from the *Stufen* are mine. As regards other translated passages, all translations in this book are my own, unless I add the page number from an existing translation, which is then mentioned in the bibliography. Page numbers from translations are given after the page numbers from the original work, separated by a forward slash.

years before Merleau-Ponty's first important work, *La structure du comportement*.[13] It seems that Merleau-Ponty had not read Plessner's *Stufen*.[14] Merleau-Ponty only refers to some texts which Plessner wrote together with F.J.J. Buytendijk, but he never enters into a discussion with Plessner about the essential parts of his philosophy. Interesting though this history is, I will focus on the *systematic* comparison between the two views. I think that, on the one hand, Plessner offers a more encompassing framework for understanding the relationship between physical reality and phenomenal world. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty's concept of motivation and his distinction between syncretic, amovible, and symbolic behavior, are unequaled and indispensible for our purposes. In my view, both philosophers complement one another.

I have given this book the title *Body and Reality* because it explores in what ways we are, as bodies, both *part* of reality and *open* to that same reality. The word "reality" not only refers to physical reality but also to the phenomenal world. Only our phenomenally present environment can be called a "world", but this term does not imply that it is merely subjective and not real. As noted above, the aspiration of this book is to accommodate both physical and phenomenal realism. It is to show how both the physical and the phenomenal can be real.

Without doubt, this agenda raises the question whether this is still a phenomenological project. This question will be touched upon a number of times, but I will not present any definite answer or make strong claims about the issue. I will assume that phenomenology can be expanded to include physical realism. One reason in favor of this assumption is that, as I will show in Chapters 6 and 7, we have first-person experience of physical reality as that which transcends the phenomenal world. Phenomenology is *the* philosophy of first-person experience. Another reason is that we can apply eidetic variation and reduction to physical reality as it is in itself (more about this in Section 3 of this Introduction). But to be honest, I am not entirely sure yet whether my agenda should be to *expand* phenomenology or to *complement* it with a philosophy of physical reality and physical realism. In that sense the phenomenological pretence of this book is somewhat hypothetical. I hope that my phenomenological readers acknowledge that this is not the most important question we face. We should think freely about these matters and not turn phenomenology into a dogmatic program. So, in principle, we should be prepared to expand phenomenology beyond its current boundaries *or* accept that there is more to philosophy than phe-

13 Hereafter: *The Structure of Behavior*, except in footnotes.

14 Cf. Struyker-Boudier, *Merleau-Ponty and Buytendijk: Report of a Relationship*, and van Buuren, *Buytendijk und die Philosophische Anthropologie*.

nomenology if the *things themselves* urge us to do so. The question whether you agree with my view is more important than the question whether you want to call it phenomenology (which is not to say that the latter question is unimportant).

The next section is an announcement of the content of all 7 chapters of this book. This enables the reader to get a quick overview and to find points of his or her interest. However, being a summary it is unavoidably a bit dense and raises many questions – which, I hope, will all be answered in the course of this book. Section 3 of this Introduction explains the reasons behind some of the main terms used. Readers who want to dive right into the matter may want to skip Section 2 and 3 and move on to Chapter 1.

2.

Part I of this book discusses the two dominant strands of materialism today, reductionism and eliminativism, and some criticisms of these strands of thought. In Chapter 1 I discuss Daniel Dennett's reductive materialism. Dennett is not only one of the most important representatives of materialism of our time; his "heterophenomenology" also invites a comparison with phenomenology. In the discussion of Dennett, the question regarding science and ordinary, non-scientific self-understanding turns out to be inextricably intertwined with the so-called mind-body problem. (I say "so-called" because, as I will explain, the term "mind-body problem" is a bad phrasing of the actual issue at hand.) Dennett thinks there are two possible answers to this problem: materialistic monism and Cartesian dualism. Dualism is the idea that the mind is something immaterial and thus divorced from the material human body. Since Dennett wants to steer clear of this radical separation of body and mind, he embraces materialistic monism instead. This is also the background of his rejection of phenomenology.

