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Aesthetic Bodily Intentionality in Dance: Developing the Classical Notion of Intentionality

Abstract

In this article, my main strategy is to analyze Merleau-Ponty's use of intentionality in order to do three things: first, I delineate Merleau-Ponty's departures from Husserl's semantic conception of intentionality. Second, I clarify and develop Merleau-Ponty own positive and distinctive account of perception in terms of bodily intentionality. Thirdly, I suggest that Merleau-Pontian account of the bodily intentionality is incomplete because it cannot describe the bodily movement in dance.

Keywords

Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, bodily intentionality, dance, aesthetic bodily intentionality

From Semantic to Bodily Intentionality

It is one of the remarkable features of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to give an account of perceptual consciousness and bodily intentionality. I am interested in examining to what extent Merleau-Ponty phenomenological notion of bodily intentionality can be applied to the body in dance. In this article, I look at the notion of intentionality, which is one of the three major pillars of phenomenology discussed by Merleau-Ponty in the Preface to *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012, henceforth PP). My main strategy is to analyze Merleau-Ponty's use of intentionality in order to do three things. First, I delineate Merleau-Ponty's departure from Husserl's semantic conception of

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I delineate Merleau-Ponty's departure from Husserl's semantic conception of intentionality, from which he claims to draw inspiration. Second, I clarify and develop Merleau-Ponty's own positive and distinctive account of perception in terms of bodily intentionality. Thirdly, I suggest that the Merleau-Pontian account of the bodily intentionality is incomplete because it cannot account for the kind of intentionality exhibited by a dancing body.

The project of *Phenomenology of Perception* is presented here in terms of a shift from the Husserlian view of semantic intentionality as content- or proposition-like, to one centered on non-propositional bodily intentionality. In content-like intentionality, the content of consciousness is understood in terms of propositional statements and concepts. It is a semantic paradigm of intentionality because perception is made intelligible in terms of declarative statements to be understood on a linguistic model. Some forms of bodily intentionality cannot be characterized in terms of propositional content, yet manifest meaningful ways of bodily engagement in the world through intentional entwining. I distinguish three kinds of bodily movement drawing on Merleau-Ponty's analysis and suggest my own fourth way of classifying bodily movement. Following Merleau-Ponty, there is a task fulfilling bodily movement, like swinging a baseball bat, swimming, or rock climbing. It is an *abstract* movement in the sense that it requires continual reference to conceptual representation to coordinate one's moves to achieve the desired result. There is a *concrete*, habituated movement of the body that performs skilful activity with the items in the environment, but does not involve reflective thought, like grasping a cup of tea, blowing one's nose. The third type of movement is *reflex*. This movement is a response to a mechanical input, such as ducking before a flying stone. On Merleau-Ponty's account, as we shall see, the first two types of movement exhibit intentionality or world-directedness, while the third, reflex movement, does not. He distinguishes abstract from concrete movement by showing that abstract movements are guided by representations while the skilful coping manifest in concrete movements are not.

I suggest a fourth type of movement, which also exhibits intentionality: *spontaneous movement*.¹ In contrast to both abstract and concrete movements, spontaneous movement neither requires a mental representation nor aims at skilful performance. This movement is found in dancing, children playing, or one's gesturing during a speech.

¹ I call this type of movement an aesthetic bodily intentionality. This form of movement is not discussed by Merleau-Ponty in PP, in my view however, this non-goal oriented movement must be taken into account to give a more complete account of bodily intentionality.

The following three questions guide my inquiry. (1) Does Merleau-Ponty's notion of perceptual consciousness as bodily intentionality fully depart from Husserl's conception of content-like intentionality, *i.e.*, is it free of the semantic paradigm? (2) To what extent does Merleau-Ponty's project of offering a phenomenology of perceptual consciousness succeed in giving a comprehensive account of bodily intentionality? (3) Is Merleau-Ponty's account of bodily intentionality rich enough to be applied to an aesthetic kind of movement, as we see in dance?

