Affect and Difference
in the Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty

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DEDICATIONS

To Bill, who taught me Beauvoir, and willed me free.

To Natalia, without whom I would never have learned
to live so well, or feel so deeply, or think so hard.

To Aaron. A thousand times.
Oh Aaron.
You are my joy.

ABSTRACT
Affect and Difference in the Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty

Interest in "affect" in theoretical work in the humanities has intensified dramatically in the last decade, giving rise to talk of an "affective turn" to rival the "linguistic turn" of the last decades of the twentieth century. Bringing Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy into dialogue with work in the affective turn such as Arlie Hochschild's account of "emotional labor," as well as with criticisms of his philosophy of child perception from recent empirical studies on neonate imitation, and with the philosophies of William James, Paul Schilder, Julia Kristeva, and Henri Bergson, the question of affect becomes a fresh, fascinating, and revealing register for understanding the development of Merleau-Ponty's own thought.

The question of affect, as I frame it in Chapter 1 with respect to themes in the affective turn as well as through a study of the role of affect in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, is a question of how to account for a key ambiguity in the nature of affective phenomena. I initially approach this as a reversibility of inward feeling and outward expression: affects involve bodily feelings that are not contained within the boundaries of the body, or the gestures and postures that incarnate them. Not only intracorporeally but also intercorporeally, there is a feedback circuit between affective surfaces and depths. I argue that we can neither separate these inner and outer aspects, nor homogenize them and dispense with the distinction. Thus the notion of difference as exteriority or negation is inadequate to account for the difference between affective surfaces and depths. I argue that we should aim instead to produce a genetic account of that difference: to think through affect, not only as something that crosses inner-outer borders, but also (and thereby) as a key part of the process that produces such a border as one of its effects—and thus that implicates a dynamic of differentiation prior to inside-outside difference. This entails accounting for affects as both pre-individual and individuating forces.

Chapters 2 and 3 undertake a study of Merleau-Ponty's early work on the phenomenology of perception and work from his middle period on the development of child perception, finding there an initial account of affect as pre-individual and individuating. I locate affect in Merleau-Ponty's account of perception prior to the emergence of the felt distinction between interoception and exteroception, perceptions that bear on an inner territory or on an external world. I also argue that Merleau-Ponty offers an account in which the feeling of bodily boundaries—the felt sense of privacy, interiority, or mineness in one's own body (*le corps propre*)—is not always already given in experience, but must be produced and maintained through affective forces. Throughout I argue for a close association between the imaginary and affect, reconceptualizing imaginary structures of embodiment such as the body schema and body image through their connection to affect. Chapter 4 takes up the question of how affect functions as a dynamic of differentiation at a pre-individual level in Merleau-Ponty's early work, analyzing his account of pure depth as affective orientation. Chapter 5 finds unique resources in Merleau-Ponty's later work for theorizing affect as a pre-individual and individuating force, focusing on his account of love as institution.

In sum, I find affect positioned as a generative dynamic of differentiation prior to the distinction between interiority and exteriority; one that makes that distinction possible. I conclude that affect should be understood as a unique force of meaningful differentiation, one that does not rely on exteriority or negation, but that rather thrives in even the most dizzying proximity: an alterity that can be found in intimacy.

RÉSUMÉ
L'affect et la différence dans la philosophie de Merleau-Ponty

L'intérêt des humanités pour le travail théorique touchant « l'affect » s'est intensifié de façon dramatique depuis les dix dernières années, ce qui provoque des discussions sur un possible « tournant affectif » pouvant rivaliser le « tournant linguistique » des dernières décennies du XXe siècle. En mettant la philosophie de Maurice Merleau-Ponty en dialogue avec les travaux du tournant affectif, tels ceux de Arlie Hochschild sur le « travail émotionnel », les critiques de sa philosophie de la perception de l'enfant que présentent de récentes études sur l'imitation chez le nouveau-né et les philosophies de William James, Paul Schilder, Henri Bergson et Julia Kristeva, la question de l'affect s'avère un nouveau terrain fascinant et révélateur permettant de mieux comprendre le développement de la pensée de Merleau-Ponty.

La question de l'affect telle que présentée dans le Chapitre 1, c'est-à-dire au travers d'une mise en relation avec certains thèmes du tournant affectif et d'une étude du rôle de l'affect dans la philosophie de Merleau-Ponty, pose la question de comment rendre compte d'une ambiguïté fondamentale dans la nature même des phénomènes affectifs. Cette problématique est d'abord conçue comme une réversibilité des sentiments intérieurs et de l'expression extérieure : les affects touchent des sentiments corporels qui ne sont limités ni par les frontières du corps, ni par les gestes et les postures qui les incarnent. Tant au niveau intracorporel qu'intercorporel, il existe une rétroaction continuelle entre les surfaces et les profondeurs affectives. Je soutiens qu'il n'est possible ni de séparer ces aspects intérieurs et extérieurs, ni de les homogénéiser en se passant de la distinction entre eux. Ainsi, le concept de différence comme extériorité ou négation est insuffisant pour rendre compte de la différence entre les surfaces et les profondeurs affectives. Je propose au lieu une exploration de cette différence en élaborant un raisonnement génétique : une étude de l'affect, non seulement dans sa capacité de traverser les frontières intéreures-extérieures, mais également (et par ce fait même) en tant qu'élément clé du processus dont un des effets est la création d'une telle frontière—ce qui implique une dynamique de différenciation existant préalablement à la différence intérieure-extérieure. Pour ce faire, il faut rendre compte des affects comme forces à la fois pré-individuelles et individualisantes.

Les Chapitres 2 et 3 entreprennent une étude des premiers travaux de Merleau-Ponty sur la phénoménologie de la perception ainsi que de travaux du milieu de sa carrière portant sur le développement de la perception de l'enfant et présentent une première description de l'affect pré-individuel et individualisant. Je considère que, dans la discussion de la perception de Merleau-Ponty, l'affect précède l'émergence de la distinction ressentie entre l'introception et l'extéroception, perceptions qui portent sur un paysage intérieur ou un monde extérieur. J'affirme également que Merleau-Ponty démontre que le sentiment associé aux frontières corporelles—l'intimité, l'intériorité, ou le corps propre ressenti dans le corps—n'est pas toujours déjà présent dans l'expérience, mais doit être produit et maintenu grâce aux forces affectives. Je souligne l'importance

d'une association étroite entre l'imaginaire et l'affect, reconceptualisant ainsi les structures de l'imaginaire de l'incarnation, comme le schème corporel et l'image corporelle, grâce à leurs liens avec l'affect. Le Chapitre 4 se penche sur la question du fonctionnement de l'affect en tant que dynamique de différenciation au niveau pré-individuel dans les premiers travaux de Merleau-Ponty en analysant sa description de profondeur pure comprise dans son rôle d'orientation affective. Le Chapitre 5, traitant de la perspective de Merleau-Ponty sur l'amour à titre d'institution, identifie de nouvelles ressources uniques dans les derniers travaux de l'auteur pour théoriser l'affect en tant que force pré-individuelle et individualisante.

En somme, je situe l'affect comme dynamique génératrice de différenciation qui précède la distinction entre intériorité et extériorité, une dynamique qui rend possible cette distinction. Pour conclure, je propose que l'affect doive être compris comme force unique de différenciation riche de sens; elle ne dépend ni d'extériorité ni de négation, plutôt, il s'épanouit même dans une vertigineuse proximité : une altérité à découvrir au sein de l'intimité.

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ABBREVIATIONS

For all citations of Merleau-Ponty's work I have chosen to include abbreviated titles, followed by the page number. For all other authors, citations include the year the text was published, followed by the page number. Full bibliographical information can be found in the footnotes upon the text's initial introduction, as well as in the appended bibliography. For *Phenomenology of Perception* I have included the pagination of the Landes translation, followed by the French pagination. For *The Visible and the Invisible* I have included the pagination of the Lingis translation, followed by the French pagination. For *Institution and Passivity*, I have included the pagination of the Lawlor translation, followed by the Bibliothèque Nationale's pagination of Merleau-Ponty's manuscripts in brackets, followed by Merleau-Ponty's pagination of his manuscripts in parentheses. Where manuscript page numbers were not available, I followed the English pagination with the French pagination. Works by Merleau-Ponty are abbreviated as follows:

SB   *The Structure of Behavior* 1942 (2006)

PhP   *The Phenomenology of Perception* 1945 (2012)

SNS   *Sense and Non-Sense* 1948 (1964)

PP   *The Primacy of Perception* 1951 (1964)

CRO   "The Child's Relations with Others" 1951 (1964)

EM   "Eye and Mind" 1961 (1964)

VI   *The Visible and the Invisible* 1964 (1968)

CPP   *Child Psychology and Pedagogy: The Sorbonne Lectures (1949-1952)* 2001 (2010)

N   *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France* 1995 (2003)

WP   *The World of Perception* 2002 (2004)

IP   *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954-1955)* 2003 (2010)

INTRODUCTION

0.1) Affect and Its Ambiguities

"Affect" is one translation of the Latin *affectus*, also sometimes translated as "passion" or "emotion." As Rorty and Brennan note, the history of the term is complex, and there is no uncontroversial broadly shared definition.[1] What counts as an affect has sometimes depended on distinctions between passivity and activity, rationality and irrationality, the somatic and the cognitive, or voluntary and involuntary behavior, just to name a few. Aristotle's taxonomy of the affects in his *Rhetoric* includes anger and mildness, love and hatred, fear and confidence, shame and esteem, kindness and unkindness, pity and indignation, envy and emulation.[2] Descartes' taxonomy in his treatise on *The Passions of the Soul* names six primitive passions, from which all others are composed: "wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy and sadness" (1985, 380).[3] Taxonomies of the affects or the emotions shift according to the ontological commitments of the theorist, sometimes including only those emotions with determinate objects, and sometimes including attitudes or background orientations like exuberance and melancholy. Moods, motives, character, and temperament, even if they are not included are nonetheless treated as closely related phenomena susceptible to more finely-grained distinctions. So too for pain and pleasure, and appetites or drives

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[1] See Rorty (1980, "Explaining Emotions." *Explaining Emotions*. Amélie Rorty, ed. Berkeley: University of California Press: 103-126)(104-105) and Brennan (2004, *The Transmission of Affect*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press)(3-6).

[2] See Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1984, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation Volume Two*. Jonathan Barnes, ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press), esp. 1377-1388.

[3] (1985), in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes Volume I*. Robert Stoothoff, trans. New York: Cambridge University Press.

such as hunger and thirst. While thus clearly associated with a broad cluster of phenomena related to emotion, "affect" is a term whose precise meaning is up for debate.

Even in specialized uses with technical definitions, the term *affect* often straddles key ambiguities or dualities. René Descartes, whose name has become synonymous with dualism, is at his least "Cartesian" in his work on affect. In *The Passions of the Soul*, and in the correspondence with Princess Elizabeth that motivates it, Descartes is challenged to confront the problem of how a mind can affect and be affected: how there can be genuine relations of receptivity and influence between the soul and the body. Phenomena like joy and sadness are of special interest because they resist classification on a single side of this duality. In Descartes' terms, they must be understood, not only as passions of the body, but as passions of the *soul* (1985, 347-348). They cannot be separated from the passions of the body, since they are often and even primarily excited by sensory stimulation (1985, 372). And yet "the feelings of joy, anger and the like, which are aroused in us sometimes by the objects which stimulate our nerves and sometimes by other causes […] are indeed passions with respect to our soul," in the sense that they are perceptions "whose effects we feel as being in the soul itself" (1985, 347-348). Fear, for instance, is often excited by a sensory object, and produces visceral effects, such as when the sight of a snarling dog inspires a cold shiver in my limbs. But it is also a motive in my inner life, affecting what I think about, remember, imagine, attend to, and decide. The passions, Descartes explains, "dispose the soul to want the things for which they prepare the body.

Thus the feeling of fear moves the soul to want to flee, that of courage to want to fight" (1985, 359). Descartes, the thinker known best for his indefatigable dualism, claims that in order to understand the passions of the soul, we must posit that "the soul is really joined to the whole body" (1985, 339).

That ambiguous pairing of inner and outer perception, of mind and body, is not exclusive to Descartes' understanding of affect. It can also be found in the use of the word "affect" that is perhaps the most common contemporary one. In psychology and psychiatry, while "affect" may be used as a synonym for "emotion" understood as "subjective feeling,"[4] the term is often employed to denote non-verbal communication accomplished in gesture and posture, especially facial expression. For instance, "affect" is often used in a diagnostic mode to speak of "blunted affect," "flat affect," "constricted affect," "labile affect," or "inappropriate affect."[5] This vocabulary associates affect not only with "subjective feeling," but also with the observable expression of emotions (sometimes distinguished as "affect display"). Affect in this sense of non-verbal communication includes the things colloquially known as "body language": especially facial expression, but also gestures, postures—any corporeal comportment that conveys felt tone and intensity.

Yet even when affect is understood as display, it is understood as a display *of* something. It is not simply a set of movement patterns or muscle twitches. It is

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[4] See for example the entry on "affect" in Oxford's *A Dictionary of Psychology* (Andrew M Colman (2008), Oxford: Oxford University Press).
[5] See for example the use in the DSM-IV (1994, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fourth Edition. Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Association) of the term "affective lability" in the entry on "Dementia due to head trauma" (1994, 148) and the entry on "Premenstrual dysphoric disorder" (1994, 350); or the use of the term "constricted affect" in the entry on "Schizoid personality disorder" (1994, 638-639).

these gestures insofar as they convey feeling: the lived-through dispositions, inclinations, or orientations of the person. The affect is the feeling made visible through its display—the feeling where it ceases to be private and subjective and becomes instead public, witnessable, even diagnosable. While this way of employing the term depends on a distinction between observable and felt aspects of emotion, it does not finally separate them. The combination of identity and difference assumed between them is perhaps most apparent when they are understood to be out of joint. To diagnose a "constricted affect," for instance, is to claim to perceive a disjunction between the displayed and the felt intensity of the emotional state. The implication is that the divergence is itself displayed: somehow evident in the bodily behaviors that express it.

It may be objected that these diagnoses are made with reference to norms for appropriate responses in a given context, rather than being based on evidence immanent to the behavior itself. And certainly standards for normal and abnormal behavior are explicitly invoked. But descriptions may also less explicitly invoke some disjunction observable in the affective behavior itself. For example, in his description of affective disorders that may accompany schizophrenia, Liddle initially describes inappropriate or "incongruous affect" as an "expression of affect" that is "markedly inconsistent with the circumstances" (2007, 174).[6] But as he goes on to describe such an expression in more concrete detail, he cites "laugh[ing] in a hollow and meaningless way" (2007, 174). The implicit suggestion is that it is possible for a laugh to *sound* "hollow," to sound as if it has

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[6] Peter F Liddle. (2007), "Schizophrenia: The Clinical Picture" *Seminars in General Adult Psychiatry*, George Stein and Greg Wilkinson, eds. London: The Royal College of Psychiatrists: 167-186.

no depth of feeling, no genuine warmth behind it. Operatively then, affect in this sense names not what is located on one side of the border between the seen and felt body (or between body and mind), but rather names the interval between them: the relation that is neither a separation nor a coincidence.

Thus in this usage as well, the term "affect" is Janus-faced. In it, affects are emotions made publicly available to an external witness through bodily behavior. But that definition does not, after all, separate affects from emotions. On the one hand, the sense of the term "affect" is split between public display or communication and private feeling. On the other hand, it names a relation between the gestures and the feelings they are taken to express (or inspire in witnesses); a relation between sensible and felt, public and private, inner and outer aspects of emotional experience that becomes a space for the expression of their connectedness as well as their non-coincidence. Affect in this usage is a sensible surface that must be distinguished from affect as felt depth, and yet cannot be separated from it either.

Interest in "affect" in theoretical work in the humanities has intensified dramatically in the last decade, giving rise to talk of an "affective turn" to rival the "linguistic turn" of the last decades of the twentieth century. This scholarly movement, as I explain in more detail in Chapter 1, has tended to celebrate the ambiguity in the notion of affect rather than aiming to dispel it. This ambiguity is a crucial part of what has been called "the perspective of affects" (Hardt 2007, x).[7] The suggestion is that thinking about bodies, communities, politics, labor, or

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[7] Michael Hardt (2007), "Foreword: What Affects Are Good For." *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*. Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, eds. Durham: Duke University Press: ix-xiii.

gender—whatever is being theorized—through an affective register tends to place the theorist in a productive confusion of the usual borders of subjects and objects, self and other.

When I began to encounter the work of the affective turn as a graduate student—one early discovery was Silvan Tomkins, recommended to me by Elizabeth Grosz at a conference—there is no doubt that it offered me a new perspective. I read the history of philosophy differently: it seemed as if a whole subterranean current of the history of ideas had been revealed. Thinkers and texts that had never attracted me before now were irresistible. To take one important example: Julia Kristeva had never held my interest before, but suddenly *Powers of Horror* was one of my favorite books. The idea that the very experience of bodily boundary is in fact an experience of horror; that the affective force Kristeva calls horror is actually what sustains that felt sense of boundary, still enthralls me. My everyday experiences and my tastes changed, too: for instance, I started to see the charm of horror movies. Though Kristeva only appears in one chapter of this project (Chapter 3), thinking through that Kristevan idea and taking up the perspective of the affect she describes was a pivotal motivation for this project, and shaped the questions I began asking about Merleau-Ponty.

My interest in Merleau-Ponty has a longer history than my interest in affects: even coming in to graduate school, I knew I would likely write a dissertation project on his work. I devoted a great deal of attention to Merleau-Ponty from the beginning of my graduate studies: my first significant conference presentation was at the International Merleau-Ponty Circle. I had already begun to

think and write about affect in Merleau-Ponty when I discovered the broader movement towards theorizing affects—or theorizing from the perspective of affects.

But encountering the affective turn and beginning to think more searchingly about affective phenomena offered me a new perspective on Merleau-Ponty as well. Affects are a rich phenomenological touchstone for the experience of pervasive interimplication between the body and the world that Merleau-Ponty's early work reveals in perception. Thinking through affect gave me an independent perspective on the phenomena Merleau-Ponty discusses, one not guided solely by his descriptions, but connecting with those perceptual experiences in a visceral and felt way. Reading his work became a more participatory experience: less an experience of appreciating his insights, and more an experience of living and inhabiting them originally for myself. Concepts like the body image and body schema came alive in a dramatic new way, since thinking through affect offered me a personal and rich purchase on the phenomenology Merleau-Ponty indicates with these terms. My experiences of others took on a whole new dimension as I thought, for instance, about Merleau-Ponty's insistence that one can literally see anger on a face in light of Teresa Brennan's work on affect transmission. Thinking through affect also gave me a more critical perspective. I had always suspected that, despite his insistence on the interimplication of body and world, the body Merleau-Ponty describes in his early work is too secure in its sense of its own integrity; reading Iris Marion Young's criticisms had also made this clear. But thinking through the register of affect

made conspicuous the everyday dramas of cultivating one's own sense of bodily boundaries. That Kristevan idea was an important influence here. I began to believe that understanding affect more deeply was key to finding better ways to account for this.

I had thus already begun thinking that affect is important to the study of Merleau-Ponty—not only for understanding his insights, but for understanding their shortcomings, and proposing amendments. But I also began discovering that Merleau-Ponty has fascinating things to say about affect. Given the emphasis in the affective turn on the somatic character of affect, I was surprised at how little his work is used and even referenced in this literature. Although Merleau-Ponty's writings do not include any single project exclusively devoted to theorizing affect, it is, as I will show in the chapters that follow, absolutely crucial to his early work on the phenomenology of perception, his account of childhood and the genesis of the body proper in his middle period, and his later ontological work.

There are two principle reasons I think the affective turn could benefit from the influence of Merleau-Ponty's thought now. First, the account of affect I find in his work ultimately offers resources to understand it as both pre-individual and individuating. A central theme in the work of the affective turn positions affects as *pre-individual*, attending to the fact that they involve a certain transitivity: we can pick up or absorb them from our situation and from others. Less theorized is the function of affects as *individuating*. I show two distinct ways —corresponding to Merleau-Ponty's early and late work—in which Merleau-Ponty offers resources to understand both, as well as their interrelation.

Second, Merleau-Ponty's account weaves together the virtual and the somatic. In general, the Deleuzian tributary of the affective turn theorizes affect in a way that emphasizes virtuality. Another tributary that runs through influences such as Silvan Tomkins and William James emphasizes the somatic character of affect. In my study of Merleau-Ponty's early work on affect, I show the connection between affect and the imaginary geography of embodiment in the pre-individual and individuating operations of affect. In Chapter 5, I take up a different account of affect as pre-individual and individuating that I find in Merleau-Ponty's later work, one that relies on a Bergsonian ontology of virtuality and memory. These early and late accounts can be folded into one another as spatial and temporal dimensions of affect respectively. Taken as a whole, this account is an important contribution to the project of creating a context for dialogue between what can otherwise seem like independent trajectories of the affective turn.

The body of work in the affective turn would benefit from being more informed by the theoretical resources offered by Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. And Merleau-Ponty scholarship would benefit from establishing lines of communication with this new body of work on affect. Given the particular way I frame the question of affect—as the question of the identity and difference of what I call affective surfaces and depths—Merleau-Ponty is uniquely positioned to address this question. Indeed, as this dissertation develops, I will offer a reading of Merleau-Ponty's oeuvre in which the question of affect is a central question motivating the major developments in his work. Thus my hope is that

this project offers an important contribution both to the affective turn and to Merleau-Ponty scholarship.

0.2) Feelings: The Ambiguity of Affect as the Ambiguity of the Body

In discussing the ambiguity of affect in the psychiatric sense, I used the term "feeling," paired with "display" or "movement," to indicate the felt and sensible dimensions of affect, respectively. The way that I use this term as I proceed in Chapter 1 is already Merleau-Pontian, so I should introduce that usage here. It also helps me explain briefly the question of affect as I approach it. You might think that giving an anti-dualist, embodied account of affects means identifying affects with their visible expressions: cheerfulness is just smiles and laughter, anger is just grimaces and abrupt gestures, etc. But as my discussion of the psychiatric use of the term above suggests, there is a relation of sensible surface and felt depth that is definitive of affective phenomena, and irreducible. Affects involve a radiation of depths through surfaces, which thus cannot be homogenized or flattened if we aim to think of the phenomena in terms of the genuine challenges it offers to theorizing it. While it is clear enough at least for initial purposes what the "sensible surface" of an affect is (a visible gesture or posture, for instance), "felt depths" are much more vague. We must thus aim from the beginning to get a clearer sense of the phenomenology of this, and the sense in which it too is a corporeal phenomenon.

The word "feeling" should be read with a kinaesthetic inflection. In his 1950-1951 lecture at the Sorbonne "The Child's Relations with Others" (which

will be much discussed in Chapters 2 and 3), a lecture organized around the theme of affectivity, Merleau-Ponty writes about empirical psychologist Henri Wallon's concept of "meditation" (CRO, 146), a bodily capacity for the "'inward formulation' of gestures" that we merely perceive (CRO, 146).[8] He is referring to a kinaesthetic experience or sensation of movement that is an aspect, not only of performing a gesture oneself, but of seeing a gesture performed. What is being described here is a "fundamental correspondence between perception and motility" (CRO, 146) that nonetheless involves a complex interval of non-coincidence. Seeing a gesture may involve a kinaesthetic experience of the gesture as potential or virtual movement *even when my own body has made no actual movement*: "I see unfolding the different phases of the process, and this perception is of such a nature as to arouse in me the preparation of a motor activity related to it" (CRO, 146). There is thus a potential rather than actual movement, the "preparation" of a movement that may be interrupted before it gives rise to a movement that is actually carried out. This "preparation" is an energizing or quickening of the flesh, a mobilization of motor forces that prepares and tends toward their actual deployment, but is not identical with it.

Thus the perception of place and movement involves feeling, a felt experience very like the kinaesthesia that is the sensation of an actual movement. It must be distinguished from kinaesthesia proper if we identify kinaesthesia itself narrowly as the sensation of actual movement, movement that I myself am currently carrying out. For feeling also must be associated with a virtual or

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[8] Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964c), "The Child's Relations with Others," *The Primacy of Perception*. James Edie, ed., William Cobb, trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 96-155. Hereafter cited as CRO.

imaginary kinaesthesia, a sensation of potential movement. One of my favorite

descriptions Merleau-Ponty offers of this aspect of perception brings the motor

and affective senses of feeling together in the expression "secret affective

movements." It can be found in the prospectus of his work that he submitted to

Martial Gueroult at the time of his candidacy to the Collège de France, where he

speaks of "our most secret affective movements, those most deeply tied to our

humoral infrastructure," and insists that even these "help to shape our perception

of things" (PP, 5).[9]

The example Merleau-Ponty offers as he explains Wallon's notion of a

bodily "meditation" on the gestures one perceives is the experience of an affect.

In the perception of fear, he writes, it is this bodily capacity for phantasmatic or

virtual kinaesthesia, this "power of perception to organize a motor conduct"

without the conduct being actually enacted, "that allows the perception of fear to

translate itself into an original motor organization" (CRO, 146). The terrified

expression that suddenly comes over my friend's face when he sees a snake in the

path we are hiking on, his cringing posture as he freezes in fear: these are all

phenomena I apprehend, not solely or even primarily as an objective spectacle,

but rather as a panicked charge in my own limbs. This then is also an example of

Merleau-Ponty's claim that our "secret affective movements… help to shape our

perception of things" (PP, 5). I take the opportunity to emphasize that the goal

here is not to separate feeling from sensing, but to understand their connection in

the context of affect.

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[9] Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964e), *The Primacy of Perception.*. James Edie, ed. various, trans.
Evanston: Northwestern University Press. Hereafter referred to as PP.

The perception of fear may be accompanied by an actual movement that expresses fear or it may not, but in either case it is accompanied by the "arous[al] in me [of] the preparation of a motor activity related to" the perception of fear (CPP, 146).[10] The perception and the actual movement are not identical: actually moving in a fearful way is not a necessary condition of the perception of fear. And yet fear is always realized as a *potential* movement if not an actual one, energizing a field of motor possibilities. The perception of fear is accomplished in the "preparation of a motor activity," a "secret affective movement" realized in the imaginary geography of embodied experience, regardless of whether this movement is realized in my actual bodily surfaces. In this and subsequent chapters, I will sometimes refer to the potential movement with its phantasmatic kinaesthesia as a virtual or imaginary movement, and sometimes simply as *feeling*. Note also that, while I do not think it is a mistake to associate the virtual and the imaginary intimately, their meanings do diverge: virtuality will take on a more specific sense in Chapter 5.

Strong experiences of attraction and revulsion are particularly clear examples of these *felt* aspects of affective behavior that, while connected to the sensation of movement, are not always realized in actual movement. In an aversive experience like revulsion, I may grimace, avert my eyes, turn my head, or even take a step backward. Even if I interrupt these actual motor responses and remain impassive in gesture and posture, the experience of revulsion still includes a *feeling* of contraction away from the object of my revulsion. Even if I do not, as

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[10] Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2010), *Child Psychology and Pedagogy: The Sorbonne Lectures 1949-1952*. Talia Welsh, trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. Hereafter cited as CPP.

the saying goes, "show my feelings," nevertheless the feeling is not disembodied; it is corporeal in the sense of the "secret affective movement."

Likewise, in an attraction to someone, I experience a more or less intense affective pull towards them. In a less guarded moment, I may find myself actually moving in their direction. It may be difficult to keep my eyes from drifting toward them. Or I may, in other aspects of my body language, betray an especially intense orientation toward them. Again, feeling and movement should not be identified, or understood as simply destined for each other. There is an interval between them. If I wish not to betray my attraction, or deem it inappropriate to do so, I can interrupt the feeling before it resolves into actual movements. However, this interruption does not necessarily stop the felt pull, the secret affective movement of being drawn toward the corner of the room I know that particular person occupies, or the persistent intensity with which particular potential movements appear in the imaginary geography of my situation. It is quite possible to feel the feeling without giving myself over to the movement that expresses it.

This term "feeling" is impossible to avoid in discussion of affect that takes it up in its phenomenological complexity. To see anger in a face (this is a favorite example of Merleau-Ponty's, which I discuss at more length in Chapter 1), is in the strictest sense to see something invisible, just as seeing depth is seeing something that is invisible (again, in the strictest sense; the point of Merleau-Ponty's example is to insist that we do in fact see these things, but that this must complicate our phenomenology of perception). To say that we see anger in a face is not to reduce affect to what is directly sensed. There *is* a difference between

affective surfaces—the visible gestures and postures—and the affective depths that radiate through these directly visible aspects. Everyone who has felt the warmth of a genuine smile and the chill of shallow or duplicitous one can understand this.

However, as I argue in Chapter 1 in my discussion of Arlie Russell Hochschild's work on affective labor, this non-identity is not a separation: managing my affective surfaces (gestures, postures and actual movements) is a crucial means for managing my affective depths (virtual movements, feelings)— and vice versa. Just as feelings have a tendency to become movements, movements have a tendency to become feelings. They are not identical, and yet their non-identical relationship lacks a boundary. Instead they exhibit a strong tendency to turn into one another and amplify each other. It is no accident that Merleau-Ponty's example when he is attempting to explain the phantasmatic transubstantiation of perception into motility is an example of an affect. The question of feeling *is* the question of affect. While I have aimed here to introduce the phenomena I mean when I use the term "feeling," the fact that I continue to use the term should not be taken to mean that I assume its full meaning is understood. The challenge of accounting for this difference between affective surfaces and depths, and at the same time for their indistinction, motivates the research presented in this dissertation.

That question of the difference between affective surfaces and depths quickly opens onto questions about the reversibility of sensing, and the ambiguity of bodily boundaries. To understand feeling as part of perception, such that to see

my friend jump is to have a feeling for that movement, or to see my friend's fearful posture and be overcome with a shiver of fear, is precisely to understand feelings as things that are not contained by the visible boundaries of the body—or by the actual movements in which we might otherwise locate them. My friend's fearful posture does not only express a feeling that is closed up inside of her; the feeling radiates outward and overcomes me too. The parts of perception that we might otherwise understand as interoception and proprioception are often actually more adequately described in terms of what I have called "feelings," and are not contained within bodily boundaries at all.

Thus the question about affective surfaces and depths is implicated in two other questions: first, how do we describe this reversibility, this difference within perception itself that is also an identity, such that "outward" surfaces can become "inward" feelings, and vice versa? And second, if feeling is not contained within the body, what are bodily boundaries anyway—how do we account for the felt sense of place, of the body as one's own? To say that the question of affect is a question of difference is not only to say that it is a question of the differentiation operative between affective surfaces and depths, but also that it is a question of the differentiation operative in the embodied experience of individuation, of the body as bounded, integral: a body proper. In Merleau-Ponty's and Kristeva's terms: *le corps propre*.

As bizarre as it may seem vis-à-vis our everyday attitudes about our bodies (which involve imagining our bodies as objects with clear and distinct outlines), one does not have to look far to find examples of the felt sense of bodily

"ownness" failing to coincide with the surface of the skin, or other measurable borders of the body as an object. The phenomenological individuation of the body is not simply a matter of exteroceptions of surfaces. As Merleau-Ponty describes it, I experience bodily boundary as a felt sense of my body being "closed in on itself" (CRO, 119), "an enclosed secret" (CPP, 289): a special zone of space marked by a feeling of interiority and hiddenness. That most intimate area of space I call my own *surfaces* as a quiet pressure. This surfacing can have a vast variety of intensities and tones: in vigor, joy, and excitement (and in a different way in anger) it feels radiant; as if I am bursting. In disgust, it feels sticky; as if I cannot get my environment to leave me alone, to make a clean break with me. Sometimes it feels alien, as if a foreign shape occupies my intimate space like a trap I am caught in.

Whatever its tone and intensity, that intimate, interior space surfaces with a more or less definite shape and texture, and though this dynamic often aligns roughly with the surface of my skin, it has a distinct mode of appearance, as evidenced by the fact that it can be felt even when the surface of my skin is not being directly perceived, and even when it does not coincide with the measurable outline of my body. As study of phenomena such as phantom limbs has demonstrated, it is not an observable shape, but a *felt* sense of place. The felt presence of a limb may persist in its measurable absence. Inversely, the shape of that intimate space felt as interior may expand to incorporate prostheses, or even more banal items like clothes and any equipment to which I develop a robust habitual connection—like a keyboard or a bicycle. A dimension of experience

develops around the negotiation and inhabitation of these shapes, generally

described in the literature through the distinct but closely associated concepts of

"body image" and "body schema," and discussed in terms of an imaginary

dimension of embodiment.[11] It is this morphological dimension of embodiment,

an imaginary geography of the body and its lived connections with the world, that

has proven so fruitful for feminist theorists in thinking through the corporeality of

phenomena like gender, sexual behavior, and sexual difference.[12]

I am interested in the possibility that affect, in addition to being exemplary

of experiences that resist the inner-outer distinction, may also be a primary site

where this distinction is made. And not only the *site*, but the *means* through which

an experience of the boundaries of the body is cultivated—the mode of these

boundaries' appearance, and the force that sustains them. This move ties affect

very closely to concepts of body image and body schema, and indeed I want to

suggest that the imaginary or morphological mode of appearance is in fact

something we should describe in terms of affect and emotion.

Thus the way I understand the question of affect, though deeply tied to my

study of the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, is not only an exegetical question

about his work. My approach to this question about affect however will be shaped

by interpretive questions. The first is the general question of what resources

Merleau-Ponty's work can offer to think through the question of affect as I have

described it. And the second is a critical question. As I explain in Chapter 1, the

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[11] I will return to this issue in the following chapters, especially Chapter 3, where I offer my own take on the much-disputed distinction between body image and body schema.
[12] See Butler (1993, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York: Rutledge), Weiss (1999, *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality*. New York: Routledge), Grosz (1994, *Volatile Bodies*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), Salamon (2010, *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*. New York: Columbia University Press).

question of bodily boundaries is not one topic among many in Merleau-Ponty's work. It is a central challenge for his thought. Thus while my study of Merleau-Ponty will yield insight into affective phenomena, affect will also provide a fresh and revealing register for reading Merleau-Ponty and understanding the issues that motivate his thought.

0.3) Methodology

Gilles Deleuze said that philosophy is the creation of concepts. My own vision of philosophy follows a similar motto. The function of concepts and theories is not only to describe experience, but also to illuminate and expand it. Ideas are not only the passive mirror of life; they influence it. The philosopher's task is to open productive possibilities for that influence: creating concepts, instead of merely discovering them, or tooling with the mechanics of their entailments.

This vision of philosophy owes something to the phenomenological tradition, insofar as the goal of phenomenological description is one of fashioning concepts that suit experiences. Phenomenology aims to think *through* experience —perception, movement, memory, imagination, and of course affect—and not only in the sense of thinking *about* these things, but in the sense of using experience to orient and motivate thought; using experience in something like the sense that Hardt uses when he speaks of theorizing from "the perspective of the affects." The phenomenological tradition suggests a mandate that the theorist position herself in the emergence of sense in an experiential situation, and think

from that place, letting it serve as the measure of her concepts and theories. I owe a great deal to the phenomenological tradition, but my way of understanding this goal diverges from phenomenological orthodoxy. I want to produce concepts that not only allow us to describe and analyze our experiences, but that actually allow us to experience more richly and fully. I think our concepts and theories should not only recover what was already there in experience—even in its pre-reflective depths. I think they should allow us to experience *more*. Philosophy should not only take us to the roots of our experience, it should make experience bloom. A better concept, a new concept—indeed, a new conceptual imaginary—can "open our eyes" and literally allow us to see things we didn't see before. My first encounters with philosophy involved these sorts of revelatory and moving engagements with ideas, and the fact that the study of philosophy continues to offer them to me is an important part of why I committed to this discipline as a career choice and a life project.

My approach to doing that work is informed by an education in the history of philosophy, especially 19th and 20th century French philosophy. That tradition teaches a practice of reading texts closely and carefully. The everyday labor of the creation of concepts—perhaps paradoxically, to some ears—is an interpretive task. Charity is an important methodological principle: when tensions or confusions within a text are found, for instance, one does not simply object to inconsistency. Part of the task of interpretation involves taking on as a reader an important role in the burden of communication. Discovering a tension or confusion is first taken up as an opportunity to seek a more sophisticated

interpretation, one that resolves or explains the tension. An important critical tool in this tradition is that of immanent critique: using a text as the key to its own intelligibility, and measuring its success by its ability to meet demands that arise from within the project it sets for itself.

Addressing the question of affect I outlined above through a study of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy requires a methodology of careful textual exegesis, combined with critical analysis. The exegesis must combine close reading with a more far-sighted historical approach that understands the details of a given passage in light, not only of the broader argument of the text in which it is found, but also in light of developments across Merleau-Ponty's whole body of work, as well as its relevance to other figures in a broader historical context.

I am also committed to feminist methodologies such as theorizing in a manner that centralizes the concerns of marginalized subject positions, and attends to the intersectionality and multiplicity of systems of social identity and difference. Thinking through experience means thinking through different experiences. My feminism influences my work at a deeper level as well: it affects the themes of my research, the ideas I am interested in pursuing. Affect is crucial medium, not only of oppressive social and political structures, but also of subversive and liberatory ones. The burdens of oppression, alienation, and abjection on marginalized peoples are often affective burdens. The experience of bodily boundaries plays a central role in the phenomenology of sexual difference and racialization. Creating richer concepts and theories of affect and difference

promises to broaden our experience and our understanding in ways that may help us influence the circulation of power in our own lives and communities.

0.4) Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 frames the question of affect with respect to themes in the affective turn as well as through a study of the role of affect in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. Analyzing the circulation of affect in Arlie Hochschild's account of "emotional labor," I show a reversibility of inward feeling and outward expression indigenous to affect: affects involve bodily feelings that are not contained within the boundaries of the body, or the gestures and postures that incarnate them. Not only intracorporeally but also intercorporeally, there is a feedback circuit between affective surfaces and depths. Taking up William James' account of affect, I argue that we can neither separate these inner and outer aspects, nor homogenize them and dispense with the distinction. Thus the notion of difference as exteriority or negation is inadequate to account for the difference between affective surfaces and depths. Turning to Merleau-Ponty's discussion of affects and emotions in his early work, I criticize his treatment of the question of true and false feelings, used in the *Phenomenology of Perception* as the key evidence of a bodily synthesis he calls the "tacit *Cogito*." I argue that we should aim instead to produce a genetic account of the difference between affective surfaces and depths: to think through affect, not only as something that crosses inner-outer borders, but also (and thereby) as a key part of the process that produces such a border as one of its effects—and thus that implicates a dynamic

of differentiation prior to inside-outside difference. This entails accounting for affects as both *pre-individual* and *individuating* forces.

Chapter 2 explores the role of affect in Merleau-Ponty's account of children's perception from his lecture courses at the Sorbonne in the middle period of his career. In this period of his career, I argue, we can already see Merleau-Ponty distancing himself from his earlier reliance on the body proper as a descriptive register. Developing a dialogue between Merleau-Ponty and both Max Scheler and Paul Schilder's work on sympathy, I demonstrate how the body schema functions on Merleau-Ponty's account in both child and adult perception as a sympathetic indistinction between body and world, self and other, and demonstrating the role of affect as a pre-individual force. The chapter is framed as a response to criticisms of Merleau-Ponty's account of self-other indistinction in child perception in light of recent studies on neonate imitation. I emphasize that Merleau-Ponty's notion of indistinction was not incompatible with distinction: he claims that the indistinction characteristic of childhood persists in adult emotional life.

Chapter 3 examines Merleau-Ponty's account of the mirror stage for the role of affect in the advent of the body proper, comparing it to Kristeva's account of abjection and the way affect functions in the emergence of the body proper there. I explore the concepts of body schema and body image, emphasizing the original account of the distinction between these phenomena that I find through understanding them in terms of affect and emotion—and in turn, the distinction between affects and emotions that emerges from that analysis. The contrast

between the two account foregrounds the question of a gendered specificity of the body proper. I argue that the dialogue I build between Merleau-Ponty and Kristeva suggests that there is not a single and uniform experience of the body proper. Descriptions of the feeling of ownness in one's body must be placed on a field of phenomenological variation; but in any case, the differences can be correlated to differences in the affective forces at work—including affects about difference. Affect is an individuating force.

Chapters 2 and 3 emphasize the intertwining of the pre-individual and individuating functions of affect, but in the service of accounting for the conditions of that reciprocal genesis, Chapter 4 takes up the challenge of specifying a variety of differentiation indigenous to indistinction, and prior to inside-outside difference. Exploring Merleau-Ponty's reading of Eugene Minkowski's phenomenologically inspired case studies of his delusional patients' experiences of space, I explore Merleau-Ponty's account of pure depth as affective orientation and original spatiality, identifying the indistinction of interoception and exteroception with affective depth. As original or "pure" depth, affective depth is the differentiation between the manifest and the latent that produces a sense of space. The manifest-latent difference, understood here as "clear" and "dark" space, is an early precedent for the later notions of the visible and the invisible, and functions as a variety of differentiation prior to exteriority.

Chapter 5 takes up Merleau-Ponty's return to the question of true and false feelings in his lecture on Proust and imaginary love in his later lecture course on *Institution and Passivity*. I demonstrate there a dramatic reversal in his position in

contrast to his treatment of this topic in the *Phenomenology*. Explaining the

operation of temporal generativity that Merleau-Ponty calls "institution" through

Bergson's theory of virtuality and an original past, and linking the notion of

institution to the notion of invisibility in *The Visible and the Invisible*, I develop a

reading of affect as pre-individual and individuating force that is unique to the

later work.