I argue that Dennett misconstrues phenomenology and that, consequently, his objections to this tradition miss their target. In addition, I show that while Dennett tries to abandon phenomenological concepts on the personal level, he tacitly reintroduces such concepts on the subpersonal level of neuronal functioning. In this way he involuntarily demonstrates the indispensability of phenomenological understanding.[15]

15 My criticism of Dennett is, of course, not a novelty but stands in a long tradition of phenomenological critiques of materialism or naturalism. As noted, I draw on Plessner's and Merleau-Ponty's, but also on Charles Taylor's work. As regards the criti-

Part of my critique of Dennett is inspired by Maxwell Bennett and Peter Hacker, whose *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* is discussed in Section 2.1. Bennett and Hacker rightly criticize what they call the "mereological fallacy": Dennett ascribes properties which belong to the person as a whole (such as thinking or perception) to only a "part" of the person: the brain. Although I agree with the tenor of this critique, I argue that Bennett and Hacker's ordinary language approach needs to be complemented by phenomenology. I then turn to the other dominant strand of materialism today: eliminative materialism. Whereas Dennett sometimes allows that intentional states are real, but can only be explained on a subpersonal level, Paul and Patricia Churchland, inspired by Quine, claim that such states are not real in the first place. They think that only physical reality is real. I argue that the Churchlands implicitly presuppose that there is something like first-person knowledge, which means that their view is incoherent. I also criticize their concept of "folk psychology": this notion is too restricted in scope to define the domain of first-person experience.

In Section 2.3, the final section of Chapter 2, I turn to the question to what extent phenomenology is the prisoner of a mechanism of polarization between phenomenology and materialism. Has phenomenology, in its fierce defense of the phenomenal world against reductionism, failed to do justice to physical reality and its relationship to the phenomenal world? In Chapters 6 and 7 I show that this can indeed be argued in regard to Merleau-Ponty. In Section 2.3 I prepare that discussion by pointing the question at Husserl and Heidegger, arguing that neither of the two provides a convenient starting point for understanding physical reality in relation to the phenomenal world.

Chapter 3 discusses the phenomenological-hermeneutical view of Charles Taylor. Taylor does not extensively criticize Dennett or the Churchlands, but his critique of naturalism also applies to materialism (as one form of naturalism). I agree with Taylor that the question regarding a true understanding of our being in the world is a matter of finding the "best account" of it.[16] If it turns out that scientific concepts are too poor to accommodate our own experiences and our basic forms of self-understanding, then we need a different kind of concepts. I

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cism of the reduction of human experience to, specifically, neural processes, we find an early example in Émil Du Bois-Reymond's 1872 Paper *Über die Grenzen des Naturerkennens* (*The Limits of Our Knowledge of Nature*), which I will refer to a couple of times. I hope the beginning of my introduction makes clear that, despite this rich tradition, it remains important to explore the relationship between the scientific world picture and our ordinary self-understanding.

16 Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 58.

argue that Taylor is right that hermeneutical phenomenology offers a better account of our being in the world than materialism. Phenomenology connects directly with the way we experience the world as first persons and also with the narrative structure of our self-understanding. The reality of freedom, of subjectivity, of what we express in our narratives, we can summarize as "phenomenal reality". We can thus say that Taylor supports phenomenal realism.

The discussions in Part I lead to four further questions, which I take up in Part II. I will first sketch these questions, and then present the layout of the remaining chapters.

(A) Taylor touches on the problem of how the first-person point of view and the scientific perspective are interconnected, but he does not give a place to the scientific perspective within subjectivity as a whole. Another open question is: what motivates the shift from one perspective to the other? I call this problem the question of the arrangement of perspectives.

(B) We may reject materialism by pointing out that we are subjects or persons who experience the world in a way which is indescribable from a third-person point of view, but then we still need to develop an alternative response to the mind-body problem. The question is: what is the best account of the nexus of human body and mind? We have to start by asking ourselves whether the formulation "mind-body problem", or its variant "mind-brain problem", is a good point of departure in the first place.

(C) The power of materialism lies in its physical realism and in the thesis that the human body is an integral part of the physical universe. Taylor in passing endorses physical realism (i.e., besides phenomenal realism), but this is not a main issue for him so he does not present an extensive argument to support his position. Are there any further arguments in favor of physical realism, besides the need to do justice to the truth claim of science?

(D) How can we overcome the one-sidedness of materialism and at the same time retain its inherent physical realism? In other words, how can we understand that both physical reality and the human, phenomenal world are real?

The key to addressing these issues is a philosophy of the human body. Although Taylor does not develop such a philosophy he often refers to (and defends) Merleau-Ponty. As noted, I will draw on both Merleau-Ponty and Plessner. The discussion of Merleau-Ponty will focus on *The Structure of Behavior*, because this work expounds the relationship between physical reality and human existence. In addition, I discuss a number of key-passages from Merleau-Ponty's

Phénoménologie de la perception.[17] Merleau-Ponty's later work will also be touched on.