Merleau-Ponty's most basic difference from Husserl is the status of the natural attitude. For Husserl, the 'natural attitude' is the one we adopt in our everyday, unreflective engagement with the world, such as walking into a familiar room to sit down to read a book. It is the every-day experience, in which we take an object's existence for granted. The natural attitude must be suspended, so that the phenomenologist can sensibly determine the mode or the features of objects given in perception. This determinacy, according to Husserl, requires philosophical reflection on perceptual experience to better reveal how the object is given in experience. This natural attitude must be corrected by the philosophical attitude of reflection in order to see how this object structurally appears in our experience. In this philosophical reflection on the experience of the object itself, Husserl's account of perception, according to Sean Kelly (2004, 74–110, henceforth CMP), is limited to what is positively given: "On Husserl's account, therefore, the hidden features of an object are *indeterminate* in the sense that I *have not yet sensibly determined* what they are. I may have a certain hypothesis or belief about the shape of the backside of the object, but until I go around to the back and look, I will not have determined it for sure" (CMP, 80).² The indeterminate features, like the hidden third dimension of objects, are unfamiliar and therefore absent, on Husserl's account of perception. The point of the Husserlian suspension of the natural attitude is to get to the "things themselves" as things we can sensibly determine through reduction. In contrast to Husserl, the unfamiliar, which Merleau-Ponty calls the "indeterminate," is positively present: we must recognize the indeterminate as a positive phenomenon (PP, 7). Kelly argues that the indeterminate features for Merleau-Ponty are normative to seeing (CMP, 79). The hidden aspects of objects in perception ought to be there as part of our perceptual experience; the background of things in the perceptual field which is not immediately given is nevertheless positively present in order to see things. While for Husserl the natural attitude stands

² Husserl 1997, 57.

in a way of positively determining the features of objects given in perception, for Merleau-Ponty the natural attitude of familiarity with objects of perception is built upon bodily ways of organizing the unfamiliar. "When I look about freely, in the natural attitude, the parts of the field act upon each other and motivate this enormous moon on the horizon, this measureless size that is nevertheless a size" (PP, 34). The difference between the suspension of the natural attitude of the familiar and of acceptance of the natural attitude towards the unfamiliar is made more explicit in terms of "things themselves."

The problem with Husserl's view of the natural attitude is that suspending the familiar features of objects involves treating them in a determinate manner. On this approach, there is no context in which one can embrace the indeterminacy of perception. Merleau-Ponty's account of perception asserts that the indeterminacy of perceived objects is necessary to our experience of them. The purpose of Husserl's reductions is to "bracket" the alleged familiarity in order to get to the "things themselves." Merleau-Ponty is also attracted to getting to the "things themselves" and describing them in a phenomenological manner; however, in his view, our everyday familiarity with the world is already continually disrupted by the unfamiliar, or what Kelly describes as the "indeterminacy positively present." The challenge of Merleau-Ponty's account of phenomenology of perception is to attend to, and clarify, these moments of disruption or indeterminacy in perception, which characterize everyday being-in-the-world. On this alternative conception, our experience of the world is "taken" by our body rather than given conceptually. In this way, I view Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as a phenomenology of experience rather than of thought.

With respect to the notion of intentionality, "which can only be understood through the reduction" (PP, xxxi), Merleau-Ponty considers perceptual consciousness as an alternative to Husserlian, content-like intentionality. For him, perceptual consciousness is grounded in bodily intentionality.³ Bodily intentionality informs us about the way in which consciousness operates and reveals how we are driven by a world of contingency that simultaneously compels us to action. In contrast, for Husserl, intentionality characterizes

³ "[M]y own body is the primordial habit, the one that conditions all others and by which they can be understood. Its near presence and its invariable perspective is not a factual necessity, since factual necessity presupposes them: for my window to impose on me a perspective on the church, my body must first impose on me the perspective on the world, and the former necessity can only be a purely physical one because the later necessity is metaphysical" (PP, 93).

mental states of consciousness of things, experiences, thoughts, and beliefs. Intentional acts are ways in which we appropriate these states of consciousness and turn them into representations, or content, which render these phenomena intelligible. On Husserl's view, meaning is achieved by relating things, experiences, thoughts, and beliefs to what they stand for. When I see a painting, then my perception is a representation of a painting; when I think of the Pythagorean theorem $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$, I think that the square areas inscribed on a triangle's lines a and b to equal the area of square on the hypotenuse c . In the next section, I will present Merleau-Ponty's challenge to Husserlian notion of intentionality as semantic. Merleau-Ponty shows that bodily experiences and experiences of other things are more basic to the semantic intentionality. We are already *au monde*, our bodies are perceptually directed to the world which offers an "inexhaustible reservoir" to perceptual experiences, and this bodily intentionality calls for a more comprehensive account.