CHAPTER 1 – Merleau-Ponty and the Affective Turn

1.1) Introduction

The body of theoretical work known as the affective turn has been a significant impetus for the project of this dissertation, influencing both the questions I ask and the way I address them. But this project is also the work of a Merleau-Ponty scholar, and my enduring interest in the study of his philosophy influences both the questions I ask and the way I approach them. The overall goal of this chapter is to frame the project in light of both of these influences.

The question of affect, as I explained it briefly in the Introduction, is one of how to account for a key ambiguity in the nature of affective phenomena between its surfaces and depths: aspects that are external and internal, sensible and felt. This way of framing the question is my own, but it owes a great deal to lines of inquiry developed within the affective turn. It was also developed in light of broader questions within Merleau-Ponty's philosophy.

In this chapter I develop that question in light of the tendency in the affective turn to think affect as a pre-individual meaning-making force. Affects involve bodily feelings that are not contained within the boundaries of the body, or the gestures and postures that incarnate them. Turning to Arlie Hochschild's account of emotional labor, I argue that affects nonetheless do become located in bodies. In addition to radiating beyond bodily boundaries, affects can influence and alter those boundaries. Not only intracorporeally but also intercorporeally, there is a feedback circuit between affective surfaces and depths, such that the

inside does not stay in, and the outside does not stay out. Thus we can neither separate these inner and outer aspects, nor homogenize them and dispense with the distinction.

I argue that the consequences of this are a) that the notion of difference as exteriority or negation is inadequate to account for the difference between affective surfaces and depths, and also b) that there is a requirement to produce a *genetic* account of the difference between affective surfaces and depths. We must think through affect, not only as something that crosses inner-outer borders, but also (and thereby) as a key part of the process that produces such a border as one of its effects—and thus that implicates a dynamic of differentiation prior to inside-outside difference. This means accounting for affects as both *pre-individual* and *individuating* forces. A central theme in the work of the affective turn positions affects as *pre-individual* in the sense that they involve a certain indistinction or transitivity: we can pick up or absorb them from our situation and from others. Less theorized is the function of affects as *individuating*.

Since my project involves understanding feeling in somatic terms, I then turn to William James' treatment of affective phenomena: his theory of emotion as somatic feedback is perhaps the most influential theoretical effort on the topic in the twentieth century. The special relevance of his work for my project lies in its clear bid at refusing a sharp distinction between inner and outer perception. This brings his thought in line with a key aspect of the research program of the affective turn. But the manner in which he does this brings him into conversation with the phenomenological tradition, raising issues around the ambiguity of

bodily boundaries and of the reversibility of sensing. James's attempt to understand the felt aspects of affect in terms of the sensible is well-known, even infamous. And while I argue that it is not reductive in the way that common cognitivist critique claims, I do argue that it fails to help us understand the full feedback circuit of affect, the reversibility of its sensible and felt aspects, of affective surfaces and depths. Nevertheless, James' account of affects in terms of somatic feedback can help us understand a crucial part of that reversibility.

Through my discussion of James, I position the question of affect with respect to the ambiguity of bodily boundaries and the reversibility of sensing. This in turn allows me to explain the central position I think the question of affect enjoys with respect to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. Studying Merleau-Ponty's treatment of affect in his early work, I argue that a requirement to produce a genetic account of the difference between affective surfaces and depths, tied to a genetic account of bodily boundaries, follows from concerns immanent to that work itself. I also show that it is a requirement that the early work fails to meet. This frames my reading of Merleau-Ponty's body of work in subsequent chapters, understanding the developments in his thought through his developing response to this question.

1.2) The Affective Turn

The rising tide of interest in affect in the humanities and social sciences that has been called "the affective turn" is not a resolution of these ambiguities.[13]

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[13] For discussions of the "affective turn," see Marguerite La Caze and Henry Martyn Lloyd, "Philosophy and the 'Affective Turn'" (2011, *Parrhesia,* 13: 1-13), Ruth Leys "The Turn to

If anything, it has involved a certain celebration of this ambiguity as a complexity that is constructive for anti-dualist research programs.

In his foreword to the 2007 volume *The Affective Turn*, Michael Hardt names two precursors to this renewed interest in affect. One is feminist theory's focus on re-theorizing embodiment in non-dualistic ways, and the other is research on emotions in queer theory (2007, ix). These research programs have motivated a move to take up what Hardt calls "the perspective of affects," a move whose primary challenge as well as its great promise resides in the ambiguity of affect. "[A]ffects," he writes, "refer equally to the body and the mind… [and] they involve both reason and the passions" (2007, ix). Thus "[t]he perspective of the affects… forces us constantly to pose the problem of the relationship between mind and body with the assumption that their powers constantly correspond in some way" (2007, x). Drawing on Spinoza, Hardt names the central ambiguity of affect, the locus of both the challenge and the promise of the affective turn, in the ambiguity of affect with respect not only to the activity-passivity distinction, but also and perhaps more fundamentally with respect to the interiority-exteriority distinction on which the activity-passivity one depends. Spinoza's notion of affect "straddles the divide" between "the power to act and the power to be affected"

Affect: A Critique" (2011, *Critical Inquiry* 37 (3): 434-472), Lisa Blackman and Couze Venn "Affect" (2010, *Body & Society* 16 (1): 7-28), Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth's introduction "An Inventory of Shimmers" in *The Affect Theory Reader (*2010, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. Durham: Duke University Press: 1-25), Clough's "The Affective Turn" in the same volume (206-225), Clough's "Introduction" to *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (2007, Patricia Clough and Jean Halley, eds. Durham: Duke University Press: 1-33), and Hardt's "Foreword: What Affects Are Good for" in the same volume (ix-xiii). La Caze and Lloyd (2011, 2) agree with Gregg and Seigworth (2010, 5) in naming two watershed essays for the affective turn, both published in 1995: Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick and Adam Frank's essay that served as the critical introduction to their Silvan Tomkins reader ("Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins," *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds. Durham: Duke University Press: 1-28), and Brian Massumi's essay on "The Autonomy of Affect" (*Cultural Critique* 31: 83-109).

(2007, x). Affects "can be actions, that is, determined by internal causes, or passions, determined by external causes" (2007, x). As phenomena, they resist being located within the psychic interiority of the subject, or in the external world. And in this resistance, they offer to theory a perspective that straddles that divide.

In their critical introduction to their 2010 edited volume *The Affect Theory Reader,* Gregg and Seigworth offer a more exhaustive list of eight research vectors that motivate and orient the affective turn, including phenomenology, psychoanalysis, cybernetics, and more broadly defined currents in philosophy such as anti-Cartesianism, new materialism, and responses to the linguistic turn that focus on reopening questions of sensation and animality. But Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth agree with Hardt's core assessment that the fruitfulness of affect for research in the humanities and social sciences lies precisely in its ambiguity. "Affect," they write, "arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (2010, 1). Like Hardt, they argue that the ambiguity of affect is not an obstacle, but an opportunity: "affect's impinging/extruded belonging to worlds, bodies, and their in-betweens… signals the very promise of affect theory too" (2010, 4). Affect theory, as Gregg and Seigworth imagine it, would not be merely theorizing that takes affect as its topic or content. It would be theorizing whose very form and methods would be altered by an attempt to address affective phenomena. The ambiguity of affect would challenge theorists to think in new ways: "Because affect emerges out of muddy, unmediated relatedness and not in some dialectical reconciliation of cleanly oppositional elements or primary units, it makes compartmentalisms give way to

thresholds and tensions, blends and blurs" (2010, 4). Affect theory would be a mode of inquiry that would begin "with movement rather than stasis, with process always underway rather than position taken" (2010, 4).

A crucial aspect of the affective turn has involved insisting that affects are not "inner realities," immanent in a Cartesian sense. Instead, there is something "pre-individual" about affects (Clough 2007, 207). In his contribution to *The Affect Theory Reader*, Brian Massumi speaks of an "affective twilight zone… that bustling zone of indistinction" (2010, 66).[14] Describing and theorizing affects properly involves the promise—and again, the challenge—of describing and theorizing the ambiguity, even the "indistinction" of interiority and exteriority. This work on affect aims not only to challenge the reduction of the subject to consciousness, but to produce an alternative description of phenomena that have been considered psychological, one that understands them as continuous with materiality, the emergent effects of pre-individual forces—affective forces. This aim is motivated by philosophical interests in resisting dualism, but those philosophical interests intersect with political concerns. As thinkers in the tradition of corporeal and new materialist feminisms have worked to show, dualisms of mind and body, reason and emotion, subject and object, thought and nature are often aligned with a dualism of masculine and feminine, and the subtle hierarchies of these ordered pairs are mutually supportive and difficult to isolate.[15]

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[14] Brian Massumi (2010), "The Future Birth of the Affective Fact: The Political Ontology of Threat." *The Affect Theory Reader*. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. Durham: Duke University Press: 52-70.

[15] For a discussion of dualisms and their intersection with understandings of sexual difference, see Elizabeth Grosz 's *Volatile Bodies,* especially "Introduction" (vii-xvi) and "Refiguring Bodies" (3-24).

Challenging dualism has an important role in changing the conceptual framework for understanding sexual difference.

Clough and Massumi are also both deeply influenced by Gilles Deleuze. Both in his single-authored work and in his projects co-authored with Felix Guattari, Deleuze is a central—even looming—figure in the affective turn. Drawing especially on his creative readings of Spinoza's notion of affect and Bergson's notion of the virtual, Deleuze contributes a unique notion of affect that emphasizes its virtual dimension and positions it in an ontology of asubjective fields.

Drawing on Bergson and Spinoza, Clough writes that affects are "pre-individual bodily forces augmenting or diminishing a body's capacity to act" (2010, 207).[16] She praises the contribution of the affective turn to new materialism. As opposed to the constructivist account of bodily materiality, "[t]he turn to affect points instead to a dynamism immanent to bodily matter and matter generally—matter's capacity for self-organization in being informational" (2010, 206-207). This, she speculates, "may be the most provocative and enduring contribution of the affective turn" (2010, 207). She criticizes thinkers who linger with "the circuit from affect to emotion, ending up with subjectively felt states of emotion—a return to the subject as the subject of emotion" (2010, 207).

La Caze and Lloyd argue that this criticism aims at a reduction of the ambiguity that was supposed to be so helpful (2011, 6-7). Clough dissociates emotion as the felt experience of a subject from affect as a bodily materiality

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[16] Patricia Clough (2010), "The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedia, and Bodies." *The Affect Theory Reader*. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. Durham: Duke University Press: 206-225.

engaged in a process of differentiating itself, a process whose description and theorization, Clough suggests, is compromised once we understand it as being lived or felt. La Caze and Lloyd join Leys (2011) in criticizing a tendency within the affective turn to reinstate the dualism it begins by rejecting, replacing the privilege of mind over body with one of body over mind (La Caze and Lloyd 2011, 6-7). They find this tendency in Clough's celebration of "the non-intentionality of emotion and affect," understood as opposed to "the subject's conscious experience" (Clough 2007, 206), distinguishing sharply between affect and "subjectively felt emotional states" (2007, 207).

Clough is of course resisting the individualization or subjectivation of affect, which could be done either to a body or to a mind. She is emphasizing the potential of affective phenomena to offer a perspective in which it "becomes possible to think the body as an open system, beyond the containment of the organism" (2007, 18). That is, a perspective, not only in which the mind is not definitively excluded from the body, but in which the body too is not understood as an atomic individual. So the accusation of mind-body dualism (albeit with an inverse hierarchy) may be a red herring here.

Even so, the dialogue between Clough and her critics raises a question about the personality of emotions. If we grant that affects are pre-individual forces, we still have the question of their relation to the things Descartes and Aristotle called affects: joy and sadness, anger and fear.[17] Even if these passions begin as pre-individual forces, they can also have subjects. The analysis of affect as pre-individual forces must confront the question of their relation to the

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[17] See Aristotle's "Rhetoric" (1984) and Descartes' "The Passions of the Soul" (1985).

emotions that we feel—or come to feel—as deeply personal. Granting that affects function as pre-individual forces, we should still account for the sense in which they become individuated.

The importance of Freudian and psychoanalytic theory as an influence on the thinkers of the affective turn should be understood in light of this interest in the pre-individual character of affect. The anti-Cartesian potential of the Freudian notion of the unconscious is clear: as Max Scheler notes in his essay "The Idols of Self-Knowledge," while the Cartesian paradigm presumes a realm of immanence or immediate contact in inner life such that inner perception will be transparent and self-evident, the whole practice of psychoanalysis depends on the premise that persons *can* be deceived about their own motivations, desires, and inclinations—and that therapy can help a person become more aware of these forces that influence behavior (1973, 10).[18] As Jonathan Lear glosses the point in his study on Freud, "The deeper meanings which shape a person's soul and structure his [sic] outlook are not immediately available to awareness. A person is, by his nature, out of touch with his own subjectivity" (1990, 4).[19]

The anti-Cartesian consequences of Freud's view of the nature of subjectivity and personality are deeply linked to affect insofar as affect is the phenomenal force of unconscious meaning, its mode of appearance and influence. Insofar as the Freudian view complicates the model of the individual by incorporating pre-individual elements, those elements are tied to affective phenomena. In Freud and Breuer's early *Studies on Hysteria*, where "hysterical

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[18] Max Scheler (1973), "The Idols of Self-Knowledge." *Selected Philosophical Essays*. David R. Lachterman, trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 3-97.
[19] Jonathan Lear (1990), *Love and Its Place in Nature: A Philosophical Interpretation of Freudian Psychoanalysis*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

symptoms" are described in terms of trauma, they describe trauma as an affective

phenomenon consisting of a memorial trace that functions as if it were a foreign

agent within the psyche:

> But the causal relation between the determining psychical trauma and the hysterical phenomenon is not of a kind implying that the trauma merely acts like an *agent provocateur* in releasing the symptom, which thereafter leads an independent existence. We must presume rather that the psychical trauma —or more precisely the memory of the trauma—acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work; and we find the evidence for this in a highly remarkable phenomenon which at the same time lends an important practical interest to our findings. (1895, 6)[20]

The claim here is that the symptom is not in a direct cause-effect relationship with

the original traumatic event. Rather, it has a more proximate cause: the trauma

consists in a memorial trace of the original event having been incorporated, and

remaining productive, forging new associations and expressing itself through

them. Hence the quality of traumatic experience as a present that resists becoming

past, demanding to be relived in more or less direct ways—that is, not as a

representational or narrative memory, but as a symptom. The memory of the

traumatic event is no longer consciously available to the subject. It has been

repressed, meaning that ideational content of the traumatic experience is

obscured, and yet the affective force of the experience persists, as the agent of the

"foreign body," the behaviors that constitute the symptom.

It is worth noting that Merleau-Ponty critiques the tendency of Freudian

psychoanalysis to conceptualize the unconscious on the model of a foreign body,

a second but hidden self, a "second consciousness behind the first wherein all that

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[20] Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer (1895), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol II*. James Strachey, ed. London: Hogarth Press.

is obtained by the analysis is contained" (CPP, 73; see also IP, 162-190/ [174] (40)-[260](7) and 199-205/ [247]-[251]).[21] The claim is that we should be wary of a tendency to model the unconscious as a second self, because it is rather an otherness that is constitutive of the self. That is, the unconscious is not a second individual, but something genuinely pre-individual. Interestingly, the alternative tendency within psychoanalytic theory that Merleau-Ponty supports strengthens the role of affect. He praises what he sees as a tendency in a more "broad" conception of psychoanalysis to reject a strong notion of the unconscious in favor of a notion of ambivalence: "attitudes of hate that are at the same time love, desires that express themselves as agony" (CPP, 73).[22] The implication is that what is needed is not a better theory of the conscious-unconscious distinction, but a better theory of affect.

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[21] Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2010) *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954-1955).* Leonard Lawlor and Heath Massey, trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. Hereafter cited as IP. I will use the English pagination followed by the French pagination. In accordance with the published edition of these lectures where possible I will use the pagination of the original manuscript. The number in brackets corresponds to the Bibliotèque Nationale pagination and the number in parenthesis corresponds to Merleau-Ponty's pagination. Where it is not possible to use the standard pagination I have used the pagination of the French edition.

[22] Freud himself indeed explains repression in terms of ambivalent affect. For Freud, repression itself functions through a confluence of aversive and attractive forces. In the 1915 essay "Repression," (1950, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol XIV*. James Strachey, ed. London: Hogarth Press: 146-158) Freud writes: "Moreover, it is a mistake to emphasize only the repulsion which operates from the direction of the conscious upon what is to be repressed; quite as important is the attraction exercised by what was primally repressed upon everything with which it can establish a connection. Probably the trend towards repression would fail in its purpose if these two forces did not co-operate"(1950, 148). Psychical distance from what is repressed is secured by the influence of aversive affects, yet that which is repressed continues to exert a counter-influence to this censorship, attracting derivatives, connections and avatars of itself in the person's experience. But Merleau-Ponty is probably also thinking of Melanie Klein's work on ambivalence, which he discusses elsewhere in this same lecture series (see for example CPP, 242-243).

To return to Freud and Breuer, the evidence for this notion of the unconscious they refer to is their finding that affect, the actual expression of emotion, is therapeutic. The passage I quoted above continues:

> For we found, to our great surprise at first, that *each individual hysterical symptom immediately and permanently disappeared when we had succeeded in bringing clearly to light the memory of the event by which it was provoked and in arousing its accompanying affect, and when the patient had described that event in the greatest possible detail and had put the affect into words*. Recollection without affect almost invariably produces no result. The psychical process which originally took place must be repeated as vividly as possible; it must be brought back to its *status nascendi* and then given verbal utterance. ("Studies in Hysteria" 1895, 6)

The claim here is that cognition of what has been repressed, without affective force, is not therapeutically effective. It is only through cognitive expression that mobilizes the affective force of the trauma that the analysand can expel the "foreign body," the behaviors that constitute the symptom.

How does this serve as evidence of an unconscious? Since the therapeutic expression really has transformative effects, it follows that the symptom is no mere reflex, no simple repetition of a response to an original stimulus. Since it is relieved by affectively forceful cognitive fulfillment, it follows that *the symptom also was a kind of expression*. It was *meaningful*; or as Lear glosses the point, a kind of "thinking," a "form of mental functioning" (1990, 7)—albeit a "mental functioning" performed by the body itself. How could a symptomatic behavior— vomiting, for instance, or a paralysis—be a kind of thinking? Lear writes that "[i]t is the responsiveness of the archaic mental activity to the mind's own attempt to understand it that lends credibility to the idea that what we have here is a form of mental functioning" (1990, 7). The symptom is relieved by cognitive or reflective

expression (but only when that expression also mobilizes the affective force of the trauma), thus suggesting a continuity, though not an identity, between the conscious, cognitive thought and the somatic thinking enacted by the symptom.

Yet we must not understand the sort of "thinking" accomplished by the symptom as equivalent to a conscious thought that is merely hidden from view. The first chapter of Lear's study offers a clear and succinct analysis that supports a critique like the Merleau-Pontian one I mentioned above, and shows how there is a tension within Freud's own work at issue here. If we understand the discovery of an "unconscious motivation" in psychoanalytic practice as merely "discoveries of what was *already there* in the patient's mind" (1990, 8), we again fail to do justice to the transformative effect of their affectively-forceful conscious expression. If the patient merely needed to uncover an idea that was already determinate but hidden from view, then they were merely missing an item of knowledge, and we cannot account for the therapeutic value of the affective force animating the recollection. The symptom does have a meaning, but one that is *both realized and altered* by being consciously expressed.

In order to account for the symptom as genuinely meaningful, and yet distinct from a deficient form of conscious representation, Freud's theory of affect must become stronger. As Michael Basch argues, Freud increasingly moved away from a view of affect as "quantitative accumulation or discharge" (1976, 772).[23] The early Freud understood affective behavior as a discharge response to a certain quantity of stimulus or excitation. That view of affect as a quantity of energy

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[23] Michael Basch (1976), "The Concept of Affect: A Re-Examination." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 24 (4): 759-777.

discharge is in tension with the meaningfulness of the symptom, because it positions affect and cognition along a duality of content and form, quantity and quality. Affects themselves are increasingly identified with "communication" rather than being merely "an indicator of discharge" (Basch 1976, 774). As Lear explains the shift, Freud increasingly understands affect as an "*orientation to the world*" (1990, 49). Affect is increasingly positioned as meaningful and expressive in a manner that is unique from cognition—though not necessarily separable. This sort of view is especially central to a development of psychoanalytic theory like Julia Kristeva's, with its central distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic.[24]

The relationship between the pre-individual and the individual depends on this complexification of the theory of affect. As a corollary to critiquing the quantitative understanding of affect, Lear also critiques of the model of expulsion or cathartic discharge in the early Freud for its insufficiently complex view of the inside-outside distinctions at stake, an oversimplification which foments inconsistency in his theory. Speaking of the therapeutically effective expression characterized in the *Studies on Hysteria*, Lear writes "the metaphor of a 'foreign body' should not suggest discharge, but an opening up of the borders. For it is only by welcoming the foreign body *into* consciousness, by granting it citizenship, that its toxic effects are overcome" (1990, 34). The relief the analysand achieves does not expel the traumatic experience, but rearranges the borders of the ego such that it can be admitted. Patricia Clough comments on this

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[24] (1984), *Revolution in Poetic Language*. New York: Columbia University Press.

as well, noting that Freud increasingly tasks affect with "disavowal or management of the threat to the ego's definition or boundaries" (2007, 10).

This tension between affect as quantitative and qualitative in Freud's work is taken up innovatively by Silvan Tomkins' theory of affect, as Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank argue in their 1995 essay introducing their edited anthology of Tomkins' writings. The Sedgwick and Frank essay, along with Massumi's "The Autonomy of Affect," also published in 1995, is widely regarded as a watershed piece for the affective turn. Indeed, taken together, the essays delineate two tributary courses for the movement. One theorizing affect in a Deleuzian (and more indirectly, a Spinozist) vein, and the other theorizing affect according to a thread of influences traced through Tomkins, and William James. The general suggestion is that the Deleuzian thread emphasizes the virtuality and asubjective character of affect, while the thread that takes its cue from a line of influence running through Tomkins, Freud, and James emphasizes the somatic character of affect. My own framing of the question of affect aims to understand the virtual and somatic aspects of affect together. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is uniquely positioned to support this project.

While Sedgwick and Frank's essay and the reader of Tomkins' work they edited have boosted his profile as a relevant figure, circumstances have long conspired to refuse Tomkins' body of work the attention it no doubt deserves. Its reception by Tomkins' contemporaries was sharply polarized. While he enjoyed a measure of professional success, Tomkins' view found only a small sympathetic audience, antagonistic as it was in both content and method to the cognitivist

treatment of affect that was dominant at the time he was writing. Tomkins' own

protectiveness about his work delayed his publications, and the full text of his

magnum opus, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, along with complete citations and

references, was not published until after his death, significantly diminishing

academic engagement with his work during his own lifetime.[25] Indeed, the first

publication of Tomkin's theory of affect was not in English, his own primary

language, but in French—in a volume edited, incidentally, by Lacan (mentioned

in Sedgwick and Frank 1995, 6).[26]

One of Tomkins' key innovations was to separate the affects from the

drives, and posit a profound dependency of the drives system on the affect

system. Affects, not drives, he claimed, are the primary motivational system in the

human being; they have a distinct structure and principle of functioning, and they

are far more labile. Drives such as hunger or the urge to breathe, he theorized, are

unique from affects insofar as they are limited in the objects that trigger and

relieve drive urgency, and in their temporality—the rising and falling action of

their intensity and density through instigation and reduction (1995a, 49-61; see

also 1962, 347)[27]. Affects on the other hand may be triggered and relieved by any

object (including other affects, drives, and cognitions), and are dramatically

mutable not only in the triggers of their instigation and reduction, but also the

schedule of their intensity and density—Tomkins calls this the affects' "freedom

[25] Since the third volume of his major work contained the citations and references for the first and second, the fact that Tomkins delayed publication of this last volume for decades was a significant factor in limiting his contemporaries' access to his theory.

[26] Silvan Tomkins (1956), "La conscience el I' inconscient representates dans une modele de l'etre humain." *La psychoanalyse (Vol. I)*. Jacques. Lacan, ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

[27] Silvan Tomkins (1995a), *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds. Durham: Duke University Press; Silvan Tomkins (1962), *Affect. Imagery. Consciousness (Vol. 1)*. New York: Springer Publishing Co.

of time" (1995a, 46-49). The drives in themselves, Tomkins theorized, are

relatively weak, and that it is only through the affects that they achieve effective

motivating force. Freud's id, Tomkins famously writes, is revealed as a "paper

tiger" once we understand the true nature of the affect system as an *analogic*

amplifier (1995b, 32). The affect system, Tomkins writes, is "a separate but

amplifying co-assembly" (1995b, 32) with respect to the drive system, and "[t]he

drive signals' apparent urgency is an illusion created by its misidentification with

its affective amplifier" (1995b, 52).[28]

Describing this process, Tomkins writes, "affective amplification is

indifferent to the means-end difference" (1962, 3:67; 1995a, 7), meaning that "It

is enjoyable to enjoy. It is exciting to be excited. It is terrorizing to be terrorized

and angering to be angered. Affect is self-validating with or without any further

referent" (1962, 3:404; 1995a, 7). The point here is not merely that affects are

their own reasons, but that affects create their own reasons: they generate a

motive force in behavior that is not derivative of a putative role in achieving some

end. He describes his discovery of "the role of the affect mechanism as a separate

but amplifying co-assembly" (1995b, 32):

> I almost fell out of my chair in surprise and excitement when I suddenly
> realized that the panic of one who experiences the suffocation of
> interruption of his [sic] vital air supply has nothing to do with the anoxic
> drive signal per se [evidenced by the fact that gradual loss of oxygen, even
> when fatal, produces no panic, and may even be euphoric]. A human being
> could be, and often is, terrified about anything under the sun. It was a
> short step to see that excitement had nothing per se to do with sexuality or
> with hunger, and that the apparent urgency of the drive system was
> borrowed from its co-assembly with appropriate affects as necessary

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[28] Silvan Tomkins (1995b,) "The Quest for Primary Motives." *Exploring Affect: The Selected
Writings of Silvan S. Tomkins.* E. Virginia Demos, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press:
27-63)

amplifiers. Freud's id suddenly appeared to be a paper tiger since sexuality, as he best knew, was the most finicky of drives, easily rendered impotent by shame or anxiety or boredom or rage (1995b, 32; the clarification about gradual loss of oxygen can be found in 1995b, 52-53).

Drive forces—the sense of urgent inclination we experience toward highly particular, fixed and determinate objects—are relatively weak. This is the case even for a drive as vital as the drive for air: asphyxiation, even when fatal, is not only an experience that will not necessarily have a robust urgency, and may involve a variety of different affective qualities: it is not even necessarily dysphoric, since suffocation can be euphoric (1995b, 52-53). There is an interesting rejection of a Freudian biologism here. Tomkins does posit certain inclinations as hard-wired—we are hard-wired to be inclined toward air—but what is hard-wired is relatively weak, and unreliable. To the extent that it develops real traction in our motives and behavior, this occurs through the process he calls analogic amplification, a process which is the unique business of affect. The affect analogically amplifies the drive.

The affect functions as an *amplifier* by producing a postural analog (the gasping gesture) of the drive urgency, which then intensifies the force of the felt quality of that urgency, which in turn intensifies the postural analogy. This is another meaning of the claim that "It is enjoyable to enjoy. It is exciting to be excited. It is terrorizing to be terrorized and angering to be angered. Affect is self-validating with or without any further referent" (1962, 3:404; 1995a, 7). Here we find an interesting support for Clough's resistance to understanding affects in terms of intentionality. Affects are not only orientations toward objects; we do not fully describe their meaningfulness—the kind of sense they make, the kind of

production of sense they are—by saying that they are directed, that they are "of"
or "about" something. A notion of signification or reference would be similarly
unhelpful.

To say that affect is amplification is to say that, in the relation between
affect as feeling and affect as movement (gesture, posture, "body language"),
rather than *displaying* feeling, movement *amplifies* it. The relation between
feeling and movement is not that of duplication, reference/signification, or
orientation. It is rather a relation of *amplification*. This is an extremely significant
claim with far-reaching consequences. It involves a rejection of the notion that
affects function according to an arbitrary relation of signification; a refusal that is
a common theme in the affective turn.[29] Angry gestures do not signify anger; they
really convey anger, really make its force felt.

This sort of suggestion—theorized especially brilliantly by Tomkins—has
been a key part of the affective turn's position as a post-linguistic turn project.
But it is important to note that this refusal of the arbitrary relation of signification
is not an insistence on the natural sign, as if it was simply another suggestion that
some physical things come packaged with their meanings. It is rather an attention
to the energetics of signs; the way that (at least some) signs precisely do *not*
contain their meaning, but function to really incarnate it in themselves and their
surroundings through processes such as cathexis and mimesis. In these processes,
symbols (or icons, or avatars; I am avoiding the use of the word "sign") really
show their meaning rather than tell it. This does not mean that they *contain* it, as

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[29] See Grossberg's "Affect's Future: Rediscovering the Virtual in the Actual" in *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. Durham: Duke University Press: 309-338), esp. 315.

if they are simply natural signs, signs whose meaning is innate; but that they *convey* or *conduct* it: they serve as a kind of amplifying force that tends to generate, not a representation of their meaning, but an actual production or evocation of that meaning.

The suspicion of intentionality and of subjectivism no doubt contributes to a hesitation among the thinkers of the affective turn to look for resources in phenomenology. While both Edmund Husserl and Jean-Paul Sartre contributed phenomenological approaches to affect and emotion, this work has not been prominent in the affective turn. Merleau-Ponty's commitment to anti-dualism and his dedicated attention to the body makes him a more likely resource, but his name does not often arise in work on the affective turn. One exception is Jane Lymer's article "Merelau-Ponty and the Affective Maternal-Foetal Relation" in which she argues that we should understand the body schema in terms of affect.[30] Namely, that an affective force of "sympathy" is the medium of the body schema's incorporating influence, and that the affective rhythms of the pre-natal maternal body (such as rocking to calm fetal distress) inculcate in the fetus a primitive body schema. Lymer suggests that affect functions as a pre-natal communion whereby the fetus is more or less incorporated into the body schematic rhythms of the maternal body. In their editor's introduction to the special issue of Parrhesia in which Lymer's article appears, La Caze and Lloyd place Merleau-Ponty in the tradition of William James' anti-dualism and theory of affect.

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[30] Jane Lymer (2011), "Merleau-Ponty and the Affective Maternal-Foetal Relation." *Parrhesia*, 13: 126-143.

While Merleau-Ponty's writings do not include any single project exclusively devoted to theorizing affect, it is, as I will show in the chapters that follow, absolutely crucial to his early work on the phenomenology of perception, his account of childhood and the genesis of the body proper in his middle period, and his later ontological work. There are two principle reasons I think the affective turn could benefit from the influence of Merleau-Ponty's thought now. First, the account of affect I find in his work ultimately offers resources to understand it as both pre-individual and individuating. And second, it weaves together the virtual and the somatic. It is also worth noting that various concepts that arise in his work—chiefly his unique notion of narcissism, and his concept of reversibility—function similarly to Tomkins' concept of amplification. Ultimately, Merleau-Ponty is likely the most important philosopher of the body in the western tradition: no one else has offered a more sustained and thorough reflection on what it means to understand the genesis of meaning as corporeal. The body of work in the affective turn would benefit from being more informed by the theoretical resources offered by Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. And no doubt Merleau-Ponty scholarship would benefit from establishing lines of communication with this new body of work on affect. Given the particular way I have framed the question of affect—as the question of the identity and difference of what I called affective surfaces and depths—Merleau-Ponty's career-spanning interest in the phenomenon of depth uniquely positions him to address this question. Indeed, as this dissertation develops, I will offer a reading of Merleau-Ponty's oeuvre in which the question of affect is a central question motivating the

major developments in his work. Merleau-Ponty has important resources to offer

the study of affect, and the study of affect proves a fresh, fascinating, and

revealing approach to Merleau-Ponty.

1.3) Affective Labor and Affective Surface-depth Ambiguity

Blackman and Venn add an interest in "affective labour" (2010, 7) to the

long list of research agendas converging in the affective turn.[31] Analyses of labor

and class, especially those interested in their intersection with race and sex, are

increasingly turning to descriptions of "the capitalization or economization of

affect and emotion" (2010, 7). Hochschild's study *The Managed Heart:*

Commercialization of Human Feeling is an excellent example of this sort of

work.[32] A thoughtful reading of Hochschild's work suggests that it is impossible

to separate feeling from affect as postures and gestures. Any account of affective

force must involve a complex and reversible feedback circuit between movement

and feeling, affective surfaces and depths.

Beginning with a description of flight attendant training and the premium

placed on the trainees' smiles, Hochschild asks what it is that so-called "'people

jobs' actually require of workers": what is "the actual nature of this labor" (2012,

10)? The answer, she argues, is "*emotional labor*" (2012, 7).[33] In the case of the

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[31] A number of essays in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (2007) also focus on affective labor: see the contributions of Staples (Women's Work and the Ambivalent Gift of Entropy, 119-150), Ditmore ("In Calcutta, Sex Workers Organize," 170-186), Ducey ("More Than a Job: Meaning, Affect, and Training Health Care Workers," 187-208), and Wissinger ("Always on Display: Affective Production in the Modeling Industry, 231-260) to that volume.
[32] Arlie Russell Hochschild (2012), *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
[33] Given my own practice of reserving use of the term "emotion" for affects that have become personal, and given the importance of affect contagion to the sort of labor Hochschild analyzes, it

flight attendant, "[t]he company lays claim not simply to her physical motions—how she handles the food trays—but to her emotional actions and the way they show in the ease of the smile" (2012, 7-8). A report evaluating Delta Airlines' services warns that passengers are "quick to detect strained or forced smiles, and they come aboard wanting to *enjoy* the flight" (2012, 6). The emotional labor required of the flight attendant is thus "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display"; "This labor requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (2012, 7).

As I read Hochschild, it is clear that the practice of commercializing affect she describes depends on the ability of feeling and affect display to effectively signal each other—even transmit and amplify each other; not only between persons (the employee sets the emotional tone of the encounter with the client), but also within persons (the employee manages affect display through feeling, and feeling through display). In order to understand what the industry is requiring of the flight attendant, we must understand the feeling and the gestures as distinct, but in a non-dualistic way: the distinction is invoked precisely because the intimate link between feeling and display must be managed in order to produce the commodity—which again involves both feeling and display. In convincingly broadcasting an experience of her own feeling via her "genuine" or deeply felt smile, the employee can also generate an emotional tone for the situation, and inspire a potentially profitable disposition and behavior in clients. Hochschild offers examples from other industries that use emotional labor: "the hotel

is awkward to call it "emotional labor." I use the term because it is Hochschild's.

receptionist who makes us feel welcome, the social worker whose look of

solicitous concern makes the client feel cared for, the salesman who creates the

sense of a 'hot commodity', the bill collector who inspires fear" (2012, 11). The

practice of emotional labor depends on the power of what has been called

"emotional contagion": the transmission of affect among people.[34] Thinkers such

as Scheler, Schilder, and Canetti have noted the remarkable capacity of affects to

induce similar or complementary feelings in others.[35] But what Hochschild's

study of emotional labor so strikingly indicates is the dependency of that

interpersonal transmission on an *intra*personal one.

On the one hand, producing the desired commodity depends on a non-

coincidence between affective surfaces and depths. If our postures and gestures

always coincided with the motive force of our most deeply felt dispositions, *then*

emotional labor would not be possible, and neither would the commodities it

produces. On the other hand, if these were truly independent of each other,

connected only by an arbitrary relation of signification, then *again emotional*

labor would not be possible. As the flight attendants' trainers know very well,

passengers are "quick to detect strained or forced smiles" (Hochschild 2012, 6).

The smile does not merely *represent* a feeling. It can *induce* a feeling. There is a

real and live circuit between them, the same one implicitly recognized by the

psychiatrist who diagnoses your "conflicted affect" based on observing your

behavior, thus presuming to observe in your affect display the conflict between

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[34] On emotional contagion, see Elaine Hatfield, John T Cacioppo and Richard L. Rapson (1993, "Emotional Contagion." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 2 (3): 96-99).
[35] See Max Scheler's *The Nature of Sympathy* (2008, Peter Heath, trans. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers), Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power* (1962, Carol Stewart, trans. New York: The Viking Press), and Paul Schilder's *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* (1950, New York: International Universities Press, Inc.).

feeling and display. Not only postures and gestures, but also *feeling* must be "managed" to create a convincing display, one that is effectively contagious. This is why "the flight attendant is obliged not only to smile but to try to work up some warmth behind it" (2012, 19). The flight attendant's smile will most powerfully broadcast the profitable emotional tone only if it is not a surface phenomenon, but is accompanied by a feeling—albeit "artificially created" (2012, 4)—of elation. Hochschild notes that the company is banking on the exchange value of this feeling-display circuit as a commodity, citing an advertising jingle that boasts "Our smiles are not just painted on" (2012, 4) (ironically, the company's planes at the time featured paint jobs that mimicked a smile painted on the nose of the vehicle). I will return shortly to this awkward invocation of an authenticity that is compatible with artifice in the promise of the "genuine smile." For the moment, we must note that what is advertised is the clients' feeling, by way of the employees' feeling. The ad promises the client that she will really feel warmth and convivial comfort, and it promises this to the client *by* promising that the company's flight attendants really feel it too. The company is banking on the transmitting power of affect.

Even more interesting, the feeling-display circuit is indeed circular, a genuine feedback loop: *its transmitting power works not only in the direction from feeling to display, but also from display to feeling.* Hochschild cites a flight attendant who worries that "[s]ometimes I come off a long trip in a state of utter exhaustion, but I find I can't relax. I giggle a lot, I chatter, I call friends. It's as if I can't release myself from an artificially created elation that kept me 'up' on the

trip. I hope to be able to come down from it better as I get better at the job" (2012, 4). The posture of cheerfulness and upbeat energy the attendant adopts produces and amplifies the feeling, deepening its hold on her disposition as well as her behavior. *She is just as susceptible to its infectious emotional tone as the clients for whose benefit it was produced.* A superficial description of emotional labor might see it as a kind of deception or illusion, or at least pretense or play-acting: an outward display that belies an inner reality. And it does indeed depend on a disjunction between feeling and display. But a more careful analysis shows us that even in doing so, emotional labor calls this inner-outer distinction into question. The successful outward display does not stay outside. It affects the feelings, not only of the customers, but also of the employee herself. If it is a deception, it is one that convinces the self as much as others. If it is successful, that is because it has actually altered the "inner reality" that we imagine could have exposed it as false.

Thus, what emotional labor requires of us—what it takes to manage one's feeling—is not simply an exercise of will. The attendant might proceed by first generating the ghost of cheerfulness in the depths of her private feelings, and then trusting that feeling to produce and inform the desired gestures and postures. But even if that is part of the process, it is by no means the whole story. Rather, much of managing feeling involves first adopting affectively significant gestures and postures and allowing these bodily attitudes to germinate into more deeply felt attitudes. The flight attendant must fall into the disposition the behavior incarnates, opening the boundaries of the self to the "rhythm of feeling" (2012, 4)

transmitted by the display. Just as the performer suffering from a bout of stage-fright may summon the posture of confidence, and trust the bodily attitude of boldness to deepen into a felt attitude, so the exhausted and irritated flight attendant who could not be further from cheerfulness may successfully generate its warmth in her clients *as well as herself* by calculatedly assuming a springier step, a cordial smile, a pretty costume and an upbeat tone. And when she returns home even more exhausted at the end of the day, it may be difficult to "turn off" not only the behaviors but the feeling as well. Through an intracorporeal resonance between the affective surfaces and depths of the body that recalls Tomkins' account of amplification, "elation" as both behavior and feeling has gathered a momentum, an anonymous force that are resistant to efforts of personal will to "switch off."

Thus the "subject of emotion" that Clough worries is a reintroduction of the Cartesian subject—a disembodied will, a thinking thing—is anything but. It is a subject who does not simply determine bodily attitudes and actions, but is actually produced by them, like the flight attendant who can't "come down" after a day of manufacturing the postures of elation. The phenomena of "subjectively felt emotional states" are indeed often conscious, phenomena amenable to description in terms of an intentionally directed subject. But this is by no means all that they are, and we risk missing what is most interesting about them if we are satisfied with such a description. For these phenomena are also caught in a feedback loop—serving alternately as causes and effects—along with the rhythms of bodily postures and gestures. Those embodied affects are neither mere effects

of feelings and willings, nor can they be separated from them. We could not isolate affects from "subjectively felt emotional states" even if we tried. But nor could we reduce them to effects of such states.

Thus, if we are interested in describing and theorizing affective phenomena, we must think through the peculiar *indistinction* between inward feeling and outer display that allows for the infectiousness and transmissibility of affect, the indistinction that allows us to see others' behavior in terms of how they feel such that the affective behaviors we witness in others and undergo in our own bodies do not remain on the surface, but take root in our own feelings, growing emotional depth. But we must also think through the *distinction* between feeling and display; the distinction that allows us to manage feeling in the first place, to separate our "true" and our "false" feelings, but also to manipulate them, making "true" feelings out of "false" ones; for instance, as we try to feel cheerful and gradually become so. We must think through the distinction that allows feeling and display to amplify each other, even potentially producing unmanageable feelings.

Thus Clough is at least partially right that affects are "pre-individual" (2010, 207): they are transmissible through contagion, they respect neither the borders between selves, nor within selves. The elated, cheerful affect the flight attendant invites into her own skin takes on a life of its own, and is soon impervious to her wilful attempts to evict it. The affect is oblivious to the border between her "true" and "false" feelings, the ones that belong to her authentic, personal self and those that belong to her put-on, professional self.