The layout of Part II is as follows. In Chapters 4 and 5 I address the problem of the arrangement of perspectives and the mind-body problem. The question we inherit from Dennett is: what do we do with dualism? When we say that there is not only a human body but also a real subject or person who lives in a real world of phenomenal qualities, are we not embracing a mind as divorced from the body? Both Plessner and Merleau-Ponty show that there are more fruitful ways of formulating the mind-body problem: the "mind" is not an immaterial substance; it is our subjective *bodily* openness to the world. We should thus speak of a body-subject, so that the question is no longer: what is the relationship between the mind and the body?, but rather: what is the relationship between the subjective aspect of the body and the objective aspect of the body?[18]

Interpreting Merleau-Ponty, I argue that the subject's first-person experience has primacy over the objectification of the body by science. (The same can also be argued on the basis of Plessner's view.) This concerns the problem of the "arrangement of perspectives". I show that the turn to the perspective of natural science is fundamentally motivated by the need or desire to heal, restore, or enhance our being in the world as subjects. I then explore in what way we are an objective body not to science but to ourselves as first persons. I begin with a discussion of the *perception* of the body proper according to Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. Merleau-Ponty on the one hand allows that *parts* of the body proper can be an object to me; on the other hand he expresses the view that our body cannot be an object *at all* to us, since the body is first and foremost a subject who is open to the phenomenal world. We find a broader outlook in Merleau-Ponty's earlier *The Structure of Behavior*: an *awareness* of the objective body is here more fundamental than specific perceptions of it. The subject not only perceives *parts* of his body as objects: his whole body is to himself both

17 Hereafter: *Phenomenology of Perception* or simply *Phenomenology*, except in footnotes.

18 I do not agree with Taylor Carman that phenomenology should not address the mind-body problem because it would be a "metaphysical" not a "phenomenological" question (Carman, *Merleau-Ponty*, 227). Both Carman and I see that the problem is badly formulated, but, in my view, this is precisely why it needs phenomenological redescription. Admittedly, I have a fairly broad view of phenomenology—more about this below.

a sensorimotor subject and "an object among objects".[19] I find *The Structure of Behavior* in this respect more persuasive than the *Phenomenology of Perception*.

The question concerning the body as an object of the phenomenal world can be solved by comparing Merleau-Ponty's own texts, but one fundamental question then still remains unanswered. When Merleau-Ponty states that we are to ourselves not only subjects but also objects among other objects, it is not clear *from what position* we can actually experience our bodies as both subject and object, or *in what position* we are, insofar as we are conscious of these two aspects. In addition, it is unclear in what *form of embodiment* this distance from the objective and subjective body is realized. Merleau-Ponty's anthropology remains a philosophy of embodied *subjectivity*, which human beings share with higher animals.

In Chapter 5 I argue that Plessner's view is very similar to Merleau-Ponty's, except that Plessner complements Merleau-Ponty's view in regard to this very issue. With Plessner we can understand what it is about our embodied being in the world that renders possible that we relate to both the subjectivity and the objectivity of our bodies. In Plessner's view, only a being that is "eccentrically positioned" lives at a distance to these two aspects of his existence. This way of being positioned in the world, this "form of positionality", defines the human being as a person. Plessner's philosophy of "embodied personhood", as we can call it, thus surpasses and encompasses Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of "embodied subjectivity".

Chapters 4 and 5 still deal with the body proper as, on the one hand, a scientific object and on the other hand an object of the first person's phenomenal world. Science approaches the body as an organic or a physical object, but the fact that our body is part of physical reality can also be experienced from a *pre*-scientific perspective. So far, when we speak of the first-person experience of the objective body, this refers to the body as an object *of the phenomenal world*. As noted, the phenomenal world has a structure which differs from that of physical reality: it is organized by perceptual qualities and spatial orientations. In Chapters 6 and 7 I explain that in exceptional situations we are specifically confronted with the body as an object *of physical reality*, or better: the *tension* between the phenomenal world and physical reality makes itself felt. I argue that this happens in two types of experience: (a) experiences of the threat of a natural disaster, and (b) perceptual illusions. The physical body in this sense, although experienced from a first-person point of view, is not the same as the body as an object of the phenomenal world. Only by addressing the body proper as part of

19 Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, 128/118.

physical reality can we complete our answer to the mind-body problem and (at least within the logical space of this book) definitely overcome materialism.

