Chapter 4
Merleau-Ponty and the Embodied Subject

Part I dealt with the limitations of materialism. But there are also limitations to my criticism of Dennett and the Churchlands. It is one thing to say that there is more than objective matter subordinate to physical laws, in other words: that there is also a subject or person who lives in a real phenomenal world. It is quite another thing to show what this "also" means. The result of Part I is an opposition between the criticized position and the criticism, between physical realism and phenomenal realism, and apparently also between an objective human body and a subjective human mind.

But the first two oppositions can be overcome and the latter opposition, between body and mind, only *seems* to be the necessary outcome of my criticism of Dennett. One of the aims of the current part is to demonstrate that a plea for phenomenology is not a relapse into Cartesian dualism; it is not embracing a division between a pure consciousness and an external world. Merleau-Ponty and Plessner have in common that they regard the human mind not as an immaterial spirit who inhabits the body: according to both these thinkers, the mind is itself embodied. Subjectivity is first and foremost a *sensorimotor* openness to the world. We are not primarily thinking things but living bodies engaged in perceiving and acting upon the situations we find ourselves in. Our consciousness is located as much at our finger tips when we catch a ball or in the inner taste in our mouth as in our reasoning or use of language.

This means that the classical formulation "mind-body problem", adopted by Dennett, is misleading. The question is not how a mind can inhabit a body; the question is how the body can be both an object—the aspect of the body science connects with—and a subject, open to a world. Of course, the mind is also a locus of imagination, thoughts, dreams, memories, and plans, but this inner world (*Innenwelt*) should be conceived in tight interconnection with our bodily

openness to the outer world (*Außenwelt*) and with our embeddedness in a shared world (*Mitwelt*).[1]

The current chapter is devoted to Merleau-Ponty. I will first introduce Merleau-Ponty's *The Structure of Behavior*. Then I remark on Merleau-Ponty's use of the word "subject": is there still a subject in Merleau-Ponty, or does he abandon this concept when he criticizes the classic subject-object *opposition*? In the next step, I interpret Merleau-Ponty's *The Structure of Behavior* a little bit more freely, using it as a basis to understand the structural motives behind the shifts we make from the first-person to the third-person point of view. My point will be quite simple: we turn to the objectifying perspective of science in order to heal, restore, or enhance our being in the world. The criterion for what counts as health or enhancement, however, does not spring from the third-person perspective but from our first-person, prescientific experience of being in the world. On the one hand, the proposed arrangement of perspectives affirms the primacy of first-person experience; on the other hand it gives a place to the scientific perspective within human life.[2]

The first two sections of this chapter lead to the conclusion that we are a body-subject to ourselves as first persons, and a body-object to science. In Section 4.3 I show that our bodies do not only have an objective existence for sci-

1 The German terms are from Plessner, whose view I am here anticipating.

2 The *Phenomenology of Perception* famously defends the primacy of "the lived world" over the "second-order expression" of the world by science (Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, III/ix; translation modified). On the face of it, *The Structure of Behavior* seems a less obvious starting point for exploring the relationship between the first- and the third-person perspective. Merleau-Ponty in retrospect says that this work describes human behavior from the perspective of the "outsider" (ibid., *Parcours Deux*, 13) not from a first-person perspective (cf. Toadvine, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature*, 146, endnote 21). However, as I will show, this characterization is somewhat crude. Firstly, the outsider's perspective which describes the dialectics of different forms is not a scientific but a phenomenological perspective which implies that it always tacitly presupposes human subjectivity. The physical system is for instance explained as a perceptual gestalt, which means that it is understood as relative to a perceiving subject. Secondly, the work describes a turn from this "outsider's perspective" to the insider's perspective of the first person: the stimulus is here understood as a signification *for* the animal, and the human being relates to entire ensembles of such significations. Furthermore, the advantage of *The Structure of Behavior* is that, more clearly than the *Phenomenology*, it describes the turn to a scientific perspective as motivated by a *disintegration* of higher structures.

ence but also in our own prescientific experience, for instance in the *perception* of the body proper. Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* is here the starting point. According to this work, only *parts* of our own body can be objects to us, not the body as a whole. But this is so because Merleau-Ponty restricts himself to the objective body as the possible content of *perception*. According to *The Structure of Behavior*, in contrast, we have a basic awareness of our *whole* bodies as objects (Section 4.4). We then move on to the next problem, which can no longer be solved by interpreting Merleau-Ponty: it is not clear *from what position* we have this distance to our bodies as both subject and object. In Section 4.5 and Chapter 5 I argue that, in this respect, Plessner's philosophical anthropology can complement Merleau-Ponty's view.

It might be useful to announce that I will speak of the objective body in four different senses. Firstly, in the next section, insofar as the body proper as an object is addressed, this is the body as an object *for science*. To be more precise, from the scientific perspective, the body can be either a physical thing or an organic body. Secondly, in the rest of the current chapter and in the next chapter, I discuss the body as an object *of the phenomenal world*. Our bodies are to us both subjects and objects and within normal experience "object" means a thing within the lived world of qualities and spatial orientations. Thirdly, in Chapter 6 and 7 I address abnormal experiences like perceptual illusions. Now the distinction between physical and organic body returns. It turns out that the body proper is *to ourselves* not only a phenomenal object but also an object within physical reality. At the same time we are here confronted—fourthly—with our *organic* attunement to that physical reality. Plessner's distinction between the organic and the physical aspect of the body will help us make sense of this. The physico-organic body can be made the object of science, but in perceptual illusions we become aware that we also have first-person experience of these separate aspects. For this reason I distinguish between the physico-organic body as an object of science and this body, insofar as it is already real for us *before* we turn to the third-person perspective of science. Of course, the physical, the organic, the scientific, and the phenomenal body are all one and the same body—for instance: *my* body. But we need to make these *formal* distinctions in order to understand how we can relate to our bodies in so many ways.

4.1 THE PRIMACY OF THE FIRST PERSON IN MERLEAU-PONTY'S *THE STRUCTURE OF BEHAVIOR*

What is the relationship between subjective experience and scientific objectification? One of the aims of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is to resist the reduction of our existence as experienced by us as first persons to a causal event as seen by science. *The Structure of Behavior* serves this aim by critically interpreting physiological and psychological research—hence its emphasis on behavior. Merleau-Ponty discusses both human and animal behavior and argues, firstly, that animal behavior cannot be reduced to a chain of physical events or to a physical system, because the animal itself (as a whole) responds to significations. Secondly, he argues that *human* behavior interacts with entire *structures* of significations. This interaction is realized by *ourselves* as subjects—a perspective which science necessarily ignores or reduces to statistical facts.

Merleau-Ponty starts out by criticizing "classical theory" (Charles Scott Sherrington, among others), which focuses on *reflex* behavior. Classical theory presumes there are pre-established pathways within our nervous system, which would allow science to describe reflex-responses in terms of cause and effect. In addition, it explains higher order behavior merely by adding levels of greater complexity. Merleau-Ponty says that the proposed solutions thus remain based on the presupposition that animal and human behavior are composed of mechanically organized, atomic elements. In Merleau-Ponty's view, gestalt theory[3] succeeds in overcoming at least one of the limitations of classical theory, namely its atomism, by showing that on all levels of nature, including the inanimate, natural processes possess "form" (*Gestalt*, *forme*).[4] This means that physical events are often (but not always) integrated in local systems of cause-and-effect relationships, which as a whole have properties that cannot be derived from the properties of the parts. Some examples of physical gestalts mentioned by Merleau-Ponty are the distribution of electrical charge in conductors, the soap bubble, and the solar system. In all these cases, the system constitutes an equilibrium with an inner tension which is diminished if a factor external to the equilibrium disturbs it.

3 Merleau-Ponty mainly discusses Wolfgang Köhler and Kurt Koffka.

4 Whenever Merleau-Ponty does not translate "Gestalt" as *forme*, but simply uses the German, he writes the word with a capital G. Instead I follow Lester Embree's recommendation to naturalize the word by writing it uncapitalized: Embree, "Merleau-Ponty's Examination of Gestalt Psychology", 184-185.

Merleau-Ponty accepts gestalt theory's concept of form—circular causality and equilibrium—but he is critical of the fact that gestalt theory applies this particular concept of form not only to physical systems but also to animal and human behavior. He thinks that the specific definition of form proposed by gestalt theory only applies to the physical world, not to organic entities. By treating all gestalts as systems of causal circularity, gestalt theory disregards the deeper discontinuities between various levels in nature. The crux is that the gestalt theorists remain within the framework of materialism. Merleau-Ponty's own concept of form, of which "structure" is a synonym,[5] is an attempt to go beyond gestalt theory by recognizing the discontinuities which divide nature into the orders of the physical, the vital, and the human (also designated as "matter", "life", and "spirit"[6]).

The most fundamental distinction within nature, in this view, is that between the structure of the physical world and the structure of behavior.[7] What does the difference consist of? According to Merleau-Ponty, behavior is not an effect of a cause in the external world but a response of an organism to a situation. Within the order of the animal, stimuli constitute a vital signification for the animal itself; they are not causes but rather occasions for the animal to respond in a certain way. This means that the animal has a certain play of responses: behavior follows norms on the basis of vital needs, it does not follow univocal laws.

Within the scope of "syncretic" behavior, the play of responses is still marginal, as these responses are largely predetermined by the animal's constitution. The animal responds to significations whose character is determined by the environment and the situation of the animal. The structure is unseparable from the material environment in which it is realized. Some conditioning can take place, but not "true learning", says Merleau-Ponty (*SC*, 115/105). "Amovible" behav-

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5 Merleau-Ponty is not explicit about this, but it appears that "form" (*forme*) and "structure" (*structure*) are interchangeable. See, e.g., *La structure du comportement*, 88/79: "a phenomenon of structure or 'form'". Cf. Ted Toadvine, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature*, 138, endnote 2.

6 Ibid., 141/131; translation modified.

7 Note that Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the vital order deals exclusively with animals and their behavior. Some descriptions may be applicable to vegetable life, but the category "behavior" seems to exclude plant life. In fact, there is no mention of plant life in this work. This is problematic, considering that Merleau-Ponty wants to present an integrated view of the different levels of living and non-living nature. Cf. Beaufort, *Die gesellschaftliche Konstitution der Natur*, 148.

ior, in contrast, reacts more loosely to significations and is open to learning processes.[8] The animal responds not only to a complex of stimuli: it responds on the basis of an essential relationship between significations. The difference with syncretic behavior is that the structure has some independence from the material in which it is realized. This is where the signal fits in: a signal is a signification that stands for another signification. Signals can be inserted between the animal and the original sense, as in the famous example of Pavlov's dogs. Amovible behavior is thus subject to learning processes.

The order of the human, says Merleau-Ponty, surpasses both the physical order and the vital domain of needs. Besides syncretic and amovible forms of behavior, human beings have symbolic behavior. The symbolic domain is not restricted to the ability to use language. It pertains to our distance[9] to structure *as such*, which enables us to see the relationships between different "ensembles" (*ensembles*)[10] of significations and to experience the same meaning within these various correlative domains. Merleau-Ponty uses the word "ensembles" to describe entire systems of significations, such as the design of a musical instrument, a choreography, or a language or text. We recognize the same sense in a spoken word and a written text, or we perceive the same meaning in the analogous structures between written music, the design of a musical instrument, and a pattern of bodily movement: "The character of the melody, the graphic configuration of the musical text and the unfolding of the gestures participate in a single structure, have in common a single nucleus of signification."[11] Symbolic behavior is furthermore intrinsically connected with the subject's ability to create and possess tools and to see things under various aspects. This is the so-called "thing-structure", which I return to in Section 4.4.

Before I get to the main point of the current section—the arrangement of perspectives—we need to address a question of interpretation. My introduction

8 The words "syncretic" and "amovible" are not widespread in philosophy. "Amovible" is French for detachable or removable (not "un-movable"!) and it describes that this structure is subject to change within the scope of a specimen's life. The word "syncretic" (*syncrétique*) etymologically carries the meaning of "combined", and Merleau-Ponty probably wants to stress, by this term, that the stimulus and the response are tightly connected.

9 I use the word "distance" in order to make sense of Merleau-Ponty's view. Below I argue that, in fact, Merleau-Ponty does not present the developed concept of distance or disengagement we need to get a complete picture of human behavior.