And yet, not in spite of their pre-individuality, their status as an anonymous and impersonal infectious force; but beside and perhaps even because of it, affects are clearly profoundly involved in the production and maintenance of individuality and of personality. This is not only because feeling and display do have some susceptibility to will. What is meant by "individuality" when we start to understand it in terms of affects will be something quite different than a disembodied force of will. Hochschild insightfully notes that emotional labor, in requiring the management of feeling, "draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality" (2012, 7). Note for instance the equation of the deeply felt smile with a *genuine* smile. The language of authenticity appears awkwardly in the training that demands flight attendants to artificially produce smiles, and at the same time insists that these smiles cannot be fake: they must be real, authenticated by integration into the depths of the self's inner life. What is at stake in this distinction between "true" and "false" feelings is not a distinction between spontaneity and artifice, but rather the internal coherence and boundaries of the individual self. And if upon reading Hochschild's study we have an intuition that emotional labor involves an especially profound alienation, this is connected to our intuition that our feelings are the most deeply personal parts of our selves, and that if they are not our *own*, then nothing is or can be.

But what Hochschild's study so strikingly shows is that what counts as my own feeling does not necessarily come 'from within.' Put otherwise, which feelings count as *my own* can become confused, not at the level of knowing, but at the level of being. The affect produced in emotional labor is impressively

effective at removing the boundary between feelings that belong to me and feelings that don't. The training for the industry Hochschild takes as her paradigm case depends on the premise that a passenger on a flight staffed by attendants who perform in the ideal manner can be expected to have a feeling of being cared for, comfortable and safe; a feeling that comes from the warmth of the flight attendant's smile. And yet surely there is an important sense in which it is the passenger's *own* comfort she feels. After all, the passenger lives and undergoes this feeling. It is on the basis of this ownness that ownership of the feeling can be sold according to the commodification of feeling Hochschild describes as the produce of emotional labor: the feeling was produced for the customer's benefit, her consumption, and she owns it in the sense that she purchased it, and she experiences its warmth. Yet this feeling the passenger enjoys is produced primarily through the emotional labor of others.

Even more striking, the flight attendant herself has a feeling of elated cheer at the end of a long and tiring day that is as unmanageable as true and deeply held desires. Further, that feeling came from her own embodied behavior, behavior she wilfully adopted. Given the wilfully chosen origins of the feeling, its production through her own emotional labor, as well as its growing durability and resistance to her will, it would be hard to claim that the affect is not her *own*: most tests of the sincerity of one's feeling would invoke some combination of these factors. Yet this elation is her own only insofar as it has succeeded, not only in *crossing* her personal boundaries, but *reorganizing* them, cultivating for this new feeling of elation the insistent and lasting force that we take as the mark of a

feeling's belonging to the most deeply personal and subjective self. Indeed, in order to claim that the feeling is not the flight attendant's own, we must appeal not to her powers of introspection, but to the broader socioeconomic situation, in which the feeling is being produced for someone else's benefit, and sold to them. The peculiar variety of exploitation this sort of labor trades in concerns the fact that the product cannot fully be transferred to the customer: grown as it is in the body of the employee, its hold on her behavior and feeling cannot be transplanted along with its transmission to the customer, since this hold is the means both of its production and distribution. If the feeling has been successfully produced, no amount of introspection will testify to its falseness. Only the circumstances of its production can do that.[36]

A great deal of the surge of interest in affect that has been called the "affective turn" aims to think through affect as "pre-individual." Thinking about emotions as embodied affects is an opportunity to refuse understanding them as inner realities populating a closed domain of Cartesian immanence, where they are available only to introspection, a kind of inner perception immune to self-deception. It cannot be denied that ultimately this line of inquiry puts pressure on the very distinction between inner and outer perception. But, as I have shown in

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[36] The case of the flight attendant I have borrowed from Hochschild is extremely useful for demonstrating the feedback circuit between affective surfaces and depths. It can be easy to dismiss notions of affect transmission as vague, outlandish, or difficult to verify; it is harder to be dismissive when the production of affects through transmission is a crucial commodity in a multi-billion dollar industry. I also appreciate the political subtext of the case: the unique variety of alienation, and the connection between gender and affective labor. However, the point I am trying to make is much broader than this case, and the alienation and artificiality involved. One can imagine any number of everyday examples of managing feeling through display, or vice versa. Performing a patience that one does not feel may be part of a personal project of trying to cultivate more patience and thereby "build character." Showing affection to become more loving similarly might be a personal project that most of us would understand as a noble effort at self-improvement, and not an exercise in artifice or self-deception.

my analysis of Hochschild's study, I think we err if we aim to simply eliminate from our analyses the difference that distinction between inner and outer perception aims to describe. *I think we should aim instead to produce a genetic account of that difference: to think through affect, not only as something that crosses inner-outer borders, but also (and thereby) as a key part of the process that produces such a border as one of its effects.* In the last half of this chapter I will develop this project in the context of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, but first I will set up the problem in more detail with a detour through William James' work on emotion and affect.

1.4) James and the Identification of Emotion with Affect

A project interested in the somatic character of affect can hardly omit discussion of William James. His theory of emotions is perhaps the most influential theoretical effort on the topic in the twentieth century. While the reception of his view has swung widely over the past century from broad acceptance to broad critique (I elaborate below), it is swinging back: increased interest in it in recent decades roughly overlaps with the rise of the affective turn. The relevance of his work on affect for my project lies in its clear bid at refusing a sharp distinction between inner and outer perception. This is clearly a move in line with a key aspect of the research program of the affective turn. But the manner in which he does this brings him into conversation with the phenomenological tradition: James takes up the ambiguity of the body and of the reversibility of sensing in a way that is close enough to treatment of these issues

in the phenomenological tradition to offer a revealing and challenging interlocutor. James's attempt to understand the felt aspects of affect in terms of the sensible is well-known, even infamous. And while I argue that it is not reductive in the way that common cognitivist critique claims, I do argue that it fails to help us understand the full feedback circuit of affect, the reversibility of its sensible and felt aspects, of affective surfaces and depths. Nevertheless, James' account of affects as somatic feedback can help us understand a crucial part of that reversibility. I also appeal to James to develop the relation between the ambiguity or reversibility of bodily boundaries and that of affect, showing the problem that bodily boundaries become on James' view. This work will help develop and clarify the problem that bodily boundaries become on Merleau-Ponty's view.

William James' theory of emotions is renowned for refusing to distinguish emotions from affects in the sense that posits a private, inner feeling which in turn causes a public, outer display. Thus Ratcliffe glosses James' theory as "the identification of emotion with affect" (2005, 180).[37] Solomon implies a similar reading when he insists, against James, that "emotions are something far more sophisticated than mere feelings" (1993, 102), that they "are not merely 'affects'" (1993, 108).[38] James articulates his own view in an early and oft-cited article entitled "What Is an Emotion?"[39] There he argues that the bodily aspects of

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[37] Matthew Ratcliffe (2005), "William James on Emotion and Intentionality." *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 13 (2): 179-202.
[38] Robert Soloman (1993, *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life*, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company). Solomon's view is that emotions are judgments. For an updated articulation of his view, see "Emotions, Thoughts and Feelings: Emotions as Engagements with the World." (2004, *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions*. Robert C. Solomon, ed. New York: Oxford University Press: 76-88).
[39] William James (1884), in *Mind* 9 (34): 188-205.

emotions—what your psychiatrist might call your "affect" in the sense of display —are synonymous with the emotions they may otherwise be understood to express or represent: "*the bodily changes follow directly the* perception *of the exciting fact, and… our feeling of the same changes as they occur* is *the emotion*" (1884, 189-190).

James' claim is that there are no inner feelings that *cause* those bodily changes we observe in emotional experience. We must not understand the bodily states as *effects* of feelings. Rather, the feelings that we call our emotions are simply the experience of these bodily states. The feeling is a kind of somatic feedback from the movements, so if anything, the causal relationship should be reversed. It is not that I cry *because* I am sad; it would be more accurate to say that "we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble" (1884, 190). When something "moves me to tears," what has happened is just that: I was moved to tears. The melancholy or sadness is a fully integrated part of that corporeal being-moved, rather than something that can be isolated from the tears and posited prior to them as their *cause*. The evidence James offers for the claim is phenomenological: if we reflect on the experience of emotions, we will find that we cannot isolate them from their "bodily symptoms":

> If we fancy some strong emotion, and then try to abstract from our consciousness of it all the feelings of its characteristic bodily symptoms, we find we have nothing left behind… and that a cold and neutral state of intellectual perception is all that remains….[40] What kind of an emotion of

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[40] James suggests here that one thing would endure this reduction: the judgment related to the emotion. For example, in fear, we evaluate something as dangerous and frightening—but "purely cognitive in form, pale, colourless, destitute of emotional warmth" (190). This sort of claim from this early article contributes to its vulnerability to a cognitivist criticism like Solomon's (2004). The more charitable view of James' claim here is the sort that Redding and Ratcliffe develop in their readings of James, according to which his full view is that in fact cognition and affect cannot actually be separated in the way this brief thought experiment in James' early (1884) article

fear would be left, if the feelings neither of quickened heart-beats nor of shallow breathing, neither of trembling lips nor of weakened limbs, neither of goose-flesh nor of visceral stirrings, were present, it is quite impossible to think…. A purely disembodied human emotion is a nonentity. (1884, 193-194)

James' work on emotions was popularized as the so-called "James-Lange theory" of emotions. Redding tracks the history of its reception (1999, 7-23). While extremely significant in 20th century scholarship on affect and emotions, it suffered a significant decline beginning in the 1960s, with the rise of cognitivist approaches to emotion.[41] These approaches acknowledged that physiological excitation could vary in *quantity*, but they claimed that the emotional *quality* of the experience depended on cognition: the person's *interpretation* of the excitation. A significant experimental study by psychologists Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer aimed to show that the same physiological states could be interpreted as a variety of different emotional qualities. Redding (1999, 11-12) and Ratcliffe (2005, 180-181) note that this was widely accepted as a definitive critique of James' view until further experimental evidence began to complicate the empirical picture.[42] Like James, important critics of the cognitivist approach to emotions such as Silvan Tomkins appealed, among other things, to the phenomenological evidence: "Surely no one who has experienced joy at one time and rage at another time would suppose that these radically different feelings were really the same except for different 'interpretations' placed on similar 'arousals'"

imagines (see Ratcliffe 2005; also Paul Redding (1999, *The Logic of Affect*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press), esp. 42-45).

[41] See Redding (1999, 8-12). Also, Jesse Prinz's article "Embodied Emotions" (2004, in *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions*. Robert C. Solomon, ed. New York: Oxford University Press: 44-58) offers an overview of updated versions of cognitivist criticisms of James, and a qualified defense of James against them.

[42] In his article "The Quest for Primary Motives" (1995b), Tomkins offers a brief but helpful account of the studies involved.

(Tomkins 1995b, 35).[43] Sedgwick and Frank, in their important 1995 essay on Tomkins and the affective turn, also offer a perspective on the reception of Schacter's study and Tomkins role in pushing back against this anti-Jamesian cognitive approach to affect (1995, 18-19). By the eve of the 21st century the tide of scholarly opinion and interest in emotions had, at least in some quarters, begun to shift back in a Jamesian direction, emphasizing affect and the embodiment of emotions.[44]

Redding and Ratcliffe, scholars who argue (independently) for reviving interest in James' theory of emotions, insist that the summary dismissal of James popularized in the cognitivist movement "rests upon a serious misinterpretation of James's position" (Ratcfliffe 2008, 219; see also Redding 1999, 24). James' cognitivist critics understand his identification of emotional feeling with embodied affect as a restriction of emotion to the purely subjective, divorced from judgments and perceptions of an outside world, and bearing only on that part of the world which is personal. On this reading, an undesirable consequence of James' account is that emotion becomes a closed circuit of purely auto-affective experience, the experience of one's own body. They criticize him for a perceived insistence on the non-intentionality of affects (though this non-intentionality would be very different from the sort Clough might have praised). But as Redding and Ratcliffe argue persuasively, in this objection the cognitivist critics assume the very separation between perceptual interiority and exteriority that James aims

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[43] See Redding for a brief discussion of other important critics of cognitivism (1999, 13-16).
[44] Redding cites as evidence two popular books by leading researchers on the biology of emotion: neurologist Antonio Damasio and experimental physiologist Joseph LeDoux (Redding 1999, 17). Both insist on the felt aspects of emotion, and both insist that these feelings must be identified with corporeal feedback from changes in bodily states.

to contest. Ratcliffe writes: "In identifying emotions with feelings of bodily changes, James does not divorce them from world-experience or from thought. Rather, he rejects the cognition-affect distinction altogether" (2008, 219).[45]

Ratcliffe's claim here is twofold. First, James is not insisting that emotion is thoughtless, but that thought is embodied. Second, James is not insisting that emotions are enclosed within interoception such that they are perceptions only of one's own body and not of the external world; rather, he is claiming that *affective experience belongs to a phenomenological domain in which these have not yet been differentiated*. The first claim is supported by the second: in order to resist positing a mutually exclusive relation between cognition and affect, James must produce an anti-dualist description of experience.

And this is precisely what he explicitly does in later work, especially the later essay "The Place of Affectional Facts in a World of Pure Experience" (1905).[46] Here James revisits his account of emotions, this time casting them as phenomena that offer particularly "powerful support" to the anti-dualist approach offered by his theory of "pure experience" (1905, 281). In their defense of James, both Redding and Ratcliffe draw heavily on the later essay, emphasizing that an accurate interpretation of James' theory depends on contextualizing James' work on emotions within his broader philosophy (Redding 2008, 220). Looking beyond the often-cited 1884 article, Ratcliffe and Redding both note James' discussion of the ambiguity of the body in the later (1905) essay.[47] One's body, James observes,

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[45] Matthew Ratcliffe (2008), *Feelings of Being: Phenomenology, Psychiatry, and the Sense of Reality*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[46] William James (1905), "The Place of Affectional Facts in a World of Pure Experience." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 2 (11): 281-287.

[47] See Redding (1999, 42-45) and Ratcliffe (2008, 219-239, esp. 221-222).

can be experienced on the one hand as the private, inner sanctum of the knowing and perceiving subject; and on the other hand as an object in the external world, influencing and being influenced by its neighbors directly from within their shared environment. Affects are a curious mixture of these two attitudes. While "sometimes I treat my body purely as a part of outer nature," sometimes "I think of it as 'mine,' I sort it with the 'me'" (James 1905, 287). A piece of the physical world, my body is singled out as the privileged location and personal register of experience. Affects, similarly, can be experienced either as the perception of an object or a situation, or as the way I feel about that object or situation. They can be experienced both as belonging to the things they are about, and as belonging to me.

James begins by claiming that it is often insisted that emotions are purely subjective, and that nothing could be more obvious. This view involves conceding that qualities such as "beautiful" and "disgusting" are not to be found in objects themselves. They are rather "made, of consciousness exclusively, and different in nature from the space-filling kind of being which is enjoyed by physical objects" (1905, 281). James maintains that, on the contrary, "the popular notion that these experiences are intuitively given as purely inner facts is hasty and erroneous," and that "their ambiguity illustrates beautifully my central thesis that subjectivity and objectivity are affairs not of what an experience is aboriginally made of, but of its classification" (1905, 282). Like Descartes, James claims that "it is a mistake to say… that anger, love and fear are affections purely of the mind… they are simultaneously affections of the body" (1905, 283). The difference lies in James'

insistence that these are identical processes, distinguished by the narrative structure they are incorporated into after the affective event.

Pain, for instance, can be spoken of as an inner state, a feeling belonging to a subject: when I sprain my ankle, I say that "I am in pain." But pain is not just this consciousness of pain that belongs to an abstract "I." It is also "local," such that the foot is objectified by it (1905, 283). The pain makes conspicuous my foot's status as a part of the external world, articulating and expressing its place there: my foot becomes a "painful place," a certain "bigness" or local voluminosity of the external world inhabited and animated by the pain (1905, 283). We are not hesitant, James points out, to avail ourselves of this sort of equivocation. For instance, we will readily say of a diamond that it is "precious," it is dear; but is that a feeling or a property of the stone? We unabashedly treat it as both or either. James quotes Santayana's claim that beauty is "pleasure objectified" (1905, 283): we can parse the experience of beauty in terms of feelings of pleasure, but

> when they combine in a total richness, we call the result the 'beauty' of the object, and treat it as an outer attribute which our mind perceives. We discover beauty just as we discover the physical properties of things. Training is needed to make us an expert in either line…. [L]anguage would lose most of its esthetic and rhetorical value were we forbidden to project words primarily connoting our affections upon the objects by which the affections are aroused. The man is really hateful; the action really mean; the situation really tragic—all in themselves and quite apart from our opinion. We even go so far as to talk of a weary road, a giddy height, a jocund morning or a sullen sky (1905, 283).

James' claim is that affects actually function as perceptions of the external world, and that this is so because experiences are originally not divided into inner and

outer perceptions—perceptions that bear on inner states (interoceptions) as opposed to perceptions that bear on an external world (exteroceptions).

All of our experiences, James argues, are like this: they begin as "pure" experiences. "'[I]nner' and 'outer' are not coefficients with which experiences come to us aboriginally stamped" (1905, 284). He invokes experiences of vertigo, in which "movement is felt in general but not ascribed correctly to the body that really moves," so that "both we and the external universe appear to be in a whirl" (1905, 283-284). Another example is motor sympathy, in which an individual does "not yet discriminate between his [sic] own movements and 'those outside of himself'" (1905, 284). These experiences, he theorizes, "point to a primitive stage of perception in which discriminations afterwards needful have not yet been made…. Motion originally simply *is*; only later is it confined to this thing or to that" (1905, 284). In support of James' view, Redding calls our attention to Bach-y-Rita's haptic vision project, in which a device for the visually impaired translates visual data into tactile stimulation on the skin, showing that sensations "could be interpreted *either* as a sensation at the site of the stimulus, *or* as a perception" bearing on an external object (Redding 1999, 22). The device offers sensations that can be felt as something touching my skin, or else as a view of the external world.

Every touch can be experienced either as *touching* or as *being touched*— or in the case of Bach-y-Rita's haptic vision project, either as *seeing* or *being touched* (where seeing means haptic vision: perceiving distance, surface, and shape outside me through the sensitivity of skin to pressure rather than the

sensitivity of eyes to light). The same sensori-motor event is undergone in both ways, though they are curiously non-coincident. Redding concludes that we need a "three-way" distinction to represent what lies "between being in sensational states and representing by means of them, either extero- or interoceptively" (1999, 23). The Jamesian claim as Redding reads it is that the potential for equivocation indicates an original ambiguity of perceptual experience that can be found in pure form in some third state, something in between perceptions of inner states and perceptions of the external world—what James called *pure experience*.

1.5) Pure Experience and the Affectivity of Sensing

There is an established conversation in phenomenology—especially in Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Irigaray—about this affectivity of sensing that James calls "pure experience."[48] Tactile perception is usually taken as exemplary of it, and there is disagreement about the extent to which various sensory modalities exhibit it. The disagreement however is usually around the reversibility of vision rather than its affectivity: while it is easy to argue that the sensation of touching is always coupled with a sensation of being-touched, it is not as obvious that sensations of seeing are coupled with sensations of being-seen.[49] I am not

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[48] See Edmund Husserl, Ideas II (1989, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy – Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution.* R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, trans. Dordrecht: Kluwer), Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*. (2012, Donald Landes, trans. New York: Routledge. Hereafter referred to as PHP), and Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968, Alphonso Lingis, trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. Hereafter referred to as VI.), and Luce Irigaray (1985, "When Our Lips Speak Together." *This Sex Which is Not One*. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke, trans. New York: Cornell University Press: 205-218).

[49] Merleau-Ponty's later work, especially "Eye and Mind (1964b, in *The Primacy of Perception*. James Edie, ed., Carleton Dallery, trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 159-190. Hereafter referred to as EM.) and VI, argues for the reversibility of vision as well its affectivity. There he claims that the reversibility sometimes associated primarily or even exclusively with

addressing here the more controversial claim that vision is always reversible in the sense that it involves seeing and being-seen. Reversibility in that sense involves an experience of boundary, and thus should be distinguished from James' notion of pure experience. The proper comparison is between pure experience and the phenomenological notion of the synaesthesia or affectivity of sensing. What I show in this section is that the phenomenology of sensing as affective is not organized according to an inside-outside boundary. My aim is to argue that a link is needed between the affectivity of sensing and its reversibility, and that failing to offer an account of this link amounts to an introduction of bodily boundaries as a kind of deus ex machina, such that they are relied upon to account for the link without themselves being accounted for.

One way to explain the affectivity of sensing proceeds by a phenomenological reflection that shows the intertwining of interoception and exteroception. A note of caution about these terms: they are often used in a naïve sense that fails to account for the intertwining and even indistinction—or indeed the reversibility—of the aspects of perception they name. Thus my own usage of them goes against the grain of their usual meaning: at first I use them in the naïve sense, but the phenomenological description I will give aims to destabilize their referent, and thereby demonstrate that interoceptions function as exteroceptions and vice versa; they are not distinct domains. However we account for the sense of interiority and exteriority that they come to refer to, it cannot be by positing two juxtaposed zones. Interoception and exteroception are not in fact exterior to one another.

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tactile perception is in fact a general structure of sensibility, and even of being.

In the naïve use, exteroception just means a perception of what is outside —of the outer world; and interoception is whatever parts of a sensory experience bear on what is private and internal, usually underneath my skin. Exteroception is especially associated with perception that asserts itself as having grasped the outside from a distance. Interoceptions and exteroceptions are sometimes distinguished according to sense modality. For instance, sensations of temperature or of speed are often classed as interoceptions, while especially vision but also hearing are taken to exemplify exteroception because of their range: sound and vision can appear as coming to us from very far away. The sense modes that are more closely associated with interoception tend to exhibit the ambiguity of interoception and exteroception more readily: for instance, while the feeling of heat or of cold is no doubt experienced as bearing on the interiority of my own body, it is felt equally as a sensation of the external world. Yet even with a sense such as vision, what asserts itself in perception's results as exteroception always involves traces that implicate it with interoception. All of our senses—even vision —exhibit this indistinction of interoception and exteroception.

The affectivity of vision is perhaps most obvious with an overwhelming perceptual experience, such as an explosion. The blinding light of the explosion is not only felt over *there*, where the explosion is, it is also felt *here*, in my eyes, where it is painful and blinding. My eyes clench tightly closed to *keep the vision out*, to reproduce a boundary between inner and outer realms of perception, a boundary to which visibility is indifferent, a fact made conspicuous by the blinding light of the explosion, and the need to rebuild and maintain it in response

to such overwhelming sights. An overwhelming sound like that of an explosion clearly is similar: we do not just hear the sound, we feel it—painfully—in our ears. Sound is demonstrably like this in much less overwhelming cases as well: a sound can be felt as a kind of tickle or vibration in my ear, or a vibration that permeates my whole body.[50]

A great deal of what is at stake in the indistinction of interoception and exteroception is the ability of a particular sense to mobilize the whole body, and even the situation, as a kind of organ. For example, when I turn up the bass from my stereo, it can be felt in the vibration of the floorboards under my feet, in the air around me, the wall I am leaning on, which all become vibrations through my whole body. We see this in the way that vision and motility are connected: a vision can produce a kinaesthetic impression. This synaesthesia helps explain the sense in which vision as well as touch is affective: sensing is feeling. Seeing my friend jump may be accompanied by a phantom kinaesthetic surge upwards in my own limbs, and this feeling is part of what it means to see this sight. Watching a bird fly may involve a soaring, weightless feeling; watching a roller coaster may involve a lurch in my stomach; looking down a path as it winds away off into the distance may involve phantom sensations of walking (or driving, or biking) down it—perhaps even an anticipatory fatigue that amounts to a kinaesthetic appreciation of how much effort that movement would be, and the time it would take to traverse the distance.

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[50] See the discussion of the auditive space of music in (PhP, 230-234/267-271); Eugene Minkowski's discussion of auditive space, which Merleau-Ponty is referring to, also enters my discussion of pure depth in Chapter 4.

Indeed, one of Merleau-Ponty's most fascinating phenomenological insights is that the depth perception crucial to vision in general is only possible on the basis of this intertwining of vision and motility. When I see the façade of a house, not as merely a façade, but as the other side of hidden sides, that is because the space I see is animated by a felt sense of potential movement in it.[51] My vision of the house as an object in depth, an object that offers more than what I immediately see of it, is undeniably an integral part of *seeing a house* and not merely a façade. And to see this depth is actually to enjoy a felt sense that if I could walk around the house, it would offer more to my vision. To offer a simpler example of why this is so integral to vision proper and not just epiphenomenal with respect to it, imagine standing on a railroad bed and watching the track stretch off toward the horizon. Do you see two parallel lines, or do you see two diagonals that meet at the horizon? The phenomenologically accurate description is that I see the one via the other. If I see the parallel lines of a railroad track, this is because I see the diagonals in terms animated by a felt sense of what it would be like to move down the track. The diagonals appear parallel only insofar as my vision of them is in part constituted by a felt sense of the motor possibilities they afford.

If we demand that the data of vision be understood in isolation, and refuse the way that vision too transforms the whole body and even the situation into a sense organ, then it is impossible to explain how we actually *see* a railroad track, with its parallel lines. We would have to understand the impression of a railroad track (rather than two diagonals) as the imposition of an idea from within the

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[51] I discuss Merleau-Ponty's early and later accounts of depth in Chapters 4 and 5.

repertoire of the subject. If we want to preserve a notion that we are actually perceiving the depth of the track, we must acknowledge an intertwining of interoception and exteroception, a reversibility, even in vision.

Merleau-Ponty's early account of this affectivity of sensing can be found in the chapter of the *Phenomenology of Perception* called "Sensing" (*le sentir*), where it is positioned as a key structure of sensibility associated with the ambiguity of the body. Here he writes that "[s]ynaesthetic perception is the rule" (PhP, 238/275), and that there is "an 'originary layer' of sensing that is prior to the division of the senses" (PhP, 236/273). This pre-dividedness extends to the division of my self or my body as the subject of sensation, divided from what I sense; I "deliver myself over to the spectacle" (PhP, 236/272).

Writing about color perception, Merleau-Ponty says that "[t]he color, before being seen, is foreshadowed by the experience of a certain bodily attitude that alone fits with it and determines it with precision" (PhP, 218/255). By way of illustration, he cites Goethe saying that blue seems to "yield to our gaze," and Kandinsky saying that blue "asks nothing of us and does not summon us to do anything" (PhP, 218/255). Yellows and reds, on the other hand, incite a more excited attitude: "another subject says: 'I clenched my teeth and so know that it is yellow'" (PhP, 218/255). Merleau-Ponty concludes that "prior to being an objective spectacle, the quality allows itself to be recognized by a type of behavior that intends it essentially, and this is why I obtain a quasi-presence of blue from the moment my body adopts the blue attitude" (PhP, 219/256).

He continues, explaining that we must not understand the relation between the color and the motor sensations as one of signification; in fact, they are not even "two distinct facts, a sensation of red and some motor reactions" (PhP, 219/256). Rather, "red, through its texture that our gaze follows and joins with, is already the amplification of our motor being" (PhP, 219/256). Perception is first of all not an objective spectacle, a collection of data whose meaning we piece together. *Perception is first of all sensing, which is a matter of joining with the spectacle at an affective level*. That is to say that the perceptual scene is realized as affective surface and depth; as both "body language," an attitude or gesture of one's body, and as feeling or kinaesthetic feedback. Merleau-Ponty's account here draws on Husserl's account of "sensing" in *Ideas II*, where Husserl describes a sensuous experience of the lived body as affectivity, a felt sense preceding its objectivation as a body proper.[52]

The passage describes the experience of redness as "the amplification of our motor being" (PhP, 219/256); the language of "amplification" is interesting here, especially since it is proposed as an alternative to signification. Sensation is not at first a matter of interpreting data, of reading the signs, trying to connect appearances with meanings that they represent. Rather, these meanings are realized directly in my body. My body serves as an amplifier, a resonance chamber where the meaning of the phenomena is made manifest, not only as a sensible spectacle, but as an affective depth. The meaning of "red" is not represented; it is actually made present in the bodily attitude it solicits.

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[52] See Husserl, *Ideas II* (1989, 144-153). For a discussion of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty on sensing, see Alia Al-Saji's 2010 article "Bodies and Sensings: On the Uses of Husserlian Phenomenology for Feminist Theory" (in *Continental Philosophy Review* 43: 13-37).

"[S]ensation," Merleau-Ponty writes, "is, literally, a communion" (PhP, 219/257).
While it is clear that he means communion in the colloquial sense of coexistence
(see for example PhP, 221/258, where sensation is defined "as coexistence or as
communion"), he also in this passage draws on the religious sense of the word
"communion" in the Christian tradition as transubstantiation. The point is to
emphasize the role the body serves in sensing as that of transubstantiating its
situation, realizing the sense of the situation in its own flesh before that sense has
become distinguished as an objective spectacle. Here we see that same logic
Tomkins' account of amplification brought to our attention: the meaning is
actually evoked rather than referred to or represented.

It is instructive to read James' account of pure experience in light of this
phenomenological tradition of understanding sensing as affective. In his 1905
essay, James is positioning affect not only as a privileged example of pure
experience, but also as a sort of reservoir of pure experience in perception. His
central claim about affects is that they are especially powerful evidence of his
theory of pure experience, since in affectional experience, "the relatively 'pure'
condition lasts… they remain equivocal; and, as the world goes, their equivocality
is one of their great conveniences" (1905, 284). But he also claims that affects are
exemplary of pure experience because they maintain the inner-outer ambiguity in
a way that other experiences do not. We "learn to separate the ways in which
things appeal to our interests and emotions from the ways in which they act upon
one another" primarily, for James, because this is practically important (1905,
285). Part of perceptual maturity is learning that "[i]t does not *work* to assume

that physical objects are going to act outwardly by their sympathetic or antipathetic qualities" (1905, 285). Disgustingness or beauty cannot be plotted geometrically, and behave in ways that resist attempts to class them with physical attributes.

And yet we would be wrong to think that they are physically inert. "[A]though they are inert as regards the rest of physical nature, they are not inert as regards that part of physical nature which our own skin covers" (1905, 286). Affects are indeed forces in the material world insofar as they act on our bodies: as they "appeal to our attention," they "produce immediate bodily effects upon us, alterations of tone and tension, of heart-beat and breathing, of vascular and visceral action" (1905, 286). They are thus "not wholly inert physically, though they be active only in the small corners of physical nature which our bodies occupy" (1905, 286). The enduring ambiguity of affects as "pure" experiences is thus borrowed from the ambiguity of the body. One's own body, James writes, is "the palmary instance of the ambiguous" (1905, 287).

Affects are not simply perceptions of my body itself, caught in a closed interoceptive circuit. They are perceptions of the world in terms of the perturbations through which it vibrates in my own limbs; perceptions that, in their infancy, contain no discriminations between my limbs and the worldly situation. Trembling with fear or quivering with excitement simply are the way that situation extends itself into the visceral rhythms of my own body. Even as I begin to discriminate, to "own" the trembling in my limbs as "my fear," a personal experience which is happening to me internally, the ambiguity of sensing

continues to trouble that discrimination, to allow and even incite equivocation. For the feeling of fear is not only an experience of my own body; it need not take my inner state as its primary object. The state that I have begun to experience as "inner" and personal is at the same time the way in which a fearsome object appears as such. Its first appearance in experience is as an orientation between body and object prior to a sense of their mutual exteriority or bounded location. The fearful object is not only over there where I see it; it is here in the trembling of my fingers; there is no distance that separates us. Insofar as it functions as an orientation, fear must be a differentiation; but it is not the sort of difference that is marked by exteriority.[53] The fearful object—and my aversive orientation toward it —are discovered in the manner in which they have already gotten under my skin.

James' answer to his critics then is that the fact that he locates affects in the body's experience of itself does not mean that they are *not* experiences of the external world. That would only follow if one has forgotten the ambiguity of sensing and assumed an ontological isolation of the experience of the body as a subject from the experience of its world—precisely what James is arguing against in his theory of pure experience. This is why Redding insists that "[i]n identifying emotions with feelings of bodily changes, James does not divorce them from world-experience or from thought" (2008, 219). His critics have claimed that James' view cannot describe the intentional aspects of emotions: the fact that emotions are *about things* in the world around us (see for example Solomon 2004, 77).[54] The broadly shared assumption in this cognitivist criticism is that only a

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[53] I will return to this in the discussion of affective depth in Chapter 4.

[54] Robert Solomon (2004), "Emotions, Thoughts, and Feelings: Emotions as Engagements with the World." *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions,* Robert C. Solomon, ed. New York: Oxford University Press: 76-88.

view that describes emotions as judgments and evaluations, understood as cognitive processes, will be capable of describing their intentionality, their function as worldly orientations. But as a criticism of James, this is a misunderstanding of the radical character of his view: "Rather than taking a conception of intentionality for granted and identifying emotions with bodily feelings that are distinct from intentional states, James reconceptualizes intentionality so as to incorporate bodily feeling into its structure" (Ratcliffe 2005, 180). It is not a view of emotions as non-intentional, but a view of intentionality as bodily. The body is not only the private headquarters of the subject, but is also an intimate disclosure of the world. When I look at the carrion and it "turns my stomach" (James 1905, 287), that is not only a perception of my inner states. It is a perception of the carrion—I perceive it through the trouble it makes in my tummy as much as through the light it bends towards my retinas. This "disgustingness… does not function as a physical quality" in the sense that it "fails to operate within the realm of suns and breezes" (1905, 287). But "it *does* function physically" on that "limited part of physics" (1905, 287) that is my own body.

1.6) Critical Reflection on James

James' account is innovative precisely because it describes the part of the feedback loop between affect and emotion that we usually ignore, in which adopting an affectively significant posture can generate feeling where there was none before. The strength of his account is its ability to describe *emotion* as

affective feedback: "we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble" (James 1884, 190). Bodily postures and gestures actually incarnate and even amplify or cultivate feelings, instead of being their effects or arbitrarily assigned representations.

But to the extent that this is merely a reversal of the causal relationship, it limits James' theory's ability to describe what is lacking from the "strained or forced smiles" (Hochschild 2012, 6) that Hochschild's flight attendants are trained to treat as an insufficient effort of emotional labor. In reversing the causal relationship instead of describing the entire feedback loop, James fails to explain what "work[ing] up some warmth behind it" (Hochschild 2012, 19) adds to the flight attendant's smile. Granted that affects are not confined to immanence in the Cartesian sense, what accounts for their personality? The affect, like one's own body, is ambiguous. Yet part of that ambiguity is that they come to be experienced as *mine*. Allowing an affect to achieve the depth of a personal feeling, as we saw in Hochschild's analysis of emotional labor, strengthens rather than diminishes an affect's transmissive or transitive force. Identifying emotion and affect flattens them, limiting our ability to describe the circuit that was such a fascinating feature of Hochschild's analysis of emotional labor. That circuit was one in which interiority and exteriority are not dualistically defined, not because they are *identified*, but because they are *reversible*: they tend to turn into one another. They involve a dynamic between inner and outer that is not a simple identity, a pure lack of differentiation, as the notion of "pure experience" suggests. Yet if it includes a border, it is a very odd sort of border, since it

functions not as a relation of mutual exteriority, but a conduit of reciprocal expression and even amplification. In order to explain this, James turns to a third thing, a "pure experience" which is neither interiority nor exteriority. But this will not be adequate if we hope to describe and understand the reversibility of interiority and exteriority, the interval or circuit of their mutual becoming. What we need to understand is the link between the affectivity of sensing and its reversibility such that sensing comes to be organized by the hinge we experience in reversibility between seeing and being-seen, touching and being-touched.

James' failure to really confront this issue can be seen in the connection he makes between the ambiguity of affect and the ambiguity of the body, deferring the difficulties of the former onto the latter. James' critics are not wholly wrong: there remains an uninterrogated equivocation in James' account about whether affects happen in our bodies or in the world. This is the case insofar as his view relies on invoking bodily borders even while it complicates our possibilities for giving an account of those borders. James' account insists on recovering a descriptive register of pure experience, of the indistinction of inner and outer perception. And yet the account also invokes a bodily subject, a bodily interiority.

The "turn" in my stomach when I see the carrion is, James insists, at first a "pure experience": neither an experience of *my own* feelings nor of an external object. As "pure experience," affects are neither inner nor outer. They are a corporeal pre-individuated experience, the reflexivity of the body without borders, as yet indistinct from its world and mixed into its situation. And yet James does not deny that affects do become personal feelings. On the one hand the upheaval

in my viscera *is* the appearance of the carrion, a perception of its disgustingness. On the other hand, my sense of bordered bodily inhabitation makes it possible to "sort" this experience "with the 'me'" (James 1905, 287), apprehending it as *my* disgust. In the midst of "pure experience," a "skin" (286) appears, sorting the affective experience into its ambiguous, reversible possibilities.

For James, affects are "pure experience," an indistinction of self and world. On the other hand, something makes it possible for an affect to eventually be experienced not only as indistinction with the object or situation, but also as a personal feeling: as *my* fear, *my* disgust, something happening within me and special part of the world that is mine. Thus that pure experience cannot be a simple identity, a lack of differentiation. There must be a dynamic there, an ambiguous *process* or *genesis* of differentiation. As we have seen, on James' account affects borrow their ambiguity from the ambiguity of bodily boundaries. *Thus the question of how an affect comes to be distinguished as a personal feeling, an emotion, is displaced to the question of how the body comes to be distinguished as a personal place, a body proper.*

James appeals to "the surface of our bodies… our own skin" (1905, 285-286), as if the boundary of affect is simply given in experience with the objective contours of our bodies. Yet James' own assertion that a status as inner or outer is not "aboriginally stamped" (1905, 284) into experience complicates that apparently easy answer that invokes the surface of the skin. It prohibits recourse to the assumption that the flesh of our limbs is always already experienced as *inner*, as *my own body's* flesh and not the world's.

This is so because the border at issue here is not simply the border between an object and neighboring objects. It is the border of interiority or reflexivity, the hinge between the reversibility of sensing as *within me* even while it discloses an external world; like the haptic vision device that is a sensation on my skin even as it is also a view of outside objects, things at a distance. Thus this border cannot simply be given in the contour of the body as a measurable perceptual object: the ambiguity of the body precisely resides in the capacity of the body as an object to also be felt as an interiority, a subject of sensation and movement. The question of bodily borders is not only one of where its measurable contours fall, but of whether and how those contours come to be inhabited as *mine*, as the proper place of that sensible reversibility.

The importance of understanding this as a process of differentiation rather than an accomplished fact of separation cannot be overstated. Exceptions to James' claim about "pure experience" cannot be made without betraying the central mandate of the theory. If James' theory of pure experience must be qualified such that the body's special propensity for ambiguity between inner and outer experience is indeed "aboriginally stamped" into its skin, that would considerably undermine his anti-dualist aims. If the body is marked *a priori* as *mine*, the residence of interiority and subjectivity, then the anti-dualist consequences of locating subjectivity in the body are significantly mitigated. Instead of a dualism of mind and body, we would find ourselves with a dualism of (human?) body and nature, the flesh of the body and the flesh of the world.

As odd as it may seem vis-à-vis our everyday attitudes about our bodies, one does not have to look far to find examples of the felt sense of bodily ownness failing to coincide with the surface of the skin, or other measurable borders of the body as an object. The phenomenological individuation of the body is not simply a matter of exteroceptions of surfaces. As Merleau-Ponty describes it, I experience my body as "closed in on itself" (CRO, 119), a special zone of space marked by a feeling of interiority. There is a sense of closure, a boundary whose tacit pressure can be felt encircling that most intimate area of space I call my own. That intimate, interior space takes a definite shape (or shapes), and though it often aligns roughly with the surface of my skin, it has a distinct mode of appearance, as evidenced by the fact that it can be felt even when the surface of my skin is not being directly perceived, and even when it does not coincide with the measurable outline of my body. As study of phenomena such as phantom limbs has demonstrated, it is not an observable shape, but a *felt* sense of place. The felt presence of a limb may persist in its measurable absence. Inversely, the shape of that intimate space felt as interior may expand to incorporate prostheses, or even more banal items like clothes and any equipment to which I develop a robust habitual connection—like a keyboard or a bicycle. A dimension of experience develops around the negotiation and inhabitation of these shapes, generally described in the literature through the distinct but closely associated concepts of "body image" and "body schema," and discussed in terms of an imaginary or virtual dimension of embodiment.[55] It is this morphological dimension of

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[55] I will return to this issue in the following chapters, especially Chapter 3, where I offer my own take on the much-disputed distinction between body image and body schema.

embodiment, an imaginary geography of the body and its lived connections with the world, that has proven so fruitful for feminist theorists in thinking through the corporeality of phenomena like gender, sexual behavior, and sexual difference.[56]

I am interested in the possibility that affect, in addition to being exemplary of experiences that resist the inner-outer distinction, may also be a primary site where this distinction is made; perhaps not only the *site*, but the *means* through which an experience of the boundaries of the body is cultivated—the mode of these boundaries' appearance, and the force that sustains them. This move ties affect very closely to concepts of body image and body schema, and indeed I want to suggest that the imaginary or morphological mode of appearance is in fact something we should describe in terms of affect and emotion.