In Chapter 6 I argue that Merleau-Ponty's view of the relationship between physical reality and the phenomenal world is not entirely consistent. On the one hand Merleau-Ponty presupposes that physical reality is the ontic precondition of the higher dialectics of animal and human existence. On the other hand there is, in his view, no physical reality in itself: physical reality would be a human construction on the basis of the lived world, and physical gestalts are, according to him, *perceptual* gestalts. The problem arises that, if physical reality is a human construction, it cannot at the same time be an ontic precondition for human existence. This problem is of an ontological-epistemological kind. It amounts to a question of foundation: is physical reality a perceptual structure and conceptual construct, based on our first-person experience, or is it the other way around: is the phenomenal world based on physical reality? I argue that we are concerned with two *directions* of foundation which are complementary. Materialism clearly founds the phenomenal world on physical reality. Merleau-Ponty in some passages does the exact opposite: by stating that physical reality is a human construct or a perceptual gestalt, he one-sidedly founds physical reality on the structure of the human world.

I show that Plessner tacitly respects both directions of foundation. On the one hand he attributes to the phenomenal world its proper structure (perceptual qualities, spatial orientation) and on the other hand he examines physical reality insofar as it is not part of the phenomenal world, because it is its ontic foundation. A Plessnerian approach includes an ontology which goes beyond phenomenology in the narrow sense of a description of the structure of the appearing world,[20] and affirms the existence of physical reality beyond the phenomenal world. This approach allows us to reconcile physical realism with phenomenal realism. In the comparison with Merleau-Ponty, the physical realism part is the trickiest. Therefore I will underpin my argument by discussing the possibility of natural disasters and perceptual illusions: these two kinds of events can only be understood if we accept that physical reality precedes, supports, and transcends human existence and perception. Whereas in Chapter 6 natural disasters are discussed, Chapter 7 focuses on perceptual illusions.

20 In the next section I explain what senses of phenomenology I distinguish.

3.

Before I cut to the chase I will make five remarks on the terminology used in this book.

(1) "Paradox" and "ambiguity"

Both Plessner and Merleau-Ponty use the words "paradox"[21] and "ambiguity"[22] in a positive sense, and I will follow this usage. Some philosophers find the use of these words very fashionable, and they do not mean that as a compliment. In my view, they are indispensible tools if we want to describe the topics introduced above, and especially if we want to describe the *relationships* between *unlike domains* of phenomena or entities. To recur to the example of spatial orientation, it appears to be undeniable that the world taken as a phenomenal world incorporates spatial orientations like up and down. But it also seems true that the world taken as physical reality does not possess such orientations. What word should we use to describe the relationship between the phenomenal world, with its spatial orientations, and physical reality, without such orientations?

If we call the relationship a "contradiction", then we have to decide that one of these "truths" is in fact not a truth at all: only physical reality or the phenomenal world would be real. This is why the word "paradox" springs to mind.

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21 Plessner, *Stufen*, 305/379: "then the original paradox of the human being's life situation becomes clear: that, as a subject, he stands against himself and the world, and that, at the same time, he is at a distance from this opposition." Cf. also ibid., 342-343/420-421 and 346/424, in regard to the utopian standpoint as "paradox" (*Paradoxon* (343/421, 346/424)) and even "contradiction" (*Widerspruch* (342/420)/ *Widersinn* (342-343/420-421)).

Merleau-Ponty very often uses the word paradox (*paradoxe*) and paradoxical (*paradoxal*) in a positive sense. One example is *Phénoménologie de la perception*, viii/XV, where Merleau-Ponty says that phenomenology should reveal the world "as strange and paradoxical".

22 Plessner, *Lachen und Weinen*, 235/32 (translation modified): "It was overlooked that the human being has, not a univocal, but an equivocal relation to his body, that his existence imposes on him the ambiguity of an 'embodied' creature and a creature 'in the body', an ambiguity that means an actual break in his way of existing."

Merleau-Ponty uses the words "ambiguous" (*ambigu*) and "ambiguity (*ambiguïté*) so often that de Waelhens calls his thinking "a philosophy of ambiguity" (the title of de Waelhens's foreword to *La structure du comportement*).

A paradox is a *seeming* contradiction. With this term we can try to make sense of the fact that both the physical universe and the phenomenal world are real. The word "ambiguity" is a kindred term: it describes the relationship between these two aspects of reality in a more positive way than "paradox"; it underscores that the logical hiatus between the physical and the phenomenal is *constitutive* of their relationship. Incidentally, I will use "paradox" and "ambiguity" on other occasions, too, but always in a similar sense: to describe the relationship between two unlike aspects of our being in the world. When I use the word "paradox" I emphasize that the relationship is a logical problem and a challenge for our thinking. When I say "ambiguity" I endorse that the relationship at issue constitutes a positive structure. For the sake of clarity I will use the word "equivocity" to refer to unproductive "ambiguities", like inconsistencies.