Bodily Intentionality

[T]here is a logic of the world that my entire body merges with and through which inter-sensory things become possible. [...] To have a body is to possess a universal arrangement, a schema of all perceptual developments and of all inter-sensory correspondences beyond the segment of the world that we are actually perceiving (PP, 341).

To have an idea of how to jump over the creek is not the same as having the actual experience of jumping. The command "to jump" does not involve a number of steps which need to be considered in order to make a successful jump. The right angle from which to initiate the jump, and the tension in my muscles required to achieve the right height to safely traverse the creek, are only a few steps I can name when my body moves closer and further away as to find the appropriate distance to achieve the right speed to complete the task. This example, among many other bodily engagements in-the-world, shows a kind of bodily preparedness to cope with things that is irreducible to a concept-like approach. There is a linguistic impoverishment in comparison to the body's myriad ways of "merging with the logic of the world." Our body in its special awareness takes care of most of our daily tasks seamlessly, like throwing a letter in a mailbox, tying a shoe, or crossing the street. How does bodily perceptual consciousness cope with things in the environment and other bodies without relying on mental representations? In Merleau-Ponty's view, the body is in communion with the world, and to un-

derstand the logic of the world with which my body merges is to understand how perceptual consciousness arises. What is perceptual consciousness?

In the early 1940's, Merleau-Ponty developed the notion of perceptual consciousness, characterized by intentional acts that are not concept-like and yet manifest meaningful bodily movements in coping with the things in the environment or social situations. The study of perceptual consciousness in *Phenomenology of Perception* focuses on considering bodily intentionality as one's way of being-in-the-world, which already takes place before any possible analysis. Merleau-Ponty distinguishes two ways in which we apprehend the objects in perception. One involves an intentional attitude that can be understood in terms of concept-like representations, in which concepts stand for the actual thing, experience, thought, and belief. The second one involves an intentional attitude characterized by bodily preparedness to cope with the object, which he refers to as "motor intentionality"⁴ as the basic manifestation of perceptual consciousness. The point of his analysis of perceptual consciousness is to show that the intentionality which characterizes mental activity, which I refer to here as semantic or concept-like, is differentiated from the intentionality which is expressed by the body's meaningful movement. On my account, Merleau-Ponty's key challenge to the Husserlian notion of intentionality is that the intentionality manifest in mental processes does not explain bodily preparedness to engage with things in the world. Merleau-Ponty's notion of a motor (or bodily) intentionality is a distinct kind of intentionality, and more fundamental than semantic intentionality. I defend this claim in two ways. (a.) I will begin by considering Merleau-Ponty's discussion of a range of pathological case-studies, which focus on patients who have suffered brain trauma, or had their limbs amputated. (b.) Then using the findings of those studies, I will highlight the main points of Merleau-Ponty's criticism of both intellectualism and empiricism as failing to provide an account of what, according to Merleau-Ponty, are the two central aspects of perceptual consciousness. The first one rejects the traditional notion of perception as passively "given" content, in favour of a notion of perception as actively involving *the lived*

⁴ I generalize Merleau-Ponty's term of "motor intentionality" under the term of "bodily intentionality". I should note that "motor intentionality" is not the only type of bodily intentionality, for I claim that to expand his analysis I consider an aesthetic model of bodily intentionality. In short, "motor intentionality" is for Merleau-Ponty something like an automated movement, which happens without any reflection on the performed movement to complete a task. An aesthetic model of bodily intentionality looks at the body without ascribing any task to be completed by its movement.

body, which *takes* items of experiences, and organizes them in perception. The second one is what is thereby given *in* the experience of the lived body of the “things themselves.”

(a.) Merleau-Ponty uses studies of patients who suffered bodily injuries during War World I to show that bodily movement cannot be classified in the same way we categorize mental experiences, which are representations “about” or “of” something. The perceptual content that results from, or is continuous with, moving one’s body around, does not require concept-like representations. How is it that we can move in a meaningful way without concept-like representations?

Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of Johan Schneider’s case shows how bodily intentionality reveals a non-conceptual preparedness to meaningfully cope with the items in the environment. Schneider was a German soldier who, at the age of 24, suffered damage to the back of his head by a mine splinter that left him unconscious for four days. His visual impairment limited his bodily way of coping with things in the environment. Seventeen years later he recovered from the trauma, and was capable of running a grocery shop and even was elected mayor in his village. The elements of Schneider’s recovery from visual agnosia, an impairment in the visual recognition of objects, were essential for Merleau-Ponty to show that the body can act skilfully, independently of reflective thought. Schneider’s symptoms of agnosia amounted to his retaining some of the visual functions, like recognizing colours and light, but he partially lost the ability to recognize objects. He could, for instance, copy drawings, but he could not recognize what they represented, unless he traced it with his fingers or imitated with his bodily movement the features of the object. Merleau-Ponty writes,

Through vision alone, Schneider does not recognize any object. His visual givens are nearly formless patches. As for absent objects, he is incapable of forming a visual representation of them. On the other hand, we know that abstract movements become possible for the subject the moment he focuses his eyes upon the limb charged with the task. Thus, what remains of voluntary motoricity depends upon what remains of visual knowledge (PP, 115).

For Merleau-Ponty, the case of Schneider shows how bodily intentionality can organize experience in a meaningful way without concepts. Merleau-Ponty uses Schneider’s ability to recognize objects by moving his limbs as a basis for distinguishing two kinds of movement: abstract movement and concrete movement. Abstract movement requires a person to have a spatial sense of the objective world. It is a type of movement that follows a com-

mand, such as knocking at the door or pointing with one's finger to one's nose. Abstract movements exhibit a concept-like, or semantic, intentional structure, because in order to execute a series of desired bodily movements so as to achieve a specific goal, we use language. Thought-driven actions like passing a book to a friend who wants to borrow it or walking to a lunch meeting, are actions of the body that stand in a causal relation to concept-like representations. In order to get to some place you have to have a concept of your destination, and you may at each point in your journey refer to a discrete set of steps. Our every-day bodily way of moving through the social environment depends in a large part on performing the right bodily conduct, which depends on thought driven commands. We use our bodies, or gestures,⁵ to communicate to others that we respect the space taken by their bodies, we trust others, who like us want to protect their vulnerable bodies. The body, in the sense of abstract movement, is a vehicle which we use in order to occupy the common space and exhibit our fundamental "bodily understanding" of social norms. Abstract movement exhibits this understanding when we take care of the personal hygiene of grooming, washing, and following rituals regarding rest and exercise. We also know how to restrain our bodies when being among other bodies, we know not to lean against or walk into them. When performing an abstract movement of knocking at my friend's door, my friend and I understand this gesture as signifying my desire to enter. The abstract movement is thus a *non-habituated*⁶ movement since it requires a level of one's reflectivity on one's body as an object, or *body image*, in order to pursue a task. Every time I want to enter my friend's house, I go through a series of steps, in which I think that I must first cross the street, then turn South, go up a flight of stairs, and knock at the door. Even though the commands do not take care of all the bodily intricate movements which constitute this seemingly simple task, this

⁵ I admit that gestures are difficult to analyze because on the one hand we have gestures, which communicate linguistic content, like I make an angry face because I am angry at you, happy face to show my content, or just smile instead of saying 'thank you'. But there also can be the type of gestures as unique movements, like the unique gesture of a woman to her swimming instructor which begins Milan Kundera's *Immortality*.

⁶ I want to claim that the expert movement is a non-habituated movement because it is an abstract movement, because here I refer to my body as an object, I move it for the sake of swinging this bat, or I move it for the sake to show how Odette/Odile swiftly do their *jetés*. Paradoxically, their movement is never habituated; it can be though if they just do it for the pleasure of just doing that. Where the whole world of reasoning why they are doing it just drops out.

type of movement is abstract because it requires a reflective attitude to be renewed every time we think of the task I want to accomplish with my body. In this sense I take expert movement, not as an automated movement,⁷ which takes place without any self-reflection on one's movement, but as an abstract movement. To perform movement abstractly on an expert level, as a chef chopping onions or a golf player, is to reflectively coordinate one's moving, the chef must guide her movement continuously by thought not to cut her fingers and the golf player must continually think about how to reach the goal of her throw. Abstract movements, as Merleau-Ponty says, are projected on a background that the person creates, which is to say that they are abstract movements because they rely on semantic intentionality as command coordination.