In this section I have aimed to show that James' account demonstrates a certain tension around the boundedness or locatedness of affect, and of the body. On the one hand, he suggests that affects and the peculiar force they exert are bounded by pre-existing bodily borders. On the other hand, his conclusion—the theory of pure experience—presents a profound and fundamental challenge to the usual ways of distinguishing inner and outer perception, inner and outer experience. The claim I am interested in exploring is that instead of thinking about affects and the peculiar force they exert as bounded by pre-existing bodily borders, we should think of those bodily borders as an affective experience, as inaugurated and cultivated by affective forces. *Affect individuates the body.* The interesting challenge here is one of thinking through affect as both the

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[56] See Irigaray (1993) and Kristeva (1982), but also Butler (1993), Weiss (1999), Grosz (1994), Salamon (2010).

indistinction and the distinction of interiority and exteriority; to put it less

paradoxically, the challenge of describing affect as the genesis of this difference

rather than a phenomenon in which that difference is already given. Affect offers

us the possibility of thinking through the interiority-exteriority difference in a

fresh and promisingly anti-dualist way.

I have shown that James' account, though it treats affect as pure

experience and indistinction, and in that sense identifies emotion with affect, does

not do so in the reductive way that his critics claim. And this is true precisely to

the extent that the account ultimately—though implicitly—calls for something

other than the identification of affect and emotion. James fully admits (and indeed

relies on invoking) the ambiguity of affect as not only indistinction but also

distinction. Affects become emotions, and anonymous impersonal feelings that

are part of a sensory disclosure of the world become personal feelings that belong

to a bodily self.

In order to explain the ambiguity of affect, James posits "pure

experience," a "primitive stage of perception" in which distinctions between inner

and outer "have not yet been made" (1905, 284). Feelings and movements are not

at first "confined to this thing or to that" (1905, 284). But he is left with an

unresolved problem of difference: how will these distinctions be made? Where is

the affect—is it located in the body, or in the world? And if the answer is that it

comes to be located in the body, then how is that localization made?

On James' account this question is (illegitimately, I think) deferred instead

of fully interrogated: the ambiguity of affect is attributed to the ambiguity of

bodily boundaries. *Affect and emotion can be identified only insofar as the questions of differentiation I have raised are deferred to questions of bodily boundaries.* But what I want to explore is the possibility that the ambiguity of affect is precisely the place to take up the question of the ambiguity of bodily boundaries, along with the issue of differentiation. The ambiguity of bodily boundary, I want to argue, does not found the ambiguity of affect. Rather, the ambiguity of affect *is* the ambiguity of bodily boundary. If, as I have argued, the individuation of the body relies on affect for its production in experience, then it can hardly be invoked as a ground for the individuation of affect.

As I will continue to explore in the following sections, Merleau-Ponty also identifies affect with a phenomenological domain prior to the differentiation of inner and outer perception. His account thus faces a similar problem: whence the differentiation? Whence the hinge of reversibility? How do we account for the difference between the reversibility of sensing and the affectivity of sensing?

His first response to this question in his early work is to posit the "tacit *Cogito*," an agency or power belonging to the body that accomplishes its own individuation. The thesis of the tacit *Cogito* has always been controversial.[57] It is famously abandoned by Merleau-Ponty himself, explicitly later in his career, but arguably far sooner: on my reading, he is working on revising it as early as his next professional project, lecturing on Child Psychology at the Sorbonne.[58] My reading of these issues in terms of a problem around affect and difference offers, I

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[57] See for example Gary Brent Madison's discussion of the tacit *Cogito* (1981, *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty: A Search for the Limits of Consciousness*. Gary Brent Madison, trans. Athens: Ohio University Press), esp. 162-166.

[58] For his criticisms of the tacit *Cogito* in his later work, see Merleau-Ponty's working note from January 1959 (VI, 170-171/222-223), and from the next month (175-176/227-228). For the revisionary developments in the Sorbonne lectures, see Chapters 2 and 3 below.

think, a fresh and helpful look not only at the philosophical motivations for proposing the tacit *Cogito*, but also at the reasons it fails, as well as at the revisions proposed by the later work and the extent to which they stand to improve upon the earlier position. The affectivity of sensing must not be simply a "primitive stage of perception" in which it is homogeneous and undifferentiated. It must instead be itself a force and a process of differentiation that is not owned or contained within the boundaries it makes possible.

1.7) Merleau-Ponty on Affect and Emotion

Though Merleau-Ponty is renowned for his work on the phenomenological ambiguity of the body and its philosophical significance, the role of affect and emotion in his philosophy is usually ignored. A great deal of scholarly work has been done on Merleau-Ponty in recent decades, especially on his most well-read text: the *Phenomenology of Perception*. Yet very few treatments even broach the topic of the role of affect and emotion in his account of perception and embodied subjectivity.[59]

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[59] There is one book-length treatment of affect and emotion in Merleau-Ponty: Suzanne Labi Cataldi's *Emotion, Depth, and Flesh: A Study of Sensitive Space* (1993, Albany: State University of New York Press). Glen A. Mazis' article "Merleau-Ponty, Inhabitation and the Emotions" (1989, *Merleau-Ponty: Critical Essays*. Henry Pietersma, ed. Washington, D. C.: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology & University Press of America: 251-268) also focuses on the role of affect and emotion in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. Komarine Romdenh-Romluc's Routledge Philosophy Guidebook on *Merleau-Ponty and the Phenomenology of Perception* (2011, New York: Routledge) devotes a section of one chapter to the topic. See also Cataldi's article "Embodying Perceptions of Death: Emotional Apprehension and Reversibilities of the Flesh" (2000, *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh*. Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor, eds. Albany: State University of New York: 189-202), Jane Lymer's "Merleau-Ponty and the Affective Maternal-Foetal Relation" (2011, *Parrhesia* 13: 126-143), and Heinämaa's work on wonder and Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the reduction as affective experience (2002, "From Decisions to Passions: Merleau-Ponty's Interpretation of Husserl's Reduction." *Merleau-Ponty's Reading of Husserl*. Ted Toadvine and Lester Embree, eds. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers: 127-146). James Phillips' article "From the Unseen to the Invisible: Merleau-Ponty's Sorbonne Lectures as Preparation for His Later Thought" (1999, *Merleau-Ponty, Interiority, Exteriority,*

Interestingly, those scholars who do comment on affects and emotions in Merleau-Ponty's work tend to call for greater appreciation of their fundamental role in his philosophy. Mazis calls for more recognition of the role of emotions (Mazis tends to use "affect" and "emotion" interchangeably) in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. He credits the development of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy in his later period into an ontology of the flesh to a more careful attention to the phenomenology of emotions, writing that "Merleau-Ponty was able to come to his final 'indirect ontology' only with a more sensitive characterization of the emotions than traditional conceptions had allowed" (1990, 267). Sue Cataldi writes that Merleau-Ponty defines affect or emotion as "the creation and (secreted) conveyance of 'lived' meanings, which emerge 'in' the expressive space of a body's purposive movements" (1993, 100). She positions affect for Merleau-Ponty as an original mode of embodied meaning allied to movement and spatiality. Affect or emotion (Cataldi, like Mazis, does not differentiate) is the body possessed by a meaning, participating in it directly with no need for representation; this is a process of expression in which, as Merleau-Ponty glosses it, "the expression cannot be distinguished from the thing expressed" (PhP, 153/188), such that the meaning is shown or evoked rather than represented, incarnated instead of signified. Affect or emotion is the embodied meaning par excellence.

Psychic Life and the World. Dorothea Olkowski and James Morley, eds. Albany: State University of New York Press: 69-88) contains helpful reflections on Merleau-Ponty's understanding of affective life and the evolution of his thought under psychoanalytic influences towards a notion of the body as a libidinal exchange. James Krasner's "Doubtful Arms and Phantom Limbs: Literary Portrayals of Embodied Grief" (2004, _PMLA_, 119 (2): 218-232) is also helpful. The positioning of affects or emotions as exemplary of Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodied intentionality in his _Phenomenology of Perception_ is touched on briefly (76, 84) in Martina Reuter's article "Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Pre-Reflective Intentionality" (1999, _Synthese_, 118 (1): 69-88).

Why do Cataldi and Mazis come to the conclusion that affects and emotions deserve this special attention in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy? Over the course of following chapters, I aim to expose and analyze a key role that affect plays in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. As I have already touched upon, and as I will argue more extensively in later chapters, the crucial notions of the body schema and body image must be understood in terms of affect and emotion. I will also argue that the concepts of flesh and reversibility so crucial to Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy must be understood in terms of developments in Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the body schema as a function of affective differentiation. While I think this development can be seen most explicitly in his later work, I think it is being prepared in his analysis of depth perception in the *Phenomenology*, and his work on the genesis of the body proper in his lectures on child psychology at the Sorbonne.

But we should begin by understanding the role of affect in Merleau-Ponty's early work in light of the issues I have raised in the context of the affective turn. Throughout his body of work, affects and emotions serve as key examples of embodied meaning, and key counter-examples to the Cartesian notion of the subject as occupying a special domain of immanence in experience; I will address a number of these in the remainder of this chapter. As I explained in my discussion of his account of sensing above, affect is positioned centrally in his account of the reversibility of perceptual interiority and exteriority. As part of a broader impetus in his philosophical project to understand the genesis of meaning as corporeal, to think difference beyond inside-outside distinction, and to

transfigure our philosophical imaginary accordingly, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is an indispensable resource for developing an account of affect that accommodates the ambiguity of its surfaces and depth, the reversibility of its sensible and felt aspects.

Perhaps nothing is better known about Merleau-Ponty than his dedicated and searching resistance to mind-body dualism. In his earliest work, *The Structure of Behavior*, he writes that it is his objective to understand the place of the conscious, feeling organism in nature (SB, 3).[60] In the final chapter of that text, he indicates his interest in phenomenology as a method that will allow him to approach that problem from the inside out. Accordingly, in his *Phenomenology of Perception* he avails himself of the phenomenological reduction, taking the starting point of inquiry as what is evident in an immanent sphere of experience, and finding a kind of transcendence always already at work in immanence insofar as it is an intentional relation. To locate that sphere of ownness in the body instead of consciousness, thereby dramatically furthering the critique of Cartesian immanence, is generally regarded as Merleau-Ponty's principle contribution to philosophy, and to the phenomenological tradition in particular.

But to locate ownness in the body is to press the limits of the phenomenological method even as it realizes more fully the phenomenological critique of dualism. The body has no claim in principle to interiority. My body is exposed, exterior: it offers itself up as a denizen of an external world. Just as readily, it can announce itself as a personal experience, or indeed as the privileged

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[60] Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2006), *The Structure of Behavior*. Alden L. Fisher, trans. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press. Hereafter referred to as SB.

location of personal experience. I enjoy a feeling of hiddenness or concealment in my body, a feeling of privacy and integrity. Yet that feeling has no ontological guarantee: it regularly unravels in intimate relationships, with an other who knows me well enough to "see right through me"; it can be lifted in a moment of discomposure, or under the keen attention of an insightful stranger; it can be damaged by humiliation and suffering; it can be shattered by mutilation, wounding, and death. Insofar as it pretends to be absolute, my sense of privacy and interiority within my own body, my felt sense of it "as a unique individual, whose place can be taken by no one else" (CPP, 119), is a pretense, a sleight of hand. Merleau-Ponty writes in his Sorbonne lectures that it "comes later and is not primitive" (CPP, 119). Further, this "distinction of individuals" is "a process which… is never completely finished." The claim is thus developmental, but also about perception and embodied experience in general. As Merleau-Ponty has it, distinction and indistinction coexist in adult life; and adult emotional life in particular is the site of a constant negotiation of that coexistence (CRO, 155). Not only can my bodily boundaries be trespassed, but also my own felt sense of them can be reorganized, weakened, or even broadly undermined. Even the most robust bodily boundaries are hardly a terminal achievement; they are rather constantly negotiated in a myriad of more and less dramatic or everyday ways. To locate the phenomenological domain of ownness in the body is to put pressure on the very distinction between transcendence and immanence.

The claim that there is no phenomenological domain that is definitively interior, utterly private, and that a sphere of ownness is not a phenomenologically

given structure but a contingent effect of ongoing and intercorporeal phenomenological processes—in other words, that individuation is not an experiential given—is one of the more radical consequences of Merleau-Ponty's anti-dualist and non-reductive ontological commitments. It is a consequence that, especially in the early work, he struggles to follow through to its conclusion. We have already seen an early expression of it in his account of sensing. In the later period of his career, he will introduce the term "reversibility" to describe this as an ontological principle: every exteriority can be felt as an interior, and every interiority yields itself to external witness, so that "the things pass into us as well as we into the things" (VI, 123/162). But that mature notion of reversibility requires a new ontology, one that reaches beyond the descriptive register of the body proper to engage with the problem of its genesis, and theorize not only the bond between body and world, but also the "differentiation" by which "individuals are formed" in the first place (VI, 114/150). The ontology of the flesh begun in Merleau-Ponty's later work is an attempt to re-describe the body, not as an agent of organic connectedness in nature, but as an exemplar of an ontological principle of differentiation, "that divergence between the within and the without that constitutes its natal secret" (VI, 135-136/177). I aim to embark on a reading of Merleau-Ponty that allows me to trace the evolution of Merleau-Ponty's thought through his work on affect.

Psychoanalysis too identifies the body and the subject of experience; Freud famously says that "ego is a bodily ego," and the development of the ego and superego is described as a process of libidinal cathexis or affective investment

in the bodies of one's self and others. This affinity inspires Merleau-Ponty's

attention to psychoanalytic thinkers, beginning during his years teaching at the

Sorbonne on child psychology, and but growing in the later years of his career,

including his increasing attention to the work of Paul Schilder and Melanie Klein

in the final installment of his lectures on *Nature* (274-284),[61] and to Freud in his

lectures on *Institution and Passivity* (117/211-209/251). The sustained study of

psychoanalytic thinkers and concepts we find in the Sorbonne lectures on child

psychology makes them a critical link between the early and later periods of

Merleau-Ponty's writings.

Here I agree with Phillips (1999), who emphasizes the importance of the

Sorbonne lectures in relation to Merleau-Ponty's later work. He in fact connects

the themes that preoccupy Merleau-Ponty in those lectures from the middle period

to the themes explored in the lectures of the later period at the Collège de France,

as well as the themes of *The Visible and the Invisible*. In particular, Phillips

anticipates my claim about the importance of reading the evolution of Merleau-

Ponty's thought in terms of the role of "affective life" (1999, 71 and 76), and the

relation between Merleau-Ponty's notion of reversibility from his later work and

his growing pseudo-psychoanalytic understanding of the body as a libidinal

exchange of incorporation and expulsion that generates inside-outside difference

rather than being conditioned by it (1999, 75 and 76-77).[62]

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[61] (2003a). *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France.* Robert Vallier, trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. Hereafter referred to as N.

[62] On this point about the shift to a more libidinal notion of the body in the later lecture courses, see Emmanuel Saint Aubert (2009, "Space and the Body Image in Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of the Flesh." Erick Raphael Jiménez and Robin Muller, trans. *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 30 (1): 31-58).

The Sorbonne lectures, and in particular the engagement with psychoanalysis we find in them, are the site of Merleau-Ponty's first direct and sustained engagement with the more radical consequences of his anti-dualist philosophy of embodiment insofar as it is here for the first time that we see him giving a genetic account of the body proper. Chapters 2 and 3 will focus on the Sorbonne lectures, especially the lecture on "The Child's Relations With Others," in which Merleau-Ponty is focused on the role of affect as the "primordial operation by which the child organizes the imaginary, just as he [sic] organizes the perceived" (CRO, 98).

I emphasize throughout the double burden that affect has as it plays the role of, on the one hand, the medium of an indistinction between body and world; and on the other hand the medium of their distinction. Like James, Merleau-Ponty maintains (increasingly rigorously from the middle period of the Sorbonne lectures on) that the distinction between interoception and exteroception is not given in experience, but emerges within it. I will argue that affect in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy must be located in perception prior to the emergence of that inside-outside difference. But it is also identified with a process of differentiation that makes that felt distinction between interiority and exteriority possible. It does this even as it continues to serve as the reversibility of that distinction.

Ultimately, I want to argue that in order to make sense of this dual role, we must take seriously claims such as the one made in a working note from December of 1960, months before Merleau-Ponty's untimely death, in which he writes that we can resolve a problem Scheler tackles—"how to understand the

relation of the intentional with the affective" (VI, 270/318)—if we begin to think

of affective phenomena not as positive terms, "but as *differentiations* of one sole

and *massive* adhesion to Being which is the flesh" (VI, 270/318). We have to

understand affect as the work of a pure difference, not a difference between

mutual exteriorities, but a difference itself: a dynamic of differentiation prior to

the distinction between interiority and exteriority that it engenders; a dynamic of

differentiation not attributable to the agency of the body proper, but conditioning

its very individuation.

1.8) Affect as Pre-individuality and Body Schema

Even Merleau-Ponty's earliest writings on affect and emotion are clearly

committed to explaining the two features that, in my reading of Hochschild and

James, I have argued are important in any account of affect: the fact that they are

pre-individual in the sense that they are contagious or transitive; and on the other

hand the fact that they can also be individuating—not only personal, but even

definitive of the personal. "Our natural attitude is not to experience our own

feelings or to adhere to our own pleasures, but rather to live according to the

emotional categories of our milieu" (PhP, 399/439), Merleau-Ponty writes. But he

also acknowledges that feelings may be my "own," incorporated into and even

definitive of the scope of the personal. In the *Phenomenology*, this is discussed in

the chapter on the "The *Cogito*" in the vocabulary of a distinction between "true"

and "false" feelings, emotions that are "authentic" or "inauthentic." Quoting

Scheler, Merleau-Ponty writes that "[i]t is only later that a personal and authentic

emotion might break into this web of emotional fantasies" (PhP, 399/439). This true-false distinction bears some resemblance to the differentiation I have already noted between affective surfaces and depths; but as I will show, it ultimately fails to help explain that differentiation. I will discuss the merits of this attempt to weave together the pre-individual and individuating aspects of affect in the section below on true and false emotions in the chapter of his *Phenomenology* on "The *Cogito*." But first, a word on how Merleau-Ponty thinks about the pre-individual character of affect in this early period of his writing.

Merleau-Ponty, like James, turns to the phenomenology of affect and emotion as a key refutation of the view that there is a phenomenological domain of immanence closed in on itself, with interior or subjective stuff, mental or psychical facts, as its object. Like James, he thinks that if we are really committed to an anti-dualist ontology, we must refuse the distinction between "inner observation" and "outer observation" (SNS, 52). Like James, he criticizes classical psychology for its insistence on this distinction. Resisting dualism will mean understanding these parts of existence we have thought of as enclosed in a private mental or psychic domain as in fact taking place in the material world. The distinction between inner and outer perception is called into question because there is no longer a definitively inner object: the body is the subject, and it has equal claim to interiority and exteriority. Further, insofar as I am a body, I must always pass through the world to get to myself. While James' view of the ambiguity of the body suggested an either-or, such that I could perceive it either as interiority or as exteriority, Merleau-Ponty's view of the ambiguity of the body

is an intertwining: any interoception will equally be an exteroception. Put otherwise, there is no pure introspection, because I will never be able to adopt a self-directed attitude that is not equally a world-directed attitude, insofar as my self is a body, and as such a part of the world. Any perception of my body as interiority will take place via a world-directed perception.

Affects and emotions are a key example for Merleau-Ponty for the same reasons they were for James: first, because these are the aspects of our existence that we tend to consider the most personal, the most unimpeachably private; and second, because despite that prejudice, ultimately each thinker finds in affects an exemplary case of the ambiguity of the body, the ambiguity of inner and outer perception. Like James, Merleau-Ponty finds in affective experience an indistinction with the thing perceived, a phenomenological domain not yet parsed according to the distinctions of objects and entities that will characterize the results of perception.

If Ratcliffe and Redding are right to defend James' theory of affect against those who say that James reduces affect to inner feelings that have no intentionality in the sense that they have no bearing on the external world and its objects, then when the sight of the carcass turns my stomach, it must be the case that this is not reducible to a perception of *how I feel*, but also a perception of the carcass itself. Thus James' claim about pure experience, interpreted in the manner Ratcliffe and Redding argue for, implies the claim that we can have "inner experiences" of things other than our own body: the turning of my stomach at the

site of the carcass is an "inner experience," not only of my own body, but also of that object.

This is a mysterious claim, since the word "inner" has lost its usual meaning at this point. The idea is that there is a *felt* aspect of perception at work, a part of the perceptual experience that cannot be reduced to what is directly sensible, or to what is immediately perceptually present: the perception involves the revelation of intimate aspects of things, aspects that are not directly visible. The first part of what it means to call the experience of these aspects an "inner" experience is to compare it to proprioception: the feel that I have for the carrion has a mode of appearance that is similar to the feel that I have for my own intimate bodily affairs. Indeed, James' description equates these. There is a part of the perception of the carrion that occurs in the kinaesthetic or visceral unseen depths of my own body: it turns my stomach. But of course, it is precisely in understanding that nauseating lurch in my innards *as a perception of the carrion* that the term "inner" loses its usual meaning. James is precisely claiming that the perception of a bodily state, at least in the case of affective phenomena, is not just the perception of a bodily state, but is equally a perception of the external world.

The second part of what it means to call this "inner" experience is to suggest that this affective aspect of perception reveals something intimate about the carrion, something that is not directly manifest, not reducible to its directly visible properties. Not only is the perception in part revealed in the invisible depths of my visceral and kinaesthetic body, but also what is revealed there are not straightforwardly visible aspects of what I am perceiving. Merleau-Ponty's

examples of affective experience emphasize this doubled reversibility, since they are examples of second-personal situations. That is, he describes the affective dimension of perception in terms of my perception of an other's feelings—a perception which is itself a feeling: to see my interlocutor's angry face is to feel her anger. It is the inward, secret aspects of things that can be revealed in this inward, secret mode of appearance. In the case of the perception of the carrion as disgusting, that more intimate, secret aspect of the perception is at least synaesthetic (the sight appears as an anticipation of slimy textures and fetid smells). But more profoundly, it could also involve the perception of rottenness and decay as such: the perception of the carrion as the remains of living flesh, once was animate and expressive, and now decomposing indifferently into the ground.

But the question remains: if the difference between the sensible and felt aspects at issue here is not best understood as an inside-outside difference, then what sort of difference is it? In Chapter 4 and even more in Chapter 5 I return to this question, and explain it is a difference between the imaginary and the sensible as latent and manifest dimensions of perception. For now, the important point is that the phenomenology of the affectively charged perception James describes involves not only the perception of the carrion as an objective spectacle, located outside of me, *over there*. It also involves a felt aspect, in which I "have a feel for" the carcass. The perceptual experience then is located *there* where I see or hear or touch as much as it is located *here*, beneath my skin. This indistinction of inner and outer perception is exactly what James emphasizes in the later article,

and it gives clear credence to Redding and Ratcliffe's defense of him against the canonical cognitivist objection.

As I have just noted, the example Merleau-Ponty relies on time and again in a variety of different texts to make a similar point is not a first-personal affect, as it is in James' account. Repeatedly, Merleau-Ponty uses a second-personal example: a perception of an other person's affects. This takes challenging the immanence of our feelings to its more radical conclusion, claiming that the ambiguity of interiority and exteriority means that *even our feelings are not in principle accessible only to the person who feels them*. In an even more profound sense than we found in James, emotions are affects: they are visible and witnessable in behaviors, especially movements such as gesture and orientation such as posture. Situations and inanimate objects also can have affective values, a countenance or "physiognomy" (PhP, 25-26/47-48). Indeed, this is a crucial part of Merleau-Ponty's criticism of empiricism: that it can admit nothing "in the sensible appearance of a landscape, an object, or a body that predestines it to have the air of being 'gay' or 'sad,' 'lively' or 'gloomy', 'elegant' or 'crude'" (PhP, 25/47). Insofar as affects are not perceptual qualities that can be assigned a point-for-point correspondence with objective features of perceptual objects, "[j]oy and sadness, liveliness and stupor" are understood by empiricism to be confined to

> the givens of introspection, and if we adorn the landscape or other humans with them, this would only be because we have observed in ourselves the coincidence of these interior perceptions with the exterior signs that are associated with them through the accidents of our own organization. Perception, impoverished in this way, becomes a pure knowledge operation. (PhP, 25/48)

Instead, Merleau-Ponty insists, we should think of "action, feeling, and desire" as "original ways of intending [*poser*] the object," ones that condition or even precede our perception of its objective contours, "since 'an object appears to be attractive or repulsive before it appears to be black or blue, circular or square'" (PhP, 26/48). We should not confuse feelings with inner realities known and accessible only to one person. They are part of the communion with the world that is sensing—and indeed, they even precede and condition perception of more objective features. If we hope to explain the transmission of affect we see in Hochschild's account of emotional labor, then we need to understand this doubling of reversibility, which Merleau-Ponty's approach emphasizes.

The fact that affects are visible and witnessable does not mean, for Merleau-Ponty, that they are all surface and no depth, a visual display devoid of feeling. In the second-personal example he refers to repeatedly, that of seeing an other's angry face, he claims that this is a genuine perception of anger rather than decoding the signs of anger precisely because the vision of her face has a visceral and kinaesthetic dimension: to see her angry face is to feel her anger. This felt engagement with the data of sight is possible, Merleau-Ponty theorizes, because of the phenomenological structure of the body schema, which allows not only my different senses, but also my body and its world, to express each other reciprocally. The body schema is a pivotal concept for Merleau-Ponty's philosophy; in his *Phenomenology* he writes that "[t]he theory of the body schema is implicitly a theory of perception" (PhP, 213/249).

One of the key claims that I make in Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation as I seek to establish the role of affect in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, especially with respect to this question of its interior-exterior ambiguity, is that *the synaesthesia that is the key work of the body schema is an affective function*. The feeling that figures as part of seeing the other's angry face is a transmission of affect, at least in the sense that the feeling has as much claim to being a veridical perception of the other's face as the sight of it does (neither of course are infallible; empathy must be educated through use just as vision must, and hardened hearts or projection are no doubt as common as near- and farsightedness). The claim is not that I have projected inner categories onto outer phenomena, but that I actually feel at a distance. This is a Jamesian move nudged into a more radical conclusion than the ones James himself explicitly draws: the bodily feelings of affect are world-disclosing precisely because they are a genuine intimacy with the things they are about.

The role of affect in the intersensory function of the body schema is not merely that of one sense among others. I argue that Merleau-Ponty understands this body schematic function as an affective force. In Chapters 2 and 3 I will adopt the language from the middle period, especially the Sorbonne lectures, in which Merleau-Ponty tends to call this force "sympathy." But Merleau-Ponty also makes the connection between affect and the body schema explicitly in his radio lecture series *The World of Perception*, where he states that "each of these [sensory] qualities has *an affective meaning which establishes a correspondence between it and the qualities associated with the other senses*" (WP, 46, emphasis

mine).[63] The charming example involves carpet shopping: "anyone who has had to choose carpets for a flat will know that a particular mood emanates from each colour, making it sad or happy, depressing or fortifying" (WP, 46).

Thus, I argue that if we pay attention to the role of affect in the body schema, we find that in fact the theory of the body schema is a theory of perception only insofar as the theory of the body schema is a theory of a transitivity of affect—a way that affect functions as a kind of sympathetic participation of my body in its world, including not only objects, but also the inner lives of others. Not only does Merleau-Ponty have an account of affect transmission that offers us a crucial resource for explaining the sort of infectiousness of affect that Hochschild's "emotional labor" depends upon, but he also positions affect as a central means of our everyday perceptual communion with the world.

But to return to the example: it occurs again in the chapter of the *Phenomenology* devoted to language and speech. Writing about gestures as embodied meanings that cannot be understood in terms of an arbitrary relation of signification, Merleau-Ponty asks us to "[c]onsider an angry or threatening gesture" (PhP, 190/225). He argues that, contrary to popular opinion, one should not "look within himself [sic] or within his inner experience for the sense of the gestures he witnesses" (PhP, 190/225). It is not the case that the gesture is an outer display of something whose original meaning is found in an inner, more immanent realm. Rather, the gesture is an embodied meaning. This meaning is

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[63] Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2004), *The World of Perception*. Oliver Davis, trans. Routledge: New York. Hereafter referred to as WP.

actually communicated in the event of seeing the gesture—it is not something that can only be thought or felt privately rather than seen. The meaning of the gesture is really incarnated in the gesture. "I do not perceive the anger or the threat as a psychological fact hidden behind the gesture, I read the anger in the gesture. The gesture does not *make me think* of anger, it is the anger itself" (PhP, 190/225).

The gesture can amplify or transmit the felt sense of anger, actually *show* it rather than *tell* it, not because it *contains* that meaning as some non-arbitrary pre-determined essence. Rather, this incarnation is possible precisely because the gesture does *not* contain its meaning. "The gesture is in front of me," Merleau-Ponty writes, "like a question, it indicates to me specific sensible points in the world and invites me to join it there. Communication is accomplished when my behavior finds in this pathway its own pathway" (PhP, 191/225). Understanding meaning as something lived and corporeal is a matter of understanding it as something that is not contained within the immanent operations of a subject.

Thus the insistence on understanding the subject as embodied requires us not merely to understand the body as a kind of primitive symbol or means of representation. It actually requires us to think differently about the structure of meaning and its production, and of intentionality, and to understand this not as "an epistemic operation" but as a lived and corporeal one (PhP, 190/225). The content of embodied meaning clings to the form of its expression. Subject and object cannot be separated, since the body as subject is also the means of expression of the object of the experience—just like with James' example, where the turning in my stomach is a perception of the rotting carrion; or like

Hochschild's example, where the flight attendant's smile actually induces feelings of warmth and cheer in passengers rather than being merely an outward representation of her own feeling. In Merleau-Ponty's example, the feeling of agitation in my own body is a perception of the anger on my interlocutor's face. In all of these cases, affective experience is characterized by an internal relation of subject and object, inner and outer. Affect is positioned phenomenologically precisely at the reversibility of sensing: the outside becoming interior, and the inner life becoming public. Merleau-Ponty's second-personal examples emphasize a doubled reversibility, where my interlocutor's inward feelings become their outward expression on her countenance, which in turn becomes my inward feeling as I look at her face.

When this same example comes up in Merleau-Ponty's 1948 radio lecture series *The World of Perception*, he describes our experience of others' bodies as an experience not only of an exterior but also of an inner life; not only of a visible surface, but also an emotional depth. Suppose "[m]y interlocutor gets angry," Merleau-Ponty writes. He goes on to ask:

> But where is this anger?[64] People will say that it is in the mind of my interlocutor. What this means is not entirely clear. For I could not imagine the malice and cruelty which I discern in my opponent's looks separated from his gestures, speech and body. None of this takes place in some otherworldly realm, in some shrine located beyond the body of the angry man. It really is here, in this room and in this part of the room, that the anger breaks forth. It is in the space between him and me that it unfolds…. When I reflect on my own anger, I do not come across any element that might be separated or, so to speak, unstuck, from my own body. (WP, 63)

Affect is positioned as a phenomenon that calls for non-dualistic description, and that indicates a certain pre-individual connection between bodies, and between a

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[64] I will return to this question of location in more detail in Chapter 5.

body and its world. Again, we see the insistence that the affect is not an inner

reality, locked away in a mental or psychical realm. It is visible, palpable,

unfolding in the space between me and my interlocutor—indeed, it serves as the

connection that makes me feel the depth of her inner life as it is brought to bear

on this situation; makes me see her as a person, not simply a visible surface, but

an other with an emotional depth. Affects are curiously impervious to borders,

curiously motivated to cross them. The anger turns the surface of my

interlocutor's face into an emotional depth, a glimpse into her inner life.

In each case where Merleau-Ponty discusses the anger example, he is

careful to qualify his insistence that the anger is not an inner reality, locked away

in some psychic realm beneath or behind the physical one, by conceding that "the

sense in which the place of my opponent's anger is on his face is not the same as

that in which, in a moment, tears may come streaming from his eyes" (WP, 63).

The anger is not "presented to me as a thing" (PhP, 190/225). There is a

difference between affective surfaces and depths, between the sensible and felt

aspects of affects. At times Merleau-Ponty's explanation for this is that the affect

must be understood as a gestalt whole, a global sense of the situation rather than a

sense attributable to one particular sensible datum.[65] In Chapter 5 I criticize this

sort of explanation of the difference between affective surfaces and depths, the

sensible and felt aspects of affect. But even in the early and middle periods of his

writing, Merleau-Ponty also tends to suggest that the explanation for the

difference between the perceptions of affects and the perception of things is that

affects are a hinge, reversible. Affect is ambiguously inner and outer, like the

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[65] See for example PhP (23-27/46-49).

equivalencies among our movements in the body schema, or equivalencies between worldly situation and movements.[66] It involves a "reciprocal expressive relation" among coextensive aspects (PhP, 160/195). More needs to be said about this, and I will return to it in Chapter 5.

In his 1945 essay "The Film and the New Psychology," he invokes this example once again, and his anti-Cartesian aims are even more explicit.[67] Classical psychology, he writes, has erroneously assumed an immanent domain of experience transparently available to the self, and available to anyone else only through representation. Again, affects are the example: "It was thought," he writes, that "anger or fear, for example, could be directly known only from the inside and by the person experiencing them" (SNS, 52). On that view, insofar as I might claim to have seen someone's anger or fear, this is an equivocation. For "I can grasp only the corporal *signs* of anger or fear from the outside" (SNS, 52). Thus "I have to resort to the anger or fear I know in myself through introspection in order to interpret these signs" (SNS, 52). But Merleau-Ponty, like James, insists that emotions divorced from relation to embodied affects are simply a confused concept. "If I try to study love or hate purely from inner observation, I will find very little to describe" (SNS, 52). It is only as a second-personal relation to others or to a situation that anger and fear make sense (SNS, 52). If a phenomenology of emotions is successful, Merleau-Ponty writes, it will only be because the phenomenologist has managed to approach them "as a way of behaving, as a modification of my relations with others and with the world, because I have

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[66] See for example WP (46).
[67] Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964d), "The Film and the New Psychology." *Sense and Non-Sense*. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus, trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 48-59. Hereafter referred to as SNS,.

managed to think about it as I would think about the behavior or another person whom I happened to witness" (SNS, 52).

Even as there is an important similarity with James, there is an interesting difference. James' description explained emotional feeling as the somatic feedback of our own postures and gestures. Merleau-Ponty explains emotional feeling as the somatic feedback, not only of my own, but also of others' postures and gestures. Further, Merleau-Ponty insists that my efforts at phenomenological description of my own affects will be productive only when I take up a second-personal orientation toward myself. This follows insofar as he is taking very seriously the refusal of a sequestered domain of immanence and the ambiguity of interiority and exteriority. The first-person perspective itself is always second-personal.

The indistinction suggested by Merleau-Ponty's description is stronger than that in James' account because of the second-person perspective of the experience he describes. It is not only a description in which the outside world shows up in my body, so that what is beneath my skin is moved in a unique way by the objects that surround me. It is rather that bodily feeling is not confined within my skin. Instead, it joins up with the other and with my situation in affective experience. As Cataldi describes this aspect of the phenomenology of affect: "During an emotional experience, I do not spatially experience my enfleshed being as a 'centered' 'subject'—as centrally and completely and absolutely 'here.'" (1993, 117). "Neither," she continues, "do I experience *my living, moving, feeling body as an emotionally* expressive space as a *source* of

space, as that source who is 'laying down that first coordinate' (*Phenomenology*) or whose interests, 'reach,' goals, or 'grasp' is determining, in advance, what is 'there'—for one to do or to manipulate or before one, to see or to use" (1993, 117-118). Even more vividly in Merleau-Ponty's view than in James', we see this "perspective of the affects" that Hardt and others were so keen to embrace putting pressure on the descriptive register of the body proper, unravelling the usual distinctions that allow us to locate and center our descriptions there.

1.9) The Problem of Individuation and the "Natural Self"

But Merleau-Ponty, like James, incurs an obligation to explain the reciprocal genesis of inner and outer, to address the question of how the reversibility of exteriority and interiority occurs. The theory of the body schema is a crucial resource, since it explains how they join up, how they become one another: how a movement I see at a distance becomes a feeling quivering in my own limbs, how "the other person's intention inhabit[s] my body" (PhP, 191/225). But what it does not explain (at least in its iterations in the early period of Merleau-Ponty's career) is the fission between interiority and exteriority—their heterogeneity. How do bodily boundaries emerge, and how does a feeling become established within them as mine? The extent to which the theory of the body schema improves upon James' theory of "pure experience," and the extent to which it encounters the same difficulties, depends on its ability to address these problems of difference. As I have already hinted and as I will argue in more detail in Chapter 2, affect is the incorporating force of the body schema. In order for the

theory to succeed in answering the question about difference, it must also include a disincorporating or differentiating force. While I see precisely that development in the later work, when the notion of the body schema evolves into that of the flesh, it is not the direction things take in the *Phenomenology*.

In the chapter of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology* on "The Body as a Sexed Being," he writes that desire "links body to body" by eliciting a bodily response expressing the situation instead of presenting it as a thing. In affective life, Merleau-Ponty finds what he initially describes as a mode of "original intentionality," even the "intentional arc" or body schema that serves as a basic function of "reciprocal expression" not only between one sense and another, and between body and world, but also between those aspects of existence that we usually distinguish as psychical life over against bodily behavior (PhP, 160/195). His language in the chapter slips easily between speaking of "affective life," "eros," the "libido," and "sexuality" or "sexual significance." This is because he means to indicate a phenomenological domain much more general than that of genital life or uniquely sexual excitement. What he finds in affective life is "the subject's general power of adhering to different milieus, of determining himself [sic] through different experiences, and of acquiring structures of behavior" (PhP, 161/196). Affective life enjoys a privileged position with respect to the reversibility of sensing. Affects and emotions concern a different "mode of perception," one unique from the perception of objects—an "erotic perception," or an "erotic structure" of perception; one in which the object is sensed as a

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quiver of our own viscera, a shiver in our kinaestheses. The worldly situation

appears to me insofar as it finds its way into my own sensorimotor being.

Cataldi explains this reversibility of affect through an example taken from

Camus' novel *The Stranger*. One of the scenes in which the protagonist Meursault

is on trial for murder depicts a companion of his being called upon to testify

against him. The witness is sympathetic to Meursault. He regrets having to testify

for the prosecution, and attempts (albeit feebly) to defend his friend. Camus'

narrative describes Meursault's sudden desire to embrace the sympathetic

witness; to kiss him in gratitude. Cataldi proposes that this illustrates the

reversibility of affect, in which there is an unexperienceable "border" at stake

between interiority and exteriority, self and other. Not only did Meursault

perceive his friend's sympathy; he perceives that kindness through his own

gratitude. The witness' sympathy makes itself known through the response it

elicited in Meursault's urge to embrace his friend. Cataldi writes: "we "are

prevented from the experiencing of where, precisely, someone's kindness may, so

to speak, be 'crossing over' into an overlapping demonstration of gratitude on, as

we say, 'our part'" (1993, 96). She compares this to a scene in which (as she reads

Camus), the contempt of the crowd in the courtroom towards Meursault appears

to him in a sudden urge to burst into tears. There again, as Cataldi reads the

passage, what is demonstrated is a lacunary structure, in which we are "prevented

from experiencing 'where' precisely, the loathing and indignation of a number of

a [sic] people may be 'bordering' with our adaptive distress of it" (1993, 96).

Clearly this emphasizes a certain indistinction of the body with respect to others and the world: affects are not an outer expression of an inner disposition toward the world. They are rather a disclosure of the world in our own bodies. But just as it did in James' work, with this refusal of the usual distinction between inner and outer perception, a problem of difference arises. Whence the experience of distinction? How does the hinge of reversibility emerge from the indistinction of the affectivity of sensing? How should we conceptualize, not only the internal relation, but also the *difference* between interiority and exteriority?

Cataldi describes the distinction in terms of a border that persists as a blind spot: that is unexperienceable. The border exists, but is in principle out of range of our perception. We feel its effects, but never experience it directly. This sidesteps my question without answering it—and it may even obscure the full difficulty of the question. It assumes the body as a kind of natural self, without accounting for the genesis of that difference: it insists that there *is* a border, a fully determinate distinction; it is just undetectable. This response fails to account for the full consequences of the claim about the affectivity of sensing, and the ambiguity of the bodily boundaries. For Merleau-Ponty's claim (maintained with less consistency in the early work, as I show below) is that there is a real indistinction or communion here, not merely an undetectable border. The affectivity of sensing is not simply a matter of lacking knowledge of precisely which parts of the experience are mine and which are yours, which parts belong to the world and which parts to my own body; there is an ambiguity about the matter at the level, not merely of knowing, but of being. If there is indeed a genuine

indistinction, a *real* ambiguity, then the difference at issue cannot even be a *border* in the usual sense—even a pre-reflective border. For instance, if it is true that the borders of the body image are not given with the objective contours of the body, then it is not the case that the borders always exist, even if they are sometimes undetectable. There must be a process through which the body image emerges, through which its borders are maintained—just as there must be a process through which affects become emotions, owned, belonging to a personal life, a personal history.

This is a problem for Merleau-Ponty, and not just for Cataldi.[68] It is in the chapter on "The Body as a Sexed Being" that the notion of the body as a "*natural self*" (PhP, 174/209) first appears in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. This vocabulary that names the body a "natural self" is repeated with some frequency in the text, including pivotal passages such as the one asserting that "[t]he theory of the body schema is implicitly a theory of perception" (PhP, 213/249). In her influential treatment of this chapter of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology*, Judith Butler is deeply suspicious of this move to position the body as a "natural self."[69] She argues that, even as Merleau-Ponty rejects a Freudian naturalization of sexist and heterosexist discursive structures as instincts and drives, he reestablishes the body proper as the reservoir of his own "naturalistic ideology" by positioning it as a "natural self" (PhP, 174/209).

On the one hand, I think it is possible to defend Merleau-Ponty from the full extent of her criticism. The body as a "natural self" need not be a package of

[68] In Chapter 5, I return to this critique of accounting for the differentiation involved in reversibility as a lacuna.