10 Merleau-Ponty, *La structure du comportement*, 132/121.

11 Ibid.

of *The Structure of Behavior* has been based on the assumption that Merleau-Ponty defends the concept of a *subject* for whom there are structures of meaning. But it might be objected that Merleau-Ponty actually wants to abandon the traditional phenomenological concept of subjectivity.[12] Is this criticism justified? It is true that Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the need to overcome the subject-object opposition which has been dominant in philosophy since Descartes and Kant. In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty says that "we shall have the opportunity to leave behind us, once and for all, the traditional subject-object dichotomy".[13] However, I argue that Merleau-Ponty, certainly in his early works *The Structure of Behavior* and the *Phenomenology*, does not reject the notion of a subject altogether; instead, Merleau-Ponty wants to replace the idea of a subject as a pure transcendental consciousness by his own conception of a *sujet incarné*: an embodied subject.

In *The Structure of Behavior* Merleau-Ponty does not yet coin the term "embodied subject". On the one hand he speaks of a "subject"[14] and on the other hand he uses the word "embodiment" (*incarnation*) to describe the nature of the subject's intentionality: "Since the body itself is not grasped as a material and inert mass or as an external instrument but as the living envelope of our actions, the principle of these actions has no need of being a quasi-physical force. Our intentions find their natural clothing or their *embodiment* [*incarnation*] in movements and are expressed in them as the thing is expressed in its perspectival aspects."[15] Instead of the term "embodied subject" we find in *The Structure of Behavior* the notion of a "phenomenal body": "The gestures and attitudes of the phenomenal body [corps phénoménal] must have therefore a proper structure, an immanent signification; from the beginning the phenomenal body must be a center of actions which radiate over a 'milieu'; it must be a certain silhouette in the physical and in the moral sense; it must be a certain type of behavior."[16]

It is, to my knowledge, not until the *Phenomenology of Perception* that this phenomenal body is also called a "sujet incarné".[17] This embodied subject is not to be confused with the notion of a *research* subject, or the subject in any other limited sense. The concept of a *sujet incarné* has a fundamental status and it serves the very aim of overcoming the traditional subject-object *opposition*.

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12 Mark Wrathall, personal communication.

13 Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 203/202.

14 Ibid., *La structure du comportement*, 179/166, 194/179, 196/181, 203/188.

15 Ibid., 203/188 (italics mine).

16 Ibid., 170/157.

17 Ibid., *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 64/61; 180/178; 225/225; 447/448.

This is illustrated by the passage, quoted earlier, where Merleau-Ponty says he wants to overcome the subject-object dichotomy. Merleau-Ponty here argues against the empiricist and intellectualist conceptions of *language*. In these criticized views, "[t]he possession of language is in the first place understood as no more than the actual existence of 'verbal images', or traces left in us by words spoken or heard".[18] He then describes the two realms in which science and philosophy have mistakenly located these "traces": "Whether these traces are physical, or whether they are imprinted on an 'unconscious psychic life', is of little importance, and in both cases the conception of language is the same in that there is no 'speaking subject'."[19] It is of little importance where one locates the traces, Merleau-Ponty wants to say, because in both cases the consequence is the same: there is nobody who speaks. So the "speaking subject" is here precisely what *gets lost* in views which start from the *dichotomy* of subject and object. The ensuing passage affirms this:

"Whether the stimuli, in accordance with laws of neurological mechanics, touch off excitations capable of bringing about the articulation of the word, or whether the states of consciousness cause, by virtue of acquired associations, the appearance of the appropriate verbal image, in both cases speech occurs in a circuit of third-person phenomena. There is no speaker, there is a flow of words set in motion independently of any intention to speak."[20] In other words, neither physicalism nor mentalism understands speech, for in these views there is actually no room for a speaking subject, only for a third-person reconstruction of speech. The speaking subject has to be saved from accounts of language that start from a Cartesian separation between the mental and the physical. The speaking subject in the positive sense is the *sujet incarné* who is in the world, and for whom speech and thought are primarily *not divorced but one*. A further objection one might raise is that the "speaking subject" above is set between quotation marks by Merleau-Ponty, but we should note that the very same "subject" (in a positive sense) returns a few lines below and without quotation marks, namely when Merleau-Ponty says that when speech is mistakenly understood in the way described, "speech . . . does not show up the internal possibilities of the subject".[21] I don't have an explanation for the quotation marks in the earlier quotation, unless that, from the perspective of empiricism and intellectualism, it is

18 Ibid., 203/203.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., 203-204/203.

21 Ibid., 204/203.

hypothetical to mention a "speaking subject" precisely because in these accounts there is no room for it.

The fact that I focus on Merleau-Ponty's early work makes it relatively easy for me to defend that there is a subject in his view. It is rather in his later work that Merleau-Ponty wants to distance himself from the terms "subject" and "object". In *Le visible et l'invisible* both terms are, when used positively, put in quotation marks and the only reason for this is that Merleau-Ponty wants to abandon the terms or at least their traditional meaning. Merleau-Ponty wants to steer clear of any view which posits a perceiving subject over against a perceived object, because he regards this as a denial of the fact that the subject is immediately part of the same perceivable world as the perceived thing. So, again, it is the *opposition* between subject and object that Merleau-Ponty is wary of: "We say therefore that our body is a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and otherwise what sees them and touches them; we say, because it is evident, that it unites these two properties within itself, and its double belonging to the order of the 'object' and to the order of the 'subject' reveals to us quite unexpected relations between the two orders."[22]

Half a page onwards Merleau-Ponty revokes his use of the word "leaves": "One should not even say, as we did a moment ago, that the body is made up of two leaves, of which the one, that of the 'sensible', is bound up with the rest of the world. There are not in it two leaves or two layers; fundamentally it is neither thing seen nor seer only, it is Visibility sometimes wandering and sometimes reassembled."[23] It would go too far at this point to try to present a thorough interpretation of these passages, but it is clear that Merleau-Ponty wants to go beyond any differentiation which separates the visible from the seer, in order to arrive at what binds the two together: "a Visibility, a Tangible in itself, which belong properly neither to the body qua fact nor to the world qua fact".[24] But at the same time Merleau-Ponty cannot express the fundamental status of "Visibility", or of the "universal flesh" (*chair universelle*)[25] for that matter, without referring to both the body proper as part of the visible world and the body proper as perceiving that same world. In the next chapter I argue, on the basis of Plessner, that ridding ourselves of these differentiations is not a necessary precondition for our ability to describe either the immediacy of our perceptual being in

22 Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, 178/137 (translation modified).

23 Ibid., 179/137-138.

24 Ibid., 181/139.

25 Ibid., 179/137.

the world, or the "intertwining" (*entrelacs*)[26] of the two aspects that constitute this immediacy.[27]

It is not clear to what extent Merleau-Ponty wanted to rid himself of the terms "subject" and "object" in his later work and, if so, if he succeeded in disposing of this terminology.[28] I think that, when we speak of the order of the object and the order of the subject, we can leave out the quotation marks. We can transform the meaning of these words at our own discretion. By using the words "subject" and "object we do not automatically commit ourselves to any inherited subject-object opposition. Transforming the meaning of certain terms, rather than abandoning them altogether, is especially recommendable if they keep urging themselves on our thinking although we thought we had good reasons to eradicate them. This is what appears to be happening with "subject" and "object" in *The Visible and the Invisible*.

This little excursion to the *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and the Invisible* also supports the main point of this section: according to Merleau-Ponty, the third-person perspective is secondary in regard to a first-person perspective. This point rests upon the very presupposition that there is a subject in (early) Merleau-Ponty in the first place, because the "first person" *is* the embodied subject. So let us return to *The Structure of Behavior*.

Whereas the first two parts of *The Structure of Behavior* stress that behavior has a different form than physical nature and that human behavior differs from animal behavior, the third and fourth part make clear that these higher forms still presuppose the lower forms of nature: "The advent of higher orders, to the extent that they are accomplished, eliminate the autonomy of the lower

26 Ibid., 180/138.

27 Like Merleau-Ponty, Plessner speaks of a connection between the order of the subjective and the order of the objective as something which is not the sum of two levels: in Plessner's terminology it is a *Verschränkung* (Plessner, *Lachen und Weinen*, 240; translated as "interlacing" by Churchill and Grene, *Lauging and Crying*, 36). This word designates a crosswise connection: it means that the one aspect is fundamentally unlike the other, and yet each of both orders cannot be conceived without the other. The term is clearly very similar to Merleau-Ponty's "intertwining" and this is one of the points where the reader wonders why Merleau-Ponty did not refer to Plessner.

28 In the *Résumés du cours* (16) from the 1950s, Merleau-Ponty still speaks of a "subject"; the term emerges at the same time as the body schema. Indeed, it is hard to understand the body schema without the notion of an embodied subject. Cf. ibid., 33, 36, 66.

orders and give a new signification to the steps which constitute them."[29] In this respect the encompassing order is dialectical in a Hegelian sense. Merleau-Ponty is quite explicit about this.[30] But there are important differences with Hegel's system. One difference is that, in Merleau-Ponty's view, the highest stage of development is not absolute spirit but the world of human individuals: "In other words, matter, life and spirit must . . . represent different degrees of integration and, finally, must constitute a hierarchy in which individuality is progressively achieved".[31]

The fact that the lower is retained in the higher enables the scientist to focus on the lower *within* the higher and still find something which meets his expectations. For instance, the behavior of a rat can still be regarded according to its "geographical" moment, which is "the sum of the movements actually executed by the animal in their objective relation with the physical environment".[32] Behavior can to some extent be explained by exact science, because the physiological field is both "beyond" the physical field *and* "has its place" in it.[33] In this passage, the term "physiological" pertains to the relatively higher structure of behavior. The passage illustrates that, according to Merleau-Ponty, a physical aspect below the vital order remains accessible. The scientific approach to behavior constitutes a perspective which is reductive, but which is also still possible. This holds for the relationship between the vital and the human order, too. Let us indeed turn to human behavior: what, in Merleau-Ponty's view, is the place of the scientific perspective in relation to our own subjective experience as human beings?

Although science is inclined to think it sees everything, taking "the physical world as *omnitudo realitatis*",[34] in fact it tacitly depends on the phenomenal, says Merleau-Ponty. "Nerve functioning . . . is not itself conceivable without reference to the phenomenal field and its laws of equilibrium".[35] Science is dependent on the phenomenal world, not vice versa. Insofar as I have been able to check, the term "first person" (*première personne*), does not occur in *The Structure of Behavior*, and the term "third person" (*troisième personne*) is only re-

29 Merleau-Ponty, *La structure du comportement*, 195/180.

30 Ibid., 175/161 and 191/176.

31 Ibid., 143/132-133 (translation modified).

32 Ibid., 140/130 (translation modified).

33 Ibid., 141/131.

34 Ibid., 144/134.

35 Ibid., 207/192.

ferred to once and in passing.[36] Both terms occur a couple times in the *Phenomenology of Perception*.[37] Nonetheless, we can say that *The Structure of Behavior* already understands science as a *secondary* perspective with regard to our own experience and self-understanding. Merleau-Ponty in this work understands behavior in terms of how the environment is meaningful *for* the subject, and he defends this understanding against views which reduce behavior to a mechanism in pure objectivity. In this sense he is already working with an implicit opposition between a first- and a third-person perspective. Philosophy is here a primary perspective on behavior, a direct description of the phenomenal world. But this leads to a further question: if the scientific conception of behavior is reductive, then what is its use? And what is its truth-value in regard to the phenomenological perspective which aims at connecting immediately with the inner structure of subjective experience?

Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that "it is not sufficient to oppose a [phenomenological, JvB] description to reductive explanations . . . It would be necessary to bring to light the abuse of causal thinking in explanatory theories and at the same time to show positively how the physiological and sociological dependencies which they rightly take into account ought to be conceived. Here we can neither treat this point completely, nor leave it aside altogether."[38] At this point Merleau-Ponty has already given us the beginning of an answer. The truth-value and function of science can be related to a kind of reduction which is not epistemic, as in the case of a reductive view of animals or human beings, but ontic, i.e., an *actual* reduction of the organism itself: "Thus, the dialectic proper of the organism and the milieu can be interrupted by 'catastrophic' behavior and the organism momentarily reduced to the conditions of a physical system. But it is a question here of pathological cases or of laboratory phenomena."[39] We are concerned with laboratory phenomena because science organizes the environment of animal and human behavior in such a way that its results come as close as possible to 1-to-1 stimulus-response relationships. This is one form of actual reduction. According to the quoted passage, the other form of disintegration is the pathological case.