However, the concrete movements are exhibited by what Merleau-Ponty calls "motor intentionality"⁸ to which I broadly refer to here as bodily intentionality. They are intelligible without concept-like representations. In contrast to abstract movement, concrete movement is not to be made sense of in an objective way. In this type of movement, it is the sense of proprioception, the sense for where my body is positioned, rather than thought, that "tells" the body how to move. In concrete movement, I do not need to refer to my body as an objective thing; rather, I am the body that moves. This type of movement I refer to as a *habituated movement* because it does not require reflection in order for a task to be completed, like in skiing, choreographed dancing, or tying a shoe. The body exhibits an organized preparedness (*body-schema*) of how to meaningfully move. Schneider could not coordinate his body through abstract movement; however in concrete movement he had no problems with moving his limbs. For example, when he was asked to

⁷ I am developing this account of abstract movement to involve expert bodily movement, which according to Barbara Montero are misleadingly taken to be automated movements. The expert movements are abstract in so far as they involve reflective commanding of one's own performance. However, there is movement in an expert body when the reflective-commanding mode is not present. This happens when bodily performance is not judged and the body moves freely for the sake of moving, because there is nothing else that it would rather be doing.

⁸ I have been referring so far to Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'motor intentionality' as bodily intentionality. This is perhaps not a fair treatment of the aspects of bodily intentionality that Merleau-Ponty focuses on. Bodily intentionality is manifest in both abstract and concrete movements, but only concrete movements in Merleau-Ponty's are the type of 'motor intentionality' "in the absence of which the order remains a dead letter. The patient either conceives the ideal formula for the movement, or else he launches his body into blind attempts to perform it (PP, 113).

touch his nose while blindfolded, he could not find his own nose, whereas when he needed to use a handkerchief to blow his nose, he had no problems finding it. According to Merleau-Ponty, Schneider's ability to perform concrete movement shows that there is a kind of movement that does not depend on semantic intentionality. The failure to perform the abstract movement, fulfilling the instruction to "touch one's nose," shows that some bodily movements cannot be executed by an aid of representation. For a "normal person" Merleau-Ponty says,

[M]ovement has a *background*, and the movement and its background are "moments of a single whole." The background to the movement is not a representation associated or linked externally to the movement itself; it is immanent in the movement, it animates it and guides it along at each moment (PP, 113).

Schneider's case presents a paradox, namely that the background deficiency, the inability to connect bodily movement with abstract, immanent thought, informs us about bodily intentionality just as his concrete movements, which are performed independently from the background, inform us about skilful bodily movement. Bodily intentionality manifested in abstract and concrete movement do not reveal the same preparedness as the body in spontaneous movement. Indeed, evidence has come to light since Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception that not only is concrete movement dissociable from abstract, as in the case of Schneider, who preserved the one but not the other. Concrete movement can be lost, while abstract movement is retained: they are double-dissociable. For instance, Christina from Oliver Sacks' *The Disabled Lady* (1985) who, after a loss of proprioception, preserved abstract movement and could teach her limbs to move again and accomplish simple movements like walking or tying a shoe.

"Phantom limb" is another example considered by Merleau-Ponty to show that patients who had their limbs amputated do not lose the sense of their bodies as integrated. The phantom limb is experienced by patients who are aware of the loss of their limb but nevertheless feel a sensation of pain, or have awareness of having their phantom limb being positioned awkwardly. A similar phenomenon, as Merleau-Ponty notices, is observed in agnosognostic patients who, unaware of their disability, do not need objective criteria to relate to their bodies as continually integrated. The unity of perception is in the body, rather than given to the body objectively.

[T]here is an affective presence and extension of which objective spatiality is neither the sufficient condition, as it is shown in anosognosia, nor even the necessary condition, as is shown by the phantom arm (PP, 150).

These examples are used by Merleau-Ponty to describe *the lived body* as an integrated unity, as *body schema*, rather than an assembly of individually coordinated limbs to which we respond linguistically by commands. Merleau-Ponty says,

Experience reveals, beneath the objective space in which the body eventually finds its place, a primordial spatiality of which objective space is but the envelope and which merges with the very being of the body. As we have seen, to be a body is to be tied to a certain world, and our body is not primarily in space, but is rather of space (PP, 149).

In a broader perspective, Merleau-Ponty's use of the discussion of inability to perform abstract movements and showing that perception is already organized at a bodily level serve to illustrate his critique of intellectualism and empiricism. In particular, as I will now show, their respective accounts of perceptual experience are essentially accounts of the experience of the abstract body to be coordinated by thought or given explanation by the stimuli-response context. The *lived body* is reducible to neither.

My claim is that in order to make sense of the body's movement one must consider *spontaneous movement*, which occurs just for the pleasure or merely for the sake of moving, in gesturing, children at play, or in some forms of dance that draw on the bodily movement, rather than choreographed ideas.