[69] Judith Butler (1989), "Sexual Ideology and Phenomenological Description." *The Thinking Muse.* Jeffner Allen and Iris Marion Young, eds. Indiana University Press: 85-100.

pre-determined boundaries and meanings. A more interesting reading of Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the body as a "natural self" and his analysis of this "natural self" as the intentional arc would interpret him as claiming, not that there is an original given and accomplished separate self, but that there is in embodied perception always a project of distinguishing self and not-self, and that this project is historical and contingent. This would be more consistent with the treatment of the question of the synthesis of the body vis-à-vis the world as it arose in the previous chapter, "The Synthesis of One's Own Body." There Merleau-Ponty writes that "our body is not an object for an 'I think': it is a totality of lived significations that moves toward its equilibrium" (PhP, 155/190). The body is an "individual" in the same sense as a work of art, such as "a piece of music," in which "the expression cannot be distinguished from the expressed" (PhP, 153/188). The equivalencies between tactile and visual experiences of my own arm, for instance, are not given in advance, a kind of communication guaranteed for the region of space within my skin. Rather, they inhere in the "sing[ularity]" of a "gesture," an individuation of the body proper that is "*perform*[ed]" in my expressive movements (PhP, 153/188), and so is constantly at stake in them. The sight-challenged person's cane, for instance, can become "an extension of the bodily synthesis" (PhP, 154/189). "[N]o longer an object that the blind man would perceive, it has become the instrument with which he perceives" (PhP, 154/189). The cane has been incorporated into the ambiguity of the body, its reversible status as subject and object.

On the other hand, even though the synthesis of the body proper is performative rather than given, the body proper is still positioned as the agent of this performance. This becomes especially clear in the chapter on "The *Cogito*" in the third and final part of the *Phenomenology of Perception*.

1.10) Merleau-Ponty on True and False Emotions

The body schema synthesizes bodily modalities vis-à-vis the world in the affectivity of sensing, but it also serves to ensure a function of reciprocal expression between body and world, the reversibility of sensing. This raises an ontological question about body-world difference. We can see the question of this difference arise even within the account of the affectivity of sensing. There Merleau-Ponty writes:

> Each time that I experience a sensation, I experience that it does not concern my own being—the one for whom I am responsible and upon which I decide—but rather another self that has already sided with the world, that is already open to certain of its aspects and synchronized with them…. I experience sensation as a modality of a general existence, already destined to a physical world, which flows through me without my being its author. (PhP, 224/261)

Sensing is not my own. The subject of sensing (insofar as it has one at all) is not the body proper, not "my own being." The passage suggests that on the one hand there is a being that is "my own," and on the other hand there is "another self that has already sided with the world." Thus, once again we face the question: what accounts for the difference between these; especially, what accounts for that difference in a manner that can also accommodate a continuity? How does a body

proper emerge out of the indistinction of sensing? What accounts for the body's difference from the world, the hinge of reversibility?

The chapter on "The *Cogito*" is the most explicit treatment in the early work of this problem. The chapter is part critique of the transparent immanence of the Cartesian *Cogito*, and part argument for a suggested replacement: the "tacit *Cogito*." This tacit *Cogito* is introduced to underwrite the interior-exterior difference the body schema is charged with traversing. The trouble is that it accomplishes little more than to make the problem all the more conspicuous under the guise of solving it. Despite the repeated discovery throughout the *Phenomenology* of the internal relation of body and world, the thesis of the tacit *Cogito* amounts to assuming the individuation of the body proper, insofar as this *Cogito* serves as a tacit body proper that engenders its own difference from its world.

The thesis of the tacit *Cogito* has always been a controversial aspect of the *Phenomenology*. Gary Brent Madison's is an important critique in the early anglophone scholarship (1981, 162-166). But perhaps the most well-known critique of the tacit *Cogito* is the one Merleau-Ponty himself offers in his later work. There Merleau-Ponty concedes that "[w]hat I call the tacit cogito is impossible" (VI, 171/222). The problem as he articulates it there is specifically cast as "the problem of the passage from the perceptual meaning to the language meaning," but this is also understood more broadly as "the problem of the passage… from behavior to thematization" (VI, 176/227). How do we account for the passage from the reversibility of sensing to the thematization of the body as

the self, the subject of experience? While in the *Phenomenology* he was satisfied with positing a tacit synthesis that guarantees the individuation of a bodily subject, Merleau-Ponty insists in these later notes that we must better understand *what the body proper is*. "The problem is to grasp *what*" it is that "*wishes, speaks, and finally thinks*" (VI, 176/228).

In his recent book, Scott Marratto offers an unconventional reading of Merleau-Ponty's criticism of the tacit *Cogito* in *The Visible and the Invisible*, maintaining that it is not a rejection of the thesis of the tacit *Cogito*, but only an acknowledgment of its limits (2012, 169-172).[70] Marratto affirms that the tacit *Cogito* fails to account for the emergence of language and the linguistic self, but questions whether "it was ever really intended as a sufficient explanation of how language is possible" (2012, 172). I think what is at issue in the working note for Merleau-Ponty is not a failure of the tacit *Cogito* to account for language, but its failure to account for the "passage" (VI, 176/227) to language, a passage in which the emergence of the body proper is the pivotal development. While there is indeed a bigger question about language and the symbolic order at issue in that note from 1959 (VI, 175-176/227-228), I think the tacit *Cogito* inspires Merleau-Ponty's criticism there, not because it fails to provide the account of language Merleau-Ponty was after in that later reflection, but because the way it accounts for the body proper blocks an adequate account of the passage from one order of sense to another.

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[70] Scott Marratto (2012), *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity.* Albany: SUNY Press, 2012.

Regardless of what Merleau-Ponty had in mind when he criticized his earlier work in those 1959 notes, it is my position that there is a failure of the notion of the tacit *Cogito* that is immanent to the concerns of the *Phenomenology*: it fails because it cannot account adequately for the body proper. I should note also that I do think that Merleau-Ponty began revising his position on this long before his final manuscript: as I will explain in Chapter 2, the thesis of the tacit *Cogito* is conspicuously absent from the lectures on child psychology at the Sorbonne. Thus there is evidence that Merleau-Ponty abandoned it as early as four years after the publication of the *Phenomenology*. Despite the fact that the concept is positioned in the *Phenomenology* as one of its key findings about the philosophical implications of the study of perception, the concept is not returned to—indeed, the term rarely appears in his work at all after that point. However, it is in the context of elaborating the notion of the tacit *Cogito* that Merleau-Ponty offers his most sustained early reflection on affect. Before I turn to that, I will offer a brief description of the concept itself, and a forecast of my critique.

The tacit *Cogito* is sharply distinguished from the Cartesian *Cogito*, the immanence of a private mental realm:

> Through the *Cogito*, I do not discover and recognize psychological immanence, which is the inherence of all phenomena to 'private states of consciousness', or the blind contact of sensation with itself, nor even transcendental immanence, which is the belonging of all phenomena to a constituting consciousness, or the self-possession of clear thought. Rather, what I discover and recognize is the profound movement of transcendence that is my very being, the simultaneous contact with my being and with the being of the world. (PhP, 396/436)

The tacit *Cogito* is charged with a great deal: it serves as the "simultaneous contact" *both* "with my being and with the being of the world" (PhP, 396/436). It

keeps my body in touch with itself at the same time as it keeps me in touch with the world. The suggestion is that both contacts will involve a "movement of transcendence," a gesture that goes outside with respect to where it begins; even a gesture of exteriorization, not simply traversing a boundary, but establishing it in the movement that crosses it. In this way, the function of the tacit *Cogito* as a connecting tissue is identified with its function as differentiation. That same contact of my being with itself implicitly forms the surfaces of the contact between my being and that of the world. But this movement is theorized as transcendence, and thus it also serves to maintain the same gap within myself that it works to span—the gap that leaves me always open to and in contact with the world. The idea is to theorize a "movement of transcendence" that is also "simultaneous contact," bridging the gap at the same time as it opens it.

At this point in the description, we should question whether the effective result of such an operation would be any different from the Cartesian *Cogito*. A single movement that establishes these distinctions in the same movement that closes them is too tightly woven to admit a genuine moment of disincorporation between body and world—or for that matter, within the body. Merleau-Ponty's answer to this objection is that his *Cogito*, unlike Descartes', is *tacit*. Merleau-Ponty's *Cogito* is a movement of transcendence that, as a synthesis that grasps my own being, is "not the absolute transparence of a thought that entirely possesses itself, but rather the blind act by which I take up my destiny as a thinking nature and carry it forward" (PhP, 392/432). It is a *Cogito* that is lived rather than known, and as such it is lacunary.

Merleau-Ponty turns briefly to a comparison with vision to understand this tacit synthesis of the body as a natural self as a movement that is lacunary in the way vision is: it always involves blind spots, areas that are hidden from view. Like a visual sense, it

> is accomplished and fulfilled in the thing seen. Vision must surely grasp itself—for if it did not, it would not be a vision of anything at all—but it must grasp itself in a sort of ambiguity and a sort of obscurity, since it does not possess itself and rather escapes itself into the thing that is seen. (PhP, 395-396/435-436).

But this is equivocation. The whole issue is how to understand the emergence of an inside-outside difference that is, in the account of sensing, shown not to be indigenous to the process of perception. It is only if we equivocate between perception and its results that we can use this example of sense in vision to find a "natural self" already at work in vision.

Perhaps the biggest problem, however, is that at the same time as it guarantees the synthesis of the body as a "natural self," the tacit *Cogito* is identified with my *self*: it "is my very being"; which is to say, the "movement of transcendence that is my very being" (PhP, 396/436). This posits a core bodily synthesis vis-à-vis the world, but also understands the synthesis as already *mine*. The *Cogito* must do its synthesizing work from within the interiority it is charged with defining. Granted, there is a sense in which this *Cogito* is not contained within the body proper: as *tacit*, it is hidden from the perspective of the body proper, the first-person view it is charged with establishing. Yet the same criticism—that it assumes the ownness it is charged with creating—can be made of this tacitness. The problem is that the lacunary character of the tacit *Cogito* is

my lacuna, *my* blind spot. The fact that the "true" surfaces of my life are hidden from me does not imply that they are not there—only that I am personally unaware of them. The notion of tacitness thus does not help explain how those surfaces come to be there, how they are established as the surfaces of my own being. It thus does not ultimately help Merleau-Ponty's *Cogito* supply an account of a space for disincorporation between body and world. Its tacitness is only lacunary with respect to the personal self it is charged with distinguishing. To insist that the answer to the question of how the self emerged is always hidden from the perspective it creates once the distinction has been made does not help us answer the question. And it is especially dissatisfying insofar as it follows on the heels of a text that has compellingly demonstrated that experience is not exhausted in that perspective, not confined to an interior domain of a self, not confined to what happens to a subject.

The issue is one of how to understand the movement between interiority and exteriority, the process through which a sense of ownness emerges in the first place. To give that process a name—the *Cogito*, albeit tacit—is not to solve the problem, but to name it. And then to call this tacit *Cogito* mine, and indeed to name it the *Cogito* in the first place (for a name more deeply associated with Cartesian immanence cannot be found), is to impose a vicious circularity on any substantial solution suggested by the name.

Interestingly, affects and emotions again appear as crucial phenomena in the illustration of the *Cogito*. They will serve as the key example of the lacunary nature of the *Cogito*, its tacitness even as it enacts a synthesis of our personal

being. The broad strokes of the argument will be that Descartes is wrong about the immanence of a private psychological domain, since even our own feelings can be hidden from us. Yet there must be a tacit *Cogito*, a tacit synthesis of one's personal being, since in a given case it will turn out that a feeling will have been more or less true, more or less false. To anyone who is sufficiently reflective about their own affective life, there is something very compelling about this claim: we are often confused about our own feelings. No doubt the thoughtful among us have all had the experience of being forced to admit to ourselves: "I thought I was happy, but I am not." It is perfectly possible to go about one's life day after day thinking that one feels joy, satisfaction, or pride, only to have these feelings one day revealed as superficial, shallow; paling in the shadow of the conviction I now feel.[71] To say that our feelings can be hidden from us is to say that they are not simply inner facts, that there is a transcendence of feelings: they are not true simply in virtue of being felt. There is thus a differentiation within affective phenomena that exemplifies the operation of the tacit *Cogito*: that "movement of transcendence" that is also "simultaneous contact" all while being tacit and lacunary.

In the chapter on "The *Cogito*," the claim that emotions are embodied affects, and as such are not inner realities, is first invoked in the service of a point about affect contagion: "Our own natural attitude is not to experience our own

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[71] This potential within affective life to be confused about one's own feelings is a key point for work on affect in queer theory (see William S. Wilkerson (2010, *Ambiguity and Sexuality: A Theory of Sexual Identity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillian) and Sara Ahmed (2010, *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham: Duke University Press Books). It has also played a role in understanding the experiences of marginalized people who become disenchanted with the ideologies that mystify their oppression (see Sandra Bartky (1976, "Toward a Phenomenology of Feminist Consciousness." *Social Theory and Practice* 3: 425-439)).

feelings or to adhere to our own pleasures, but rather to live according to the emotional categories of our milieu" (PhP, 399/439). This is consistent with the affectivity of sensing, the inter-implication of body and world. Even our feelings are first of all not our own.

Yet Merleau-Ponty quickly acknowledges that they can become so: quoting Scheler's essay "The Idols of Self-Knowledge,"[72] Merleau-Ponty speaks of a young girl reading about the fictional love of Juliet or Isolde. She feels their love, not as a mere "project[ion]" (PhP, 399/439); rather "the emotions of these poetic phantoms… [slip] into her own life. It is only later that a personal and authentic emotion might break into this web of emotional fantasies" (PhP, 399/439). Despite their vernacular status as the deepest and truest parts of ourselves, feelings, Merleau-Ponty claims, do not usually come from within. The default mode or "natural attitude" is to absorb the feelings available in the situation, just as in Hochschild's account of emotional labor the airline customer absorbs the warmth of the flight attendant's smile. And yet affects are also the site of establishing which feelings are more "true" or "false"; which feelings are genuinely *mine*.

Merleau-Ponty's aim is to follow Scheler's anti-Cartesian argument that self-deception is possible. The argument begins by positioning feeling as a stronghold of the private psychological domain, so that showing that feelings are not confined to an inner reality poses a significant challenge to the notion that a distinct inner reality exists. This parallels James' starting point, in which he

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[72] Max Scheler (1973), "The Idols of Self-Knowledge." *Selected Philosophical Essays*. David R. Lachterman, trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 3-97.

asserts that we often think of feelings as definitively private and subjective, and goes on to show otherwise as a way of challenging the very idea of an enclosed private and subjective realm. It is notable that while Scheler and Merleau-Ponty call the view they resist a "Cartesian" view of affects, it is not in fact Descartes' own view: recall that in the Introduction I noted that Descartes is at his least Cartesian in his treatise on the passions.

The notion that feelings are a stronghold of Cartesian immanence is relatively compelling. There is no better candidate for something that belongs in a realm of Cartesian immanence. What could be more private than our feelings? It seems apparent that we ourselves are the only appropriate arbiter of their truth and falsity. And that the way to tell whether we have a certain feeling is to introspect, to pay attention to our inner states, and discover whether the feeling is present there. If emotions were indeed inner realities in this Cartesian sense, then they would not be susceptible to self-deception. If they were inner facts in an immanent Cartesian domain, we could never hide from our feelings. It would be possible for them to "trick us" with respect to the objects they purport to be about, yet it would not be possible "that they trick us with regard to themselves: from the moment I experience [*éprouve*] love, joy, or sadness, it is true that I love, that I am joyous, or that I am sad" (PhP, 396/436). I could be tricked into thinking, for instance, that a certain circumstance will make me happy, when in fact it will not; but I could not be tricked into thinking I am happy when I am not, because "[w]ithin me, appearance is reality" (PhP, 396/436). Love would just be the consciousness of love, joy just the consciousness of joy, and pain merely the

consciousness of pain. There would be no way to genuinely deceive myself about whether I love. If I feel it, it is a real and true feeling, since the reality of a feeling consists entirely in feeling it: in it being present to my consciousness.

If it can be shown that there are indeed feelings that are more or less true, and more or less false; that our feelings are sometimes hidden from us, then we cannot maintain that feelings are contained in a psychological immanence. And insofar as feelings are a kind of stronghold of immanence, then the usefulness of the very idea of such an immanent domain is threatened.

Merleau-Ponty points out that there is an element of discovery in our experience of our own feelings: for example, "I discover that I am in love" (PhP, 399/439). He describes months of the anticipation and nervousness of dating, the excitement, sexual tension, "the hours of boredom prior to a date, and… joy when it approached" (PhP, 400/440). I lived through these experiences, yet after all this, I must still "discover that I am in love" (PhP, 399/439). Merleau-Ponty is emphasizing here the notion of a *discovery* of my own feeling. It is possible to feel and live through all of my history with a person, and to genuinely not know whether I am in love, even though there will eventually be a truth of the matter. Similarly, I may think that I am in love, only to find later that I was mistaken; that, as we say, the love was not "true."

He insists on this distinction between "true" and "false" feelings. This insistence is not simply the claim that sometimes we pretend; that occasionally we deceive others about what we feel. Using another example from Scheler, Merleau-Ponty says of "the hysteric" that "[h]e was quickly treated as a pretender, but it is

first of all himself that he deceives" (PhP, 398/438). While of course it is possible to play-act, to go through the motions of an affect one does not really feel, this is not what Merleau-Ponty means when he says that feelings can be false—that sort of falseness would do nothing to threaten the Cartesian view. To say that a feeling is false in the sense Merleau-Ponty means is not to say that I do not really feel it. I could feel love or happiness quite intensely, only to discover later that I was wrong; that this love or happiness was not, as we say, "true."

Merleau-Ponty uses the language of authenticity and inauthenticity, and his description of the sort of falseness involved recalls Sartre's description of bad faith, where he distinguishes it from lying: if bad faith is a lie, it is a lie *to oneself*.[73] Indeed, Sartre's own treatise on emotions treats them largely as bad faith—a "flight" or "escape."[74] But Sartre's work also singles out certain special affects as revelatory of being, as in the case of anxiety and shame. Those affects are a disclosure of the genuine character of existence as being-for-itself and being-for-others. They are important to Sartre's account since the fact that affects are something undergone gives those disclosures of being their sense of passivity and discovery; of being the revelation of a truth that exceeds the power of my present consciousness to constitute it.

Simone de Beauvoir's work also suggests that affects should be understood in terms of a disclosure of being, but she emphasizes the authenticity of affect, even of positive affects such as love, of which Sartre gives only a very pessimistic account. In one memorable scene from her novel *The Blood of Others*,

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[73] See Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology* (1956, Hazel E. Barnes, trans. New York: Washington Square Press).
[74] See Sartre's *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1971, Philip Mairet, trans. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd).

as the two protagonists are talking, one of them expresses a worry about the arbitrariness of original choice. The other responds "Why, you don't find them [your reasons for living] just like that—out of thin air. We discover them through the strength of a love or a desire, and then, what we have found rises before us, solid and real" (1964, 72).[75] Beauvoir is insisting that there is always an element of discovery in the process of self-determination, and that the "strength" of an affect can be a disclosure of the authenticity of choice. In the final chapter of the *Phenomenology*, the chapter on "Freedom," Merleau-Ponty describes the free choice as a "secret decision" (PhP, 460/499). I can deliberate endlessly, but really committing to a choice happens when I discover that a decision has been made. I think that the decision follows the deliberation, but "[i]n fact the deliberation follows the decision," for the true decision is one enacted tacitly, a "secret decision" that "is what makes the motives appear," making my genuine feelings, the genuine parameters of my self evident by quietly enacting them (PhP, 460/499). As in Beauvoir's novel, this discovery is revealed in the affective force of a feeling of conviction.

Beauvoir's own philosophical treatment of genuine freedom in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* tells a similar tale: it is only through passionate love of my freedom and the freedom of others that I can really live my freedom. This is so because passion is a kind of commitment that can be absolute even while it need not disavow the subjectivity of choice, and thus can be sustained without ossifying

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[75] Simone de Beauvoir (1964), *The Blood of Others*. Yvonne Moyse and Roger Senhouse, trans. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd.

into a bad faith that instrumentalizes freedom by idolizing its objects.[76] Granted, I

am often enough confused about my own feelings; but the fact that they can be

false, or at least more or less true, precisely means that they are a kind of

disclosure of the world and the current of my own life: desire is not just the

consciousness of desire, etc. I discover the true parameters of my self in the deep

sense of conviction that comes with making a decision that commits me fully.

This notion of the authenticity of a feeling that engages the whole self—

and thereby reveals the truth of the self—is clearly part of Merleau-Ponty's

account as well. Yet he distinguishes it sharply from another kind of feeling:

"[i]llusory or imaginary feelings" (PhP, 398/438). Though these will later be

shown to have been false, they are not false because I do not *really* feel them, or

have only *pretended* to feel them. They "are certainly lived," but they are false

because "they are lived, so to speak, on the periphery of ourselves" (PhP,

398/438).[77] Merleau-Ponty classes those affects that are absorbed from our

surroundings and from others with these "[i]llusory or imaginary feelings" (PhP,

398/438). Neither are "true" or "authentic" feelings, feelings that are truly *mine*.

Insofar as "[o]ur natural attitude is… [to feel] according to the emotional

categories of our milieu" (PhP, 399/439), we are constantly absorbing and

transmitting affects. The fact that something is felt does not make it a true feeling.

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[76] Simone de Beauvoir **(**1948), *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Bernard Frenchman, trans. New York: Philosophical Library.

[77] As I have noted, Merleau-Ponty's discussion of true and false feelings draws heavily on Max Scheler's essay "The Idols of Self-Knowledge," where he is interested in pursuing the anti-Cartesian thesis that genuine self-deception is possible. Interestingly, Scheler's vocabulary on this point emphasizes depth and levels, while Merleau-Ponty, even in the face of this precedent from Scheler and his own precedent of the use of notions of depth and level, instead here invokes the core-periphery distinction. It is one of the ways that this chapter, in its rhetoric as well as its philosophical substance, is in tension with the rest of the *Phenomenology of Perception*.

This is an important concession to the pre-individuality of affect: we are just as likely—even more likely—to feel others' feelings as we are to feel our own. The corporeality of affective meaning, which opens up a direct experience of others to us, also distances us from ourselves: it means that we can be genuinely mistaken about our own feelings. Thus, against the Cartesian view, the distinction between true and false affects is not made on the basis of whether or not a feeling is felt by me.

Even so, my personal self is still the standard by which the truth of the feeling will be judged. "A true love ends when I change or when the loved person has changed; a false love is revealed as false when I return to myself. The difference is intrinsic" (PhP, 398/438). Whether the love is "true" depends on its status with respect to "'[m]y life' and my 'total being'" (PhP, 399/439). The love is true or false depending on its status at either the "core" or the "periphery" (PhP, 398/438) with respect to the boundaries of the whole scope of one's own incarnate life: a set of embodied currents or tendencies, tacit motives and projects. To say that these are tacit is to say that they are not constituted by their presence in consciousness, but rather as something enacted and lived through: as a matter of "what we are *doing*" (PhP, 399/439). While not Cartesian in the sense he is resisting, still Merleau-Ponty's distinction amounts to an insistence that feelings are true or false depending on their status with respect to my "core" self—the tacit *Cogito* as the guarantor of the body's status as a "natural self." While this core is tacit, there is an equivocation about what this tacitness really means. It still uses the self it is charged with enacting as an "intrinsic" standard for what it enacts, as

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if a secret self already exists, and only a lacuna separates it from the one that is enacted. Thus on the one hand tacitness means that the *Cogito* is realized only in being lived through and enacted, and on the other hand it means that there is always already a secret truth of myself that is hidden from me by a lacuna.

There is something right about claiming that there is a differentiation in affective phenomena between shallow and deep affects, and resisting the notion that this should simply be explained as deception. We can indeed be confused about our own feelings. Yet the way Merleau-Ponty makes this distinction in the *Phenomenology* depends on assuming the inside-outside difference it was supposed to account for. While Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that "the hysteric" is not just pretending, he also distinguishes "the hysteric's" affects from other, more true affects that are genuine in virtue of their engagement with the core of the self (PhP, 398/438). "He does not feign pain, sadness, or anger, and yet his 'pains', 'sadnesses', and 'angers' are distinct from a pain, a sadness, or an anger that is 'real' because he is not entirely caught up in them" (PhP, 398/438). There is a tension here: if the "hysteric" in fact "deceives [himself]," then what does it mean to say that "he is not entirely caught up" in these feelings? Instead of taking the opportunity to theorize how a person might *become* caught up in a feeling, Merleau-Ponty writes "At his core there remains a zone of calm" (PhP, 398/438). One problem with this is that it does not clearly improve on the Cartesian view: the presence of one's feelings to oneself is still the court of appeal for genuineness. Further, while no doubt this describes some kinds of ambivalent behavior, surely it only accounts for the more superficial varieties. It cannot, for

example, describe Hochschild's flight attendant's situation. The flight attendant has deceived herself far more effectively than Merleau-Ponty's "hysteric": she has precisely lost her "core… zone of calm" beneath a day's work of artificially produced elation.

It is this possibility of movement at the "core," of passage between the core and the periphery, that Merleau-Ponty's account of true and false emotions fails to explain. It implies that there is a "core" self that is not actually at stake in affective life. The distinction does not show how something on the periphery could become a core feeling: what is the movement between these? It distinguishes instead too sharply between the false (though not pretended) affect of the "the hysteric" and the genuine love, between the affect picked up from the environment and the authentic and truly personal affect; claiming that "[t]he difference is intrinsic" (PhP, 398/438), as if these are two separate structures, always already distinct, with the difference merely hidden from my view. So while Merleau-Ponty's discussion of affects in this chapter of the *Phenomenology* clearly tracks some of the things I have established about affect in the discussion of Hochschild and James in this chapter, his discussion of the affects here assumes the inside-outside difference that it should be explaining. It does not account for affects as phenomena that can genuinely cross the borders of the self, genuine transform periphery into core, or vice versa.

Thus my concern with the thesis of the tacit *Cogito* is that it relies on assuming that what happens to the flight attendant is impossible: that there is always a core contact with oneself. Even as he argues against a Cartesian

immanence of self-experience by recognizing that genuine self-deception is possible, Merleau-Ponty reinstates another sort of immanence, one guaranteed, not by the boundaries of the mind with respect to the body, but by the boundaries of the lived body.

This is indeed a different kind of immanence. The notion of "tacitness" means that this "core" is not the core of what is present to consciousness, but in fact something that is never entirely present: a kind of "synthesis…*in the making*" (PhP, 400/439), a lived process through which what belongs to my own life and what does not are always becoming differentiated. This is, however, a curiously circular claim: what is at issue is the boundaries of the body proper, of what will count as my *own* life. Yet this *Cogito* and its tacitness are positioned as something that belongs to the body it is charged with producing: a primordial lacunary contact that serves as a core body proper even as it claims to produce the body proper as one of its effects. Either the tacit *Cogito* is the name of an unsolved problem, or it is a substantial yet circular answer to the problem.

In the working notes of *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty says that the problems raised in the *Phenomenology of Perception* were "insoluble" (VI, 200/250) because he started with the distinction of consciousness and its objects. Having started with a distinction between interoception and exteroception by adopting a methodological commitment to the descriptive register of the body proper and the privileging of first-person presence that is its corollary, there was no way to trace the genesis of this difference. It became an *a priori* in effect: the theory that began by assuming this difference could not account for it.

However the thesis of the tacit cogito may have erred, it is proposed in response to a genuine problem that arises in the *Phenomenology*. Having discovered the inter-implication of body and world, and the original indistinction of interoception and exteroception, the pressing question becomes one of giving an account of their difference. How does the individuation of my body as an interior and private space within its environment evolve? And how must we think of its difference from its environment in a way that accommodates the discovery of its original immersion in its environment?

The thesis of the tacit cogito is a disappointing response to these questions. There are two ways to interpret the thesis. On the most obvious—but least charitable—interpretation, it amounts to the assertion that the body engenders its own boundary conditions. The key problem with this is that it undermines the thesis of body-world implication. In order for one's body to produce its own distinction from its world, it must already be individuated to the degree that it can claim agency with respect to some reservoir of independent powers. The tacitness and anonymity of this bodily agent does not resolve the problem. Even if the cogito is something lived rather than thought, if it indicates a realm of immanence cordoned off from the world, then it stands in stark tension with the rest of the findings of the book.

The other possibility is that, despite Merleau-Ponty's claims that the tacit *Cogito* "is my very being" (PhP, 396/436), we interpret it as a process of differentiation indigenous to the body-world relation rather than a self-organizing power of the body alone. This is the charitable reading, since it must be the case if

the claim of body-world ambiguity or indistinction is to be preserved. However, on this reading the tacit cogito is no longer a "cogito" in the strict sense, and it is not clear what purpose is served by naming it as part of that tradition. Far more pressing, if it is not a cogito in the strict sense, while it is no longer in opposition to the central claim about body-world inter-implication, its explanatory power in addressing the question at hand is considerably diminished. If the tacit cogito is co-constituted, so that it is not a cogito in any robust sense, then it is also not a robust response to the problem. The question of how the distinction emerges and how precisely we should understand the sort of difference at stake is just as pressing as ever.

As a lacunary "movement of transcendence" that is a "simultaneous contact" both "with my being and with the being of the world" (PhP, 396/436), the tacit *Cogito* is a fundamentally confused concept. It cannot simply be an "I think" that is tacit, lived instead of known, because it must also be something that no longer issues from or contains "ownness." What we need in this position is something that is not yet owned, not yet on the side of the body proper. But neither can it be a pure indifferentiation. It must include a dynamic of differentiation that is not yet the meeting of mutually exterior forces or entities, but that rather is hospitable to their cultivation, original events of orientation that establish the framework for feeling "ownness" in the first place.

What is needed is a description of a dynamic of differentiation that serves as the hinge of interiority and exteriority while being contained within neither; a liminal process through which interiority becomes exteriority and vice versa.

Instead, the tacit *Cogito* invents a new kind of immanence: an immanence, not of representation within consciousness, but the lived immanence of the body.

I want to suggest that what is needed is not an account of the tacit *Cogito*. What is needed is an account of affect as the dynamic of differentiation in the flesh of the world, such that it folds and becomes the flesh of my own body. In the following chapters, I explore the way that affect functions in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy both as perception prior to the emergence of inside-outside difference, but also as a process of differentiation that makes that felt distinction between interiority and exteriority possible. In the next two chapters, I will take up this question in the context of Merleau-Ponty's lectures on child psychology at the Sorbonne, where he confronts again the question of the genesis of the body proper.

CHAPTER 2 – Affects, Images and Childlike Perception: Self-other Difference in Merleau-Ponty's Sorbonne Lectures[78]

2.1) Introduction

It is well known that in the manuscript he was working on at the time of his death, Merleau-Ponty criticized the thesis of the tacit *Cogito*, writing in a working note "What I call the tacit cogito is impossible" (VI, 171/222). What is commented upon far less is the fact that developments in Merleau-Ponty's thought begin to distance him from the thesis of the tacit *Cogito* much earlier in his career. As early, in fact, as his lectures on Child Psychology at the Sorbonne (1949-1952), which commenced a mere four years after the publication of the *Phenomenology*. Merleau-Ponty's basic task in the lectures is to familiarize his students with contemporary work in child psychology to prepare them for exams. Thus much of the lectures consist of detailed treatments of hundreds of texts in psychoanalysis, empirical psychology, anthropology, and philosophy. But as translator Talia Welsh notes, while at times Merleau-Ponty's lectures read as mere summary of these works, he does not refrain from offering his own endorsements and critiques, and advancing original interpretations.[79] One central thread that runs through the lectures is Merleau-Ponty's resistance to a "tendency [in child psychology] to assume that the child is internally occupied… rather than… engaged with the larger environment" (CPP, xii). Certain threads of psychoanalytic theory are praised for appreciating this, and in general Merleau-Ponty devotes significant attention in the lectures to discussing psychoanalytic thinkers and texts.

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[79] See *Child Psychology and Pedagogy: The Sorbonne Lectures 1949-1952* (2010), which as I noted in the Introduction will be cited as CPP. This is an English translation by Talia Welsh of a French text of the lectures compiled by students and approved by Merleau-Ponty himself. I also sometimes cite the single lecture "The Child's Relations with Others" (cited as CRO) which was translated into English by William Cobb based on a different set of notes, and was published in *The Primacy of Perception* (1964).

Merleau-Ponty's lectures on Child Psychology at the Sorbonne have

enjoyed far less attention in Anglophone scholarship than his *Phenomenology of*

Perception and his unfinished final manuscript *The Visible and the Invisible*.

There are sound reasons for this: the work is not a book or even a manuscript, but

a lecture series; and further, the engagement with psychology renders the work

less overtly philosophical. Yet, commentaries that do take up the Sorbonne

lectures tend to emphasize their importance in the development of Merleau-

Ponty's thought. James Phillips' 1999 article "From the Unseen to the Invisible:

Merleau-Ponty's Sorbonne Lectures as Preparation for his Later Thought" is an

instance of this sort of view, arguing that the lectures serve as a bridge between

Merleau-Ponty's early magnum opus, the *Phenomenology of Perception*, and his

later work.[80] More than just a recitation of then-current views in the field of child

psychology, Phillips maintains that these lectures "advance beyond the earlier

thought and anticipate Merleau-Ponty's later ontology" (1999, 69). Talia Welsh's

book-length work on the Sorbonne lectures, published just this year, likewise

emphasizes the importance of these lectures in the development of Merleau-

Ponty's thought, arguing for example that "Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the

infantile reveals his increasing interest in ideas that push the limits of a subject-

centered phenomenology" (2013, 50).[81]

As I read this text vis-à-vis the *Phenomenology*, the key development at

issue is that *while the analysis in the* Phenomenology of Perception *relies on the*

*descriptive register of one's own body (*le corps propre*), in the Sorbonne lectures*

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[80] See also M. C. Dillon, "Merleau-Ponty and the Reversibility Thesis" (1983, *Man and World.* 16 (4): 365-388).

[81] Talia Welsh (2013), *The Child as Natural Phenomenologist: Primal and Primary Experience in Merleau-Ponty's Psychology*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

we find an investigation into the genesis of the body proper. The embodied sense of self—the very identification with the body that expresses its distinction from others and the world, its boundaries as the localization of a felt sense of ownness —is in the Sorbonne lectures *interrogated* rather than assumed as a point of departure. The tacit *Cogito*, a phenomenological structure that the *Phenomenology* posited as a guarantor of the emergence of this distinction, is conspicuously absent from the analysis. It should be noted that the tacit *Cogito* is not absent from this text for want of opportunity to discuss the topic. The question of the *Cogito* is explicitly raised in a discussion of Husserl (CPP, 26-29). There Merleau-Ponty praises Husserl for entertaining "the possibility of starting without posing the primordial 'cogito', starting with the consciousness that is neither self nor other" (CPP, 29). While as I argued in Chapter 1, this investigation beneath the self-other, mine-alien distinction was called for by the results of the *Phenomenology*, in that text Merleau-Ponty himself proves unwilling to undertake it, instead positing the tacit *Cogito* as a structure that guarantees the pre-reflective operation of a self-other, body-world distinction. In the Sorbonne lectures however, this hesitation has been overcome. In this text we find a description of childhood perception as originally characterized by an indistinction of inner and outer perceptual domains: "a syncretic sociability where the infant does not distinguish between herself and others or between herself and the world" (Welsh 2013, 45). As M. C. Dillon glosses the point, the world Merleau-Ponty describes as the child's is "not a world I experience as my own: it is a world in which there

is an indistinction of perspectives, a world from which the mine-alien or self-other distinction is absent" (1988, 19).[82]

   This difference was obscured in part by Colin Smith's choice in his 1958 English translation of the *Phenomenology of Perception* to render Merleau-Ponty's phrase "*le corps propre*" as "the lived body." Don Landes' 2012 translation of the *Phenomenology of Perception* corrects this (see PhP, xlviii-xlix), pointing out that a French equivalent of "the lived body" (*le corps vécu*) never appears in the text. The mistranslation occludes the *Phenomenology*'s emphasis on the body considered as "*my* body, the body that is lived *as my own*" (2012, xlviii).[83] This in turn obscures the contrast between the project of the *Phenomenology* and the sort of analysis we see in the Sorbonne lectures, which does not take the body proper as a starting point, but rather aims to trace its genesis, stepping outside of a strictly first-person description to do so. While the *Phenomenology* begins with the descriptive register of the body proper and concludes that the distinction between inner and outer domains of perception does not precede it but is rather one of its results, the investigation in the Sorbonne lectures assumes as a starting point an experience not yet structured according to these distinctions, and aims to give an account of their genesis. Not only Landes' 2012 translation of the *Phenomenology*, but also the 2010 publication of Welsh's English translation of the complete set of approved notes from the Sorbonne lectures (the French version was approved by Merleau-Ponty himself), provide an

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[82] M. C. Dillon, (1988) *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
[83] Donald Landes (2012), "Translator's Introduction." *Phenomenology of Perception*. New York: Routledge.

opportunity for Anglophone scholarship on Merleau-Ponty to attend anew to this important development in his philosophy.

Another factor that may have obscured the revisionary character of the Sorbonne lectures with respect to the *Phenomenology* is that influential Merleau-Ponty scholar M.C. Dillon maintained the view that Merleau-Ponty must be mistaken when he claims that the child's perception enjoys a certain persistence in adult life.[84] This may have helped reinforce the view that the account of child perception is independent of the account of the body proper in the *Phenomenology*. My own view, as I will develop it in this chapter, is that when we understand in adequate depth Merleau-Ponty's notion of the "indistinction" that characterizes child perception, it will indeed include the implication that indistinction persists in adult perception. That is, indistinction extends to a certain indistinction of child and adult perspectives

Another factor that has complicated the issue of this development in Merleau-Ponty's thought is a critique of Merleau-Ponty's characterization of child perception motivated by empirical studies of neonatal imitation. Perhaps the most influential item of Anglophone scholarship on Merleau-Ponty's Sorbonne lectures to date is a 1996 article co-authored by Merleau-Ponty scholar Shaun Gallagher and empirical psychologist Andrew Meltzoff (the critique is repeated in Gallagher's 2005 book *How the Body Shapes the Mind*).[85] Gallagher and Meltzoff marshal the results of empirical studies on neonatal imitation conducted by

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[84] See M. C. Dillon (1978), "Merleau-Ponty and the Psychogenesis of the Self," Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 9 (1): 84-98. He repeats the view in his influential work *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (1988, 119, 255-256).

[85] Shaun Gallagher and Andrew Meltzoff (1996), "The Earliest Sense of Self and Others: Merleau-Ponty and Recent Development Studies." *Philosophical Psychology* 9 (2): 211-233.

Meltzoff and M. K. Moore in the 1970s and 1980s to demonstrate that even the youngest newborn infants display "a rudimentary differentiation between self and non-self" (Gallagher and Meltzoff 1996, 223; Gallagher 2005, 83), such that "some primitive and primary sense of embodied self" (Gallagher 2005, 78) may be considered innate.[86] The claim that a minimal core sense of self is innate has also been maintained by other scholars of phenomenology, such as Dan Zahavi.[87]

Insofar as it claims to show that experience is always already individuated, Gallagher and Meltzoff's critique also presents a challenge to the insight I hope to glean from Merleau-Ponty on affect as both pre-individual and individuating. In this chapter, I explore recent opposition to Gallagher and Meltzoff's critique of Merleau-Ponty, arguing that the case for indistinction should be revisited, and that the precise meaning of indistinction for Merleau-Ponty needs to be understood in more depth. I offer my own reading of Merleau-Ponty's view of the infant's indistinction from others and the world, arguing that it must be understood as an affective phenomenon. I also begin an analysis, to be completed in Chapter 3, of Merleau-Ponty's concepts of body schema, body image, and body proper. I use these concepts to understand the indistinction that characterizes child perception, and that analysis in turn reflects back on these crucial Merleau-Pontian concepts, allowing me to develop a unique reading of these phenomenological structures in terms of affect.

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[86] Shaun Gallagher (2005), *How the Body Shapes the Mind*. Cambridge: Oxford University Press.
[87] See Dan Zahavi (2004, The Embodied Self-Awareness of the Infant: A Challenge to the Theory-Theory of Mind?" *Structure and Development of Self-Consciousness: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Dan Zahavi, Thor Grünbaum and Josef Parnas, eds. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co). See also Kym Maclaren (2008, "Embodied Perceptions of Others as a Condition of Selfhood? Empirical and Phenomenological Considerations." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 15 (8): 63-93.) for a critique of Zahavi's view.

2.2) The Critique of Indistinction and Its Opposition

Since Gallagher and Meltzoff's 1996 article on Merleau-Ponty and recent development studies, it has become commonplace in Anglophone scholarship on Merleau-Ponty to question or even dismiss his claim in the Sorbonne lectures that the sense of self is developmentally acquired. Gallagher and Meltzoff argue that Meltzoff and Moore's studies on neonate imitation show newborn infants doing something that Merleau-Ponty is committed to claiming infants cannot do, namely, imitating the facial gestures of others directly after birth.[88] Imitation, they write, indicates that "the newborn infant is capable of a rudimentary differentiation between self and non-self," including not only "a primitive body schema," but also a "primitive body image" that must be innate in the sense that it is present before birth (Gallagher and Meltzoff 1996, 223). "The youngest infant in the study," they write, "was just 42 minutes old at the time of the test. It is difficult to conceive of any stronger evidence for nativism than this" (1996, 221).[89]

However, in recent years Meltzoff and colleagues' work has inspired interesting and compelling opposition from Merleau-Ponty scholars. The most

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[88] See Gallagher and Meltzoff (1996) 212. See also A. Meltzoff and M. K. Moore (1977, "Imitation of Facial and Manual Gestures by Human Neonates." *Science* 198 (4312): 75-78); (1983, "Newborn Infants Imitate Adult Facial Gestures." *Child Development* 54 (3): 702-709); (1989, "Imitation in Newborn Infants: Exploring the Range of Gestures Imitated and the Underlying Mechanisms." *Developmental Psychology* 25 (6): 954-962); (2000, "Imitation of Facial and Manual Gestures by Human Neonates." *Infant Development: The Essential Readings*. D. Muir & A. Slater, eds. London: Blackwell: 167-175).