36 Ibid., 193/178.

37 "First person": ibid., *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 99/96 and 400/405; and negatively, referring to the idea of a pure consciousness: ibid., 95/92. "Third person": ibid., 95/92 and 203-204/203.

38 Merleau-Ponty, *La structure du comportement*, 191/176.

39 Ibid., 163/150.

Merleau-Ponty does not go into this pathological type of behavior at this point, but in relation to Freud's attempt to systematically explain behavior by the unconscious, he remarks: "The possibility of constructing a causal explanation of behavior is exactly proportional to the inadequacy of the structurations accomplished by the subject."[40] And when Merleau-Ponty in his discussion of the unity of body and soul addresses illness, he argues that, if the ill body becomes more determining for our behavior as a whole, this means "that the behavior had become disorganized, leaving room for less organized structures . . . Since the physical, the vital, and the mental individual are distinguished only as different degrees of integration, to the extent that the human being is completely identified with the third dialectic, that is, to the extent that he no longer allows systems of isolated conduct to function in him, his soul and his body are no longer distinguished."[41]

This seems to prepare the view that the scientific perspective on human behavior comes into the picture whenever our physical or mental functioning is somehow impaired so that the unity of body and soul becomes problematic. According to this *anticipated* view, we normally have a first-person, phenomenal perspective on the world and ourselves. If we fall ill, are injured in an accident, or we are traumatized by a shocking event, our existence degrades to a lower level of being, which demands mediation by an objectifying—medical, psychoanalytical—perspective. (Although mental illness does not pertain primarily to the body as object, there is here an objectivity of a higher order: a pattern of behavior beyond the influence, the will, and the intrinsic motivations of the subject.) This is however not how Merleau-Ponty elaborates his point. Merleau-Ponty now presents the example of the painter El Greco. The painter El Greco might have been astigmatic, and it has been speculated that this caused him to paint human beings as elongated figures. According to Merleau-Ponty, El Greco's alledged "anomaly of vision" should not receive a "physiological explanation", since, if the artist indeed was astigmatic, he overcame his handicap by integrating it in his way of perceiving the world, thus giving his anomaly "a universal signification".[42]

It has been disputed that El Greco painted his vertical figures relatively long because he would have been astigmatic.[43] Merleau-Ponty is careful enough

40 Ibid., 194/179.

41 Ibid., 218-219/202-203 (translation modified).

42 Ibid., 219/203.

43 Psychologist Stuart Anstis argues that astigmatism cannot be derived from the shapes El Greco painted: <www.psy.ucsd.edu/~sanstis/PDFs/Greco.pdf.>

not to present the anomaly as a fact. Although the example might raise questions, I think Merleau-Ponty is right that this is an important manner in which we deal with some deviations in our physiological and mental functioning. We realize a kind of sublimation of the anomaly so that it actually contributes to the originality of our view on the world and of our self-expressions. Merleau-Ponty presents a similar thought in *L'oeil et l'esprit*, again referring to painting. When he speaks of the painter's artistic style as issuing from his individual shortcomings (*manques*),[44] he does not mean that the resulting style is the artist's *remedy*. What Merleau-Ponty means both in *La structure du comportement* and in *L'oeil et l'esprit*, is that our strengths and weaknesses are inextricably intertwined, that there is a certain relativity to what is normal and what is pathological, and finally, that deviations from norms reveal new existential possibilities. Consequently, we should not turn to causal explanation too quickly.

This is a valid point, and yet it cannot be the whole story. Many illnesses, injuries, handicaps and traumas are simply too overwhelming to be transformed by the subject, sublimated by him, and reintegrated into his *style d'être*. To return to my point above, Merleau-Ponty's observations about disintegration can also be interpreted as accounting for the—quite obvious—fact that subjectivity can be impaired to such an extent that healing *is* necessary. In that case the "reductionism" of science finds a correlate over against itself: a disintegrated, reduced being in the world. In other words, in addition to Merleau-Ponty's point about El Greco, we can interpret the theory of dialectical integration and disintegration in such a way that it accounts for the fact that an impairment of our functioning can render necessary the detour over an external, scientific perspective, from which our bodies are natural objects (or from which our behavior is objective). In the case of illness we need a physician who knows about causes and effects within the scope of the organic body-object. When our sight is diminishing we need to make use of technology based on optics and the physiology of sight. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, my (tentative) conclusion is that we basically have a first-person perspective on our being in the world, and that we turn to science and technology whenever our functioning shows symptoms of disintegration, i.e., of *actual* or *ontic* reduction.

Although this conclusion is in itself correct, it is still not sufficient. Sticking to the example of optics, it is easy to understand that there is no principle boundary between technology which compensates impairments of the body, like glasses and contact lenses, and technology which *enhances* our sensorimotor ca-

44 Merleau-Ponty, *L'oeil et l'esprit*, 31/129.

pabilities, like binoculars, telescopes, and microscopes.[45] This implies that the turn to a reductive perspective does not find its *exclusive* motivation in actual reductions of our being in the world. And it implies that the reductive perspective of science does not necessarily correlate with an actual reduction of our bodily being. As we saw earlier, science finds a subject-matter in *anything*. The reason for this cannot be that disorganizations of higher structures are ubiquitous. It is that the "lower structures" of the physical always remain a constitutive aspect of our being in the world. They make up its objective, technical moment, the moment which allows us to use technology and *integrate* it into our being in the world. But this does not undercut the assumption that science is a secondary perspective with regard to first-person experience, since what counts as an enhancement of our sensorimotor and intellectual capabilities depends on our needs and desires *as* first persons,[46] and the development of technology finds its fulfillment in the moment that we use it and integrate it into our own activities. The reductionism of science rather sits in the fact that it temporarily *isolates* the objective moment from the entirety of our being in the world.

Summing up this point, a critique of reductionism cannot lead to the conclusion that physics, chemistry, or physiology should concern themselves exclusively with physical nature or lower organisms, because their concern with human beings would lead to reductionism. The example of the medical treatment of illness or injury even demonstrates the absurdity of that conclusion. Merleau-Ponty's conception of the dialectical structure of behavior provides the basis for an arrangement of perspectives according to which (a) we normally have a prescientific, first-person perspective on ourselves, taken seriously by philosophy as it takes the inner significations of our lives seriously, (b) we turn to science when this level of being shows symptoms of break-down or when we seek technical enhancement of our capabilities.[47] Science is then a secondary and, in a sense, reductive perspective on our behavior, which at the same time provides

45 At least there is a certain relativity to the distinction. This blurry line between on the one hand healing and restoring and on the other hand enhancing renders possible the questionable use, or downright abuse, of medication and other kinds of therapy as described by Carl Elliot, in his *Better than Well: American Medicine Meets the American Dream*.

46 Cf. Fredrik Svenaeus, "Naturalistic and Phenomenological Theories of Health", 235-237.

47 The word "technical" here has a very wide meaning, referring to any physical means to heal, restore, or enhance the functioning of the body.

the detour needed to restore or enhance the higher dialectics of the first-person perspective.

The relationship between first-person experience and scientific objectification remains paradoxical. This shows itself most clearly when we reflect on this relationship in terms of freedom and causal determinism. Roughly speaking (in that there might be exceptions), science approaches the world, including the human body, as a totality of causally determined processes, in which there is no room for a person who autonomously finds his way in the world, makes decisions, and leads his own life. As I argued in Part I, the phenomenal world, including our sense of (relative) freedom, cannot be discarded as a mere illusion. So on the one hand we have the truth of our sense of freedom, and on the other hand we have the truth of science which purports that our behavior is the result of objective physico-organic events. We might feel forced to decide once and for all whether the human being is free or not: we then wrongly understand the paradoxical relationship between freedom and nature as a contradiction. Only by distinguishing between the first-person and the third-person point of view, and by asking what is the most sensible arrangement of these perspectives, can we save both the subjective and the objective aspect of our being in the world. We regard the tension between these two aspects not as a contradiction, but as a necessary ambiguity. Accordingly, we approach the relationship between prescientific experience and scientific objectification also as a positive ambiguous structure. This approach allows the conclusion that the detour by way of an inherently deterministic perspective not only does not interfere with, but even helps to restore our basic sense of freedom.

My interpretation of Merleau-Ponty is inspired by Theo de Boer, who made a similar point with respect to psychoanalysis. De Boer argued that, if a trauma *causes* compulsive behavior, the therapist needs to have causal explanation at his disposal as one of his perspectives. But he also argued that, in addition, the psychoanalyst needs a hermeneutical perspective which is continuous with the subject's self-understanding: the therapist needs to be the patient's (or "client's") conversation partner. The hermeneutical point of view here fulfills a similar role as the phenomenological approach in Merleau-Ponty: it constitutes a primary perspective on our behavior and thereby a level of identification between the ego and the other person. Only the combination of hermeneutics and causal explanation can contribute to the patient's return back to who he actually is, with the aim of making causal explanation of this patient's behavior in the end redundant.[48]

48 For the details of how this works: De Boer, *Foundations of a Critical Psychology*.

De Boer refers to the philosopher of history William Dray, who says that historical understanding starts from a level of identification with the historical agent in an attempt to understand his reasons, to fall back on causal explanation only in case this understanding of the person is no longer possible. "We give reasons if we can, and turn to empirical laws if we must."[49] Although the aim of historical research is probably not (at least not only, or not primarily) therapeutical, we find in this view a similar emancipatory ideal as in De Boer: a call on science and philosophy to take seriously the way human beings themselves experience the world and their lives. De Boer catches this way of thinking in the term "the ladder of understanding",[50] which in its simplest form expresses nothing other than the primacy of first-person experience, the second rung on the ladder being the objectifying perspective. Only if we do not succeed in understanding the other person as an interlocutor who is relatively free and therefore has (often implicit) reasons to live the way he lives do we turn to the third-person perspective of science in order to find what causes his behavior.

4.2 ARBITRARY AND NECESSARY SHIFTS OF PERSPECTIVE

In the Introduction I raised a number of issues concerning everyday self-understanding and science. Since science has acquired a place within our ordinary self-reflection, we no longer see ourselves only as relatively free persons who try to make the best of our lives under certain—easy or difficult—circumstances, but also as objective bodies with a nervous system that determines our behavior. As noted there, journalist Derek Thompson jumps arbitrarily from the first-person perspective, which includes narratives about our consumer decisions, to the third-person perspective, from which the *brain* seems to be the decision maker. This raised the question of what criterion could help us decide what is the most logical perspective in a particular situation. When do we simply say "I bought this laptop because it appealed to me (for all kinds of further explicable reasons)" and when do we alternatively say "I bought this laptop because it (apparently) triggered something in my brain"?

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49 Dray, quoted by De Boer, ibid., 125/131. Merleau-Ponty seems critical of "reasons" as an essential ground of action, instead promoting "motives". However, as I will show in Section 7.1, Merleau-Ponty only targets a specific, intellectualist, concept of "reasons", sometimes even using "reason" as an equivalent of "motive".

50 Ibid., 124/130.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, Thompson's article is not primarily about brain functioning and nor is it about the question concerning the relationship between mind and brain. Thompson simply wants to make us aware of our consumer behavior and the information he provides is very useful. It can make us more reflective on, and critical of, the choices we make: many of us could save money without being any less happy with the things we buy. How do we become more critical consumers? A clear message from the article is that we should calculate *more* often, and follow our impulses *less* often, because our impulses are easily tricked by clever marketing. Let us suppose the article is indeed meant to be instructive: it invites the reader to modify his behavior if he wishes to do so. We can then ask the question: which perspective should we adopt when reading the article in order to benefit optimally from its content: is it the first-person consumer perspective or the consumer-brain perspective?

I argue that under normal circumstances (more about "normal" below), the first-person perspective is the most logical choice. When I plan to calculate more often when making a purchase, I would better stick to the presupposition that there is indeed an "I" (me), who can plan certain things, and perform calculations. We need to ask a simple question: how does it contribute to my self-understanding if I translate these considerations to a layperson's version of neuroscientific language? In what way do I understand myself better if I say that it is not me who is going to do the calculating but rather my brain? In what way do I understand my personal impulsivity better if I ascribe that impulsivity not to me as a first person but rather to my nervous system? If I formulate for myself the resolution to be less impulsive, should I then communicate this resolution to my nervous system, so that *it* can be less impulsive next time? But since we are then embracing the perspective of neuroscience, we might just as well accept that it is the nervous system that is adopting such good resolutions in the first place. Does this mean that the "I" can sit back and relax and drop his resolutions? We see that we get into an awkward logical predicament when we arbitrarily mix neuroscientific language and ordinary life vocabulary. We also see that in order for Thompson's article to makes optimal sense to us as readers and consumers, we have to stick to our ordinary first-person perspective: only then the article is truly instructive and beneficial to our practical lives.