Intellectualism and Empiricism

In Merleau-Ponty's view, both intellectualism and empiricism are insufficient to describe perceptual consciousness because their accounts are respectively too rich and too poor. According to Merleau-Ponty, consciousness for intellectualists only begins to exist by determining an object, and the phantoms of an "internal experience" hence, intellectualism is too rich because it projects unified concepts about things into the perceived world. Empiricists who rely on constancy hypothesis to explain conscious perception suggest that there is an isomorphism between perception and what is perceived. Their view of perceptual consciousness implies that attention "illuminates and clarifies" basic given sensations rather than creating some new form or gestalt. But on his account, the "normal function of attention" is "a process of constitution, not copying" (PP, 9) In this way for Merleau-

-Ponty, empiricism is too poor because it falls short in explaining how things appear. Both accounts therefore commit “the experience error,” which means that what we know to be in things themselves, we immediately take as being in our consciousness of them. “We make perception out of things perceived. And since perceived things themselves are obviously accessible only through perception, we end by understanding neither” (PP, 150). Perception is not made out of the things perceived, it is not a house, which we construct by laying one brick after another, it is an organized experience of the *lived body*. The unity of experience does not result from putting the elements of experience together; neither is it unified by our idea of it.

Showing how intellectualism and empiricism fail to give an account of the perceptual body, *the lived body*, as the “vehicle of perception,” reveals how the fundamental program of phenomenology of getting back to the things themselves cannot be satisfied. If the perspective on how things are perceived is confused, then how can we describe what is perceived? Here is an excerpt in which Merleau-Ponty offers his phenomenological account of perceptual consciousness as *the lived body*:

If I am seated at my desk and want to pick up the telephone, the movement of my hand toward the object, the straightening of my torso, and the contraction of my leg muscles envelop each other; I desire a certain result and the tasks divide themselves up among the segments in question, and the possible combination of movements are given in advance as equivalent: I could remain leaning back in my chair provided that I can extend my arm further, I could lean forward, or I could even partly stand up. All of these movements are available to us through their common signification. That is why, in their first attempts at grasping, children do not look at their hand, but at the object. The different segments of the body are only known through their functional value and their coordination is not learned (PP, 150).

Bodily dimensions are not presented by intellectualists or empiricists accounts, because the account of the meaning of bodily movement in the case of intellectualism is performed in terms of abstract movement. As the case of Schneider shows, making sense with one’s body moving cannot be reduced to concept-like representations, since concrete movements can be performed independently of them. Bodily habitual⁹ dispositions do not disap-

⁹ Abstract movement is a movement coordinated by thought. This movement is non-habituated because every time I perform it I need to ‘command’ my body to move in a desired way. This movement characteristic to exhibiting understanding of social norms of not leaning on people on subways, not stepping on someone’s foot, and for expert bodily movement. Concrete movement is the movement which is habitual which

pear with the disappearance of thought, as the intellectualist account would suggest. Schneider was still able to find a handkerchief in his pocket to wipe his nose, even though he could not say what it was that he was doing.

Is Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Bodily Intentionality Sufficient to Grasp the Body in Dance?

Merleau-Ponty's offers a non-reductionist account of bodily intentionality as coping with the environment. The non-reductionist account rests on the descriptive account, in contrast to scientific way of understanding things on the reductionist cause-and effect model of explanation. On the scientific cause-and-effect model, we should be able to understand the genesis of bodily movement by tracing and enumerating the stimuli that go into producing a movement. We know that it is not possible because no increase of the stimuli would capture the motivation for bodily movement, let alone reproduce the same movement again. Merleau-Ponty agrees that the causal explanation occurs when "we build perception out of the things perceived" (PP, 5). We do not add elements of our perception to make it, rather in perceptual consciousness we are confronted with the field outlined by the parameters of experience.