[89] Gallagher's 2005 book *How the Body Shapes the Mind*, especially the third chapter "The Earliest Senses of Self and Others," repeats the criticism of Merleau-Ponty made in the co-authored 1996 article, bringing it to an even wider audience of scholars in Phenomenological Philosophy and Cognitive Science.

comprehensive rebuttal is Welsh's tightly argued and impressively researched 2006 article "Do Neonates Display Innate Self-awareness? Why Neonatal Imitation Fails to Provide Sufficient Grounds for Innate Self- and Other-Awareness."[90] It raises both empirical questions about the data from the original studies, as well as phenomenological questions about how we should interpret that data. Welsh marshals evidence against key tenets of the studies by Meltzoff and colleagues, first challenging whether the studies show imitation at all; and if they do, objecting to the claim that these results indicate the presence of "primitive" versions of phenomenological structures present in the goal-oriented imitative behaviors displayed in older children and adults. She argues that we must consider the possibility that neonate imitation is a phenomenologically unique mimetic behavior which requires a unique description and explanation, in particular one that does not depend on invoking the phenomenology of body image and the sort of self-other distinction implied in it.

Insofar as Meltzoff and Moore's studies successfully establish neonatal imitation, Welsh points out that while the claim that imitation indicates a neonatal *body schema* is relatively uncontroversial, the claim that it establishes the presence of a *body image* is much more contested (2006, 225). In this chapter and in the next I will develop my own view, based on my reading of Merleau-Ponty, on how we should understand these terms and their relation to each other. However, to understand the significance of the dual claim made by Gallagher and Meltzoff, one need only understand the basic distinction. While the body schema

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[90] (in *Philosophical Psychology* 19 (2): 221-238). See also Welsh's 2013 book *The Child as Natural Phenomenologist: Primal and Primary Experience in Merleau-Ponty's Psychology*, especially Chapter 4 "Contemporary Research in Psychology and Phenomenolgy."

is a system of motor capability—that is, a system of pre-reflective motor equivalencies between perception and movement (thus, between movements that are seen and movements that are experienced kinaesthetically, or between a moving body and the motor possibilities afforded to it by its situation), the body image includes the perceptual experience of one's body as *one's own*. That is, body image experience is proprioceptive awareness in the narrowest sense: a body image is always of a body proper: a sense of one's body as the bordered and private space of a self. Thus the much stronger and more contentious claim that Meltzoff and colleagues make is that neonate imitation involves, not only a body schema, but also a body image.

Merleau-Ponty's lecture posits a body schema from the time that he thinks perception in the full sense begins. Thus, he thinks that as long as there exist perceptual fields to be coordinated, that coordination is underway. However, he says that this body schema is "fragmentary" and only gradually becomes "total" (CPP, 247-249, CRO, 115-123), meaning that it does not at first involve the integrated consciousness of one's body as one's own that is part of the development of body image.

The part of Meltzoff and colleagues' critique of Merleau-Ponty that has been received with little controversy is the following: relying on the empirical studies available at the time he gave this lecture on child psychology at the Sorbonne (1950-1951), Merleau-Ponty reports that in the neonatal phase, infant neurophysiology is not equal to the task of external perception, and is instead

wholly interoceptive (see CRO, 121-123, also CPP, 248-249).[91] He is lecturing

from Henri Wallon's work, whose study *Les origines du caractère chez l'enfant*

serves as the primary text for the whole of Merleau-Ponty's lecture.[92] If Wallon is

right about this, and interoception and exteroception must be "solder[ed]" (CPP,

248) in order for the body schema to be instituted, then it follows that there is an

initial neonatal phase prior to body schematic functioning. As I explain below,

this conclusion depends on the assumption of an initial distinction of

interoception and exteroception such that they would need to be correlated or

"solder[ed]" together (CPP, 248)—an assumption that is awkward at best for

Merleau-Ponty to maintain. Despite this tension, in his lecture he reports without

challenge the claim that the limits of infant neurophysiology imply an initial stage

of experience that is wholly interoceptive.

It is this position that is the basis for Meltzoff and Moore's largely

uncontroversial claim that, as his text stands, Merleau-Ponty cannot account for

imitation in the youngest infants. Insofar as Meltzoff and Moore's empirical

studies demonstrate that in fact, even infants under an hour old are able to imitate

adult facial gestures, then this aspect of the correction they offer is an open-shut

case.[93] Anything rightly called imitation would certainly require a coordination of

the aspects of sensation that will later be distinguished as exteroception and

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[91] Note that the two English translations of Merleau-Ponty's lecture differ on their spelling of "interoception" and "exteroception." I use Welsh's spelling from the 2010 translation. When citing Cobb's translation, I preserve his spelling (the second vowel does not appear).

[92] (1949), *Les origines du caractère chez l'enfant.* Paris, Press Universitaires de France.

[93] See Meltzoff and Moore (1977, 1983, 1989); though again, note that there exist challenges to the claim that Meltzoff and colleagues succeeded in showing infant *imitation* narrowly construed (see Welsh 2006, 227-231). There are however no challenges to the claim that they succeed in showing infant exteroception: clearly the infants *see* the expressions on the adult's faces. On Merleau-Ponty's view of the necessity of the body schema for perception, this is enough to suggest that a body schema exists—though again, it could still be fragmentary rather than total.

interoception—for example, vision and motility; imitation requires that a movement seen must also have a kinaesthetic sense. In fact, without a functioning body schema, a newborn infant would only be able to *see* an adult's face in the weakest sense of the verb (see CRO, 122, see also CPP, 249). Insofar as what Meltzoff and Moore observed in neonates is in fact imitation properly so called, infants' sensorimotor capabilities must be equal to mimetic behavior, and thus they must in fact have a body schema.

However, according to my reading of the Sorbonne lectures, so far this correction does not challenge Merleau-Ponty's claim about indistinction. In fact, the claim that there is an initial neonatal phase in which interoception and exteroception are not yet correlated can be excised from his account as a friendly amendment that results in a far more consistent view. To explain: Merleau-Ponty's account of child perception is characterized primarily by an *indistinction* of interoception and exteroception. "The child," he writes, "in no way distinguishes at first between what is furnished by introception and what comes from external perception. There is no distinction between the data of what the learned adult calls introceptivity and the data of sight" (CRO, 133). The advent of adult proprioception thus constitutes a reorganization of perception that distinguishes interoception and exteroception (with the distinction of self and other as a corollary development). The distinction of inner and outer domains of perception does not *precede* perception, but is one of its results.

This is why the terms themselves (interoception and exteroception, self and other) are ill-fitting as a description of early childhood experience: they

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belong to a distinction that is a crucial axis of adult perception, but that it is anachronistic to use in describing the world according to the child, in which "[i]t is not possible to separate the internal from the external, nor is it possible to make a cleavage, since there is an intermeshing" (CPP, 294). This claim about "intermeshing" and "indistinction" of interoception and exteroception in childhood experience makes it especially awkward for Merleau-Ponty to maintain along with his contemporaries that the initial neonatal phase involves interoception alone, such that "First, there is an interoceptive body" and that "a soldering between the two domains" must develop in the first months of life (CPP, 248). Indeed, the view of interoception and exteroception that develops in the lecture is inconsistent with understanding them as "two domains" (CPP, 248) at all. If we must posit interoception and exteroception as integrated from birth in order to account for neonate imitation, then so much the better for Merleau-Ponty's key claims about the indistinction of interoception and exteroception in child perception.

I am asserting, essentially, that the claim about self-other and body-world indistinction is inconsistent with the claim that it is possible to have a wholly interoceptive experience—an experience of interoception isolated from exteroception. But both of these claims (sole interoception in infants, and subsequent self-other indistinction) were widely held among Merleau-Ponty's contemporaries as well.[94] That raises the question of whether the interpretation of

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[94] The most relevant representative of this view is Henri Wallon, whose study *Les origines du caractère chez l'enfant* (Paris, 1949) is Merleau-Ponty's primary text in this lecture. However, P. Guillaume (1943, *Psychologie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France), J. Piaget (1962, *Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood*. C. Gattegno and F.M. Hodgson, trans. New York: Norton), and J. Lhermitte (1939, *L'Image de Notre Corps*. Paris: Editions de la Nouvelle Revue Critique) were all part of this school of thought.

these claims that was mainstream in the 1950s was a weaker one than what I am

attributing to Merleau-Ponty, such that the inconsistency was also weaker, or even

did not arise. I do think that the tension is especially strong for Merleau-Ponty's

view. On my reading of Merleau-Ponty, self-other indistinction is a matter of

being and not only of *knowing*. One important piece of evidence that this is his

position is the fact that he maintains that the self-other indistinction that

characterizes childhood is never fully eradicated: it continues to characterize adult

life and adult perception. Notably for my purposes, he claims that indistinction

plays out primarily in the adult emotional life. It is not the case, on his view, that

we experience indistinction because we are simply confused about where the

boundaries lie, and must discover this as a matter of perceptual maturity. Rather,

the boundaries between inner and outer domains of perception are always at stake,

always being negotiated and cultivated. They are not merely discovered, but must

be built and maintained.

Thus, I interpret Merleau-Ponty's claim about the indistinction of

interoception and exteroception as a matter of the structure of sensibility. As I

argued in Chapter 1, one of the more radical consequences of the hypothesis that

the body is the subject of experience, and that meaning and its production are

corporeal processes, is that the phenomenology of perception cannot simply be

divided into two domains, one interior and one exterior. This consequence is

confirmed by Merleau-Ponty's analysis of sensing (*le sentir*) and the body schema

as synaesthetic and reversible in the *Phenomenology*. But it is also undermined by

the positing of the tacit *Cogito* in that text. More consistent is the account of

interoception and exteroception in the Sorbonne lectures. This account posits interoception and exteroception as indistinct, yet accounts for the advent of a distinction between them. For the child, "my visual body, my introceptive body, the other" form "a system," one "founded on the indistinction of the several elements that enter into it" (CRO, 135). This is why the account of the advent of the body proper will be a version of the mirror stage: because it is once the child assumes a felt sense of his body as located "at a certain point in visible space," then he will be prepared "to limit his own life to himself" (CRO, 135). Yet this limitation will never be completed. Even once indistinction "has been surpassed in the realm of immediate daily life," it "is never surpassed in the realm of feelings" (CRO, 155). Indistinction continues to make its appearance in adult affective life. This is revisionary with respect to the *Phenomenology* in the sense that it provides an answer to the question of bodily boundaries that displaces the answer offered by the tacit *Cogito*, and is better able to accommodate the ambiguity of the body-world difference and its ongoing malleability.

It is possible that when Merleau-Ponty relates to his students the supposed fact of this initial wholly interoceptive body and chooses to offer no critique (CPP, 248-249, CRO, 121-125), he had in mind a narrower sense of interoception and exteroception. As I noted in Chapter 1, these terms are often used in a naïve sense that does not account for the intertwining and even indistinction of inner and outer realms of perception. Senses that are more far-reaching, such as vision and hearing, may simply be identified with exteroception because of their range: sound and vision can appear as coming from very far away, grasping the world at

a distance, and disclosing especially wide worldly horizons. This ignores the fact that these senses are synaesthetic and reversible, and have interoceptive aspects that cannot be isolated from their exteroceptive aspects. Similarly, we might identify the sense of touch, taste, or temperature as interoceptive, forgetting that these senses too can be world-disclosing. Though he is not rigorously consistent in his use, Merleau-Ponty often uses the terms this way. For instance, he will contrast "the body as seen" with "the body as felt by introceptivity" (CRO, 123), "the data of what the learned adult calls introceptivity and the data of sight" (CRO, 133).

As that last line suggests, this usage for Merleau-Ponty carries a *retrospective* sense that describes perception from the perspective of its results, in which the distinction has already been made as a part of the process of perception. In this case, there is also a retrospectivity between adulthood and childhood: he is describing the child's experience from an adult perspective. The full line reads: "The child in no way distinguishes at first between what is furnished by introception and what comes from external perception. There is no distinction between the data of what the learned adult calls introceptivity and the data of sight" (CRO, 133). As an adult whose perception is organized by this distinction, speaking to an audience of adults whose perception is also organized by it, Merleau-Ponty uses the terms for the distinction. Yet he is asking us to imagine the world according to a child, which he is proposing to understand as primarily characterized by an indistinction of interoception and exteroception. The analysis he builds of this indistinction, as I will show in more detail in what follows,

ultimately destabilizes the adult sense of the terms as well, showing how their referents are not stably distinct, but rather tend to reverse and become one another. Merleau-Ponty's account of child perception is most successful where he shows us childhood perception operating in adult perception. The distinction is retrospective, and the indistinction ends up being prospective.

When we read these terms in the retrospective sense, we should read them as refraining from naturalizing the distinction to sensations themselves—refusing the suggestion that the distinction is simply given, as if sensation could be broken down into two classes of data that come stamped with their status as internal or external. Exteroception, for example, simply means a perception of the external world, but without indicating that the sense or sensation so described bears on the outside by definition, assuming a distinction between inside and outside packaged within the sense or sensation itself.

So it may be that, in the context of Merleau-Ponty's thought, the proper interpretation of the claim that "[f]irst, there is an interoceptive body" (CPP, 248) and that the newborn is without external perception emphasizes his characterization of this body as a "*buccal* body" and "*respiratory* body" (CPP, 248), without insisting that the sensations of the mouth and of respiration are definitively interoceptive in the sense of being not at all world-disclosing. Taken in this sense, the claim admits only that the neurophysiology of the infant is not yet capable of sensations like those of vision that are more far-reaching. These buccal and respiratory sensations too may function as exteroception (more precisely: they too may function ambiguously as both interoception and

exteroception), but the world thereby disclosed would be a very small and limited one, one that does not actually include the spaces that will later be characterized as external—or does so only in a fragmentary and as yet disorganized fashion.

This interpretation is supported by the text. In explaining to his students how to understand the claim that "[f]irst, there is an interoceptive body" (CPP, 248), Merleau-Ponty says that "[i]nteroceptive organs come to serve exteroceptive organs" (CPP, 248). For instance, "the whole respiratory apparatus gives the child a kind of experience of space" (CRO, 122). Similarly, the first experiences of others will be experiences of a caregiver that will not be

> a veritable exteroception of the mother, the father, and the nurse. Instead it is a question of differences felt by the child in the state of his [sic] body—differences in his well-being according to whether the nurse's breast is present or absent and also according to the way in which the child is held in the arms of each of the persons involved. (CRO, 123-124)

Thus Merleau-Ponty's reading of the claim that the body is at first wholly interoceptive turns out to mean that even when perception is very limited, interoception and exteroception are interchangeable functions. The infant's felt sense of his own body, which in a naïve or retrospective sense we might identify as interoceptive, still functions as exteroception, as a disclosure of the world, a perception of a space, others, and a situation. To say that interoception and exteroception are not distinguished is precisely to say that the infant has not yet organized his perceptual experience around a distinction between bodily states and external states of affairs. Merleau-Ponty's claim is that the comfort experienced while nursing functions as a perception of an other person. Yet this is not experienced as the presence of an *other* as such. This would be far more

consistent with the overall thread of Merleau-Ponty's lectures on child psychology that I cited Welsh commenting on earlier, which challenges a "tendency [in child psychology] to assume that the child is internally occupied… rather than… engaged with the larger environment" (CPP, xii).

One note about gender before I continue: while I flagged Merleau-Ponty's generic use of the masculine pronoun for the infant in the hanging quote above, I adopted it myself in the rest of the paragraph. This is because the use of the masculine here, while it does participate in the normalization of masculinity, is not simply a conflation of the masculine and the generic. The account of child development offered is an account of specifically masculine development: it is a masculine child being discussed, in the sense that the drama of the development of personality being accounted for is in various more and less subtle ways a specifically masculine drama. This will matter more in the next chapter, but I remark on it here because this particular passage on the earliest experience of others as an interoception that functions as exteroception makes an explicit reference to the gender of the caregiver, and its importance. It is one small note, but it reads: "this justifies the importance accorded by psychoanalysis to the mother-child relationship" (CPP, 248). Merleau-Ponty is probably thinking of Melanie Klein's work when he writes this. While the importance that he admits here is underdeveloped, there is some acknowledgement of it much later in the lecture, where he discusses Melanie Klein's work on the significance of sexual difference in early development—the unique importance of the maternal figure, as well as a uniquely feminine drama of development that is not reducible to the

privation of masculinity. There he "note[s] in passing"—the comment is actually enclosed within parentheses—"that this represents an important correction to Freud's thesis on the male essence of the whole libido" (CPP, 289). As I said, I will take up the question of gender again in Chapter 3. But it is worth noting from the beginning that a specifically masculine (or masculinizing) childhood is being discussed—and that Merleau-Ponty has a rudimentary level of awareness of that.

The claim that infants at first have a wholly interoceptive body is worth clarifying for the indirect reason that it bears on what Merleau-Ponty means by the indistinction of interoception and exteroception. That notion of indistinction is an extremely important aspect of his original work on childhood perception in the Sorbonne lectures, and as I argue in this chapter, has been oversimplified by its critics, and needs more scholarly attention. However, considered on its own terms, the claim about the supposed interoceptive body is of minor consequence, since it is now clear that even the youngest infants are not limited to buccal and respiratory experience, but have perceptual capacities far more advanced than those previously thought possible based on the lack of myelinization of nerve fibers that was thought to be a prerequisite. For instance, infants do in fact see the faces of adults (if readers still require evidence, Meltzoff and Moore's studies of neonate imitation undoubtedly show at least this). No doubt for those of us who have significant experience doing childcare work, it is curious that believing otherwise was once mainstream in child psychology.

Another aspect of Gallagher and Meltzoff's view that has drawn criticism from Merleau-Ponty scholars is the inference to *nativism*. Jane Lymer's 2011

article "Merleau-Ponty and the Affective Maternal-Foetal Relation" challenges

Meltzoff and colleagues' equation of behaviors present at birth with behaviors

that are "innate," correcting for the neglect of the maternal body, pregnant

experience, and *in utero* development in the accounts offered, not only by

Meltzoff and colleagues, but also by Merleau-Ponty. She offers an account in

which a maternal body schema inculcates fetal kinesthetic rhythms during

gestation by means of an "affective bodily incorporation" of the fetus into the

mother's movements—for example, rocking to calm fetal distress (2011, 129).

Lymer's view offers a compelling critique of the assumption that the presence of

a body schema in neonates is evidence that the body schema comes from *within*

the infant's body, or that it is native to the fetus *itself* in a way that could be

separated from the body schematic functioning of the mother's body. Lymer

offers a view in which, granted that a body schema is in evidence immediately

after birth, even so the origins of the body schema are to be found in self-other

indistinction: the indistinction of a particular maternal-fetal relation.

  Another familiar claim from imitation studies that has drawn compelling

opposition is the assertion that the sort of body schema necessary for imitation is

incompatible with self-other indistinction. Taking a position that is especially

interesting for its refusal to insist on the mutual exclusivity of self-other

distinction and indistinction, Kym Maclaren's 2008 article "Embodied

Perceptions of Others as a Condition of Selfhood?" criticizes work in

phenomenology and recent developmental psychology that rejects notions of

infant self-other indistinction and insists on distinct selfhood as an organizing

feature of infant phenomenology.[95] Maclaren explains that while it is

uncontroversial among her interlocutors to concede that infants do not distinguish

between their own and others' *minds*, the theorists she mentions share an interest

in positing a specifically *perceptual* sense of distinct self in infants (2008, 66).

While Maclaren does not directly engage with the work on imitation by Meltzoff

and colleagues, their work clearly falls within this research program. Maclaren

applauds the premium her interlocutors place on a notion of embodied, perceptual

subjectivity, but objects that they have imported the Cartesian assumptions they

hoped to abandon when they insist that the phenomenology of the embodied

subject always involves a sense of self-possession or "mineness" and distinctness

from others (2008, 67).

Maclaren offers her own argument in support of Merleau-Ponty's claim

that the individuation of lived experience is not given from the start, but must

develop. Analyzing a different set of empirical studies on infants' perceptual

engagements, she concludes that especially but not exclusively for very young

children, other people's sensory-motor orientations are directly perceivable, and

the feelings and movements that make up those orientations are infectious. In a

word, there exists a curious indistinction of the aspects of experience that

traditional views regard as private, exclusive to myself or an other: "other

people's intentionality orients us" (2008, 80). The attitudes and expressions of

others can overtake me, so that to perceive them is to participate in them. This

sort of indistinction, Maclaren argues, precedes and conditions the infant's

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[95] Maclaren positions her paper as a critical response to Zahavi's (2004) work, as well as that of three developmental psychologists (see Maclaren 2008, 64).

perceptual sense of her own distinctness, but is not incompatible with it. Indeed, the infant learns to develop an orientation toward her self as such by first participating in an other's orientation toward her.

This work on the sharing of movement and feeling between infants and their primary caregivers has a precedent in Cynthia Willett's study of the topic in *Maternal Ethics and Other Slave Moralities*.[96] She draws on Daniel Stern's research on infant sociality as centering around "vitality affects": kinetic rhythms that incarnate energy levels and mood changes, and that can be shared in "such simple acts as how a mother or father picks up a baby," or through "soothing sounds" (1995, 26). Stern hopes to falsify the description of early childhood experience as solipsistic and asocial; Willett applauds this but criticizes Stern's tendency to import an adult sense of sociality into the infant world. Turning to Irigiray's account of the caress, Willett finds there an account of "the presubjective origins of sociality" (1995, 35), not to be confused with fusion or homogeneity (1995, 38).

Welsh's 2013 book on the Sorbonne lectures finds a similar account in Merleau-Ponty's treatment of childhood indistinction, arguing that a valuable innovation of this text is its theorization of a sociality that must be understood in terms other than that of the self-other distinction: a pre-individual sociality (2013, 49). The "concept of syncretic sociability," Welsh writes, is not an antithesis of subjectivity, but rather develops "the claim that another kind of communicative life underlies conscious subjectivity" (2013, 50). This is indeed a sociality, but one that cannot be understood to be founded on a self-other distinction. It is an

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[96] (1995), New York: Routledge.

intersubjectivity in which "subjectivity is either not yet formed (as in the case of infant intersubjectivity) or not primary (as in adult intersubjective experience)" (2013, 51). And Welsh too insists that it consists of "a common, affective experience," in which a person "responds to the other's emotional state," sometimes "prior to any outward, readable sign that indicates what the other is feeling" (2013, 53).

This critical work suggests a need for entertaining phenomenologies of infant and neonate behavior that share credit for the infant's movement (imitative or otherwise) with the influence of others—that is, that situate it within self-other indistinction, understood as a pre-individual sociality. Meltzoff and colleagues may have too hastily dismissed the possibility that neonate imitation could be a co-authored behavior, a behavior that is produced by an intercorporeity. Because they observed repeated imitations that involved closer approximations, they concluded that imitation is a goal-oriented activity: that the infant is correcting its expression to more closely match the adult's.[97] That implies a movement organized by a qualitative distinction between inside and outside, self and other, interoception and exteroception. They controlled for the possibility that the "corrections" they observed were responses to encouraging feedback from the adult.[98] But this does nothing to control for influences that are at once subtler and more profound, such as the influence of the maternal body schema that Lymer describes, and the influence that interests Maclaren: the influence the very

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[97] See for example Gallagher and Meltzoff (1996, 222-223).
[98] See for example Meltzoff and Moore (2000, 172).

perception of the adult's expression exerts on the infant's own perception and movement.

Evidently, the debate about imitation would be well-served by reopening the case for indistinction. But what precisely is meant by indistinction in Merleau-Ponty's sense of the term? Ironically enough, his account of indistinction in the lecture on "The Child's Relations with Others" primarily features a description of imitation in infants (though not neonates): imitation is offered as a privileged example of something infants could not accomplish *without* a certain indistinction from others. Imitation also comes up in other lectures in this series, in a manner that supports my reading. These references arise in the context of teaching Guillaume's account of imitation: "*we have studied imitation only to discover, following Guillaume, that imitation is not preceded by the conscious grasp of other and identification with the other*. On the contrary, it is the act by which identification with others is produced" (CPP, 33). Again, in another lecture he returns to this idea that awareness of self and other follows rather than precedes imitation: "It is imitation that will bring about self-consciousness" (CPP, 427). Clearly Merleau-Ponty was aware that young children (if not neonates) imitate. But he also specifically theorized imitation as something that takes place in the context of syncretic sociability, a pre-individual sociality. He did not think that a self-other distinction was necessary in order to account for it. Thus, in this chapter I offer a reading of what Merleau-Ponty says about imitation in the particular lecture in question, the lecture on "The Child's Relations with Others." However, I will not produce a competing interpretation of Meltzoff and Moore's data. My

goal is to re-examine on its own terms what Merleau-Ponty meant by self-other "indistinction." Whether confusing or convenient, much of what he said about that in the lecture in question can be found in a description of infant imitation. This is no coincidence: mimesis is a key dynamic of indistinction as he understands it.

What I discover is that it is crucial to understand *both* distinction and indistinction in terms of their *affective* significance. In the critical literature I have discussed above, affect is a theme as persistent as it is difficult to pin down: for Lymer, affect is the maternal body schema's pre-communicative influence over fetal body. For Maclaren, sympathy is the means through which one person's attitudes and orientations can overtake and inhabit those of another. Willett and Welsh offer accounts of a pre-individual sociality that involves affect sharing. The role of affect in this discussion clearly deserves more attention. Its role in indistinction is suggested in some way by many of these thinkers; less theorized is its role in distinction.

My contention is that what Merleau-Ponty calls self-other indistinction is a virtual or imaginary participation in others' embodied orientations, including the felt and motor aspects of their experience; a participation that he defines as an affective phenomenon. Further, I contend that Merleau-Ponty's account of the advent of the body proper—the aspect of the body image that constitutes a perceptual sense of the body as a distinct and private space—theorizes that development as an affective innovation. Rather than being a fact of which we are at first ignorant and which we gradually grow to recognize, distinction from

others in the sense that is important to Merleau-Ponty is a situation that must be cultivated and maintained through the negotiation of affective distance and proximity. Again, affect plays a key role: it is in our adult affective attachments to others that we negotiate and cultivate self-other boundaries and intimacies. The affective dimension of adult relationships is a life-long project of working out the relation of distinction and indistinction.

One crucial conclusion we should draw from this for the debate about imitation and the child's sense of self and others is that insofar as self-other distinction and indistinction have been understood as mutually exclusive phenomenologies, we may be entertaining an over-simplified notion of both. This has always been an issue in Anglophone scholarship on this lecture. As I mentioned above, Dillon's early article on the text, "Merleau-Ponty and the Psychogenesis of the Self," notes that Merleau-Ponty is maintaining the coexistence of distinction and indistinction, but objects that that must be a mistake (1978, 89-90). I propose that understanding indistinction and distinction in terms of the affective forces that sustain them explains how it is possible for them to coexist.

2.3) Merleau-Ponty on the Child's Perception: Imitation as Sympathy

Arguing against the classical account of the psyche, Merleau-Ponty invokes the problem of invisible imitation:

> At a very early age children are sensitive to facial expressions, e.g., the smile. How could that be possible if, beginning with the visual perception of another's smile, he [sic] had to compare that visual perception of the

smile with the movement that he himself makes…? This complicated process would seem to be incompatible with the relative precociousness of the perception of others.[99]

Merleau-Ponty concludes that we cannot solve the puzzle if we suppose an original difference in kind between interoception and exteroception. The key feature of Merleau-Ponty's account of child perception, as I explained above, is the indistinction or mixture of interoception and exteroception, such that the advent of adult proprioception is primarily characterized by a reorganization of the perceptual field that qualitatively distinguishes inner and outer zones.[100] "The child in no way distinguishes at first between what is furnished by introception and what comes from external perception" (CRO, 133), such that he feels himself to be where he is looking or touching instead of being limited to "a certain point in visible space" (CRO, 135), so that in the perception of others also, the child "feels that he is in the other's body" (CRO, 134). As the child watches the others' movements and expressions, he feels them. The child's perceptual field is not yet organized around a qualitative distinction between private and public parts of perception—those that take place outside of bodies, and those that take place privately, inside bodies. The indistinction of self and other is for Merleau-Ponty a corollary of this indistinction of interoception and exteroception.

We can see why Merleau-Ponty thinks that this view of the phenomenology of child perception prevents the more intractable puzzle of invisible imitation from arising only if we understand that indistinction for him is not merely ignorance of distinction. For the child, perception really is a less

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[99] CRO, 115, see also CPP, 247.
[100] See CRO, 133-135, see also CPP, 253.

private and intensely participatory experience. When the adult smiles at her, the child experiences not "an other person" (CRO, 116) in the adult sense of that expression, but rather a *conduct*, which is literally "transferred" (CRO, 117) from the adult to the child through "sympathy" (CRO, 120, 145-146). The child's vision of the adult's smile functions, Merleau-Ponty says, as a kind of "sympathy" that "grasp[s] directly in the other" (CRO, 115) the motor and affective *feeling* of the adult's smile. Through this *sympathy*, the adult's seen smile "speaks directly" to the child's *felt* or interoceptive body (CRO, 117). The very perception of the other's gesture is a perception, not only of its exteroceptive qualities, but of its "inward formulation" (CRO, 146). "[T]his perception is of such a nature," he writes, "as to arouse in me the preparation of a motor activity related to it" (CRO, 146).

Sympathy is thus indistinction operating as an affective force that lends movement its infectious or contagious potency, allowing the infant to participate in what she sees, to *see* things in terms of how they *feel*. It is precisely because the body schema functions as a sympathetic indistinction of interoception and exteroception that no side-by-side, self-other comparison between the visual and motor smile is necessary. Sympathy inducts the child into the behavior she witnesses. For Merleau-Ponty, the claim that imitation requires a body schema is tantamount to the claim that imitation requires sympathetic indistinction.

There is some confusion in the literature about this passage and the surrounding text, in which Merleau-Ponty discusses the problem of invisible imitation. When Gallagher and Meltzoff argue that Merleau-Ponty's

understanding of the phenomenology of imitation requires a body schema, the

quote they use to establish his understanding of imitation—that in order to

imitate, "it would be necessary for me to translate my visual image of the other's

smile into a motor language" (CRO, 116)—is not Merleau-Ponty's own position,

but one he describes in the course of attributing it to his classical interlocutors.[101]

He argues against the classical view that this phenomenology of "translation" is

not consistent with the precociousness of imitation. A body schema is needed to

explain infant imitation, Merleau-Ponty argues, insofar as a body schema

conducts a motor equivalency between perception and movement, including what

will later be distinguished as interoception and exteroception, self and other, such

that no effort of translation is initially necessary. Relying not on translation or

comparison but on the affective force of sympathy, the body schema equates the

seen smile with a felt one, so that the adult's smile offers the child not only a sight

but also a feeling.[102]

Merleau-Ponty claims that without sympathetic indistinction we cannot

account for the precociousness of imitation. But crucially, he also claims that

without sympathetic indistinction we cannot account for the adult experience of

others as such. As adults whose perception has become organized according to a

qualitative distinction between private and public spaces, between the

interoceptive aspects of a perception that I feel "in here" and the exteroceptive

aspects that I see "out there," we think of the adult's smile as a spectacle whose

felt aspects are private, and we create not only the puzzle of invisible imitation,

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[101] See CRO (116), quoted in Gallagher and Meltzoff (1996, 220-221), and again in Gallagher (2005, 69).

[102] Note the resonance here with Lymer's suggestion that affect is the medium of the maternal body schema's incorporating influence.

but also the classical problem of the experience of others. Merleau-Ponty's solution is to say that the division between inside and outside that generates that problem is not as inflexible as the classical prejudices of psychology would have us believe. Without doubt, social life often involves struggling to "translate" others' more complex and inscrutable conducts. But this cannot be the *earliest* experience of others. For in order to inspire such efforts on our part, others' appearances and movements must first distinguish themselves from mere spectacle by making themselves *felt as conducts*.

The earliest experience of others must not be an experience of the other *as other*, on the outside of an inside-outside divide. It must rather be the experience of a conduct that makes itself *felt* directly, through sympathy rather than translation or comparison. The earliest experience of the other must be a kind of induction into her attitudes and behaviors, in which I participate in the feelings her gestures radiate. Sympathy shows itself in gestures of imitation, a "[m]imesis" which, Merleau-Ponty writes, "is the ensnaring of me by the other, the invasion of me by the other; it is the attitude whereby I assume the gestures, the conducts, the favorite words, the ways of doing things of those whom I confront" (CRO, 145).

This aspect of Merleau-Ponty's work is what Maclaren invokes when she argues for a self-other indistinction in which "other people's intentionality orients us" (2008, 80). If Merleau-Ponty is right in his anti-Cartesian claim that the embodied status of intentionality means it is not hermetically private but rather tends to be directly perceivable, then when we say (for example) that we see someone looking at something, that need not be a euphemism for having *inferred*

that they are looking. Rather, we can actually *see* them seeing. When "we pass someone on the sidewalk apprehensively gazing upwards, we tend to feel quite unreflectively moved to look upwards too," (2008, 80) Maclaren writes. This behavior, she argues, is not simply a matter of turning our attention. The other person's apprehensive upwards orientation "actually solicits in us the same apprehensive way of intending. It calls upon us to *participate virtually* in the other's intentionality" (2008, 80). Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's notion of indistinction as sympathy, Maclaren argues that the infant's perception of an other inducts the infant into a determinate attitude or orientation—the one incarnated already by that other person. "When perceiving another," Maclaren writes, "the other's intentionality sweeps us up and turns us away from the person herself, and towards that which she intends" (2008, 79). Maclaren is drawing on Merleau-Ponty's implication that the imitating infant is not the author of the smile on her face. Instead, the *feeling* of a smile—in both the motor and affective sense of the word—is directly mobilized in the infant's body by her perceptual exposure to the smile she sees on the adult's face such that she participates in it (CRO, 115).

Maclaren describes this in terms of intentionality, but it is crucial to note that it is an *affective* event, and that this is at odds with description in terms of intentionality. In Maclaren's own description, the language of intentionality works against the grain of her point. It is not an intentional engagement with an other that she is describing, as if the other is the intentional content of a directedness that is mine in the sense that it issues from me towards her. Maclaren's point is precisely that the other's orientation "sweeps us up" and

directs us "toward that which she intends" (2008, 79). But even here the language of intentionality—its distinction between noesis and noema, between the directedness itself and the content it is "of"—works against the grain of her point. What Merleau-Ponty is describing, and what I see Maclaren aiming at, is an experience in which the child is not directed "towards that which [the other] intends" at the expense of being directed toward the other herself, as if there is a ray of directedness at issue that must issue forth in one trajectory or another. It is rather a mimetic participation in the world according to the other. In a manner characterized by precisely the indistinction of interoception and exteroception that allows the child to perceive an other in changes in her own felt bodily states, the child perceives the world according to the other and a felt sense of the other herself. The language of intentionality imposes an inward-outward directedness that is alien to the mimetic structure of indistinction as sympathy.

It is worth noting that the example Maclaren uses is different from the case Merleau-Ponty is describing. He is describing the infant smiling as he looks at the adult's smile. Maclaren is describing a person looking upwards apprehensively when she sees someone else looking up apprehensively. Maclaren's case is more object-oriented, and thus easier to describe in terms of intentionality. I am not suggesting that the sharing works according to a fundamentally different dynamic; I think both are cases of sympathy. Yet when what is shared is clearly describable in terms of intentionality, it is easier to ignore the question of what other forces we need to account for. Even in Maclaren's case where what is shared is clearly describable in terms of

intentionality, I believe we need an account of affective force irreducible to intentionality in order to understand *how it is shared*. Maclaren's description of the others' intentionality as something that "sweeps us up" is a fascinating opportunity to reflect on this. That move whereby the intentionality of one person sweeps up or infects another is not analyzable as another intention, another directedness toward another content. Even if it operates to make an intention contagious, it is itself something in excess of intentionality: not the directed force of intentionality, but the mimetic, amplifying force of sympathy. Merleau-Ponty himself does not abandon the use of the language of intentionality in these lectures, but he depends on it less, and increasingly in his later work develops new concepts instead of relying on the notion of intentionality. It is worth reflecting on what motivates this.

Borrowing Scheler's phrase, Merleau-Ponty calls sympathy a "pre-communication" (CRO, 119, 146), mimesis rather than dialogue. This is the meaning of Merleau-Ponty's position (following Wallon) that there is a "'postural impregnation' of my own body by the conducts I witness" (CRO, 118, 145). Instead of striving to match the adult's expression, in the unguarded intimacy of the infant's sympathetic indistinction, the perception of the adult's smile possesses her with its felt qualities and summons its reflection in her features. In "mimesis," Merleau-Ponty writes, "our perceptions arouse in us a reorganization of motor conduct, without our already having learned the gestures in question" (CRO, 145).

Scheler's notion of sympathy is undoubtedly influential for Merleau-Ponty in this lecture. His turn to the use of Scheler and the notion of sympathy should also be understood as part of the change that is developed in his thinking between these lectures and the *Phenomenology*. Affirming a notion of sympathy *à la* Scheler involves distancing himself from a version of phenomenology that involves a methodological commitment to some version of the *Cogito* or a "sphere of ownness" (CPP, 29) as a starting point. In an earlier lecture in this series, he takes up Scheler's thought directly as a reaction to a tension in Husserl's work around intersubjectivity, and whether it is possible to refuse proceeding from a "sphere of ownness" as a starting point, and "attempt[s] to gain access to others" from this "cogito" (CPP, 29). Scheler, he writes, attempts to solve the problem "and secure the perception of others in completely renouncing the 'cogito' as the starting point" (CPP, 29). Instead, "[h]e explicitly begins with the total indifferentiation of self and other" (CPP, 30).

This indifferentiation has a unique relationship to affect. Merleau-Ponty describes Scheler's position:

> Scheler generalizes the notion of "internal perception" (the perception of sentiments, for example) that applies as much to the others as to myself because, on the one hand, the perception of my own body or my own behavior is exterior to the perception of objects and not more immediate; and on the other hand, we see, we perceive the other's sentiments (not only their expressions) with the same certitude that we perceive our own. (CPP, 30)

The indifferentiation at issue involves a sharing of sentiments, a kind of "internal perception" that can be had equally of others' bodies and behaviors, such that "my own body or my own behavior" are "not more immediate" (CPP, 30). While I

cannot sense what the other senses, I can feel what the other feels: "the purely sensible aspect of a feeling constitutes only a minor portion of it. All the rest, its content, its *intention*, can be shared with others" (CPP, 31). Of course the language of intentionality is being used here in precisely the way I argued above we should hesitate to use it, in the interests of letting a uniquely affective force become conspicuous. But even if Merleau-Ponty is not following my advice here, he clearly understands sympathy in a manner that is in line with my conclusion: it is a uniquely affective force.

Fairly or not, ultimately Merleau-Ponty criticizes Scheler for positing a "total indifferentiation of self and other" (CPP, 30). It leaves open the question, he writes, of "how self-consciousness can surge forth from this ground of a primitive undifferentiated state" (CPP, 30); how "a subject who doesn't have self-consciousness (in the Husserlian sense) [could] emerge as a subject from this common current" (CPP, 32). What we need, he concludes, is not a notion of the other already in me or myself already in the other, but rather a notion of "*expression*" (CPP, 32), the emergence within shared, sympathetic perception of something like "the individual's style" (CPP, 34). He cites an study in which a researcher

> shows photographs of different people to subjects with no scientific background. He also presents them with the same people's signatures, silhouettes, and their recorded voices and asks them to match all these materials. The proportion of correct matches (about 70 percent) is *remarkable without the subjects being able to say what guided them in their decisions*. We must admit that perception grasps in the other a unique structure that participates in the other's expressions, voice, writing and so forth. (CPP, 34)

The implication is that there is indeed a force of sympathy at work in the recognition the subjects demonstrate in the study. But it is a sympathy that is not at odds with the expression of an individual style. Scheler is right that "[l]ife surpasses individuality" (CPP, 32). But sympathy and the perception of others must be understood in a manner that is consistent with the emergence of individuals.

In "The Child's Relations with Others," we find this same insistence that sympathetic indistinction is not inconsistent with the self-other distinction that emerges in adult experience, but is actually crucial to a perception of others as such. "[G]enuine communication" and the adult perception of others, Merleau-Ponty argues, would not be possible without this "transfer" of conduct found in pre-communicative sympathy (CRO, 118). Insofar as we become able to see others as such, to communicate dialogically and "smile back" when they smile, this is not only because we learn to see bodies as interiorities, private lives distinct and external to each other, but also because our adult vision of others still functions as sympathy. Just as Merleau-Ponty distinguishes "genuine communication" from "pre-communication," he distinguishes "a genuine sympathy" that is "at least *relatively* distinct" from the initial, childlike sympathy (CRO, 120). As adults, what we see others doing still functions to mobilize *feelings*, in both the motor and affective sense, in our own bodies. But it works according to an "adult sympathy" that "occurs between 'other' and 'other'; it does not abolish the differences between myself and the other." Quite the contrary: "on the basis of this initial community… there occurs a segregation, a distinction of

individuals" (CRO, 119). And yet this segregation also does not abolish the indistinction between myself and the other, for it is "a process which, moreover… is never completely finished" (CRO, 119). Thus, even in the adult perception of others, there is still transfer: "conduct which I am able only to see," Merleau-Ponty writes, "I live somehow from a distance" (CRO, 118).