Does this mean that, in our everyday existence, we should abstain from turning to the neuroscientific perspective altogether? That is not the conclusion that I am proposing. First of all, the observations I am making, of course, are not meant to deny that the brain is an ontic precondition for our ability to make consumer decisions, calculate prices, and so forth. One can simply be fascinated by this objective-organic precondition, and only for this reason want to know more

about it—which should only be encouraged. But neuroscience itself cannot answer the question of which perspective is the best to adopt in a given situation. We can only answer this practically oriented question if we examine the relationship between *both* perspectives we have at our disposal. Since the first-person perspective has the primacy, we have to look for an essential motive to turn to the scientific perspective on this level of first-person experience.

Imagine that we have a friend who is often rather withdrawn and serious, and not quite the type to go shopping for all kinds of luxury goods. Now suppose that, suddenly, he has bought an awesome car that we know he can hardly afford, and he avidly invites us to go for a ride. We are confronted with a side of our friend's personality we previously had no knowledge of. At first, we may be happy to see that our friend is coming out of his shell. But when not much later he falls back into a period of melancholy and withdrawing, then followed by the next spending spree, we might begin to suspect that he is suffering from a physical condition which has a strong effect on his attitude and the way he lives his life. We might still try to understand our friend by talking to him, but he himself might not be able to understand what sometimes gets into him. Instead of explaining his actions by fitting them into his story, he starts to ask questions about his behavior as if this behavior is not his own, and we might join him in this outsider's stance: we turn from our default first-person perspective to the third-person perspective. A specialist may later diagnose our friend with bipolar disorder and point out that there is some evidence that deviant brain functioning is responsible for this condition.[51]

What does the example tell us? A person's consumer behavior can deviate so extremely from normal patterns that it becomes harmful to the person in question. In this situation we can no longer understand his actions on the personal level and are forced to turn to the third-person perspective of science. So the example illustrates (a) that we normally adopt a first-person perspective with respect to consumer behavior, (b) that there can be very good reasons to turn to a third-person perspective: apart from sheer fascination with the nervous system (which constitutes a good reason, but one which remains relatively separated from practical life), an abnormality of behavior can lead us to turn to the objectifying perspective, even if we are reluctant to do so, because we prefer to think of our friend as someone who is motivated to act in the way he does and can take responsibility for his behavior.

51 Recent research indeed shows a correlation between anomalies in the brain and bipolar disorder: Strakowski et al., "The Functional Neuroanatomy of Bipolar Disorder: A Consensus Model", 313.

Let me shortly discuss a further example to make plausible the arrangement of perspectives I am proposing. If a very old relative of ours increasingly talks nonsense, has bad memory and neglects himself, then at some point we stop asking him why he displays this behavior, because we realize that it is no use addressing him as someone we can level with. We see that there is something wrong in the objective-organic body, which, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, has led to an ontic reduction of the higher structures of behavior to lower structures. The very moment we realize this, we have already adopted the layperson's version of the doctor's perspective. We stop talking to the person but instead ask questions *about* him, like: what deterioration of the brain is causing this abnormal behavior? Are we dealing with dementia, and if yes: what condition in the nervous system is causing these symptoms? We have turned away from our relative as a subject and reflect on his body as a physico-organic object. Neuroscience adopts essentially the same perspective, albeit of course a highly advanced version of it: the neuroscientist brings along a vast amount of knowledge and experience, and she has the technical and institutional means to diagnose the patient and hopefully propose treatment. The relationship with a relative with dementia is difficult, because we do not want to give up on the person as we know him. We certainly do not want to give up on him any sooner than strictly necessary: so we keep trying to approach the person as a person, and if the dementia is an unstable condition, which often it is, we may sometimes succeed in communicating normally with him and then again be disappointed. The fact that we make these attempts illustrates that, in our practical lives, the first-person perspective has the primacy over the third-person perspective.

Only from the first-person perspective do we understand each other according to the most integrated, highest dialectics of our being in the world. Since this philosophical claim connects with prescientific experience, the claim itself also includes a practical position: we express that it is worthwhile and important to treat human beings according to their highest mode of being: as a (potential) conversation partner, i.e., as *someone like us*. Philosophy does not have the neutrality of science because it seeks to understand what life is like for ourselves as human beings. Only if we include the desire to connect with one another on the same personal level, can we understand what is so dramatic about losing a family member when his mind deteriorates. We turn to the objectifying perspective only because this detour is necessary in order to understand how improvement of the condition of our loved one might be possible. But there is a tension here: anyone who has had such experiences or can imagine what this situation is like, would agree that we postpone as long as we can the moment that the objectifying perspective becomes the only perspective we have left—besides, perhaps,

the ability to show affection through physical contact and prediscursive forms of attention. We want to be able to be with, and talk to, the other person *as another person* as long as possible. The example once more illustrates, hopefully even makes plausible, (a) the priority of the first-person perspective, (b) that the structural motive to look at ourselves from a scientific perspective sits in the failure to connect on the personal level and in the desire to restore the personal level via a detour over the objective body. For us as first persons with ordinary human desires the objectifying perspective which is blind vis à vis the person we love is nonetheless extremely meaningful because, *indirectly*, the objectification of the body is a means that bring back that beloved person.

In order to avoid misunderstandings I add four remarks.

Firstly, as noted, the motive to turn to the objectifying perspective is not always related to illness, injury, or trauma. The other essential motive for this turn is the wish to enhance one's being in the world by means of the detour via the objective body. But although the enhancement requires a detour over the third-person perspective, the *value* or *importance* of the improvement can only be recognized on the level of personal experience, the level we return to after adopting (the layperson's version of) the scientific perspective.

Secondly, the third-person perspective characterizes scientific research but scientific praxis is not restricted to this perspective. When neuroscience correlates the addiction to smoking with the physical effects of nicotine on the nervous system, lay persons will at least recognize one half of the correlation, viz. the habit of smoking. This is so because the neuroscientist establishes correlations between on the one hand neural structures and on the other hand a description of behavior which connects quite directly with first-person experience. The scientist always stands with one foot in the phenomenal world, the explanation of which he seeks in physical-organic reality. In addition, as both De Boer and Krüger point out, scientific research is much more than focusing on the *object* of research: it is a practice of intensive communication with colleagues, who (normally) take each other seriously as first persons of experience and judgment.[52] For example, a scientist who tries to convince his colleague of a theory does not approach that colleague as a physical thing or a nervous system, but as a phenomenally present person whom he respects and regards as "one of us". As De Boer remarks, we can only be convinced on the basis of reasons, not causes.

52 De Boer, *Foundations of a Critical Psychology*, 56-61/52-59; Krüger, *Gehirn, Verhalten und Zeit*, 98-100, 109-110, 115, 122-126, 165-166. Reflection on the social dimension of science is, of course, older than De Boer and Krüger; further references can be found on the pages referred to.

This also holds for philosophers: when I am convinced by a colleague, this cannot be interpreted as an effect of a cause, for one effect is not more "true" to me than any other possible effect.[53] So the objectifying perspective is embedded in a social world, and in this social world itself the objectifying perspective is not at all the default point of view.

Thirdly, I am not suggesting that there are not also many *other* motives which occasion us to turn to the third-person perspective of science. One can aspire to the prestige and the payment of a doctor or a university professor. I would argue that these motives are *derived*, because salary and reputation are predominantly based on the usefulness of science for society. However, so far I have only shortly mentioned a facet which, I admit, is not at all unimportant: scientists do what they do because they are *fascinated* by what they explore within their fields. This motive possibly provides an alternative approach to the arrangement of perspectives: what is the structural relationship between a scientist's fascination and the personal and social world his research is embedded in? On the one hand, fascination appears to be an authentic mode of the disinterested search for something meaningful in life; on the other hand, it seems that, insofar as we bracket the usefulness of scientific knowledge, which we do when we focus on fascination, there remains always a gap between the special field which fascinates us, whether quantum physics or astronomy, and the scale and nature of our everyday lives. I would argue that the wish to theoretically address this gap requires the turn from scientific research to the philosophical interpretation of that research. This transition unavoidably leads to the further question of the role of fascination in *philosophy*, and *its* relation to life. Unfortunately, both forms of fascination fall beyond the scope of this book.

Fourthly, insofar as laypeople are concerned, I am not claiming that so long as a layperson, or his friend or relative, has no problems caused by abnormalities in the nervous system, it is useless for him to take an interest in the functioning of the objective body. The purpose of these considerations is rather to make us aware of the presuppositions of the perspectives we adopt with regard to ourselves, and to show the difference between a motivated turn to the objectifying perspective and an arbitrary turn to it. In the first case we have a reason to focus

53 De Boer calls this the "pragmatic paradox" of scientism: De Boer, *Foundations of a Critical Psychology*, 57/53. Incidentally, in my terminology this would not be a paradox but rather a contradiction. Hans-Peter Krüger addresses a similar fallacy when he criticizes neuroscientist Gerhard Roth (Krüger, *Gehirn, Verhalten und Zeit*, 98). The same holds for Ted Toadvine in his criticism of E. O. Wilson (Toadvine, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature*, 11-12).

merely on the objective aspect of the body proper; in the latter case we simply explain our behavior one time by referring to ourselves as agents, another time to the brain as the agent, without understanding why we choose one perspective in one case, the other in the other case. If the layperson examines the nervous system simply because he is fascinated by it, this does not lead to logical problems, so long as he realizes that he has restricted himself to a limited aspect of the world and human existence. The practical or existential implications of one's findings can only be examined when the other aspects of our lives are also taken into account, notably personhood and the phenomenal world. The broader perspective required is that of philosophy, as just noted.

In the Introduction I discussed a further example of the way science penetrates our ordinary life self-reflection: Clinton's 2008 campaign speech, in which she highlights the talents of women by referring to their genetic make-up. Let me finally return to this example in order to wrap up this section. If one of our friends is very good at tennis we may be inclined to say, in a Clintonian fashion: "She's got the right genes." Another time we simply say: "She's very talented.", or: "She's got the right body for it and the right character." What are the differences between these remarks? Perhaps we want to say that "genes" is the same as "bodily constitution". Then we still face the question whether "the right character" for being competitive at tennis is also part of the bodily constitution, i.e., of our genetic make-up. Are these alternative remarks about our talented friend made from similar or fundamentally different perspectives? If we are concerned with different perspectives, how do we know which one to choose in any particular situation? How do we achieve a coherent, integrated self-understanding when we have so many perspectives at our disposal in the first place?

It is clear by now what kind of answer to these questions I am proposing. From the first-person perspective of ordinary life, talent is something we cherish and want to develop. If we have children we try, without pushing them to much, to recognize their talents and to stimulate them to become good at something, and above all: to enjoy what they do. It takes practical wisdom to find the right balance between the space of freedom we give a child (negative freedom) and the encouragement we offer in order to give some direction, and substance, to the child's personal development (positive freedom). Another tension we have to deal with is that between the individuality of the child and the demands of society, notably of school, which always only facilitates the development of some talents while neglecting others. Negative and positive freedom, individuality and the general demands of society—these are some of the concepts we might use to reflect on the upbringing of our children, and on the development of their talents. Against the backdrop of the discussion above we have to ask ourselves whether

reformulating these concepts in terms of our children's genome really improves our approach to their lives. I am of course not making the rather absurd suggestion that our genome is not an essential ontic precondition for (the passing on of) our natural properties, among which our talents. However, there is a logical price we pay for turning to the objectifying perspective of genetics: whereas it makes perfect sense to say that you need to develop your talents and thereby realize yourself, to become your *best* self; it makes no sense to say that you need to develop your genes. We do not relate to our genes when we develop our talents, because our genome is not an integral part of the phenomenal world we live in. By turning to the perspective of genetics we cut ourselves off from our talents as they exist for us.