In a reductionist account of scientific causal explanation, we stipulate that, in order to get to New York, we must move from an antecedent point and take several steps to complete the journey. In this way, how we go about getting to New York is explained in terms of all these necessary steps that one must take, and which cause one's arrival in New York. The non-causal descriptive understanding of perception takes perception in its totality of perceptual field of experience. In this sense it is a kind of circular causality, in which I watch the world "watching" me. I do not derive meaning from being in the world; the meaning is already there before I reflectively engage. I refer to Merleau-Ponty's description as *referential*. In order to make sense of perceptual consciousness, he uses descriptions of pathological cases in order to reveal a system of reference by means of which one assess performance or failure to complete a task. In such a way he retains the features of Husserlian phenomenology, which approaches features of experience in a non-causal manner; however, he relies on a quasi-semantic model in which

we perform in order to cross the street or tie a shoe; it does not require thought to be performed. Spontaneous movement is movement of free bodily play of children, impromptu dance, or just moving for the sake of taking joy in moving the body.

to make sense of bodily movement. The dissonance in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* is between describing bodily intentionality as essentially genuine openness of perception, and at the same time treating it from a vantage point of defined meaning. Merleau-Ponty suggests in the Preface to *Phenomenology of Perception* that "intentionality can only be understood through the reduction" (PP, xxxi). On the one hand, intentionality for Merleau-Ponty reveals the unity with the world prior to knowledge "through an explicit act of identification, is lived as already accomplished or as already there" (PP, xxxi), and on the other,

Through this enlarged notion of intentionality, phenomenological "understanding" is distinguished from classical "intellection," which is limited to considering "true and immutable natures," and so phenomenology can become a phenomenology of genesis. Whether it is a question of a perceived thing, an historical event, or a doctrine, "to understand" is to grasp the total intention—not merely what these things are for representation, namely, the "properties" of the perceived thing, the myriad of "historical events," and the "ideas" introduced by the doctrine—but rather the unique manner of existing expressed in the properties of the pebble, the glass, or the piece of wax, in all of the events of a revolution, and in all of the thoughts of a philosopher (PP, xxxi).

The paradox of bodily intentionality presented in his work is that at the same time the body's intact and impaired ability to perform tasks as unity with the world prior to reflection but also at the same time is supposed to inform us about its way of giving an account of the unique properties of things.

More importantly, while Merleau-Ponty succeeds in showing that intentionality is fundamentally embodied, he limits the consideration to the bodily intentionality involved in task fulfilment, the one that can give us a teleological account of how bodily intentionality works. But I contend that one must consider what I call an aesthetic model of bodily intentionality, which is intended to help us understand a kind of non-goal-oriented movement that is often encountered in dance. By adding this new category of movement, we can expand the understanding of bodily intentionality in general.

Merleau-Ponty's consideration of dance from a perspective of a concrete skill learning activity, focuses on dance as learned for the sake of habit formation and not about expressive movement. "For example, is it not the case that forming the habit of dancing is discovering, by analysis, the formula of the movement in question, and then reconstructing it on the basis of the ideal outline by the use of previously acquired movements, those of walking and running? But before the formula of the new dance can incorporate certain elements of general motility, it must first have had, as it were, the stamp

of movement set upon it. As has often been said, it is the body which 'catches' (*kapiert*) and 'comprehends' movement. The acquisition of a habit is indeed the grasping of a significance, but it is the motor grasping of a motor significance. Now what precisely does this mean? A woman may, without any calculation, keep a safe distance between the feather in her hat and things which might break it off. She feels where the feather is just as we feel where our hand is. If I am in the habit of driving a car, I enter a narrow opening and see that I can 'get through' without comparing the width of the opening with that of the wings, just as I go through a doorway without checking the width of the doorway against that of my body (PP, 165). "For example, in learning the habit of a certain dance, do we not find the formula of the movement through analysis and then recompose it, taking this ideal sketch as a guide and drawing upon already acquired movements (such as walking and running)? But in order for the new dance to integrate particular elements of general motoricity, it must first have received, so to speak, a motor consecration. The body, as has often been said "catches" (*kapiert*) and "understands" the movement." (PP, 143–144).

To enrich Merleau-Ponty's account of bodily intentionality, to make sense of the body moving, we must look at the body itself independently of the semantic meaning comprised in action-goal meaning. We must consider a type of movement which is non-goal oriented and yet appears as meaningful, such as the movement in dance. Let me consider a couple of examples from contemporary choreography.

During the Holland Festival 2001, there was a series of dance performances staged by Boris Charmatz, a French contemporary dancer. His choreography experiments with new means of bodily expressions rather than ideas how to construct bodily expressions. In his work, he undermines the basic assumption of classical dance: there are no rules of classical dance applied in his pieces, nor there is any particular story to be told by the moving bodies. His choreography explores the movement of the bodies themselves, and the audience is there to witness how bodies move when placed on an accelerating platform, how do they walk among the audience when stripped bare and vulnerable, or how they find other bodies on stage while lying down covered by a thick fabric.