(2) Three senses of "phenomena" and "phenomenology"

I use "phenomena" and "phenomenology" both in narrower and in wider senses. In the narrowest sense, the phenomenal world is the world as it appears in perception. This means that we are here primarily concerned with the *outer* world, not with the mind's inner world or with the social world.[23] It also means that we are emphatically concerned with the way the outer world *appears* to us. Elements of this "way of appearing" are both primary and secondary properties (like color, mass, sound, smell, volume), spatial orientations like up, down, left, and right, the thing's appearance in adumbrations, and the figure-background structure of the perceived world.

In Chapters 6 and 7 I use "phenomenal world" in this narrow sense. There, the central issue is the relationship between the phenomenal world and physical reality. On the one hand the physical is *integrated* in the phenomenal world: gravitation is a physical force and I have perceptual experience of it. On the other hand, physical reality is *hidden* from such prescientific perception, and in tension with it: we perceive colors, sounds, and spatial orientations but these structures do not belong to physical reality. We know that physical reality does not, in itself, have these properties. This places physical reality as it were beyond our perception and beyond the phenomenal world as the correlate of perception.

In the wider (but not the widest) sense, a "phenomenon" is an integral part of the world as it is experienced by the subject as a first person. The subject or person herself is included in this field of experience. The boundary of the notion

23 The distinction between inner world, outer world, and social world is from Plessner. It will be explained in Section 5.1.

is here defined by first-person experience, whereby "experience" is much broader than perception. The phenomenal concerns anything carried out by the first person or "lived through" by her as her reality. Phenomena do not only include external things like the coffee cup on my table and the blueness of the sky, but in addition everything that belongs to the self and the social world, including dreams, memories, imaginations and thoughts, but also social interaction, situations, feelings, emotions, moods, suffering, pleasure, freedom, character, language, story, mood, politics, war, trauma, institutions like states, businesses, schools, universities, the media, and praxes like outdoor sports, science, family life, love, sex, creating art, and philosophy itself.

When we address the freedom-determinism problem, we are not only concerned with a tension between physical reality and the appearance of the *external* world (the narrow definition of the phenomenal), but, more broadly, with the tension between physical reality and our sense of being a free self. Here, the phenomenal includes freedom, responsibility, motivation, reasons. The wider sense of the phenomenal includes the narrow sense, and the distinction between the two senses is not very sharp. Merleau-Ponty has demonstrated that an appearing object possesses a motivational structure: it invites us to do something with it, to respond to it in particular ways. This means that the perceived object is always already integrated in the life of a subject who has practical interests. The subject is solicited to respond *within a certain play of freedom*.[24]

According to a still wider sense that we can attribute to the "phenomenal", even physical reality falls within the scope of this concept. I am not referring to physical reality insofar as it consists of the specific laws of nature which are discovered empirically. This is the field of scientific research. But physical reality is not the exclusive domain of science. The questions I raise about the relationship between physical reality and the phenomenal world are *philosophical* questions. If they are sensible questions, which I think they are, then physical reality is also a topic of philosophy. To go a step further, only philosophy can address the relationship between the physical *as such* and the phenomenal. Physics is not equipped to analyze the inner structure of the phenomenal world, and it is not able to think through the ambiguous relationship between the phenomenal world and physical reality.

But in what sense is physical reality a phenomenon, and thus a subject-matter of phenomenology? One of the reasons I want to use this "widest" definition of phenomenology (besides the "narrow" and the "wider" one), so that it in-

24 As we will see, syncretic motivations are an exception to this, in that they escape direct intervention by the subject.

cludes the physical, is that we can apply Husserl's method of free imaginative variation to physical reality.[25] I think that any answer to the question which kinds of properties are primary qualities and which are secondary qualities is essentially based on such eidetic variation. We vary the properties (mass, color, volume, sound, temperature, movement, etc.) and decide on the basis of an intuiting of the object which of these properties belong to the physical object as it is in itself, and which properties are rather produced in our subjective relationship *to* the object. The process of narrowing down what belongs to the object itself is the so-called eidetic reduction.[26] This procedure is not empirical. I cannot decide by any experiment or observation whether the blue book in front of me, as a physical object, is in itself blue. When I see the book it appears as blue to me, and when I turn to measuring wave lengths I focus on the wave lengths. Although empirical research *correlates* wave lengths with seeing blue, it does not contemplate the nature of the correlation as such. It is no coincidence that Locke made the distinction between primary and secondary properties, determining that color must be a secondary property, long before Maxwell concluded that light is an electromagnetic wave. The relationship as such between colors and wave lengths is not a scientific problem.[27]