Take note of that language of *distance*: Merleau-Ponty will describe the feeling of alterity, the learned and perpetually negotiated distinction between self and others, in terms of a "lived distance," distinguishing it from the one-time discovery of a given and pre-determined boundary (CRO, 154). Not only does Merleau-Ponty think that child perception begins with an indistinction of self and other, he thinks adult experience continues to be a potentially disorienting mixture of distinction and indistinction, a "distance" that is "lived"; not fixed and discovered once and for all but negotiated. The "dizzying proximity of others" that characterizes child perception is "pushe[d]… farther away rather than suppress[ed]… altogether" (CRO, 154). We push others farther away (or draw them closer), we become people that are more or less intimate with and sensitive to particular people or contexts, and in that sense the self-other distinction is quite real; but not as a brute or fixed fact, and not in a manner that is inconsistent with the persistence of indistinction.[103]

In his influential study of the body image, Paul Schilder notes that manifestations of both motion and emotion have a tendency to provoke similar

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[103] For an opposing interpretation, see Dillon (1978), the early important piece of anglophone scholarship on this lecture that I mentioned earlier. Dillon argues that Merleau-Ponty must have been wrong to posit the breakdown of syncretic sociability well after the advent of specular experience, since syncretic sociability is characterized by indistinction while specular experience is characterized by distinction, and thus they must be mutually exclusive.

reactions in others.[104] He accounts for most forms of mimetic behaviour by

theorizing a contagious potential he calls sympathy that constitutes the expressive

force of motions and emotions (1950, 243-245).[105] If we understand Merleau-

Ponty's notion of sympathy through Schilder's, then it is no accident that

imitation is chosen to exemplify it, since sympathy as Schilder theorizes it is a

fundamentally mimetic force.[106]

The type of mimetic behavior Schilder associates especially with the

behavior of children, crowds and animal groups he calls a "sympathetic induction

of emotion and feeling… [or] of an affective state" (1950, 244). As in Merleau-

Ponty's lecture, Schilder also uses the example of the infectious smile: "the sight

of a smiling face," he writes, "provokes a smile" through a kind of induction of

the feeling, even when the child is "at an age at which they cannot be credited

with understanding… the significance of the expression that provokes their

reactions" (1950, 244). He notes that adults also have "sympathetic reactions" of

this sort: "[a] merry face makes us feel brighter" (1950, 244). Laughter and crying

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[104] Paul Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* (1950, 244 and 245).

[105] The outlier is a more voluntary, conscious type of imitation.

[106] I have suggested comparing them on the basis of the parallels between their concepts; also, as I explain in the next section, references to Schilder on related topics continue to appear in Merleau-Ponty's later work. Yet since they wrote during roughly the same period, we might also take an interest in the puzzle of how the directions of influence actually ran at the time. Since *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* was published in 1950, the year Merleau-Ponty gave his lecture on the child's relations with others, it would no doubt be anachronistic to cite that work as the precedent for Merleau-Ponty's discussion of sympathy. The most direct influence on Merleau-Ponty's notion of sympathy and mimesis (aside from Wallon himself) was Max Scheler. See Scheler's discussion of mimetic behavior, sympathy, and "fellow-feeling" in the early chapters of *The Nature of Sympathy* (2008). As I have already mentioned, Merleau-Ponty cites Scheler on the notion of "pre-communication" in this lecture (CRO, 119), and discusses his notion of sympathy in more depth in a previous lecture in the series (CPP, 29-34). However, while *Image* was Schilder's first major work to be written in English and the one circulated most widely, especially in subsequent decades, we must not forget that Schilder had been publishing on related topics in German for decades. It is known Merleau-Ponty was already familiar with that work at the time he taught at the Sorbonne, since he cites it in *The Phenomenology of Perception*. Schilder also influenced Lhermitte, whose *L'Image de notre corps* Merleau-Ponty cites in the Sorbonne lecture under discussion.

are notoriously infectious in this same manner: we may laugh or cry along with

others even when we have no idea what the fuss is about.

Though he distinguishes them as different varieties of imitation, Schilder

compares this sympathetic induction of emotions to motor mimesis, in which the

sight of someone's movement prepares a motor version of the gesture in "one's

own body, which, like all motor representation, tends to realize itself immediately

in movements" (1950, 244). Thus for Schilder, both motions and emotions are

fundamentally promiscuous, incontinent, infectious. They *solicit* induction,

repetition, analogic amplification. Indeed, contemporary studies support the

suggestion of a close relationship between emotional contagion and motor

mimicry.[107]

Both Schilder and Merleau-Ponty claim that the body schema in its initial

form is an intercorporeal system rather than something that is privately owned.

Schilder theorizes that, rather than relying on them already being in place,

imitating emotional expressions of others conditions the cultivation of the

perceiver's body schema and body image, as well as her perception of others as

such. "[T]he postural model of the body is dependent on what we see and

experience in others," he writes.[108] Schilder even claims that "[o]ur own emotions

and those of other persons and their expressions are never isolated" (1950, 246),

and that the imitation of another person's movements relies on "the partial

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[107] See Hatfield et al, **(**1993**,** 97)

[108] The full quote runs: "Emotions are in themselves connected with expressions and are in themselves connected with the emotions of others. We perceive… their expressions which are expressions of emotions, and emotions are emotions of personalities. These are primary data. They are not secondary to the building up of our own postural model of the body, and I have shown in detail how much the postural model of the body is dependent on what we see and experience in others" (1950, 247-48).

community of the body-image" (1950, 247). Thus, for Schilder, sympathetic mimesis is a crucial means through which the child *develops* proprioceptive structures—structures which thus are themselves intercorporeal achievements. Similarly, when Merleau-Ponty returns to a discussion of mimesis later in the lecture emphasizing that it operates through sympathy, he says that sympathy relies on a body schema or "postural function" that is not private, not owned by the child's body personally, but is rather an intercorporeal system "unit[ing] my body, the other's body, and the other himself [sic]" (1950, 145).

In order to understand these claims, we must distinguish between two stages or functions of the body schema: one which is intercorporeal, and one which is proprioceptive. At first the body schema serves as a system of equivalencies between perception and movement. It is only after the assumption of the body image, when the body schema must adapt to incorporate the body proper, that it develops to include a felt sense of qualitative distinction between interoception and exteroception. And it is only in this adapted variation that the body schema functions as proprioception narrowly construed. For instance, I can coordinate the movements of my legs with themselves or in response to my environment without that coordination involving a sense of my legs as part of a bounded territory that is my *own*.

When he introduces the concept of the body schema in this lecture, Merleau-Ponty asserts that "my body… is first and foremost a *system* whose different introceptive and extroceptive aspects express each other reciprocally" (CRO, 117). But he distinguishes between a "fragmentary" and a "total body

schema."[109] It is only insofar as the body schema incorporates into perception and movement a qualitative inside-outside distinction that it functions as proprioception in the narrow sense of the term, indicating in the perceptual field a feeling of ownness, a distinction of one's own body as an inner, closed, or insular zone bordered by a perceptual frontier. To have a body schema that reciprocally expresses interoception as exteroception (retrospectively understood) is not necessarily to have a body schema that distinguishes them as such.

Merleau-Ponty's reference to a period before the body schema becomes "total" posits a time before the body schema has incorporated interoception as a totality, a closed and insular interior domain separated from the domain of exteroception and given the special and exclusive status of "mine." The earliest form of the body schema that Merleau-Ponty posits, and that he attributes to the imitating infant, is a body schema that conducts the reversibility of perception and movement, the reversibility of what will later be qualitatively distinguished as interoception and exteroception, such that they "reciprocally express" or stand in for each other. It does not yet distinguish them into private and public zones. As I will suggest in the concluding section and argue more extensively in the next chapter, that development will require an affective investment in a body image.

Understanding this early form of the body schema is the key to understanding Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of child perception as sympathetic indistinction. It is because exteroceptions actually function as interoceptions and vice versa (again, these terms should be understood in their

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[109] See CRO, 115-123, especially 123: "The consciousness of one's own body is thus fragmentary at first and gradually becomes integrated." See also CPP, 247-249, especially 249: "No total body schema yet exists," and "[c]onsciousness of one's own body is first of all fragmentary."

retrospective sense here), rather than merely being confused with each other, that the child "live[s] in the facial expressions of the other" (CRO, 146). Child perception is characterized by a "*ubiquity*" (CRO, 129, 139) or "*identity at a distance*" (CRO, 139), such that interoception is not limited to a certain point on the perceptual field, but can find itself in multiple places at once. Interoception for her has not yet fixated on what she will later feel to be its privileged location: her *own* body, *le corps propre*.

2.4) Interoception, Exteroception, and Imagination as Adult Sympathy

What becomes of that first function of the body schema in adult perception? In "Eye and Mind," Merleau-Ponty recounts an experience of the mirror image borrowed from Schilder. "[S]moking a pipe before a mirror," he writes, "I feel the sleek, burning surface of the wood not only where my fingers are but also in those ghostlike fingers, those merely visible fingers inside the mirror."[110] As Schilder tells the tale:

> I sit about ten feet away from a mirror holding a pipe.... I press my fingers tightly against the pipe… [and w]hen I look intently at the picture of my hand in the mirror I now feel clearly that… sensation of pressure… not only in my actual hand but also in the hand in the mirror…. [T]he body is also present in my picture in the mirror.[111]

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[110] The full quote continues: "The mirror's ghost lies outside my body, and by the same token my own body's 'invisibility' can invest the other bodies I see. Hence my body can assume segments derived from the body of another, just as my substance passes into them: man [sic] is a mirror for man" (EM, 168; see also Schilder 1950, 223-224, 278).

[111] The full quote runs: "I sit about ten feet away from a mirror holding a pipe or a pencil in my hand and look into the mirror. I press my fingers tightly against the pipe and have a clear-cut feeling of pressure in my fingers. When I look intently at the picture of my hand in the mirror I now feel clearly that the sensation of pressure is not only in my fingers in my own hand, but also in the hand which is twenty feet distant in the mirror. Even when I hold the pipe in such a way that only the pipe is seen and not my hand, I can still feel, though with some difficulty, the pressure on the pipe in the mirror. This feeling is therefore not only in my actual hand but also in the hand in the mirror… the body is also present in my picture in the mirror. Not only is it the optic picture but

As bizarre as this doubling of one's felt sense of place sounds, it is readily

repeatable. For instance, executing complex motor tasks using a mirror—like

shaving or applying make-up—requires coordination between two sets of motor

feelings: one that takes place in my actual fingers, and another that takes up

residence in the phantom fingers in the mirror.

Schilder's mirror experience betrays a weakness in the hold the body

proper's felt insularity exerts over the organization of our adult perceptions. It

allows us a glimpse into what perception was like prior to the advent of the body

proper, but it also reveals an undercurrent of adult perception in which the

childlike felt sense of place is still at large, possessed of a mobility that is the

adult form of "*ubiquity*" (CRO, 139).[112] The mirror image is crucial in this

Sorbonne lecture, not only because of the mirror stage, but also because the

mirror image, Merleau-Ponty writes in that lecture, "even for the adult… is

mysteriously inhabited by me" (CRO, 132). For Merleau-Ponty the mirror stage,

like the reduction, cannot be completed. The mirror's ability to mobilize the

child's interoceptions so that they cathect on a privileged location as *her own*

depends on its ability to solicit the child's sympathy, offering her "a 'phantom'

life in the mirror" (CRO, 134). It is this function of the mirror Merleau-Ponty is

emphasizing when he writes that just as the child "feels that he [sic] is in the

other's body… he feels himself to be in his visual image" (CRO, 134). Chapter 3

will expand on this account of the mirror image as a double inhabited through

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it also carries with it tactile sensation. My postural model of the body is in a picture outside
myself. But is not every other person like a picture of myself?" (Schilder 1950, 223-224).

[112] See also the description of this mirror experience in the Sorbonne lecture: "the body is at once
present in the mirror and present at the point where I feel it tactually" (CRO 139-140). See also
(CPP 251).

ubiquity, exploring the way that it conditions the development of the experience of the specular image and the corollary assumption of a body image, even as it is displaced by the specular image.

Both Merleau-Ponty and Schilder claim that we can witness this ubiquity in adult life, not only in perceiving ourselves in the mirror, but also in perceiving others and the world around us. Merleau-Ponty's late essay "Eye and Mind" is dedicated to arguing that depth perception is only possible on the basis of this ubiquity (EM, 170). The things I merely *see*, Merleau-Ponty writes, are also *felt*: they "have an internal equivalent in me; they arouse in me a carnal formula of their presence" (EM, 164). This "carnal formula" conditions the emergence of perceptual depth. It enables perceived objects to appear in terms of their hidden sides. It supplies the force of the feeling Merleau-Ponty calls the perceptual faith: the feeling that perception has placed me in the presence of the real.

Thus the development of the body schema into a means of proprioception in the adult sense does not extinguish the first function of the body schema— indeed, it depends upon it. To perceive my surroundings in terms of possible movements I could undertake in them is precisely for the space I see to become populated with vaguely felt phantom movements; to "have a feel" for a space I see. But as an adult, the virtual or imaginary presence of the body in potential movements and orientations is qualitatively distinguished from the perceptual presence of the body in its actual movements and orientations. Insofar as the reciprocal expression between interoception and exteroception, which the body schema performs in adult perception, functions as proprioception, the interocepted

feeling of my surroundings in terms of potential positions and movements is sharply distinguished from my sense of my *actual* position and movements. If it becomes conspicuous, their reversibility in experiences like the one I describe— an implicit sense of the surrounding space that consists of phantom movements that I could perform in it—will feel like a haunting of space, an imagination distinguished from perception proper.[113] Thus part of what it means to claim that child perception involves an indistinction of interoception and exteroception is that for the child, the distinction between imagination and perception has not yet been made. This is indeed also a claim Merleau-Ponty makes in the Sorbonne lectures (CPP, 176-182): not only that childlike perception involves "a partial absence of the distinctiveness between the real and the imaginary" (CPP, 182), but also that even in adult perception, "this distinction cannot be maintained absolutely" (CPP, 181).

The interoceptive sense of things that are nonetheless experienced as outside, attributed to child perception and found again in adult experiences such as Schilder's mirror experience, is that "imaginary texture of the real" Merleau-Ponty speaks of in his famous final essay (EM, 165). When Merleau-Ponty writes there that "the word 'image' is in bad repute," he means that we fail to understand imagination if we see it only through adult eyes: as mere illusion, an inner copy of the world projected back onto it by the self, paling in contrast to veridical exteroception, veridical contact with the outside (EM, 164). "[W]e have thoughtlessly believed," he writes, "that a design was a tracing, a copy, a second

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[113] This raises an fascinating question about the phenomenology of distinctions between possible and impossible movements.

thing, and that the mental image was such a design, belonging among our private bric-a-brac." Instead, in that text and in that later period of his work, the term "image" achieves the sense of a perception animate with interoceptive textures. Imagination trades in the affective tissue of perception; it is the means in adult life through which what we merely see *moves us*, the means through which it has affective force, a felt purchase on our own sensorimotor bodies. But that sense of the term is already being prepared in the Sorbonne lectures, where Merleau-Ponty writes that "[t]he image is not an enfeebled perception" (CPP, 176); that "what is called *imagination* is an emotional conduct" (CRO, 98), that "imagination… [is] an *affective* and *motor* phenomenon" (CPP, 178). Imagination, in other words, is the adult form of sympathy: that "genuine sympathy" that hesitates to affirm itself as perception, distances itself from perception in order to make space for difference and dialogue.

The adult mode of this childhood indistinction of exteroception and interoception is an experience of their reversibility, where exteroceptions function as interoceptions and vice versa. That reversibility, Merleau-Ponty argues in "Eye and Mind," is the mode of perception that the painter taps into when she paints: by "lending his [sic] body to the world" (EM, 162) the artist "liberates the phantoms captive in it" (EM, 167). The painter's gaze is an exteroception that functions as an interoception; and that, by painting what she sees, lets that interoception function in its turn as an exteroception, a way to see the canvas. Though the advent of the body proper represses it, to see is not merely to *be in here* and *look out there*; it is also to haunt the whole sphere of perception. In the

experience of looking, I can find in what I merely *see* qualities that I otherwise

treat as inward qualities, as things that must be *felt* from within. Though the

advent of the body proper identifies the felt sense of place, the interoceptive body,

as *inner*; even in adult experience the feeling, interoceptive body is not contained

within the boundaries that have captivated it. And this is why "even for the adult

the image is never a simple reflection of the model; it is, rather, its 'quasi-

presence'" (CRO, 133), borrowing from interoception the feelings that will let it

come to life, will mobilize its affective force, and let it appear as a kind of

physiognomy.

I must make one last point about the distinction between imagination and

perception before I turn to concluding remarks. The claim that imagination must

be distinguished from perception proper as an aspect of the development of the

body image, self-other distinctions, and inside-outside distinctions, is a claim that

raises a fascinating question about the phenomenology of distinctions between

possible and impossible movements. The distinction of imagination and

perception is a distinction of my actual and present place and movement from the

kind of feel I have for places and movements that are not actually present (note

that it follows from the claim about the co-existence of distinction and

indistinction that imagination and perception cannot fully and finally be

distinguished; see also my conclusion below). Yet, within the latter category

(imaginary place and movement) there is a further distinction to be made: some of

the non-present movements I feel are movements I experience as possible for me,

and some are movements I experience as impossible for me. Some of the non-

present places I feel I experiences as places I could occupy, and some I experience as places I could not occupy. I could of course be mistaken about my own possibilities; nevertheless the distinction must be accounted for in a phenomenology that posits the advent of a distinction between imagination and perception.

This distinction between possible and impossible imaginary movements is indebted to work on the feminist question of how the body schema, understood in the *Phenomenology* as an "I can" (a system of movements felt as things *I can* do), can serve also as an "I cannot" (a system of movements whose possibility is felt in a foreclosed sense, so that they are foreshadowed by the body schema as things someone can do, but that *I cannot*). The watershed work on this is Iris Marion Young's influential essay "Throwing Like a Girl" (2005, 27-45).[114] Young demonstrates that the body schema functions, not only to suggest possible movements and orientations to us, but also to deny the possibility of other movements and orientations. As Young explains, an important mechanism of internalized oppression is the installation in our perceptual habits—indeed, in our body schema—of an inhibiting, hesitating sense that certain movements and orientations are foreclosed to us; the same movement may appear as one that *someone can* do, but that *I cannot*.

The distinction is relevant to my discussion here because it bears on the self-other distinction. The question about a further distinction within imagination between imaginations of the possible and imaginations of the impossible suggests

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[114] (2005), in *On Female Body Experience : "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press: 27-45.

that a distinction between perception and imagination, while necessary, is not sufficient to distinguish my self and the other. One way to approach this point is in terms of the experience of the other: when I am experiencing the other as other, and nonetheless have a feel for her gestures and conducts, feeling these as *hers* and not *mine* involves feeling them to be conducts that are, in a very specific sense, impossible for me. It involves feeling these conducts differently than I feel the possibility of responding to them or even repeating them with my own body. The point is perhaps more simply approached in terms of the experience of self: the felt impossibility of some movement that I nevertheless have a felt sketch of in my body schema is also no doubt an individuating experience: these movements are possible for someone, but not *for me*.

On my analysis, it would follow then that the way to describe the distinction between possible and impossible imaginary movement is that some imaginary movements are expressed in my body schema and are also refused by my body image—they are sketched as possible by the body schema, but they are in tension with my body image. This supports the analysis of gender as body image, and suggests that it should be understood in terms of the distinction between body image and body schema that I have drawn here, and will elaborate in Chapter 3. The layering of a felt sense of generic capacity with the prohibition of personal capacity is extremely interesting as a case of the co-existence of indistinction with distinction that I have been arguing for in this chapter. It is also an interesting case of the body image functioning as a reorganization of the body

schema according to self-other and inside-outside distinctions, a point which I will discuss at more length in Chapter 3.

2.5) Conclusion: The Affective Assumption of the Image

Crucial to understanding Merleau-Ponty's position about child perception as indistinction is that *the indistinction he speaks of is not only a spatial indistinction, but an affective one*. It is not just a failure to make a spatial distinction. It is rather an affective intimacy: an unguarded tendency to induct affects. This is why Merleau-Ponty insists that childhood indistinction is not "egocentri[sm]" (CRO, 119). The child is not simply attributing to others feelings that really belong to her. Indeed, she has no feelings that are properly her *own*. Thus, to incorporate the self-other distinction into perception is not only to begin experiencing *spaces* as yours vs. mine, it is also to begin experiencing *feelings* as yours vs. mine.

Merleau-Ponty's account of child perception follows Henri Wallon's very closely until the pivotal mirror stage, when he rejects Wallon's description in favor of a more Lacanian one that privileges its "affective significance" (CRO, 137). In this stage, the child is supposed to learn to see the mirror image in the adult manner, withdrawing her interoceptive participation in it so that the image no longer enjoys its own spatiality, but instead serves to indicate her own body as the privileged headquarters of all her perceptions. Wallon, Merleau-Ponty reports, treats this as an intellectual development: as the child learns how the mirror

works, she comes to understand it as a reflection. But he objects that this approach fails to appreciate "the affective significance of the phenomenon" (CRO, 137).

One part of what Merleau-Ponty means by this is that an *affective force* must be mobilized in order for the child to invest her embodied perspective in a body image. In order to feel the image as her *own*, it is not enough that the child learns the facts about reflective surfaces. What occurs in the mirror stage, Merleau-Ponty writes, "is the acquisition not only of a new content but of a new function as well: the narcissistic function" (CRO, 136).[115] She must become "capt[ivated]" by the image, devoted to it (CRO, 137). This requires cathexis: *attachment* in the affective sense of the word. Her interoceptive, feeling body must be "confiscat[ed]" by this visible one, so that her interoceptions now feel shaped by the surfaces of the image. The visible image of her body in the mirror and her interoceptivity migrate into one another, so that her visible body becomes a *body image*: an imaginary exteroception present whether or not she is looking in the mirror. Furthermore, this imaginary exteroception is *interocepted*, and indeed captivates her interoceptive body, so that for the first time the child is "distance[d]" from the desires and feelings immediately available in her present perceptual situation, and becomes "orient[ed]… toward what he [sic] sees or imagines himself to be" (CRO, 137). Note that once again, in the pivotal case of the body image, we see imagination cast as the adult form of sympathy, the one that includes distance. The development at issue here, the transformation wrought in the child's perception, is not primarily an intellectual acquisition, but an affective investment.

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[115] See also CPP (254).

There is a second sense of the claim that the "affective significance" of the transformation is crucial. Merleau-Ponty means to emphasize, not only the role of affect as means and medium of the development, but also the affective results of this development. The transformation changes the way the child feels feelings. It introduces "a sort of wall between me and the other: a partition" (CRO, 120). But this "wall" or "partition" is not only a partition in the child's experience of spaces. It also reorganizes her experience of affects. "There is no longer," Merleau-Ponty writes, "that dizzying proximity of others" (CRO, 154). Instead a "'lived distance' divides us," allowing room to perceive others' feelings without them encroaching on the intimate space of my *own* feelings.

But just as the mirror is a lasting reservoir for the experience of ubiquity it helped to suppress, it is in "the realm of feelings" that the childlike indistinction and mixture of self and other persists most tenaciously (CRO, 155). Love, for instance, forges between people "an undivided situation" akin to that of childhood, joining me to an other such that I "suffer from her suffering" (CRO, 154). Affective forces carve into relief the imaginary geography of perception that allows me to say "this is mine, this is yours." And just so, affective forces can forge intercorporeal situations in which these boundaries are once again fully at stake, situations in which "[o]ne can no longer say 'This is mine, this is yours'" (CRO, 154). If affective forces intervened to institute a felt sense of privacy in one's body, then whether for better or for worse, they retain a power to renegotiate it. This account of love exhibits some distance from the account of it in evidence in the discussion of true and false feelings in the chapter of the

Phenomenology of Perception on "The *Cogito*." Unlike the account of love in the earlier work, here Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that the boundaries of the self are actually at stake in emotions, rather than preceding the emotions and serving as an arbiter of their veracity.

Thus on Merleau-Ponty's account of the phenomenology of child perception, not only is the self-other distinction an affective development rather than an innate possession, it is also not a terminal accomplishment. A valid concern with the politics of difference might motivate us to theorize in a way that protects self-other boundaries at an ontological level, or by positing them as fixed phenomenological structures. Merleau-Ponty's notion of "indistinction" offers us an opportunity to reflect on the possibility that in fact our boundaries have to be negotiated and protected at an interpersonal and intercorporeal level. It is possible, he suggests, to really undo my boundaries in a relationship; for better or worse, to re-introduce that "dizzying proximity" with an other, and genuinely lose my bearings on what is my own. Not only our spatial boundaries but also our affective ones are vulnerable and negotiable. Adult sociality and difference is an imaginary geography whose contours surface in the circulating currents of affective forces. The assumption of the body image institutes a phenomenological structure for addressing a question of distinction which is never finally answered.

If Merleau-Ponty is right that distinction and indistinction coexist, this opens an intriguing set of questions about how to understand intercorporeal difference and the experience of alterity. In my view, by the end of Merleau-Ponty's lecture some tension has accrued between the model of alterity as a

"wall" or "partition," and the model that casts it as a "lived distance." If it is true that our relations with others as such will always involve a certain amount of sympathy, and that there is fundamental structural instability in the experience of self-other difference as a "wall," that feeling of absolute integrity our sense of privacy can sometimes presume; then it follows that the wall, the border or partition, is not the right model for all of our experience of intercorporeal difference. There must be an operation of differentiation in childhood and in intimate adult relationships that is not finally or fully describable as the parsing of territories, the assertion "this is mine, this is yours." There must be a more intimate dynamic of difference that accommodates the micropolitics of the negotiations that transpire when the question of boundary has been relaxed, a differentiation that gives rise to—perhaps consists of—the many variations and mixtures of affective intensity and valence through which the intimacy of a relationship is incarnated; a differentiation that is not a matter of drawing borders, but rather persists and even thrives in even the most intimate, shared space.

In this chapter I have focused on the role of affect in Merleau-Ponty's account of self-other and inside-outside indistinction; in Chapter 3, I will explore the role of affect in the account of distinction Merleau-Ponty offers—especially its advent in the mirror stage.

CHAPTER 3 – Affect and Individuation: Body Schema, Body Image, and the Advent of the Body Proper in Merleau-Ponty and Kristeva

3.1) Introduction: The Body Proper and the Problem of Individuation

Merleau-Ponty's account of the advent of the body proper occurs in the context of a lecture on "The Child's Relations with Others." Its overall aim is to account for "the perception and understanding of others" (CRO, 97). In order for the child to experience others as such, perception must be reorganized according to a self-other distinction. Precisely because an individuated experience of one's own body is not assumed as a starting point, the traditional problem of other minds is displaced, and individuation itself is what needs to be explained. As M. C. Dillon summarizes the problem,

> the world prior to the emergence of the other is not a world I experience as my own: it is a world in which there is an indistinction of perspectives, a world from which the mine-alien or self-other dimension is absent. […] [T]hus for him, the problem is not 'how does the infant begin to recognize others as other consciousnesses? But rather 'how does the infant learn to differentiate himself and others as separate beings within a sphere of experience that lacks this differentiation.' Again, it is not a question of how the infant transcends an aboriginal self-centeredness, it is rather a question of how he learns to distinguish his experience of himself from his experience of others, that is, how he transcends syncretism (1988, 119-121).

But as I emphasized in Chapter 2, Merleau-Ponty argues that relations with others consist not only in our sense of distinction from others, but also in an affective indistinction from them. Both are part of my ability to see an other as such: on the

one hand I must share the other's feelings, and on the other hand I must share them as her feelings and not my own.

The experience of oneself or of an other "as a unique individual, whose place can be taken by no one else," Merleau-Ponty writes, "comes later and is not primitive" (CPP, 119). An indistinction or syncretic sociability characterizes childhood perception. Further, this "distinction of individuals" is "a process which… is never completely finished" (CPP, 119). The claim is thus developmental, but also about perception and embodied experience in general—as I argued in Chapter 2, Merleau-Ponty's insistence on the persistence of indistinction in adult life suggests that he sees this as having a structural status as a general condition of perception. As Merleau-Ponty has it, distinction and indistinction coexist in adult life; and adult emotional life in particular is the site of a constant negotiation of that coexistence (CRO, 155). But the question remains: if we follow him in refusing to assume individuated experience from the beginning, *how does it emerge?* What force of differentiation is at work here? In this chapter, I propose to explore the role of affective forces in the differentiation through which embodiment comes to be experienced as individuated.

Julia Kristeva likewise offers an account in which an individuated experience of one's body is not the starting point, is produced under pressure of affective forces, and never eradicates the indistinction of childhood.[116] For Kristeva, the body proper is forged and maintained in a process she calls *abjection*. There must be in child development an initial "mapping of the self's

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[116] (1982), *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. New York: Columbia University Press.

clean and proper body [*le corps propre*]" (1982, 72) that she theorizes as the

child's struggle to extricate itself from a particular post-natal context of

indistinction: the pre-objective, pre-representational relationship to the maternal

figure in which the child's body even after birth is not yet experienced as

separate. Instead the child's experiences of others and his (Kristeva, as we will

see, is explicitly theorizing the development of a masculine child) environment in

terms of indistinct affective rhythms. However, for Kristeva, this indistinction is

not an immersion in the environment generally. It describes the infant's situation

of felt indistinction from the flesh of the mother: indistinction and affective pre-

communication is concentrated in attachment to the maternal figure. Like

Merleau-Ponty, she theorizes the establishment of bodily boundaries as a process

that is never finished: "the subject will always be marked by the uncertainty of his

borders and of his affective valency as well" (1982, 63). Abjection begins when

the infant is subjected to a demand to experience its body as separate from its

mother's. But abjection is also an ongoing operation of adult experience in which

that "archaism of the pre-objectal" space is "preserve[d]" in the very act of

repudiating it (1982, 10).

What is at stake in both Merleau-Ponty's and Kristeva's account of

"individuation" is the emergence of what they call *le corps propre*, the feeling of

the body as *one's own*. The sense of "ownness" I find in these accounts concerns

the shape(s) of the body's felt sense of place. My claim is that, for both thinkers,

this intimate perceptual space is neither a territory that is simply *given*

perceptually, nor posited through a *belief* claim about the correct property lines.

To have the felt sense of my body as my own, it is not sufficient to perceive the contours of my skin. Nor is it sufficient to have a belief that those surfaces are important. One reason for this is that, as I argued in Chapter 2, my felt sense of myself does not always line up with the contours of my skin, or with other observable parameters for measuring the limits of the body. Further, even though we no doubt have beliefs about the parameters of bodily boundaries, accounting for the formation of a belief would not be sufficient to account for the felt force of the body proper, the way that it structures my perception pre-reflectively. Again, the easiest way demonstrate this is to point out that my explicitly held beliefs about my bodily boundaries do not always align with my felt sense of them. Thus the advent of the body proper must account for my *attachment* to my body in the sense of an affective investment. To account for the advent of the body proper is to account for an event of affective investment such that my body develops an attachment to a certain contour or shape as its own place.

What is interesting about placing Merleau-Ponty's and Kristeva's accounts of the advent of the body proper in dialogue is that, while for both thinkers affect is the force of individualization, the affects they invoke are markedly different. For Merleau-Ponty, it is an account of narcissism, an attachment to the body through devotion (CRO, 136). His version of narcissism, as we will see, is unique and surprising: it is not a singular attachment, an attachment to the unity of the body introduced by the assumption of the image. It is rather an attachment to play —literally in this case child's play—between interoceptive and exteroceptive experiences of the body which have never before been distinct but which for the

first time appear to the child across an interval, the distance between his body where he moves and the visual image in the mirror that echoes his movements. So there is an ambivalence in this narcissistic attachment. But it is nonetheless a kind of love. The affect Kristeva places at the center of her account is horror. But in the tradition of Bataille and Freud, she understands horror as a definitively ambivalent affect as well.

Foregrounding the role of affect allows me to show how the actual experience of the body proper, of ownness in the body, that these accounts describe is different. The felt quality of bodily integrity is different, varying with the affective forces through which it is forged. Instead of arguing that we should place these accounts in competition for the claim to an exclusive account of the body proper, I am interested in using them to show that we do not have to choose between them. Ultimately I bring these accounts into dialogue because I think they describe between them a range of phenomenological variation in experiences of ownness. There is not a singular, uniform account of what it feels like to experience one's body as one's own: its phenomenology actually varies—not only between persons, but also between the various body images that a single person may assume. Comparing the two accounts also helps me argue that the experience of the body proper varies according to the affective forces brought to bear in its production, and that those forces vary with the broader social context in which individual occurs.

Contrasting these accounts also brings gender into the foreground, both in terms of its role in the social context in which individuation occurs, and its status

as part of the result of individuation. The body proper in both accounts is gendered. Though both accounts follow a more or less implicitly masculine drama of development, both accounts also offer some acknowledgement that gender is a variation in the experience of the body proper that occurs within and between social contexts.

3.2) Childhood Indistinction and the Body Schema

As my analysis in Chapter 2 demonstrates, in the Sorbonne lectures Merleau-Ponty argues for the indistinction of childhood experience, not by appeal to the authority of classical psychological accounts, but rather by invoking his own anti-dualist ontological commitments, arguing that the notion of the innate privacy of the felt aspects of experience includes a dualistic commitment to the innate closure of the psyche. In particular, if we are going to account adequately for the experience of others, we must reject the classical notion of "cenesthesia" (CRO, 114-118) in which the body is experienced as "a mass of utterly private sensations" (CRO, 117), such that *interoception* (perception that bears on an inner states) and *exteroception* (perception that bears on the external world) are mutually exclusive domains. The body is rather a body schema (or "postural schema"); not an entity in itself, contained within the skin, but rather the system of connections integrating a body and a particular environment. This argument tracks the history of the concept of the body schema, which was originally introduced by a French neurologist (Pierre Bonnier) who challenged the notion of cenesthesia as having no neurological basis: there is no physiological correlate for

a distinct sense of one's own body. Bonnier proposed instead that we describe the felt sense of place as a body schema.[117]

The body schema functions as a "system of equivalents and transpositions from one sense to another" (PhP, 236/273, see also PhP, 131-132/163), so that I can, for instance, see things in terms of how they feel, or feel things in terms of how they look. It allows my environment to appear in terms of kinaesthetic inclinations; in one often cited description of the phenomenology of the body schema, Merleau-Ponty describes it as "[a] system of possible movements, of 'motor projects' [that] radiates from us to our environment" (CRO, 5). This intersensory function extends to the sensations that will eventually be distinguished as interoception and exteroception. Thus Merleau-Ponty writes in this lecture that the body schema is "a *system* whose different introceptive and extroceptive aspects express each other reciprocally" (CRO, 117).

It is because exteroceptions and interoceptions (understood in the retrospective sense) actually function interchangeably, rather than merely being confused with each other, that the child "live[s] in the facial expressions of the other" (CRO, 146). The body schema ensures that visible behavior will have a felt meaning; that there is a "'postural impregnation' of my own body by the conducts I witness" (CRO, 118). The principle feature of childhood perception according to Merleau-Ponty is that interoception and exteroception have not yet been distinguished (CRO, 133). Perception has not yet been organized in such a way that its aspects announce themselves as "inner" vs. "outer" appearances. The child perceives the surfaces and depths of her body, but feels no privileged attachment

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[117] 1905, "L'aschématie." *Revue de neurologie* 13: 605-609.

to them. She feels herself to be where she is looking or touching. Child perception is characterized by a "*ubiquity*" (CRO, 129, 139), a coexistence of interoceptions in multiple places on the perceptual field at once. Interoception for her is spectacularly mobile, and has not yet fixated on what she will later feel to be its privileged location: her *own* body.

Merleau-Ponty writes in the *Phenomenology* that "the theory of the body schema is already a theory of perception." Perception understood through the notion of the body schema is a kind of participation in perceived things, a sympathy or fellow-feeling that arises out of my body's more or less organized and articulated immersion in a particular environment. As we will see, it follows from the theory of the body schema that, even after the advent of the body proper, perception doesn't entirely lose that status as a sympathetic participation in the perceived things. We cannot simply equate the child's perception with indistinction and the adult's with distinction.

3.3) Merleau-Ponty and the Mirror Stage

In his lecture course at the Sorbonne on "The Child's Relations with Others," Merleau-Ponty gives an account of the advent of the body proper that is a reading of the now well-known theory of the "mirror stage." This theory is now primarily associated with Jacques Lacan's version of it. In a short paper entitled "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," delivered in 1949 at the Sixteenth Annual Congress of Psychoanalysis in Zurich, Lacan presented an account of ego development that

proceeds through the child's identification with his mirror image.[118] This

identification at once alienates the child from his corporeal body in favor of the

ideal unity of the image, and at the same time produces a sense of integrity and

coherence in the body (1977, 3, 15). As a view from outside, the image gives the

child his body as a "total form" (1977, 2) for the first time. The "assumption"

(1977, 2) of the image creates a sense of the body as a self-contained interiority,

but it does so only through the alienation of identifying with an exterior

perspective on the body. Integrity is achieved through identifying with the totality

of the image at the cost of producing an irreducible "dehiscence at the heart of the

organism" (1977, 3): the appeal of the image is its unity (1977, 15), yet

identifying with the image is alienating (1977, 3), since it positions the child as

always outside-looking-in with respect to the body it unifies.

What is less well-known is that the theory of the mirror stage is the

contribution of Henri Wallon, a French child psychologist who introduced it in his

1931 article, *Comment se développe chez l'enfant la notion de corps propre*.[119]

There are important differences—as Merleau-Ponty points out, while Wallon

understand the child's recognition of the mirror image as an intellectual

development such that the child comes to understand the function of a reflective

surface, Lacan "emphasizes the affective significance of the phenomenon" (CRO,

137). While for Wallon, recognition of the mirror image is a measure or litmus

test for the intellectual development of a notion of the body proper, for Lacan this

change actually occurs through the recognition of the mirror image. The mirror

[118] Jacques Lacan (1977), *Écrits*. Alan Sheridan, trans. New York: Routledge Classics.
[119] Henri Wallon (1931), "*Comment se développe chez l'enfant la notion de corps proper*." Journal
de Psychologie, (November-December): 705-48.

stage for Lacan is an "*identification, in the full sense analysis gives to the term:* namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he [sic] assumes an image" (1977, 1). The recognition of the mirror image is for Lacan not primarily a development in the child's understanding. It is affective investment in the image.

As I noted in Chapter 2, Wallon's *Les origines du caractère chez l'enfant* (1949) is Merleau-Ponty's primary text in his lecture on "The Child's Relations with Others." In this text, published the same year as Lacan's presentation on the mirror stage in Zurich, Wallon again presents an account of the child's development of a sense of self as a mirror stage. Merleau-Ponty borrows elements from both accounts. He stresses Lacan's emphasis on "the affective significance of the phenomenon" (CRO, 137), arguing that it succeeds in accounting for the developments of the mirror stage in a way that Wallon's does not. Welsh notes that "Merleau-Ponty was one of the first to pick up on the importance" of Lacan's revision of Wallon's mirror stage, something that "would later become a seminal piece of psychoanalytic literature" (2013, 59). However, Merleau-Ponty's account of the narcissistic affect involved in assumption of the image deviates sharply from Lacan's. Further, there is a social element to Wallon's account that Merleau-Ponty preserves, while Lacan does not. I elaborate on these differences between Merleau-Ponty's version of the mirror stage and that of his sources in subsequent sections.

Wallon's basic premise is that insofar as the child's perception is not individuated, this can be correlated to the fact that she does not yet experience her

body as *visible* in the sense that she does not yet live her body as a thing which has a singular and discrete location in visible space (CRO, 135). Modifying Wallon's account to include Lacan's understanding of the affective assumption of the image, Merleau-Ponty offers an account in which the child's feeling of ownness in his body is produced through his affective incorporation of his body as seen, the visible image of his body in the mirror.

Wallon sets out to explain a change that he observes in children's behavior toward their mirror images. By fits and starts, the child can be observed treating the mirror image in a manner consistent with its status as a reflection and not always treating it as a double.

What does it mean to treat the mirror image as a double? When Merleau-Ponty writes about the mirror stage again years later in notes for a lecture at the College de France, he makes the cryptic comment "Schilder: I sense the contact of the pipe in my hand in the mirror" (N, 278). This fragment is an unmistakable reference to an anecdote told by Paul Schilder in his influential study of the body image that illustrates the experience of the mirror as a double. This anecdote is also mentioned in Merleau-Ponty's later essay "Eye and Mind" (EM, 168); I discussed this mention of it in Chapter 2 as an example of the persistence of child perception in adult perception. As Schilder tells it:

> I sit about ten feet away from a mirror holding a pipe.... I press my fingers tightly against the pipe… [and w]hen I look intently at the picture of my hand in the mirror I now feel clearly that… sensation of pressure… not only in my actual hand but also in the hand in the mirror…. [T]he body is also present in my picture in the mirror (1950, 223-224).

As bizarre as this doubling of one's felt sense of place sounds, it is readily repeatable. For instance, executing complex motor tasks using a mirror—like shaving or applying make-up—requires coordination between two sets of motor feelings: one that takes place in my actual fingers, and another that takes up residence in the phantom fingers in the mirror. Notably, both Schilder and Merleau-Ponty maintain that this doubling is not unique to the mirror image, but can also be found in our perceptions of others.

Treating the mirror as a reflection involves treating it, not as a figure in its own right, but as a reference to what it reflects. Wallon recounts observing a one-year old child wearing a straw hat stepping in front of the mirror (CRO, 130). When the hat catches her eye she "puts her hand not to the image of the hat in the mirror but to the hat on her head" (CRO, 130). So she sees the hat in the mirror, but she reaches for it on her head. In this development, the image has suffered a kind of "de-realization" (CRO, 130). It is not treated as a location of feeling in its own right, but as a reference to what it reflects.