The distinctiveness of Charmatz's approach to dance is sharply illustrated by a discussion he had with Merce Cunningham, who, then in his eighties, was one of the most iconic choreographers. Their discussion laid the grounds for distinguishing modern and contemporary dance. In his reply to the question how he uses the bodies in his performances, Cunningham

said that they are merely tools for staging the choreography; the movements of the body *per se* were not what inspired his work. Indeed, he even experimented with computer generated movements, which he later on translated into bodily movements onstage. By contrast, Charmatz emphasized that dance must draw from the bodily movements themselves, and there is so much we can create with those unique movements.¹⁰ You can perform walking in so many ways by being attentive to your body, the surface you are walking on, the air that presses against you, or walking while mindful of others. This exchange between Cunningham and Charmatz clarifies the line between modern dance, which breaks away from the standards of classical ballet, but remains faithful to the idea of organizing the body in movement on stage by giving it directives, and contemporary dance, which radically breaks from both standards of rigid training and story driven choreography. Only in this way can contemporary dance be a modernist art. By letting the body move freely, we can contemplate its beauty and not the beauty of other mediums of art that typically accompany dance, such as music, narrative, and musical rhythm. Contemporary dance, to put it in more provocative terms, is the kind of dance that is freeing itself from being choreographed.

In Jodi Melnick's choreography, the expressive meaning of the body in dance is revealed through a series of gestures which in themselves have a rhythmic organization in space and time. Her dance performances are very minimal; they often show the body in movement without accompaniment of music. Her choreographic challenge is to give the body in movement full means of being critically approached from both dancer's and audience perspective. In her piece *Solo, Deluxe Version, One of Sixty Five Thousand Gestures*,¹¹ staged in 2011, she performs solo, almost never moving away from the center of downstage. She mesmerized the audience with performing a series of hundreds of unique gestures to a minimal composition by Hahn Rowe. In doing so, she drew the attention to the body as the medium for aesthetic expression of seemingly ordinary gestures that were made visible as aesthetic.

In contemporary choreographies of Boris Charmatz and Jody Melnick, the use of the body as an artistic medium is not for the sake of storytelling or any other instrumental goal. They use the body in movement as an expressive body. I call this expressive movement the *aesthetic intentionality of the body*, which can only be appreciated without any goals of the moving.

¹⁰ Merce Cunningham and Boris Charmatz in conversation.

¹¹ The video is no longer available as of November 13, 2014, but her style of movement can be appreciated at: *Business of the Bloom*, 2009.

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- (1) In the first section of this paper I showed the trajectory of the understanding of the notion of intentionality as semantic like, understood on a model of language, in the work Husserl, to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of intentionality as primarily embodied. The concern of the first section was to establish whether Merleau-Ponty's notion of bodily intentionality is fully liberated from the semantic paradigm, and as my analysis show that Merleau-Ponty is successful in departing from the Husserlian notion of semantic intentionality but is not radical enough. Merleau-Ponty's moves away from the phenomenology of thought to phenomenology of experience, however, still retains the semantic approach to how bodily movement can be understood.
 - (2) In the second section I offer an extensive account of Merleau-Ponty's view on bodily intentionality focusing on the case of Schneider, which is used by him to categorize bodily movement. Merleau-Ponty identifies three basic ways of bodily movement (abstract, concrete, and reflex) but views them as primarily goal-oriented actions that can be judged and understood by looking at the result of the bodily movement, or how bodily movement successfully satisfies a goal. I argue in this section that whereas Merleau-Ponty's account of intentionality is radical, however, does not take into account the kind of bodily movement, which is non-goal oriented, it is performed for itself, such as gesturing, children at play or some forms of dance. I call this kind of movement aesthetic bodily intentionality and argue that the notion of what bodily intentionality means must necessarily be expended to include this form of bodily movement.
 - (3) In the final section I argued that Merleau-Ponty's account of bodily intentionality fails to make sense of the kind of aesthetic movement that is present in some forms of dance. While many dance forms (ritual, classical, modern dance) are goal-oriented actions, dancers must obey the rules of the choreography, train to successfully dance on stage, etc. there is a kind of bodily performance, which is inspired by the bodily movement itself (contemporary forms of dance of Boris Charmatz and Jodi Melnick). That kind of bodily movement is modernist in an aesthetic sense, it is performed for itself and the judger of the movement must be attentive to the bodily performance itself rather than the results of the movement.

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