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25 For a clear description of this method, see Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, 409-442/339-364. Husserl is critical of the distinction between primary and secondary properties, but this is mainly because he wants to call into question the scientistic thesis that only primary properties are real and secondary properties are not (Husserl, *Ideen I*, 82-83/84-85). However, it is important to note that my approach to physical reality goes against Husserlian phenomenology because, in Husserl's view, phenomenology cannot describe physical reality and certainly not a subject-independent physical reality. See Section 2.3.

26 When applied to primary properties, the method of eidetic variation and reduction differs somewhat from this procedure applied within the domain of the phenomenal world in a narrower sense. In the latter case subject-relativity does not imply that a property does not belong to the phenomenon.

27 Three qualifications need to be made. Firstly, I am presupposing that there is a distinction between science and (a priori, transcendental) philosophy, i.e., that philosophy is not a science. Even if we do want to call philosophy "science", then we still need to acknowledge that it is one of a kind. Secondly, I do not mean that a person who is an empirical scientist cannot engage in a deeper contemplation of the relationship between the physical and the phenomenal, or between primary and secondary properties. I simply say that if she does, she is doing philosophy. Thirdly, science has of course an extremely important role in informing philosophical reflection, and phi-

I have been arguing that first-person experience demarcates the domain of the phenomenal. Does that criterion still hold for the widest sense of "phenomenality"? In other words, can we have a first-person experience of physical reality as distinct from the phenomenal in the narrow sense? If I can feel that one stone is much heavier than another, I can, under normal circumstances, be pretty sure that it has, in itself, a greater mass. In that case the physical is not experienced as distinct from the phenomenal world but as integrated in it. It is simply the physical which appears phenomenally. Science not only quantifies such facts much more accurately, situating them in a context of physical laws, it also "perceives" much more of the external world than we can from our normal, prescientific perspective.

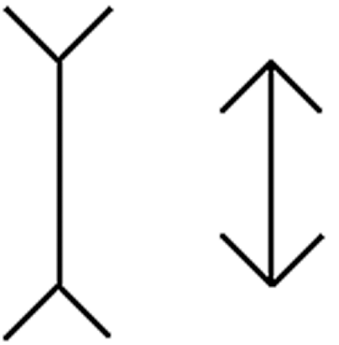

Figure 1: the Müller-Lyer illusion

But the question was: do we have first-person experiences of physical reality as somehow dissolving itself from, as in tension with, the phenomenal world? We do, as I will explain in Chapters 6 and 7. Occasionally we experience physical reality as being in tension with the phenomenal world. This happens in perceptual illusions. Consider for instance the Müller-Lyer illusion (figure 1). Phenomenally, the lines are unequal in length. To use Merleau-Ponty's terminology, the auxiliary lines *motivate* the appearance of one main line as shorter than the other. Physically, the two main lines are equal in length (within a negligible margin of deviation). The physical truth of the matter is only established indirectly, in

losophy interprets scientific findings. Philosophy is partly a meta-reflection on science and therefore both historically and logically dependent on it.

this case by measuring the actual lengths of the main lines. "Indirectly" means that we bypass the motivational structure of the appearing world.

In perceptual illusions, the phenomenal is not univocally the medium of the appearance of physical reality: the physical hides, so to speak, behind the motivational structure of the phenomenon. Insofar as we experience the illusion *as* an illusion, we are at the same time aware *that* something is being obscured. This awareness is part of our experience and therefore we can speak of an experience of the tension between physical reality and phenomenal world. Consequently, the physical, as distinct from the phenomenal, can indeed be experienced from a first-person perspective. This is another reason to use the widest sense of "the phenomenal", so that the concept includes physical reality.

However, does this not cancel the distinction between the wider and the widest sense of the phenomenal? This is not necessarily the case. We can say that the second (wider) sense of the phenomenal includes all experience that is not an experience of the *boundary* of the phenomenal, i.e., the boundary which separates it from the physical insofar as it hides behind the structure of the phenomenal. Even if we would make another decision on these labels, the important thing is that we understand the differentiations involved. I will return to these issues elaborately in Chapters 6 and 7, then with a more thorough philosophical preparation, and with many more examples of perceptual illusions. At this point my main aim has been to show in which three senses I use "phenomenal" and "phenomenology". I will not always make explicit which of these senses is meant, but I trust that this can be derived from the context.