Considering that it is important to connect with the way we experience our lives from our primary, everyday life perspective, I argue that we should only turn to the objectifying perspective of genetics on the basis of very specific *reasons*. When the hidden objective-organic precondition for our self-realization urges itself on us, because we are severely inhibited by some physical shortcoming, we turn to the perspective from which we can diagnose that shortcoming. If there is a suspicion of a genetic defect, we turn to genetics. In all other cases, the turn to the objectifying perspective does not add anything substantial to our self-understanding but rather prevents us from relating to ourselves in a way that makes sense on a practical level. Of course, one could also turn to genetics to determine which talents one has without having to try out any activity in advance. Let us suppose that, in principle, this could work. This does not detract from the fact that the ultimate proof of what our talents are is in our development of them. Someone who is obviously very good at playing the piano can never be proven wrong by a geneticist; but the other way around correction is always possible: if we were told we would be no good at the piano, but we turn out to be extremely talented pianists, then it is the task of the geneticist to find an explanation for the falsity of his initial assessment. The meaning of talent, and the criterions for judging it, are located on the phenomenal level. What a talent is, its place in life, its readiness to be developed, can only be understood from the first-person perspective of our factual, practical lives.

According to our tentative conclusions, the body appears as a *subject* to ourselves and as an *object* only from the secondary perspective of science (of which we, laypeople, adopt a laypeople's version). To science the body proper is roughly speaking either an organic object or a physical object. These different aspects of the objective body need to be explored further and integrated in an encompassing philosophical anthropology. This is the long term goal which is only prepared by the next step. We now turn to the way in which our body can

be an object not to the third but to the first person. In some respect my body is to me a *thing* even before I turn to the objectifying perspective of science. My body is a thing to me when I examine my body in the mirror, or when, in a busy street, I find myself to be in the way of other people trying to pass. I am then not concerned with my nervous system or genome. In these simple examples the body is an object but not in the scientific sense discussed above. In the next section I continue the discussion of Merleau-Ponty in order to contemplate this issue.

As we will see, Merleau-Ponty is equivocal about what I have boldly stated just now: that the body proper is not only a subject but also an object. Sometimes he states that the first person relates to himself not only as a sensorimotor subject but also as an objective body. At other times he is wary of allowing that the body proper is, besides a subject, also an object. In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty is indeed hesitant to allow the possibility that we experience our whole body as an object, leaning rather to the view that the body proper is always only a subjective openness to the phenomenal world. But in one crucial passage in *The Structure of Behavior*, and in Merleau-Ponty's later work, we find a broader point of view.

The conclusions of Sections 4.1 and 4.2 pertain to the relationship between subjectivity and the external, scientific approach to our bodies as objects. According to our account so far, we either have first person experience of ourselves and our world or we turn to a scientific perspective which objectifies self and world. If we would stop here, the resulting view would be that the subject is to himself a body-*subject*, and to science a body-*object*. This account is not false but it is incomplete, because there is a sense in which we can speak of the body as "object" which does not depend on the scientific perspective. We have first-person experience of our own body as an object among other objects within the phenomenal world. The next two sections explore this sense of objectivity. The discussion then leads to the following question: what basic structure of our subjectivity or personhood enables us to relate to both the subjectivity and the objectivity of the body proper? This problem guides my comparison of Merleau-Ponty and Plessner from Section 4.5 onwards. Of course, the relationship between the scientific and the phenomenal objectivity of the body proper will also have to be addressed, but this can only be done after the discussion of Plessner. I return to it in Chapter 6.

4.3 THE PERCEPTION OF THE BODY PROPER

Samuel Todes, Maarten Coolen, and Richard Shusterman have, each in his own way, argued that Merleau-Ponty neglects the objective aspect of the body. They refer mainly to the *Phenomenology of Perception*. In my view, this work indeed has this shortcoming, but in *The Structure of Behavior* Merleau-Ponty at one point adopts a broader perspective and allows that human beings have a basic awareness of the body proper as an object among objects. In the current section I discuss Todes's and Shusterman's response to one key passage from the *Phenomenology*.[54] In the next section I turn to *The Structure of Behavior*. Merleau-Ponty's later *Le visible et l'invisible* will then also be touched on.[55]

In the *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty states in various ways that our body is by no means an object to us. An external object, he says, can only be there for us if "our own body does not belong to the realm of the 'in-itself' [*en soi*]".[56] And: "We must . . . avoid saying that our body is *in* space, or *in* time. It *inhabits* space and time."[57] It is *as bodies* that we are subjects, open to the world, and it is our task as philosophers to "rediscover the relationship between the embodied subject and his world".[58] "[T]he objective body is not the true version of the phenomenal body, that is, the true version of the body that we live by: it is indeed no more than the latter's impoverished image".[59] The objective body "exists only conceptually".[60] But in the following passage Merleau-Ponty allows that we can at least experience parts of our bodies as objects:

> My visual body is certainly an object as far as its parts far removed from my head are concerned, but as we come nearer to the eyes, it becomes divorced from objects, and reserves among them a quasi-space to which they have no access, and when I try to fill this void by recourse to the image in the mirror, it refers me back to an original of the body which is not out there among things, but in my own province on this side of all things seen. It is no different, in spite of what may appear to be the case, with my tactile body, for if I can, with my left hand, feel my right hand as it touches an object, the right hand as an object is not the right hand as it touches: the first is a system of bones, muscles and

54 I turn to Coolen in Section 5.4.

55 From here onwards: *The Visible and the Invisible*, except in footnotes.

56 Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 161/161.

57 Ibid., 162/161.

58 Ibid., 180/178 (translation modified).

59 Ibid., 493/501.

60 Ibid., 493/502.

flesh brought down at a point of space, the second shoots through space like a rocket to reveal the external object in its place. Insofar as it sees or touches the world, my body can therefore be neither seen nor touched. What prevents its ever being an object, ever being "completely constituted" is that it is that by which there are objects. It is neither tangible nor visible insofar as it is that which sees and touches.[61]

According to this passage, my body *can* be an object (in a non-scientific sense) to me, but always only partly, not as a whole. By perceiving my body as an object I bring about a kind of virtual boundary between my perceiving body and my body as perceived. I see *with* my eyes, and so my gaze can never become an object to me. So, according to Merleau-Ponty, there is always at least a zone of subjectivity in my body which cannot be objectified. What do we make of this?

According to Todes, Merleau-Ponty is right that my attempt to make my seeing body the object of my gaze, i.e., to see myself seeing, is bound to arrive too late: I cannot catch myself looking at myself. Incidentally, Todes says that this also holds for *thinking*: the objectification of any particular thought comes after the thought. But he argues that in tactile *feeling* this is different: "However, I hold that in the *very act* of feeling something, e.g., feeling a smooth surface by moving my hand across it, I feel myself feeling it. In vision as in thought, in order to catch sight of myself making sense of things, I must do so in a second-order act taking my first as object. I must do so, in short, reflectively. But feeling is *reflexive*; I make sense of my own making sense of something within the first order of sense-making."[62]

Shusterman takes a position similar to Todes: "one *can* simultaneously have experiences of touching and being touched, of feeling our voices from inside while hearing them from without, even if the prime focus of our attention may sometimes vacillate rapidly between the two perspectives within the very short duration of time we phenomenologically identify as the present and which, as James long ago recognized, is always a 'specious present', involving memory of an immediate past."[63] By stressing the possibility that our attention vacillates between subjectivity and objectivity, Shusterman seems to echo Merleau-Ponty himself, since the latter also writes: "When I touch my two hands together, it is not a matter of two sensations felt together as one perceives two objects placed side by side, but of an ambiguous set-up in which both hands can alternate the

61 Ibid., 107-108/105.

62 Todes, *Body and World*, 266. This is a quotation from Appendix I, a posthumously published note dating from 1993.

63 Shusterman, *The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy*, 174.

roles of 'touching' and 'being touched'."[64] But there is a subtle difference. Contrary to Merleau-Ponty, Shusterman recognizes that touching and being touched are simultaneous: it is only the *attentive* touching/being touched which vacillates. The emphatic forms of perceptual consciousness are here understood as a figure against the background of a preconscious layer of sensations. Because these sensations are as yet indeterminate they can constitute a reciprocal contact between ourselves as touching and as touched.[65] Only if we restrict ourselves to the more emphatic or explicit forms of self-perception can we distinguish between a part of the body which operates as the body-subject and a part which undergoes perception passively. But this attentive seeing a body part, or feeling it, is embedded in the sphere of immediate sensations and inner feelings of our bodies, the feeling of pain or simply a quite neutral *thereness* of our limbs and organs, or the inner taste in our mouths.

I agree with the general purport of both Todes's and Shusterman's critiques. Feeling is reflexive, as Todes puts it, while seeing is not. In my view, hearing is also *not* reflexive in this strict sense: we may feel our voices but we do not hear ourselves hearing something. Neither do we taste ourselves tasting our food or smell ourselves smelling the scent of a flower. I may smell myself *while* smelling a flower, but this is not the same as smelling my smelling. So there is something exceptional about feeling: it is reflexive in that the body part operating as a subject of perception can at the same time belong to the objective field of perception.[66]

We can reformulate this in terms of exteroception and proproception. Exteroception is perception of the outer world. This includes some perceptions of the body proper, for instance when I look at my hand. Proprioception is the *internal* perception of the body proper, for instance the light strain in my muscles I feel when I walk up the stairs, sensations of genuine pain, or the "neutral" sense

64 Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 109/106 (translation modified).

65 I am loosely interpreting Shusterman, *The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy*, 169. It should be clear from the context that the "sensations" I refer to are not the "layer of 'impressions'" rightly criticized by Merleau-Ponty (Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 9/4).

66 Taylor Carman in "The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty", 334-335, reminds us that Husserl already addressed this exceptional property of feeling. Cf. also Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, 104-105 and Bernet, *The Body as a 'Legitimate Naturalization of Consciousness'*, 46-55.

of my stomach and other organs.[67] Proprioception is a permanent background phenomenon of exteroception; it is there as a precondition of all sensorimotor functioning.[68] It accompanies our exteroceptions, as in the example mentioned by Todes: when I feel the surface of my desk by stroking it I have an exteroception of the desk and at the same time a proprioception in the outer layers of my fingers. I thus feel myself feeling the desk.

Self-perception thus has two forms: exteroception, e.g., when I see my hand, and interoception, e.g., when my legs hurt. In both these forms, self-perception constitutes the contact of the body-as-subject with the body-as-object. Merleau-Ponty would only partly agree with this description. He allows that the hand that I see, in a sense, becomes an object. But he does not allow that proprioception is a perception of the body as an object. There is something intuitive about his position because when, for instance, I feel my muscles, it seems impossible to determine what zone of the body is subjective and what zone objective. But it does not follow from this that the body that feels its muscles is therefore a mere subject. The *thingness* of the organism is a precondition for it to feel, and to feel itself. I feel a body part (also) because it is physically *there* in the first place. I agree with Todes that "the human body is . . . a material thing in the world".[69] As we will see, the thingness of the body was also elaborately discussed by Plessner, in his *Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch*. Proprioception is unthinkable without the materiality or thingness of the body. Instead of attributing bodilyness to the subject we should attribute subjectivity to the thing that is the body. Human beings are things with an inner sensuousness, proprioception, which is a necessary condition for exteroception.

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67 Merleau-Ponty mainly works with this twofold distinction between exteroception and proprioception, but he derives it from Sherrington's *threefold* distinction between exteroception, proprioception *and interoception* (Sherrington, *The Integrative Action of the Nervous system*, 316-318). According to Sherrington, the proprioceptive field is the "deep field" of internal receptiveness to stimuli incited by the organism itself (mainly in movement) in response to the environment; the "surface field" is then divided into the exteroceptive field, which is the organism's receptiveness at the outer surface of the body, including touch, hearing and vision, and the interoceptive field, which is "in contact with the environment" but "less freely open to it" (ibid., 317): this mainly concerns the digestive system. In modern phenomenology, "interoception" is rarely distinguished and simply assumed to be a form of proprioception.

68 Merleau-Ponty, *La structure du comportement*, 98/89.

69 Todes, *Body and World*, 88.

But it remains true that in the case of a feeling in the muscles (e.g. in pain, or in straining oneself, or the "neutral" background feeling of our bodies), we cannot distinguish a zone or location which is subjective and a zone which is objective. The reason for this is that, in proprioception, feeling and being-felt are both completely dispersed over the body or body part.[70] Our bodies are, as a whole, in an ambiguous state: they are both perceiving bodies and things perceived. We should understand the word "things" accordingly. Because of the "reflexivity" (in Todes's sense) of proprioception, our bodies are never *mere* things, but always *also* things. If we pay attention to specific proprioceptions, one body part might act as a subject and the other as the object, but this is not so much a revelation as it is a specific *realization* of a previously indeterminate immediate contact of the body with itself. This is in accordance with Merleau-Ponty's rejection of "critical thinking" and with his primacy of the body: we are not *first* a mind which *then* has certain perceptions of its body. But in my view this means that we are a body-object with an inherent reflexive sensuousness.

The underlying thought of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body is that subjectivity and objectivity exclude one another: something which is an object to the subject cannot at the same time be that subject. This assumption automatically leads to the conclusion that only parts of the body, viz. outside a certain zone of subjectivity, can become objective to me, but that, when they are, they retreat from the subjective body, the body through which I am open to the world.

I do not see why we should agree with that presupposition. Merleau-Ponty is right that my own body will never be an object to me *in the same sense* as, for instance, a use-object on my table, but we do not have to deduce from this that my body is not an object at all. The alternative explanation for the difference with the use-object is that my body is *at the same time* a subject and an object. The ambiguity of subject and object changes the whole essence of the body. This alternative explanation is logically sound and, phenomenologically, it has certain advantages as we will see.

Why does Merleau-Ponty, at least in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, regard the subjectivity and objectivity of the body proper as mutually exclusive? Why does Merleau-Ponty in this work not allow that the embodied subject is at the same time, and as a whole, an object in the world? What is so threatening about the idea that our bodies are things like other things in the world?

70 There are exceptions: if one of my bones is dislocated I will feel it as an object within my flesh.

I think Merleau-Ponty is cautious because he identifies objectivity with a one-sided scientific approach to the body. The body is here only approached as an "object" in the sense defined by empirical science which forms the basis of a materialistic and reductionistic account of our bodily being in the world. It is no coincidence that, in the *Phenomenology*, the chapter on the body as an object is called "The Body as Object and Mechanistic Physiology".[71] Merleau-Ponty's critique of materialism motivates him to avoid calling the body an object or a thing in any sense whatsoever. But what we really need here is a distinction between (the body as) an object of the phenomenal world and (the body as) an object as defined by science. This is precisely the distinction which in Merleau-Ponty often gets blurred.

Let me elucidate this with a concrete example. When Merleau-Ponty discusses the spatial structure of our being in the world, he says that "[i]f my arm is resting on the table I should never think of saying that it is *beside* the ashtray in the way in which the ashtray is beside the telephone. The outline of my body is a frontier which ordinary spatial relations do not cross."[72] Merleau-Ponty adds that "my hand is not a collection of points", and then mentions "cases of allochiria", whereby stimuli in the right hand are experienced as located in the left hand, and vice versa. The experience of the body proper follows the body schema, not locations in objective reality. Merleau-Ponty concludes that the subject's hand is not "a mosaic of spatial values".[73]

Incidentally, these and similar considerations lead Merleau-Ponty to agree with certain psychologists who say that the body schema is "'dynamic'" because "my body appears to me as an attitude towards a certain existing or possible task. And indeed its spatiality is not, like that of external objects or like that of 'spatial sensations', a *spatiality of position*, but a *spatiality of situation*."[74] The body schema is thus defined exclusively in terms of an awareness (a knowing[75]) of the body proper as a *subjective* body. This awareness, the body schema, is a background of "non-being"[76] which together with the background that is the external world renders possible the appearance of something *against* this double background. Let me return to the body schema below and first discuss the example of the arm on the desk.

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71 Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 81-105/84-102.

72 Ibid., 114/112.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid., 116/114-115.

75 Ibid., 114/112-113: "je connais la position de chacun de mes membres".

76 Ibid., 117/115 (translation modified).

I agree with Merleau-Ponty that my arm will always appear to me in a different mode than some use-object on my desk, because it is an integral member of the body that I am, and through which I am in the world. My body is a subject and as such it is the origin of spatial orientations.[77] (As we will see, Plessner's view is in this respect similar to Merleau-Ponty's.) But the question is: do both aspects, the subjective and the objective, exclude one another? Is it correct to say that where the objective body is, the subjective body cannot be? The alternative is that we say that *in one respect* my arm *is* an object on the table. If my desk is becoming too full, I might need to clean the place up so that I have space to put my arms when I am working. It only makes sense to say this if we accept that the arm and the ashtray occupy sections within the same objective space.

When Merleau-Ponty first says that my arm is not like the ashtray and then concludes that "my hand is not a collection of points", he ignores the fact that the ashtray is primarily not a collection of points either: it is not a scientific object to us but an object in the prescientific sense. From Merleau-Ponty's own point of view this means that the ashtray is a phenomenal unity which, in virtue of its motivational structure, invites the subject to behave in certain ways (smoke, park his cigarette). If we say that our arms are *in some respect* objects on the table like the ashtray, we are referring to this phenomenal meaning of "object", not to a scientific theory which refers to the object as "a collection of points". In addition, I argue that my objective body can motivate me in a similar fashion as the ashtray. When I notice that my hair is quite long this motivates me to go get a haircut, and when I see that I cut my finger, although I had not even felt it, I go get a band-aid. The passage quoted above shows that, insofar as his discussion of the body proper is concerned, Merleau-Ponty does not consistently distinguish between, on the one hand, an object as we experience it from our first-person, everyday life perspective, and on the other hand the object as it appears from a scientific perspective. Since Merleau-Ponty wants to steer clear of scientific reduction, he is wary of calling the body an object or a thing. However, the phenomenal thing is not a scientific object in the first place: it has secondary qualities, spatial orientations like a top and a bottom, and it carries motivational meanings which are inextricably connected to it. Furthermore, so long as we acknowledge that the body proper is an object *and at the same time* a subject, our body remains incomparable to both the scientific object and the mere phenomenal thing, such as the use-object on the table.

Merleau-Ponty seems to have a further reason for his hesitation, in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, to accept that our body is an objective thing to

77 Ibid.

us. Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that we *know* the body proper as a subject, but insofar as our body as object is concerned he limits himself to the *perception* of the body proper. Why should our *experience* or *knowledge* of the body proper as an object be limited to having specific perceptions of it? Because of this limitation we feel obliged to answer the question whether we can experience the whole body or only body *parts* as objects. The assumption that our relationship to the objective body proper is per definition perceptual in nature seems characteristic of the *Phenomenology*, but not of *The Structure of Behavior*. In the latter work we find a broader outlook: our being in the world includes a basic *awareness* of the body proper as an *object*. A relationship in the sense of an awareness is not restricted to parts of the body. Awareness is more encompassing than any perception can be: although we can always only see one side of the body at a time, we can be aware of our whole bodies as things among other things. I am referring to Merleau-Ponty's account of the differences between human and animal behavior on the basis of Köhler's chimpanzee experiments. Let us now turn to this.

4.4 HUMAN DISENGAGEMENT AND THE BODY AS A THING AMONG THINGS

According to *The Structure of Behavior*, human beings and animals have distinctive ways of perceiving a thing: contrary to animals, human beings can recognize one and the same object throughout a series of very diverse appearances by which the object shows itself. Merleau-Ponty bases this distinction mainly on Wolfgang Köhler's chimpanzee observations.[78] In one experimental setting, a chimpanzee, attracted to a piece of fruit hanging high above it, uses a box to stand on so that it can reach the fruit. But the ape's first achievement does not guarantee further success. In future set-ups the animal recognizes the same box as an instrument only under similar favorable circumstances. If the situation has

78 After Köhler, the behavioral sciences have of course further explored the differences between human and animal behavior, and the theoretical interpretation of these empirical results has also proceeded. Although it is certainly worthwhile to take notice of these developments, I will have to leave out this detour. For the latest scientific results and their theoretical interpretation, I refer to Michael Tomasello and Josep Call, *Primate Cognition*, to Tomasello's work in general, and to Hans-Peter Krüger, who in his *Gehirn, Verhalten und Zeit*, assesses Tomasello's view from a Plessnerian perspective.

changed because, for instance, another chimpanzee now sits on the box, the first no longer recognizes the thing as the same object with the same instrumental function: "the box-as-seat and the box-as-instrument are two distinct and alternative objects in the behavior of the chimpanzee and not two *aspects* of an identical *thing*."[79]

This lack of a "thing-structure" (*structure chose*)[80] in the world of the animal is linked to the way the animal relates to the body proper. In another experiment pieces of fruit are presented in a construction which allows the chimpanzee to reach the fruit only if it first pushes it away from its own body. The chimpanzee has difficulty fulfilling its task. In contrast, when the ape *itself* needs to make a detour to get to a piece of fruit, it has no trouble at all reaching its goal. Something similar happens when apes are stimulated to build a tower out of boxes. Although the animals are perfectly able to balance their own bodies, they often fail to build a stable tower out of these alien objects. The reason for this, says Merleau-Ponty, is that apes lack the symbolic function which human beings possess.

According to Merleau-Ponty, symbolic behavior pertains to the human ability to see structural relationships between entire "ensembles" of structures, such as different languages.[81] Not only can we perceive a thing or a situation as a symbol for another thing or situation, we are also flexible enough to play with these relationships. To us, the words of our language never have only one meaning and yet we have a grip on these words, because we can stabilize their meaning according to context. Animals can play with objects, but not with the structures between them; neither do they have the flexibility to vary the meanings of signals. Even if one signal can have different meanings in different contexts,[82] the individual animal has no role in determining the interaction between context and meaning.

As already noted, symbolic behavior is not limited to the use of language. Interestingly, its wider meaning includes the way we relate *to the objectivity of our body*. In his discussion of the chimpanzee experiments, Merleau-Ponty indeed interprets symbolic behavior in terms of the human ability, and the animal's *lack* of such an ability, to regard oneself as an object: "What is really lacking in the animal is the symbolic behavior which it would have to possess in order to find an invariant in the external object, under the diversity of its aspects,

79 Merleau-Ponty, *La structure du comportement*, 127/116.

80 Ibid., 129/119 (translation modified), 130/120.

81 See Section 4.1.

82 Cf. Tomasello and Call, *Primate Cognition*, 244-246.

comparable to the immediately given invariant of the body proper and in order to treat, reciprocally, its own body as an object among objects [*comme un objet parmi les objets*]. In the same manner the ape, which knows how to balance itself so well, that is, to re-establish the vertical position of its body by appropriate movements, does not succeed in balancing its constructions."[83]

Merleau-Ponty compares the body proper to an object, suggesting that there is a degree of interchangeability between the body and the external thing: both can be in or out of balance. The chimpanzee is very well able to keep its own body in balance, but compared to this its ability to balance a tower of boxes is minor. The reason is that the animal is unable to realize, through a kind of prediscursive reflexivity, a level of identification with the things surrounding it. Symbolic behavior here means that I regard my body as a symbol for the thing opposite me, and vice versa. I am not only at the center of the structural ensemble that is *my* situation but I can also put myself into the heart of the ensemble that is the *object's* situation; I know what it means to be in the position of the object. The identification works both ways: we regard ourselves not only as subjects but also as objects, and we see the object as the "subject".

Of course, the latter does not imply that the thing is to us literally a subject: it means that we regard *its* center as the center of the complicated movement *we* would make if we would be in its place. The best example of this is probably the piece of fruit that needs to be pushed away from the body before it becomes available. As just noted, the chimpanzee has trouble seeing the piece of fruit as the center of movement. What is the reason for this? "Why is the detour of the object not just as actual as the detour of the body proper? This is because, in animal behavior, the external object is not a thing in the sense that the body itself is—that is, a concrete unity capable of entering into a multiplicity of relations without losing itself."[84] Whereas the body proper is to the animal a unity throughout all the movements it realizes, the thing opposite it does not possess the same stable identity. Consequently, the animal does not recognize the interchangeability of its own sensorimotor center and the "core"[85] of the thing. The thing-structure, i.e., the relation between the object's core and its properties, is a precondition for this recognition. Only if the subject faces an object which does

83 Merleau-Ponty, *La structure du comportement*, 128/118 (translation modified).

84 Ibid. (translation modified).

85 The word "core", referring to the thing as the bearer of properties, is actually Husserlian and Plessnerian language; Merleau-Ponty instead uses the word "invariant". It should be noted that the "core", in this sense, is not litterally the center within the objective space of the thing; it is the ground of its unity through its diverse aspects.

not lose its identity throughout a series of quite diverse, spatially and temporally scattered appearances, can this subject put itself in the place of the object and realize that it is itself also still a thing among other things.