(3) "Prescientific", "everyday-life", and "ordinary-life experience"

The term "prescientific experience" expresses that our life experience is in some sense *prior to* the possibility of a scientific explanation of that experience. However, the disadvantage of this word is that it may sound as if, in ordinary life, we are always on the verge of turning to the scientific perspective, as if our life experience already presents itself as the potential object of scientific research. It is true that every experience can in principle be subjected to some scientific method, for instance in the form of a questionnaire to be filled out by the subject of the experience. The word "prescientific" is meant to denote that our normal experience has its proper structure which differs essentially from the structure of matter ruled by laws of nature, or of behavior as described by ethology or psychology. However, its explicit reference to science may in a subtle manner undermine that very aim.

Therefore we could choose to refer to prescientific experience as "everyday-life experience". The latter term is in my view certainly acceptable, but not

without its own disadvantage: this expression, in turn, seems to exclude "special" experiences which go beyond the mediocrity of our daily lives, such as traumatic events or experiences of euphoria or a deep meaningfulness. That exclusion is not intended. As a third term to denote the domain of (prescientific, everyday-life) experience, I speak of "ordinary-life experience".[28] This term seems to have the same downside as the previous one. The advantage of this variant is that it invites a comparison with "ordinary language philosophy", which from my phenomenological perspective rightly stresses the ordinary (in the sense of the non-theoretical), but at the same time over-emphasizes the role of *language*. This will be argued in Section 2.1.

One could object to my use of these three terms that there is not one unified domain of "ordinary-life experience": there are many cultural life forms in the world and so we must be concerned with a plurality of structures of ordinary life. I have two remarks in response to this objection. Firstly, any claim I make about the structure of ordinary life experience refers to a basic structure which underlies cultural variation. For example, different peoples are focused on different gestalts in the outer world, and gestalts are imbued with different meanings. For some peoples a full moon has a moral-religious significance. For many modern city dwellers the full moon might appeal to certain romantic feelings. But all peoples see *gestalthaft* unities, like the moon, which are more than the sum of their parts, and which motivate them to respond in a certain way. All peoples see the moon larger at the horizon than high up in the sky.

Secondly, it is true that individuals from different cultures produce different descriptions of this basic structure of ordinary-life experience, but this only implies that there is no such thing as absolute truth. It means that my claims about the structure of the phenomenal world constitute a finite attempt, from my particular perspective, to say something about the general structure of experience. Cultural diversity must actually be a productive factor: only from such finite perspectives can we have a go at saying something sensible and worthwhile for others and can we be interested in what people from other cultures have to say to us. I return to this issue in Section 3.4.

(4) "First-person", "second-person", and "third-person perspective"

Phenomenology wants to maintain a certain continuity with our ordinary (prescientific, everyday) life experience. This implies that it connects directly with

28 Cf. Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 73.

the experiences of an I, an ego, who is open to the external and the social world. Since phenomenology tries to describe the *general* structures of this experience, the first person singular is at the same time a first person plural. Nonetheless, the philosopher can only put the truth value of any phenomenological claim to the test if she relies on her own first-person (singular) experience of the world, and attempts to reduce the properties of the experience to the logically necessary possibility conditions of the type of experience at hand. After all, in philosophy, each individual has to find her own way of approximating what she regards as the truth of the matter. When it comes to taking position in philosophical debate, each person is left to her own devices.

In what sense is the turn to science a turn to a third-person perspective? According to one of its meanings in philosophy, which I will be loyal to, the third-person perspective always only refers to a scientific point of view. It denotes the fact that physics, chemistry, neuroscience, and other disciplines of natural science, approach the human being and the world as a purely objective, external reality, in other words, as part of a reality without subjects or persons.[29] However, the grammatical sense of "third-person perspective" ("he says", "she does", "it is") does not in itself imply such objectification. The philosophical use of "third-person perspective" is justified only very minimally, namely by the fact that objects are always grammatically referred to as third persons. I cannot use the second person in regard to an object. I cannot say "you did such-and-such" or "you are so-and-so" to a coffee cup, a stone, or even a plant or lower animal. (Higher animals are an in-between case.) Only the third-person form includes the possibility of referring to entities which are not persons but non-living things or "lower" living things, like plants.[30]

What is the place of the second person in this context? We can only use the second-person form if the entity facing us is to herself a *first* person: she can say "I am . . .", "I see . . .", and so forth. The first-person perspective and the second-person perspective are thus tightly interconnected. This is illustrated by phrases

29 Some scientific disciplines which study behavior take into account that the animal or human being is a sensorimotor subject, but since the goal is then still formulating laws (viz. of behavior), we are concerned with an objectification of a higher order (according to a certain dialectics of subject and object that will be described below).