When we compare this passage from *The Structure of Behavior* to the descriptions of self-perception in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, an important difference presents itself. We have seen that, in the *Phenomenology*, only a body *part* can be an object to us, because the body only becomes objective when it is the content of specific perceptions.[86] In *The Structure of Behavior*, the objectivity of the body proper is not discussed as the *content* of perception, but rather as an integrated moment of the *structure* of perception. To be more precise, our relationship to the objective body has the form of a preunderstanding which accompanies and transforms perception.[87] The invariant core of the thing is part of a structure, namely the relationship between the core itself and the thing's varying appearances. Likewise, the invariant of the body is not given *in* perception: it is there for us as part of the relationship between the properties given in proprioceptions, which express our sensorimotor possibilities, and the body itself as the center of these possibilities. The awareness of the body as an object among objects is based on the analogical structure between these two relationships of core (or center) and properties. The awareness of the objectivity of the body is not the result of any perception: it is *presupposed* in all perception and action. This presupposition renders possible that the body is to us a subject and an object at the same time, and it removes the restriction that only *parts* of the body can be objects to us.

I regard *The Structure of Behavior* as, in this respect, a more accurate account of our bodily being in the world than the *Phenomenology*. We can now better understand the example discussed in the previous section. Even if I do not notice that my arms occupy space because I keep my desk in order, I have an implicit awareness of the fact that they take up an amount of space in very much the same way as other objects on my desk do. This awareness is needed for my

86 Note that something perceived, in Merleau-Ponty's view, is never a pure *content* within the *form* of perception: it is at the same time a modification of the flexible structure of perception, what Merleau-Ponty calls a "modulation" (Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 319/321, 491/499).

87 Some might be inclined to say that we should be able to analyze this awareness of the body proper in terms of a form (consciousness) and a content (the body as subject and object), but the distinction between form and content does not apply to an awareness which exists on the level of preunderstanding. Cf. Kelly (2002) on the difference between intentionality and motor intentionality.

sensorimotor functioning, because I know, for instance, that I cannot put my arms where there are other objects. The trivial nature of the example illustrates how basic this knowledge is. The comparison between humans and animals in *The Structure of Behavior* shows that the awareness of the objective body is presupposed in the successful carrying out of the sensorimotor tasks we face. Consequently, the body schema cannot be restricted to an awareness of the *subjective* body as the background of the perception of objects: it must include, or be complemented by, this awareness of the body proper as an object in phenomenal space. The knowledge I have of my body as a background of sensorimotor functioning must include both its subjective being directed at tasks and the objective aspect of the body.

We cannot reserve any zone in the subjective body which would not at the same time be a part of the objective body, as Merleau-Ponty suggests in the *Phenomenology*. If I stick my head through a hole in the fence and the hole turns out to be too small I get stuck. I, the subject, am then struggling with the size of my head, the object, in relation to the hole in the fence. The head shows its ambiguity precisely because it is both subject and object: it is *not* a zone of subjectivity which retreats from the objective periphery of the body. The comical character of the situation sits in the very break between the subjectivity of my body and its objective shape which makes my subjective efforts futile.[88]

Whereas the *Phenomenology of Perception* only allows for a basic awareness of the body as a subject ("je connais la position de chacun de mes membres"), *The Structure of Behavior* recognizes a fundamental ambiguity which distinguishes the body proper from any use-object it finds in the world: that it is both a subject and an object. However, something is lacking from *The Structure of Behavior*, too.

We are indeed arriving at a boundary of what we can understand on the basis of Merleau-Ponty's view in either *The Structure of Behavior* or the *Phenomenology of Perception*. A basic awareness of the body proper as both an object and a subject is not only a new, "higher" structure: it implies that the lower structures are somehow *given* to someone who is at a distance from them. The ape is not aware of the interchangeability of subject and object. The margin of its engagement is too small to allow for such awareness. Human beings thus combine engagement with a degree of *disengagement*, which reveals the deeper structures of their being in the world to them, if only on the level of preunderstanding. This might be what Merleau-Ponty has in mind when he says that, con-

88 The example illustrates that slapstick is inconceivable without this break between the subjective and the objective body.

trary to the ape, even a child is already able "to detach itself from the elementary structure" (*à se déprendre de la structure élémentaire*)[89] of the situation. It might also be what he means when he suggests that structures are "more available" (*plus disponibles*)[90] for the human being than for the animal.

However, Merleau-Ponty does not define this detachment, I mean this capacity to "se déprendre de la structure élémentaire". Nor does he give a systematic account of the distance we need to have, the position in which we need to be, in order for structures to be "disponibles" to us. The principle of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is that behavior is a response to something meaningful to the subject, so that the question rises to whom these deeper structures—"la structure chose" and the body proper "comme objet parmi les objets"—are given. For whom are they real? They must be real for someone who is in a position at a (potential) remove from these structures. The fact that every new distance creates a new structure in itself (*an sich*) which is not yet for itself (*für sich*)[91] does not detract from this necessity, because we may assume that the human subject is at least at a remove from the analogy between his subjective situation and the situation of the object. He is at least so disengaged from the world that the body proper is to him both a subject and an object. From what position do we have this distance to our being a thing among things in the world and to our being open to that very same world?[92]

Incidentally, if we are able to find a systematic account of this position at a distance from our being in the world, an account which somehow does not erase our immediate *engagement* in that world, then this does not contradict but rather complement Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. The hypothesis of a structural distance we have from our bodily existence only makes it easier to give a place to some of Merleau-Ponty's claims. This distance renders possible (a) that the thing constitutes a stable unity throughout a wide variety of appearances, (b) that we see this stable unity as in some sense interchangeable with the unity of our bod-

89 Merleau-Ponty, *La structure du comportement*, 119/109.

90 Ibid., 130/120.

91 I am here not using "an sich" and "für sich" in the sense Merleau-Ponty uses "en soi" and "pour soi" because the latter terms precisely do not apply to the structure of behavior.

92 This question is inspired by Krüger, who argues that Merleau-Ponty's understanding of *time*, in *Phénoménologie de la perception*, remains on the level of Plessner's "centric positionality" (Krüger, *Zwischen Lachen und Weinen*, Volume II: *Der dritte Weg Philosophischer Anthropologie und die Geschlechterfrage*, 139-141). Plessner's distinction between centric and eccentric positionality will be addressed below.

ies, so that we can make the thing move as if it were a subject, and the subject reveals itself to be still also a thing. We would be able to understand that, as humans, we are engaged in the world and at the same time at a remove from it, so that the world's deeper structures are given to us, as well as the ambiguous nature of the body itself.

Of course, the distance we have to our bodies should not be understood as a pure mind or res cogitans. Therefore, the second question this account would need to answer is: how is this disengaged position *embodied* by us? The mind-body problem which guides our explorations necessitates this question. Sticking with the terminology in which this problem is stated we can say that humans have a different kind of "mind" than animals. If we want to avoid a dualism of body and mind, then we have to accept that all forms of mind must be realized in some form of embodiment. We cannot escape this task by restricting ourselves to a defense of embodied subjectivity because animals are also embodied subjects. But animals do not have a distance to this subjectivity or to the objectivity of their own bodies. Both human beings and animals have bodies which possess a subjective and an objective aspect, but in *what form of embodiment* is the typically human disengagement from these aspects realized? Otherwise put: granted that animal subjectivity is our starting point, how does human disengagement transform our concept of embodied being in the world?

I have not been able to find an answer to these questions in *The Structure of Behavior*. The *Phenomenology of Perception* will not bring us further either. As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty in this work emphasizes that the body proper is a sensorimotor subject. One of its main aims is to overcome "intellectualism" not by rethinking the relationship between disengagement and engagement, but by rediscovering only our *engagement* in the world.[93] More importantly, according to this work only parts of the body can become the objective content of perception. The whole body as "an object among all others"[94] (i.e. all other *objects*) only occurs in its negative, reductionistic meaning. But the objectivity of the entire body is the dialectical presupposition of the kind of disengagement or distance we are trying to grasp. So we cannot expect to find in the *Phenomenology* an elaboration of the kind of awareness of the body proper that we find in *The Structure of Behavior*.

If one would nonetheless want to find a more elaborate account of the ability "to detach" oneself "from the elementary structure" of a situation, two no-

93 Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, ix/xvi, 97/94, 253/254, 324/326-327, 358/361-362, 382/386.

94 Ibid., 68/64.

tions can be considered. The first is the human being's personal existence in contrast with his prepersonal existence and the second is the cogito. However, personal existence needs to be interpreted in relation to both the natural and the habitual body, not to the subjective and the objective body. This approach is not false, it is simply not the approach that we are looking for. How about the cogito, then? The cogito is fundamentally understood as "the simultaneous contact with my own being and with the world's being."[95] In other words, the cogito is an immediate relationship both with myself (as prepersonal and personal *subject*) and with the world I am thus *subjectively* open to. There is much more to say about these concepts, but we can conclude that they do not answer the question which ensues from *The Structure of Behavior*: what is the nature of our position so that (a) the thing shows thing-structure and (b) our bodies are to ourselves immediately both subjects open to the world, and things among other things, placed in that very same world?

Merleau-Ponty's later work does not address this issue either. I will restrict myself to a remark on *The Visible and the Invisible*. In this work, Merleau-Ponty again addresses the issue of the subjectivity and objectivity of the body. Is the objectivity of the body here perhaps restricted to body *parts*, as it is in the *Phenomenology of Perception*? This may seem to be the case when Merleau-Ponty returns to the example of the hand which both feels and is felt. Merleau-Ponty's question is how tactile perception is possible. "This can happen only if my hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example, if it takes its place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of them, opens finally upon a tangible being of which it is also a part."[96] However, after exploring how touch and vision are intertwined, Merleau-Ponty continues: "Hence, without even entering into the implications proper to the seer and the visible, we know that, since vision is a palpation with the look, it must also be inscribed in the order of being that it discloses to us; he who looks must not himself be foreign to the world that he looks at."[97] So although Merleau-Ponty initially formulates his main argument by referring to the hand which can become a perceived object to me, in the end he works towards the conclusion that the whole body belongs both "to the order of the 'object' and to the order of the 'subject'".[98]

95 Ibid., 432/438-439.

96 Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, 174/133.

97 Ibid., 175/134.

98 Ibid., 178/137.

As I remarked in Section 4.1, it is not clear to me why the apparently indispensible terms "subject" and "object" need to be put in quotation marks. After all, it is clear from the context that Merleau-Ponty does not defend a subject/object-opposition, but rather addresses the ambiguous relationship between a subjective and an objective aspect. But this is now not the main point. We should first observe that Merleau-Ponty's view here has something in common with the view in *The Structure of Behavior*: the whole body is regarded as part of the order of the objective, as a thing among other things. This is now explained in a different way which may or may not be compatible with *The Structure of Behavior*, but I will leave these differences aside. The question I want to focus on is: why does Merleau-Ponty neglect the fact that the "subjective" and the "objective" order are, in their ambiguity, also *given* or at least *sensed* by human beings, which presupposes that human existence possesses a dimension which transcends the subjective and the objective? Merleau-Ponty argues that, in order for us to be able to perceive the world, our bodies must already be part of that same world. They must belong to "the order of things" (*l'ordre des choses*),[99] which then leads to the description of this order as "universal flesh" (*chair universelle*).[100] We can observe that, although *The Visible and the Invisible* in some respects differs from both *The Structure of Behavior* and the *Phenomenology*, there is one important similarity: Merleau-Ponty fails to describe the position from which we are aware of the two orders, that of the subject and that of the object. Nor does he describe how this position at a remove from our subjectivity and objectivity transforms our bodily existence.

Of course, the question of how the *world* is given in perception *is* addressed. "For if the body is a thing among things, it is so in a stronger and deeper sense than they: in the sense that, we said, it *is of them*, and this means that it detaches itself upon them, and, accordingly, detaches itself from them."[101] This detachment renders possible that the human body "concentrates the mystery"[102] of visibility, i.e., that it is a "subject". Since we are reading the word "detachment" here we might expect to find an answer to our question. But the problem is that this kind of detachment is rather a detachment "of the first kind" which only constitutes subjectivity.