30 We cannot conclude that we refer to single persons as "he" and "she" and to single things as "it". In English there is the peculiar exception of the ship, which is a "she". In other languages, like French and German, even considerable subclasses of objects are—grammatically speaking—female or male (in German: besides neutral). They are referred to as "he" (il/er) or "she" (elle/sie).

like "If I were you, I would . . ." There is here a moment of identification on a personal level, a degree of interchangeability of first persons which characterizes the social world. The same holds for the plural variants of these forms: "If we were you, we would . . ." But, of course, the third-person perspective also includes reference to other persons. I can say: "If I were him, I would . . .", and this identification is not essentially different from the identification with a person facing me, with a "you". This means that the third-person perspective as a *scientific* point of view is a very specific kind of third-person perspective.

The fact that the grammatical third person includes reference to things renders possible that we characterize the scientific perspective as a third-person perspective. It is then tempting to conclude that the scientific point of view is limited to a subcategory of entities grammatically referred to as "third persons", namely non-living things and lower living things like plants, and perhaps also lower animal species. We would account for this conclusion by saying that only human beings are persons: if science is concerned with objects as distinct from persons, then its domain must be reality excluding human beings. But this conclusion is of course false, because science studies everything, including human beings. So the third-person perspective of science cannot be defined by the domain of *objects* ("things") within reality as a whole. Its field cannot be demarcated by any empirical domain or group of entities. Instead, the thematic field of science should be defined as the *objective aspect* of reality as a whole, including human beings. Science studies everything, but it studies everything as a purely external reality, i.e., without interpretations of the subject's or person's proper life.

(5) "Subject" and "object"

Both Merleau-Pontyans and Plessnerians are wary of using these words, or at least of emphasizing their importance. As part of the discussion of Plessner and Merleau-Ponty I will justify my vocabulary in relation to the texts,[31] so I will now restrict myself to a general remark. I think that "subject" and "object" are indispensible terms if we want to make sense of our being in the world. I have just referred to the first- and the second-person perspective: "we" are in the world means that there is a *we* consisting of a number of egos. Despite any criticism we might have of the concept of a "subject", we do not have to throw the

31 For the discussion of the use of "subject", see Section 4.1 (Merleau-Ponty) and Section 5.3 (Plessner). As regards "object", see Chapter 4 as a whole (Merleau-Ponty) and again 5.3 (Plessner).

baby out with the bath water. We can hold on to the concept of a subject in the sense of a "center" of experience and action—even if this subject is at the same time "eccentrically positioned" (Plessner). An essential part of our being in the world consists of our openness to the *external* world, and part of this openness consists in perceiving *things* (objects) around us. So the subject-object relationship is very real. Even if the subject is not concerned with any object, but, for instance, experiences the landscape as an immediate whole and herself as physically part of this whole, then we still need to understand how this "embodied subject" (*sujet incarné*, Merleau-Ponty) is both part of the landscape and open to it.

I realize that there is much more to this relationship than only a subject and an object, such as a foreground-background structure, the sense of being immersed in a worldly medium, the embeddedness of the subject in a social world, or the ambiguity of immanence and transcendence. But I do not see how these moments of our openness to the world would make the concepts "subject" and "object" superfluous. Whether we can maintain them depends on how we shape their definition. I agree with the traditional phenomenological critique of Cartesian dualism, i.e., of the limited *opposition* between subject and object. But I do not think we can overcome that opposition by abandoning these terms altogether. Instead, we need to rethink the relationship between subject and object in such a way that we can, for instance, understand the self-forgetfulness we often experience in being "with" the things (*bei den Dingen*), i.e., in what Dreyfus calls "absorbed coping".[32] We need to get a sense of the *directness* of our being in the world. Merleau-Ponty's concept of motivation can help us achieve this, and so can Plessner's principle of mediated immediacy. Finally, we need to think these terms in such a way that the subject reveals himself to be also an "object" in some sense: our bodies are both subjects open to the things surrounding us, and themselves such things. Considerations like these will help us overcome the opposition between the subject as a mere res cogitans or consciousness and the object as res extensa or pure externality.

32 Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, Division I.