Let me explain what I mean by this. Merleau-Ponty should agree that the animal, too, belongs to the order of the subject and to that of the object, because

99 Ibid., 179/137.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

it, too, can *perceive* the world only on condition that its body fundamentally *belongs* to that world. And yet, human beings alone emphatically *live* this ambiguity. We humans can both sense, and reflect upon, the *ambiguous sphere* which is constituted by the "intertwining" (*entrelacs*)[103] of the objective order and the subjective order. The animal has no sense for the mystery of the visible. Only to us the perceivable is both something given and something which intrigues us. This is so because we are not only detached from the order of things, not only subjects, but also detached from this detachment, that is: from our subjectivity *itself*.

4.5 THE SENSE OF THE NEGATIVE

The question regarding the nature of human disengagement evoked by Merleau-Ponty's The Structure of Behavior thus remains open. I think that we need to look for an answer outside Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, and that, to be more precise, Helmuth Plessner can complement his view at this point. Some time before Merleau-Ponty, he formulated the structure of our being in the world in terms which are very similar to Merleau-Ponty's. For example, the intertwining (entrelacs) mentioned above is not exactly the same as, but quite similar to Plessner's "interlacing" (Verschränkung)[104] of the subjective and the objective order. Plessner also discusses Köhler's experiments with animals, specifically chimpanzees, and like Merleau-Ponty, Plessner interprets these experiments against the backdrop of Husserl's phenomenology, so that he too arrives at a description of the limitations of animal behavior in terms of the structure of the thing, which is hidden from animals. I will conclude this chapter by presenting a few crucial points from Plessner's interpretation of Köhler. This is a bridge to the next chapter, where I present a more thorough account of Plessner's conception of being in the world.

On the basis of Köhler's experiments, Plessner argues that the animal's environment constitutes a field with a *gestalthaft* and sometimes complex character. For *higher* animals, the latter means that they are able to make detours to reach a goal, as in the examples discussed in the previous section. The animal has a certain degree of insight in the structure of the field. It recognizes similarities between different objects or situations, but these similarities belong, as it were, to the surface of the appearance. In fact, there is nothing *but* a surface of

103 Ibid., 180/138.

104 Plessner, *Lachen und Weinen*, 240/36.

appearances, because, in Plessner's view, the animal has no sense of the existence-in-itself, i.e., of the surplus of possible ways in which the thing can appear. There is here no distance between the appearance of the thing and the thing in-itself as the "source" of the appearance. In this sense, there are no "genuine things" (*echte Dinge*) for the animal;[105] there here is no real "objectivity" (*Gegenständlichkeit*).[106]

Likewise, there is for the animal no distance, no gap, between the particularity and the generality of what is given in perception. This does not mean that there is no relationship at all between the particular and the general: the animal sees in the *particular* things surrounding it immediately the *general* correlate of its own needs and playful interests. However, the field is only given as a direct answer to these needs and interests, and the animal's insight in the field enables it to make detours, but not to recognize the general structures *as such* that govern its behavior. In other words, the general is for the animal not present as separate from the concreteness of the situation.

In human beings this is different, in two ways:

(1) The human being regards the thing not only as a structural moment of the field, which together with the other moments constitutes the totality of the field including its meanings, but precisely also as detachable from this context, as a thing with a proper existence and an unlimited reserve of possible appearances (albeit restricted by its nature as *this* thing). The thing "appears as a unity of properties organized around a core",[107] and always some part of all properties is hidden. This duality of givenness and hiddenness constitutes true objectivity (*Gegenständlichkeit*), which defines the structure of the human world.

(2) As regards the general/particular-distinction, it is quite common to ascribe to the human being the ability to think and develop concepts, but Plessner points out that these capacities are founded on something which precedes conceptualization. They are founded on a high level of reflexivity *inherent to perception*: "In order to subordinate the structure of a thing, for example, to the conceptual unity of the 'ladder', one first needs to grasp the prelinguistic, schematically intuitable 'ladder-ness' as the pure gestalt which can correspond to a thousand variations."[108] Drawing on Kant, Plessner in this contexts speaks of "schemata" to designate a special, general kind of "Gestalt".[109] The schema is an

105 Ibid., *Stufen*, 270/340.

106 Ibid., 270/341.

107 Ibid., 81/128.

108 Ibid., 273/344.

109 Ibid., 273/344.

"emptiness" (*Lehre*), a general "framework" (*Rahmen*), according to which the world of perception is automatically organized.[110] According to my interpretation, the schema is a unity of essence indicating characteristics (*indikatorische Wesensmerkmale*),[111] i.e., properties which are indicative of a certain essence or category. A multitude of particular gestalts, in this case ladders of different materials, shapes and colors, are still in accordance with the general schema "ladder". The "framework" not only refers to this general, perceivable gestalt, but also to the correlating category "ladder" as the object with this specific essential function.[112] In contrast to animal experience, human experience is structured by the gap between, on the one hand, the general category (and its schema) and the particular thing here-and-now.

How are (1) and (2) interconnected? There is indeed an intrinsic relationship between the structure of the genuine thing and the gap between the particular and the general. The example of the "box-as-seat and the box-as-instrument" from the previous section shows that there is one thing "underneath" these different categorial appearances, which also means: that different categories (here: seat and instrument to stand on) apply to an object which is to us, but not to the animal, *one and the same thing*. So the fact that the human can recognize one individual thing throughout a range of very diverse appearances (even in different times and places) *and* the fact that he can recognize the thing as one of many instances of the *general* category "ladder", "box", "rope", and so forth, are *both* founded on the transcendence of the thing with regard to its appearance, i.e., its proper, stable reality as the bearer of a multitude of properties only some of which are given at any moment in time.

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110 Ibid.

111 Ibid., 115/168.

112 It seems hard to intuit "ladder-ness" without imagining a concrete, perceivable ladder. But we are dealing with levels of experience with different degrees of independence from empirical perception. The empirical properties of any concrete ladder are the least independent from perception. The set of general characteristics of the ladder, i.e. its typical form, mediates its perceptual recognition as a *ladder*. This typical form is gestalthaft but it cannot be pinned down in terms of very specific qualities. Imagination often dwells on this "general perception" level. Finally, the logic of the function of the ladder, and what is implied in it (e.g. physical object, use-object, the human ability to climb), is the level of experience which is most independent from specific empirical qualities. It allows us to accept a-typical objects (e.g. a box or table) as a ladder and also to use the word "ladder" metaphorically.

This is all roughly in accordance with Merleau-Ponty, but there are two major differences between Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of Köhler and Plessner's. Contrary to Merleau-Ponty, Plessner emphasizes that the objectivity of the thing over against the subject is imbued with *negativity*: the surplus of possible appearances and the thing in-itself as the carrier of its properties and source of its appearances are all "negative" in the sense that they go beyond the superficially given appearance. Therefore, they are hidden from a sensorimotor perception which only recognizes what correlates with its abilities, its needs, and its playful interests. Plessner indeed argues that the absence of a genuine thing, of real *Gegenständlichkeit*—Merleau-Ponty's *structure chose*—from the animal world, is due to the animal lacking "the sense of the negative" ("der Sinn fürs Negative").[113] Furthermore, the schematically present category which governs perception and which forms the basis for explicit reflection, reasoning and so forth, is an *empty* category and precisely for this reason it is meaningless—that is: non-existent—for the animal. In the field of the animal there can be no distance between the concrete and the general because recognizing this distance presupposes the sense of the negative which is typical of human beings: "Genuine individuality and genuine generality . . . are based on the presupposition that consciousness is able to grasp the negative as such, the lack of something, the deficiency, the emptiness."[114]

There is in this respect a second difference between Merleau-Ponty and Plessner. When we focus on the structure of the thing and on the relationship between the particular and the general, we explain negativity only in terms of the structure of the things given to us, i.e., the way in which our world is organized so that it is indeed a genuine *world*. But the main possibility condition for the structure of the world is the manner in which the human being, as a body, takes his *place* in that world. This condition is what Plessner calls the human being's *form of positionality*.

As we will see in the next chapter, the crux of everything that distinguishes a human being from an animal is that the human has a different form of positionality. The negativity inherent to the human environment, its inner discontinuities and its transcendence, is due to the gap between the two modes of our being in the world which we have been discussing: subjectivity and objectivity. According to Plessner, our being in the world is therefore characterized not by a twofold but by a threefold structure. Firstly, we are in the world in the sense of part of the world of things: our bodies are things among things within phenome-

113 Ibid., 270/340. I removed the italics.

114 Ibid., 276/347.

nal space. This is the objectivity of our bodily existence. Secondly, we are in the world in the sense of open to the world: we are a center of convergence of world experience—this is the subjective aspect of our bodily being in the world. So far, Plessner's view is quite similar to Merleau-Ponty's. But thirdly, according to Plessner, we are also at a distance to both the objectivity and the subjectivity of the body: this distance is what makes us different from animals. Whereas animals are "centrically positioned", human beings are "eccentrically positioned".

This triple structure defines Plessner's concept of personhood. Consequently, the person is not the same as the subject: it is the person who is aware of, and mediates between, his being objectively part of the world and his subjective openness to the world. I argue that we need this concept of eccentric positionality in order to understand the structure of the thing, and also—for our purposes even more importantly—in order to understand that we are to ourselves both subjects and things among other things. Before I turn to this, let me shortly recapitulate this chapter.

In Section 4.1 I addressed Merleau-Ponty's view, in *The Structure of Behavior*, on the relationship between subjective experience and the scientific objectification of the body. I agreed with Merleau-Ponty's critique of materialism (i.e., classical theory and gestalt theory): being in the world cannot be reduced to a set of causal events, even if the set of events concerned constitutes a system which is more than the sum of its parts. My interpretation of *The Structure of Behavior* led to the conclusion that science constitutes a secondary perspective in regard to first-person experience. It also clarified what generally motivates us to shift from the first- to the third-person perspective: we make this shift whenever we seek healing or technical enhancement of our functioning. We make a detour, via the objective body, back to our first-person perspective, because only from this personal point of view can we value and enjoy our restored or enhanced being in the world. In Section 4.2 I presented a number of examples to illustrate this point, and to demonstrate the difference between arbitrary and necessary shifts of perspective.

In Section 4.3 I explored in what way we are an objective body, not to science, but to ourselves as first persons. I began with a discussion of the *perception* of the body proper according to the *Phenomenology of Perception*. Merleau-Ponty on the one hand leans to the view that our body cannot be an object *at all* to us, since the body is first and foremost a subject open to a world; on the other hand he allows that *parts* of the body proper can be an object to me. We found a broader outlook in *The Structure of Behavior*: an *awareness* of the body proper is more fundamental than specific perceptions of it (Section 4.4). The subject not only perceives parts of his body as objects: his whole body is to himself both a

sensorimotor subject and "an object among objects". The body schema turned out to be one-sided because it only incorporates our awareness of the body proper as a subject open to a world, not, in addition, as an object placed *in* the world.

We learn from *The Structure of Behavior* that a critique of materialism does not necessarily lead to the position that our bodies have no objective aspect at all. We can resist materialism and still say that the body is, besides a subject, also an object in the world. It is important to note that neither the body part in the *Phenomenology* nor the "object among objects" in *The Structure of Behavior*, is an object as seen from a scientific perspective. The body part is perceived as integrated in the phenomenal world and the ability to treat one's own body (or a body part) as an object among objects is constitutive of the inner structure of first-person human experience. The difference between a phenomenal object and a physical object will be discussed in Chapter 6. Only then can we address the questions, firstly, in what sense our bodies are part of physical reality; secondly, how physical realism and phenomenal realism are reconcilable; and thirdly, how science connects with the prescientific experience of the objective body.

Merleau-Ponty's view raises an important question: from what position is the subject at a distance from the structure of the thing and from the double character (subject and object) of the body proper? From what position is she immediately aware of the analogy between the situation of her own body and the situation of the thing facing her? Neither the *Phenomenology* nor *The Visible and the Invisible* answers this question.

In the current section I have introduced the thought that will be elaborated in the next chapter. Plessner's concept of being in the world is quite similar to Merleau-Ponty's. Plessner also analyzes our bodily being in the world in terms of the subjectivity and the objectivity of the body proper. In addition, Plessner complements Merleau-Ponty because he presents a systematic account of our structural disengagement; he describes elaborately the position from which we are at a distance to both the subjectivity and the objectivity of the body.