So how is this "de-realization" accomplished? How does the image come to refer in this way, so that it reflects the child's felt sense of place back to her own body instead of absorbing it in the image? How does the child come to *recognize* the image, to treat it as belonging to her interoceptive body in the sense of a reflection, an "external witness" (CRO, 129) of it, a view that can be taken on it from elsewhere? The theoretical task of accounting for the child's experience of the mirror image as specular is shaped by the way the child's perception is understood. If the child's felt sense of place is not only mobile but even

ubiquitous in the manner I have described, then simply being exposed to her reflection will not suffice.

Merleau-Ponty criticizes Wallon for explaining the de-realization of the mirror image as an intellectual development, the acquisition of new knowledge about the mirror and how it works. He turns instead to Lacan, whose psychoanalytic account of the mirror stage, he writes, can explain what Wallon's fails to, because "it emphasizes the affective significance of the phenomenon" (CRO, 137). On Merleau-Ponty's reading of the familiar Lacanian take on the narcissism of the mirror stage, it is the child's devotion to the visible body that supplies the force of her identification with it. When the child shows the "jubilation" (CRO, 135) in play with the mirror that Lacan's account emphasizes, this is due to the fact that she has developed an attachment to it. She "*recogniz[es]*" it as "[her] *own*" (CRO, 136), not in the sense of a visible recognition, nor a misrecognition (as we will see Lacan would have it), but rather what Jenny Slatman, in her reading of Merleau-Ponty's take on the mirror stage, calls an "affective recognition" (2007, 188).[120] The child has become attached to the mirror image as a beloved and preferred visible avatar for her movements. The force of this devotion produces a singularity in her felt sense of place, intensifying and amplifying it in the mimetic resonance between the motor feelings she experiences in her limbs and the ones she enjoys in her mirror double.

This does not at first seem to take us any closer to solving Wallon's mirror puzzle. The child has not "de-realized" the image by withdrawing her felt sense of

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[120] (2007), "Recognition Beyond Narcissism: Imaging the Body's Ownness and Strangeness." *The Other: Feminist Reflections in Ethics.* Helen Fielding, et al, eds. New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 186-204.

place from it. She has rather devoted herself to it with an unprecedented intensity. On Merleau-Ponty's account, this narcissism is not a singular devotion. The child's devotion to the image is the crystallization of his "jubilation" in mirror play, a joy that "responds clearly to the correspondence between observed changes in visual appearance and interior intention" (CPP, 86). It is the correspondence of the visible and felt body, played out in the mirror image experienced as a double, that is the object of narcissistic attachment for Merleau-Ponty.

For Lacan, the narcissism of the mirror stage introduces an alienation between seen and felt experience, insofar as it is a devotion to the impossible unity of the body image at the expense of the felt body. Lacan writes:

> What I have called the *mirror stage* is interesting in that it manifests the affective dynamism by which the subject originally identifies himself with the visual *Gestalt* of his own body: in relation to the still very profound lack of co-ordination of his own motility, it represents an ideal unity… (1977, 15)

But in this way, the devotion that comprises narcissism's affective force also functions for Lacan as an elision of the very difference it establishes. It is always a misrecognition, in which the visible image of one's body claims an impossible mastery over the felt body.

Merleau-Ponty's notion of narcissism, though presented as a reading of Lacan, is interestingly unique. For him, narcissism is not an exclusive devotion, but an ambivalent one. Like Lacan, he emphasizes that the formation of a sense of ownness depends, paradoxically, on an intracorporeal alienation: a disjunction or "conflict" that opens for the first time between interoception and exteroception,

"between the *me* as I feel myself and the *me* as I see myself or as others see me" (CRO, 137). But narcissistic devotion to the image for Merleau-Ponty is in fact a devotion to the *mirror play*, to the image, not in itself, but the image *as* a favorite visible avatar of interoception. Noting Lacan's emphasis on the child's "'jubilation' at seeing himself [sic] moving in the mirror," Merleau-Ponty asks: "why is the image so *amusing*?" (CRO, 135, 130-131) The child is enthralled, not by the visible image *in itself*, but by the coordination of two sets of motor feelings echoing each other across a distance, amplifying each other, intensifying the child's felt sense of place in the doubling. Through the sympathetic "*ubiquity*" of the body schema (CRO, 139), the child finds herself in *both* poles of a mimetic relation; and it is this mimetic resonance, this "*identity at a distance*" (CRO, 139) that she becomes devoted to in Merleau-Ponty's reading of narcissism.

Merleau-Ponty cites the myth of Narcissus: "Narcissus was the mythical being who, after looking at the image in the water, was drawn as if by vertigo to rejoin his image in the mirror of water" (CRO, 136). In the mirror play, an attachment forms between the child's body as seen and her body as felt, such that the interoceptive body becomes invested in having a visible double, and feels a certain "vertigo" or loss of bearings without it. Narcissus is *captivated* by his image in the pool, so enthralled that he loses his bearings in his actual limbs, abandoning them for love of the merely visible body he sees in the surface of the water. Just so, the infant is *captivated* by the image she sees in the mirror. Like Narcissus listing steadily into the pool, the child dotes on the visible double, bonding with it, literally *affecting* a kind of migration into it, a sense of place via

affective investment. The interoceptive body has, as we might say of a child and her favorite toy, *become attached* to the visible figure that echoes its movements. The mirror image comes to enjoy a privileged status in the child's felt sense of place since visual and motor experiences can be combined there, and that composite is gratifying.

But when the child delights in her mirror image, what thrills her and captivates her fascination is not the image itself, but the image as a visible echo of her motor feelings. Given the experience of the mirror image as a double, a feedback cycle between her visible and interoceptive experiences can be played out *in* the mirror image, and this play draws the child in, enthralls her. So the visible image is attractive, not in itself, but in its concert with the interoceptive body. Because of the experience of ubiquity, where the visible figure is felt as well as seen, the sightless interoceptive motor feelings in the child's limbs enjoy a double life in the visible figure in the mirror, and in the mirror figure's movements the child can both see and feel an echo of those movements. This instantaneous doubling of the child's movements becomes deeply gratifying, compelling: attractive. It may be that Echo is a more fitting mythological reference for Merleau-Ponty's version of narcissism than Narcissus himself.

Again, this is still the experience of the double in the mirror, with the modification that this doubling, and the distance between its poles, has become an especially intense site of the felt sense of place. But eventually there is a "confiscation" or "capture" (CRO, 136-137) of the interoceptive body by the image. Even in the perceptual absence of her reflection, the child begins to live

her movements as shaped by the contours they can have in the distant image. Merleau-Ponty's reading of this "confiscation" is again more ambiguous than Lacan's: the felt body seems to have captured the image as much as the other way around. The child begins to experience her movements as shaped by their visible avatar even in its perceptual absence, such that their relationship becomes one of mutual migration, reversibility. The image incorporates the felt body, shapes it; and the felt body incorporates the image: assumes it as its own shape.

Yet the image brings with it the "distance that separates the image in the mirror from the felt body" (CRO, 140). This is the "alienation" of the mirror stage in Merleau-Ponty's reading of it. The child incorporates the image into her interoceptive experience as her felt shape from a visible distance. The image becomes an imaginary exteroception of the felt body, a view from outside; but this exteroception is in turn interocepted, and indeed it *shapes* the interoceptive body. It is *a view that is felt as the contours of feeling*. The mimetic relation folds, pivots on the axis of the distance between the image and the felt body. Interoception and exteroception are for the first time experienced, not as indistinct, but as reversible: folding outside-in and inside-out. This, Merleau-Ponty writes, is "the inauguration of an inside and an outside and their exchanges" (N, 278).

It is in this way that the experience of the image becomes an experience of an "external witness": it restructures the child's felt sense of place to incorporate the basic structure of a second-personal relation. To *interoceptively inhabit an imaginary exteroception* of my body as I do in the assumption of the body image

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is to experience my body from multiple perspectives. The body develops a body proper, a first-person stronghold on the perceptual field. But it does this only by incorporating into the felt body an imaginary perspective on that hidden position from outside, as if it is graspable in total, like a visible object seen in depth.

Thus occupying a perspective and place as my own "proper" one will in fact involve occupying multiple perspectives. It is a singularity that is not exclusivity. "Ownness" will, in this way, always involve strangeness—a difference that is not quite other, a difference within. A distance opens between experiences of the body as interior and as exterior, the advent of their distinction; yet this distance is on Merleau-Ponty's account a "lived distance" (CRO, 154). We inhabit, not one pole or the other, but the depth between them. The experience of the body proper is not so much the experience of containment within a border or of crossing a border; it is rather the experience of the body as a border space, as a liminal zone that is neither interior nor exterior but the distance and reversibility between them.

3.4) Body Image, Body Schema, Body Proper

For much of the history of the terms "body schema" and "body image," they have not been distinguished. However, especially since Shaun Gallagher's work on these concepts in the 1980s, his distinction has become commonplace in both psychology of the body and phenomenological philosophy. His distinction identifies the body schema as the pre-reflective integration of the body and its environment, felt and operative rather than representative; while the body image

is an explicit, conscious representation of the body to itself as a perceptual object (1986, 541).[121] While associated with the experience of ownness, this sense of the term "body image" refers to an objectifying consciousness of the body as a visible object, and does not describe a *feeling* of ownness in the body.

There has been much confusion in Merleau-Ponty scholarship on his uses of these terms. In the first English translation of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Colin Smith controversially translated "*schema corporel*" as "body image" (instead of using the English cognate of *schema*, "schema"). Gallagher claims that Merleau-Ponty does distinguish the body schema from the body image (2005, 20), while Saint Aubert insists that he does not (2009, 31).

Clearly Merleau-Ponty would distinguish the body schema from Gallagher's sense of the body image. But in the Sorbonne lectures we find a much richer phenomenology of images, especially body images. The "*image*," Merleau-Ponty writes, cannot be "assimilate[d]… to a… degraded, weakened copy of preceding perceptions" (CRO, 98).[122] Conditioned by the intersensory influence of the body schema, and intensified by affective investment, *body images*, though they may be related to visible objects, are not reducible to them. They are not merely seen or represented, but felt, in a motor and affective sense. In one of the lectures Merleau-Ponty defines imagination, not as a representative system, but as "an *affective* and *motor* phenomenon" (CPP, 178). The image is the mobilization of a feeling.

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[121] (1986), "Body Image and Body Schema: A Conceptual Clarification." *The Journal of Mind and Behavior* 7 (4): 541-554.

[122] Elsewhere ("Affects, Images and Childlike Perception") I have commented on the relation between the sense of image and imagination developed in the Sorbonne lectures and the sense this vocabulary achieves in Merleau-Ponty's later work re-conceptualizing perception through his notion of the flesh.

Thus I do see a distinction between body image and body schema being made in these lectures, but not the one Gallagher describes—and not one that locates them as independent phenomenological structures. While the body schema is the structure that accommodates the general reversibility of interoception and exteroception, the body image is a particular exteroception of one's body which is (via the body schema) reciprocally expressed as interoception in the unique fashion Merleau-Ponty describes in his reading of the mirror stage. Through the force of affective investment, this image becomes the felt contour of interoception, the shape of the body's felt sense of place—that is, the body proper. The body image is thus a restructuration of the body schema rather than an independent phenomenological structure.[123]

As I argued in Chapter 2, the claim about the pre-individuated or "indistinct" character of childhood perception is for Merleau-Ponty described in terms of two stages or functions of the body schema.[124] The advent of the body proper through the assumption of a body image restructures the body schema according to a new function, one which strives to organize perception according to distinct zones of inner and outer space, not only reciprocally expressing interoception and exteroception, but also distancing them. This allows a felt "distance" to develop in my relations with others, a border zone that individuates us even as I continue to sympathetically participate in their behavior: "[t]his

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[123] See Dillon (1988) for a similar reading of their relation: "The body image is thus the thematization of the corporeal reflexivity underlying the corporeal schema" (124).

[124] See CRO (115-123), especially (123): "The consciousness of one's own body is thus fragmentary at first and gradually becomes integrated." See also CPP (247-249), especially (249): "No total body schema yet exists," and "[c]onsciousness of one's own body is first of all fragmentary."

conduct which I am able only to see, I live somehow from a distance" (CRO, 118).

Merleau-Ponty writes in the Sorbonne lectures that indistinction and distinction coexist in adult life: the advent of the body proper is not a terminal achievement, but the advent of a body schematic function of addressing the question of bodily boundaries. He also claims that emotional life is the ongoing negotiation of this interminable process of the individuation of our selves and others. In the lectures given years later when he returns to the notion of the body schema, Merleau-Ponty follows Schilder in describing the distance or liminal space the body image establishes between ourselves and others as an "emotional distance" (N, 279). As Schilder writes:

> every emotion expresses itself in the postural model of the body…. Every emotion therefore changes the body-image. The body contracts when we hate, it becomes firmer, and its outlines towards the world are more strongly marked…. We expand the body when we feel friendly and loving. We open our arms, we would like to enclose humanity in them. We expand, and the borderlines of the body-image lose their distinct character (1950, 210).

This is both a fascinating account of the experience of emotions as embodied affects, and also as the coexistence or continual negotiation of individuation in adult life. The experience of emotions, in this view, is not only a kind of perception in which the character of particular objects is constituted ("that thing is scary"), nor a kind of judgment in which the personal value of those objects— how *I feel* about them—is constituted ("I feel frightened"). Emotions are rather embodied in the sense that they actually serve as body images: as the imaginary texture and quality of the felt hinge between interiority and exteriority, the

specific quality and relative distinctness or indistinctness of our felt sense of our bodies in a given situation, especially with respect to others' body images. This phenomenology of emotions is reflected in many of our expressions about them, such as "swelling with pride," or watching someone's face "harden into a mask of fury." Emotions are the movements of this felt, imaginary boundary: the dilation or contraction of its openings, its ejections or incorporations; the rigidity or suppleness of its texture. The body proper is an affective phenomenon, not only in the sense that its boundary is sustained through affective forces, but also in the sense that adult emotions are the variability in the texture of that boundary, and in the distance it establishes between ourselves and others.

3.5) Intercorporeality in Merleau-Ponty's Account of the Mirror Stage

When Merleau-Ponty describes the advent of the body proper through the specular image, he turns to Lacan, and follows Lacan's account closely; that part of the lecture describes a child encountering a mirror alone. Though Merleau-Ponty's account of narcissism distinguishes itself from Freud's and Lacan's as a devotion to intracorporeal *difference* rather than sameness, in this section of the lecture course, everything proceeds as if the impetus for these transformations in the child's experience comes from within. No suggestion is offered of how the ambivalent devotions that make up Merleau-Ponty's account of the body proper could have been developed in the child's earliest encounters with others—even others who are not yet experienced as such.

However, while Merleau-Ponty praises Lacan for emphasizing the "affective significance" of the assumption of the image, and turns to Lacan to

describe that assumption, a key part of Wallon's account as Merleau-Ponty teaches it is absent from Lacan's. The earlier sections of Merleau-Ponty's discussion describe a much longer development than the brief encounter with the mirror that Lacan popularized as the mirror stage. As Merleau-Ponty's lecture course shows, in Wallon's account the child is introduced to the mirror by an adult caregiver, who plays mirror games with the child's mirror image, as well as interacting with his own mirror image (CRO, 127-131).

Welsh also notes Merleau-Ponty's agreement with Wallon over Lacan on this. "Merleau-Ponty," she writes, "stresses that the mirror stage itself is a social event and not an internally motivated instinct toward self-identification" (2013, 59). Unlike Lacan, Merleau-Ponty follows Wallon in emphasizing "the role of the parent in the mirror stage" (Welsh 2013, 59). There is no innate guarantee that the child will identify with the image in the mirror. The assumption of the image is an event conditioned by the demands of the adult sociality that the child is being brought up into. This is consistent with Merleau-Ponty's general tendency in the Sorbonne lectures to insist on the importance of social contingency in shaping development, and to acknowledge cultural variation. In a different lecture course in this series, Merleau-Ponty follows Klein in arguing against Freud that the Oedipal model of development is culturally conditioned: "If the child chooses the way of Oedipus very early, it is because this way is indicated by the cultural atmosphere which surrounds him [sic]" (CPP, 223).

In his discussion of Wallon's account of the mirror stage, Merleau-Ponty writes: "Let us begin by considering not the child's image of his own body in the

mirror but instead the image he has of others' bodies" (CRO, 127). The earliest

encounter with the mirror is not a child encountering the mirror on his own: "A

child smiles in a mirror at the image of his father" (CRO, 127). The adult's image

too is at first encountered as a double. "At this moment his father speaks to him.

The child appears surprised and turns toward the father" (CRO, 127). The surprise

is explained: "He is surprised that the voice comes from another direction than

that of the visible image in the mirror" (CRO, 127).

The surprise indicates two things: both that the child treats the mirror

image of his father as a double, since it seems to him that the voice could have

come from there instead of from the actual father holding him; and second, that

while the child clearly does not associate the actual father and the mirror image

father in the manner of reflection, he does associate them. "The attention he gives

the phenomenon shows, in effect, that he is in the process of understanding

something" (CRO, 127-128). The child does not immediately have an experience

of the father's mirror image as specular, as a relationship of reflection in which

there is a distinction between the real father and the specular one that is not a

double, but an external view. But the child "distinguishes much more quickly

between the other's specular image and the reality of the other's body than he

does in the case of his own body" (CRO, 127). Wallon shows, Merleau-Ponty

explains, that "the specular image of one's own body develop[s] later than that of

the other's body" (CRO, 129). The conclusion is that "it is possible that the

experience he has of the other's specular image helps him arrive at an

understanding of his own" (CRO, 127). While the child cannot relate to the other

as other until the advent of the body proper, the sympathetic perception of the specular relation in the case of the adult is an important precedent for the experience of specularity that will occur in the assumption of her own mirror image.

How would this "apprenticeship" (CRO, 128) work? There is, as Merleau-Ponty points out, no direct analogy between the two cases of specular perception of an image. "[T]he problem to be solved," Merleau-Ponty writes,

> is much more difficult in the case of one's own body. The child is dealing with two visual experiences of his father: the experience he has from looking at him and that which comes from the mirror. Of his own body, on the other hand, the mirror image is his only complete visual evidence. (CRO, 129)

The child's assumption of the image thus does indeed require a distinct account, such as I gave above. The perception of the father's mirror image as specular will not automatically extend to a perception of the child's own image as specular. For that, the child will have to assume his image; and it is only through this assumption and the advent of the child's sense of his own body as being visible from without that his specular perception of his father's image can be resolved into an experience of the father as someone who can look at the child from without.

However, as I showed in Chapter 2, Merleau-Ponty's understanding of indistinction as a pre-individual sociality is of something that cannot be separated from distinction. The adult perception of others as such requires both. Merleau-Ponty's account of the mirror stage must be understood in the context of this layering. The child's ability to assume his own image is conditioned by his

earliest interactions with others. The mimetic resonance that builds narcissism in mirror play has a precedent in the account of imitation that I explored in Chapter 2, as well as in the mimetic resonance the child observes between the adult caregiver and the adult's mirror image.

Merleau-Ponty explains "[m]imesis or mimicry" as "the power of assum[ption]" (CRO, 145) that relies on "postural impregnation" (CRO, 145), the experience of what I mimic as a double. The mimetic power that allows me to assume the image is an affect-sharing developed in imitative play with others. And it is no doubt at work in watching the adult caregiver look at himself in the mirror as well. What I see watching an other looking at himself in the mirror is the other modeling a second-personal orientation toward himself, looking at the view of himself from outside, interacting with his own exterior. From the indistinction of syncretic sociality, that sight is experienced sympathetically, so that the child looking at the father (while the father looks at himself in the mirror) participates in the father's specular relation with his mirror image. Seeing myself in the mirror may be partly an imitative behavior in the sense that it is prepared by the child's mimetic participation in the sight of the adult caregiver seeing himself in the mirror.

I argue that there is also a more profound sense in which the earliest experiences of others condition the assumption of the body image. Though relations with the parents are absent from Lacan's earlier accounts of the mirror stage, Welsh points out that in lectures presented in 1960-1961 (available only in French), Lacan posits that "The child's affective relations with the parent are what

allow her to be impelled to take interest in her own image, not vice versa" (Welsh 2013, 65). Schilder too suggests that the cultivation of our body image depends as much on others' interest in it as our own. The body image, he writes, "is built up not only by the interest we ourselves have in our body, but also by the interest other persons show in the different parts of our body" (1950, 137).

This is an exchange of "libidinous" intensities and tones, such that zones of special sensitivity are developed in certain areas of the body, especially its actual or imaginary openings (Schilder 1950, 88). Indeed, actual openings become imaginary ones, such that the sensitivity has a cartography that is not reducible to anatomy. "[W]e do not feel the mouth where it opens," Schilder writes (1950, 88). "[T]he sensitive zone is again about one centimetre deeper in the body from the opening" (1950, 88). A fascinating discussion about the phenomenology of the body image during breathing ensues, followed by a phenomenology of erogenic zones.

There is also a zone of sensitivity in the immediate surrounding space of the body. In her discussion of Schilder, Grosz explains "Intrusion into this bodily space is considered as much a violation as penetration of the body itself" (1994, 79). It is in no way uniform, both within a given individual and from one individual to another. It has "thinner" and "thicker" zones, which are more and less sensitive to contact. Within a given individual, the body image also changes, varying according to other factors. It is more welcoming of contact with some individuals than others (Grosz 1994, 79).[125] In the previous section I discussed this

[125] See also Gail Weiss' discussion of "body-image intercourse" in Merleau-Ponty and Schilder (1999, 7-38). "Schilder and Merleau-Ponty emphasize the importance of others in the processes of construction/destruction/reconstruction that characterize the ongoing development of the body image" (Weiss 1999, 33). Schilder theorizes a "body-image intercourse" whereby the "body-

sort of specificity in terms of the way the body image functions as emotion, as personalized affect: these variations in a person's body image sensitivity are experienced as personal feelings, including anger, love, shame, fear, etc. But the claim that the body image is also shaped by others implies that the shape of the body image as emotion is an expression of affective pre-communication with others. At the level of body schematic function, I participate in the other's feelings; my own body image is an expression of this pre-communication, rigidifying in a complementary anger, or shrinking in fear.

The claim that emotions are body images is also a claim that we can have multiple body images, and that the body proper can be experienced in a range of varied ways. These ways *are* the emotions. It is not as if the body proper is one special body image, the sort that expresses ownness. All of our body images express ownness. But it has many different qualities. These are a set of body images, and not only are they forged in a crucible of affective forces, but also they themselves *are* the emotions: affects that have become personal, owned; and thereby that serve as part of the ongoing process of individuation. Emotions as body images individuate the body, expressing the sense of the individual's difference from the world and others, her boundaries and her personal sense of connection with particular things, situations, and others.

I said above that the mirror stage is an event conditioned by the demands of the adult sociality that the child is being brought up into. But I think that there are suggestions on Merleau-Ponty's account that the assumption of the image and

images of human beings communicate with each other either in parts or as wholes." Weiss sees in Merleau-Ponty an interest "in the non-verbal communication that plays such a crucial role in what Schilder calls 'body-image intercourse'" (1999, 33).

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its cultivation is conditioned as well by the contingent affective currents of the child's own family life, as well as the contingent affective currents of the child's own family life, the affective forces made available in relationships with particular caregivers. As I suggested in Chapter 2, the mirror stage is for Merleau-Ponty not the once and final accomplishment of the body proper, but the advent of a negotiation and cultivation of body images. The child does not immediately in the mirror stage develop a border. Rather, the child acquires the perceptual and imaginary dimension in which borders can grow. "Lived distance" (CRO, 154) develops into a "wall" (CRO, 120) through the ongoing affective maturation of the child's body images in relation to those of others. Merleau-Ponty teaches his students that there tends to be a "crisis" at three years in which these borders become more stable, solidifying into gendered and familial roles (CRO, 151-153). The preparation of this crisis involves the affective particulars of sociality in family life and the child's particular attachments. Merleau-Ponty writes that in order for the assumption of the image to be possible, "the 'reduction' of the image must be not so much an irreversible progression of the understanding as a restructuration of our entire manner of being continually exposed to the accidents of emotional experience" (CRO, 138). The "true" and "false" feelings of "The *Cogito*" chapter of the *Phenomenology* are conspicuously absent.

After a discussion of gender in Merleau-Ponty's account of the body proper, I will turn to Kristeva's account of the phenomenon in order to demonstrate the forging of the body proper in a crucible of quite different affective forces than the ones Merleau-Ponty describes.

3.6) Gender and the Advent of the Body Proper

In general above I followed Merleau-Ponty's practice of using the masculine pronoun for the adult caregiver. That is because his usage is not merely a conflation of the masculine with the generic: in the cases from Wallon's account the caregiver is almost always masculine, a father. Merleau-Ponty does relate one example, also from Wallon, of a mother and child interacting with their mirror images. We should not conclude from this that there is no sense in which the masculine is normalized or the feminine ignored. Olkowski has argued in her essay "Only Nature Is Mother to the Child" that Merleau-Ponty neglects to include any discussion of the importance of the pregnant body or a specifically maternal figure in this aspect of development.[126] However, this critique should be qualified. Olkowski's article only cites the Cobb translation of the lecture course; Welsh's translation was not yet published when Olkowski's article was written. -This is important since Welsh's translation, unlike Cobbs', is complete: it includes the discussion of Melanie Klein's work on the maternal figure that I referred to in Chapter 2. There Merleau-Ponty agrees with Klein over Freud, and lends his own authority to Klein's critique: "We note in passing," he writes, "that this represents an important correction to Freud's thesis on the male essence of the whole libido" (CPP, 289). The comment is enclosed in a parenthetical, and also dismissed as a "note in passing"; however it is clearly the driving impetus of this whole paragraph about Klein in the lecture, which concludes by praising

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[126] Dorothea Olkowski (2006), "Only Nature is Mother to the Child." *Feminist Interpretations of Maurice Merleau-Ponty*. Dorothea Olkowski and Gail Weiss, eds. USA: The Pennsylvania State University: 49-70.

Klein for creating and account in which "[t]here is no priority of representing the masculine body" (CPP, 289).

Overall the reading of Klein and the treatment of these issues is not feminist—not alive to the politics of sexual difference, the ways that power is at stake in the discussion. And there is one infuriating moment where Merleau-Ponty suggests doing "*a psychoanalytic diagnosis of Melanie Klein*" herself, finding in her theory "the desire to defend the mother" (CPP, 294). Perhaps the most interesting thing about the passage is Merleau-Ponty's discomfort with discussing it: he clearly realizes the importance of the difference between Klein and Freud on this point, but struggles to do justice to it. There is something fascinatingly candid about this moment, seeing the philosopher struggling to do justice to the gravity of a point about sexual difference and sexist prejudice that extends outside what he is comfortable discussing, but whose importance to his topic he nonetheless intuits.

We should also not forget that line I noted in Chapter 2, where Merleau-Ponty affirms "the importance accorded by psychoanalysis to the mother-child relationship" (CPP, 248), undoubtedly an observation influenced by his reading of Klein. This line also does not appear in Cobbs' translation. While the corresponding section appears, Cobbs' translation is not only distinct from Welsh's in being partial; it is also based on a different set of lecture transcriptions and notes, so the text is often slightly different in many respects that are not merely due to differences in the translation.

As with the gender of the caregivers, Merleau-Ponty's tendency to use the masculine pronoun for the developing child is not merely a conflation of the masculine and the generic. The specific children used in examples (all from Wallon's observations, or those of other researchers Merleau-Ponty refers to in this lecture course) are usually boys, but sometimes girls. While this in no way innoculates against the participation in producing and maintaining masculinity as the norm, Merleau-Ponty does tend to acknowledge girl children and gendered difference, to some extent. "Social integration assumes an enormous importance in education: a little girl is treated like a future mother, we give her dolls, we teach her decadence very early" (CPP, 223). This line suggests that an adequate account of child development will not be gender-neutral. While the discussion of the mirror stage itself proceeds as if it is gender-neutral, as I have noted in Chapter 2 and above, there are indications elsewhere in this lecture course that Merleau-Ponty is aware that a gender-neutral account of the development of the body proper is not possible.

One of the most intriguing of these suggestions for my purposes is the line in Merleau-Ponty's discussion of Klein where he writes that "[t]he girl would already have a global sentiment of her body as an enclosed secret" (CPP, 289). The context is him arguing for the plausibility of Klein's treatment of masculinity and femininity as involving unique developmental dramas, in which the feminine is not reduced to a privation of the masculine. He praises Klein for working to conceptualize "[s]exual difference… more in psychological than physiological terms" (CPP, 289), where a "psychological conception" means thinking of

masculinity and femininity as categories "whose differentiation is founded on the evolution of individuals from comparable beginning situations" (CPP, 290). This means that sexual difference is largely a matter of how development is directed, and how one's individuality as a body takes shape.[127] The overall consequence of the passage is that gender begins as a difference around the way the body proper comes to be experienced. This suggests two things: first, that a gender neutral account cannot be given, in which case the tendency of the mirror stage account to appear gender-neutral is suspect; and second, that there is not just one experience of the body proper.

Perhaps Merleau-Ponty saw no inconsistency between the apparently gender-neutral account of the mirror stage and the discussion of gender specificity because that specificity was coded as exclusively feminine (as if masculinity is generic), and did not threaten the masculine norm at the methodological level. In any case, it raises the question: could it be then that the feminine (and feminizing) developmental drama involves arriving at the advent of the body proper by a different path? If the body proper is produced through affective forces, could a different affect be involved?

While these qualifications are significant and indicate that a more complicated analysis is needed (see for example Welsh [2008]"The Developing Body: A Reading of Merleau-Ponty's Conception of Women in the Sorbonne Lectures"), Olkowski's basic point stands: Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the

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[127] See Welsh (2008, "The Developing Body: A Reading of Merleau-Ponty's Conception of Women in the Sorbonne Lectures." *Intertwinings: Interdisciplinary Encounters with Merleau-Ponty*. Gail Weiss, ed. Albany: State University of New York Press: 45–59) for an analysis of Merleau-Ponty's treatment of gender specificity in the Sorbonne lectures.

development of the body proper lacks attention to gendered specificity, especially in the neglect of sustained and integrated discussion of the significance of maternity, and a dedicated attempt to problematize the apparent gender-neutrality of the body proper. We see attention to specificity in the attention to family life and immediate social context in the crisis at three years and in the passing comment about the very early importance of the mother-child relationship. There are also indications that a gender-neutral account of the body proper itself cannot be given. It is interesting that Merleau-Ponty shows some sensitivity to these issues, and the account clearly offers a richer set of resources than Olkowski's critique gives it credit for. But even if they are not wholly neglected, Merleau-Ponty never gives these themes the significant and focused attention they deserve. The gendered specificity of the others in the child's life, the caregivers; the gendered specificity of the social context in which the body proper is cultivated; and the gendered specificiy of the body proper itself, are underdeveloped.

3.7) Kristeva on Abjection, Horror, and Ambivalence

When we consider what the experience of infancy and very early childhood is actually like, the claim that maternity requires special attention in the development of individuality and sociality is unavoidable. Insofar as infants are getting the kind of care that infants need, anyone who has observed the kinds of relationships that care entails will conclude that very young infancy is always an experience of intense attachment to particular others, particular caregivers. Pre-natal life for all of us begins in a visceral indistinction from a particular body, a

female and maternal body. Thinkers like Julia Kristeva, following Melanie Klein's work on the topic, point out that birth is not the conclusion of that attachment, and emphasize the importance of the child's postpartum relations with a particular, maternal other in the process of individuation. Kristeva's account posits a demand to individuate that doesn't arise unbidden, or come from the general structure of sensibility, but comes from the influence of others—even before I experience others as such.

For Kristeva, the postpartum relation to the body of a maternal figure, a relation Kristeva calls the primary site of "abjection" is a "*precondition of narcissism*" (1982, 13). The emergence of embodied subjectivity for her begins with the maternal function that takes place before the mirror stage, in the drama of attachment to and separation from the maternal body. Thus it is the maternal figure who becomes the authority figure of the imperative to separate: "Maternal authority is the trustee of that mapping of the self's clean and proper body [*le corps propre*]" (1982, 72). Kristeva describes a far more violent affective drama than narcissism, one that includes intense aversive affects.

In Merleau-Ponty's account, a distance opens up between the interior and exterior experience of our own body, and that difference is established in a relatively peaceful way. The child affirms the distance, and doesn't disavow it. As I explained above, this is the key difference between Merleau-Ponty and Lacan on the mirror stage: for Lacan the child's narcissistic attachment is to the image because of its false promise of unifying her experience, giving it clear borders. The child Merleau-Ponty describes is not attached to that experience of unity. It

even delights in its difference from itself. That distance, we saw, gradually becomes the basis of a felt distance from others, which can take on all sorts of different qualities as different emotions, including variations of proximity and distance. The experience he is describing is not of a rupture, a sharp experience of a border. He is rather describing how an experience of a liminal space emerges, and becomes something that we can inhabit in different ways.

Kristeva on the other hand describes an experience of a border. Like Merleau-Ponty, she thinks that we don't finally achieve individuation: individuation is a process of differentiation rather than a state of separation. Thus the experience of a border that she describes is an experience of border *trouble*, a disturbance that, as it intensifies, produces the felt effect of a border. The infant incorporates a demand to separate from its mother, and a conflict begins between on the one hand, its attachment to the mother and the unbounded experience (*jouissance*) that relationship has afforded and, on the other hand, an intense, visceral rejection of that indistinction, a revulsion toward it. In this way, the infant is drawn to the indistinction it feels in its attachment to its mother, but on the other hand that very attachment becomes infected with an intense revulsion. It is the confluence of these conflicting affects and their ability to amplify each other, to keep reanimating each other, that Kristeva calls the experience of abjection. The ambivalent affect made up of these two orientations she calls horror.

There is a psychoanalytic tradition of understanding horror as ambivalence: a mixed or conflicted affective disposition. We find this in Freud's work on horror as the affect of the taboo in his essay on "Taboo and Emotional

Ambivalence,"[128] as well as Bataille's work on horror as the affect of the prohibition and its transgression.[129] Bataille's distinction between horror and fear is the ambivalence of horror: "Pure and simple danger frightens one away, while only the horror of prohibition keeps one in the anguish of temptation" (1991, 95). The object of horror, he says, does not quite distinguish itself as an object. It is "sticky": "a fetid, sticky object without boundaries" (1991, 95). It defies objectification—and this is precisely what is so disturbing about it: it gets under your skin. The classic example is the sight of a corpse: while I feel an intense aversion, I am also bizarrely attracted, drawn in, fascinated. Even as contact aversion charges my limbs with an intense kinaesthetic urge to flee and distance myself from the horrifying thing, yet my feet are planted to the ground and I cannot look away. The thrall of this ambivalent attachment and border trouble is mythologized in Medusa's story as paralysis, in which horror turns to stone those who look at her. Bataille prefers an image of stickiness: I am "stuck" to the object of horror. To be exposed to it is to feel my own borders in question, troubled and uncertain.

Kristeva is also drawing on Mary Douglas' work on filth, defilement, and practices of ritual purification.[130] Kristeva brings these influences together in her concept horror as the affect of "the unclean," something that pollutes or infects; that is out of place according to a symbolic order. "Out of place" here is not only that which is misplaced, but that which defies place, disturbs place: monstrosity,

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[128] (1913), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol XIII*. James Strachey, ed. London: Hogarth Press: 18-74.

[129] (1991), *The Accursed Share, vol. II*. Robert Hurley, trans. New York: Zone Books.

[130] (2002), *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Routledge Classics.

the uncontainable, that against which borders are built in the first place. Kristeva's notion of abjection always involves an upsurge of this unclean thing. Kristeva plays heavily on the sense of the French "*propre*" as both "own" and "clean," in the sense of being neat, tidy, in its proper place: *une maison propre* is a clean house, a well-kept house, where everything is in its place; *ma propre maison* is one's own house.

Though repulsed by the unclean or out-of-place, I am still attracted to it: it enthralls me. Kristeva thinks adult experiences of horror are moments where this process of differentiation has been triggered or provoked again—especially where horror is a visceral convulsion, like gagging or vomiting: a visceral gesture of expulsion where I seem to feel a foreign body within my own, to feel infected or defiled. So for example the visceral convulsions of nausea and disgust that can be provoked by contact with bodily fluids, corporeal detritus, as well as decay, death, and waste or the out-of-place in general are for Kristeva a moment in which that confluence of affects has again been triggered.

Kristeva calls abjection a "twisted braid of affects" (1982, 1). The aversive and attractive forces of horror play off of each other in a drama of mutual intensification: the revulsion I feel in abjection is a "revolt" against jouissance. In abjection, "the subject is swallowed up" by "jouissance"—so jouissance has me feeling undone, lost in the thrall of the abyss—"but… [I am kept] from foundering by making it repugnant" (1982, 9). Thus, even as I recoil in horror, I also feel attracted to the prospect of coming undone, to the loss of proper place. It is through jouissance that the experience of abjection persists in the face of even

the most intense aversion. Jouissance keeps me coming back to the borderline, the liminal space—like the compulsion to bite one's nails, or scratch a scab, or pop a pimple. It is that confluence of attractive and aversive affects that produce the felt effect of a border, and maintain the felt boundaries of the body proper.

3.8) Ownness According to Kristeva

Thus the experience of abjection is "above all ambiguity" (1982, 9). In the nausea of my revulsion, there is an intimate relation of mixture with the very thing my horror avoids, and tries to relieve itself by expelling. "[O]ne does not get rid of the impure" (1982, 28). The filthy feeling of the unclean or out-of-place, the feeling of defilement, infects the proper place it seeks to secure. The ambivalence of the affect of horror actually maintains the ambiguity of bodily boundaries even while it generates an intensification of feeling that produces the effect of a surface.[131] What is abjected, Kristeva explains, "is something rejected from which one does not part" (1982, 4). Abjection is not an actually accomplished separation. It is a "repudiation" (1982, 7): an affectively enacted separation, a disposition to separate, to seek a point of separation. What is abjected is "*excluded* but in strange fashion: not radically enough to allow for a secure differentiation between subject and object, and yet clearly enough for a defensive *position* to be established" (1982, 7). The abject "does not succeed in differentiating itself as *other*" (1982, 65). The feeling of exteriority will not stay

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[131] Sara Ahmed (2005, "The Skin of the Community: Affect and Boundary Formation." *Revolt, Affect, Collectivity: The Unstable Boundaries of Kristeva's Polis*. Tina Chanter and Ewa Płonowska Ziarek, eds. New York: State University of New York Press: 95-112) suggests a similar reading of Kristeva, in which borders are generated through affective intensification: "intensifications of feeling create the very effect of the distinction between inside and outside, or between the individual and the collective" (2005, 100).

outside. Abjection *preserves* a feeling of pollution in the same gesture that repudiates it. In the discomfort, unease, and nausea that characterize and provoke my revulsion, the feeling of exteriority is present—and present *on the inside* of the very expulsion my horror enacts. This is why the abject is not an object—it isn't a thing, a particular foreign body that could be expelled once and for all. Insofar as there are particular things Kristeva calls *abject* or *abjected*, this indicates that they have become invested with this affective drama, so that they have the power to trigger or provoke it.

Thus in Kristeva's account, just as in Merleau-Ponty's, individuation is never finally and terminally accomplished. The body does not finally achieve identity with itself, separating outside and inside so that the outside stays out and the inside in. Instead, we produce an experience of exteriority at the price of reproducing that exteriority within the interiority we had aimed to secure.

3.9) The Symbolic Order and Paternal Authority

On my reading of Kristeva, not only is the experience of abjection a drama of ambivalent affective forces, but also the imperative to separate was introduced through the child's pre-communicative affect sharing with the maternal figure. The revulsion toward ambiguity that seeds the child's horror comes from the mother: "braided, woven, ambivalent, a heterogeneous flux marks out a territory I can call my own because the Other, having dwelt in me as an alter ego, points it out to me through loathing" (1982, 10). The indistinction of the mother and child is not symmetrical: before the child has an experience of boundary, the mother

begins to yearn for the return of hers. And in the child's indistinction, he is

possessed with the mother's disgust for it. The child struggles to distinguish

himself from the maternal body in primary abjection only because, precisely due

to an affect sharing made possible by our indistinction, he has become

"possessed" (1982, 10) by her aversion to their indistinction, her disgust at the

messiness of their boundaries. At some point in infancy or early childhood, this

indistinction is treated as "filth," as defilement, as uncleanness. This is the child's

first taste of the experience of a border: the "repulsive gift" (1982, 9) of the

Other's loathing, which comes to live in him as the generative dynamic of the

body proper.

  This reading as I have given it so far emphasizes affective forces rather

than symbolic ones. For a counterpoint, see Weiss' reading in "The Abject

Borders of the Body Image" (1999, 87-102). As Weiss reads Kristeva, "the

boundary is only reinforced on one side, the Symbolic side. The 'other side' is the

unnameable, abject domain that continually threatens to overrun its carefully

established borders" (1999, 89-90).[132] Weiss has Kristeva pitting a symbolic

prohibition against the somatic upsurge of ambiguity. In my reading, the conflict

Weiss explains by opposing the corporeal and the symbolic is actually played out

for Kristeva in the ambivalent affective forces of abjection: the eponymous

"powers of horror" (note the plural "power*s*"). The history of the concept of

horror through Bataille and Freud as I related it above in which horror is theorized

as a definitively ambivalent affect supports my emphasis on mixed affective

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[132] This approach may be influenced by a Butlerian account of abjection, in which the expulsion is credited to the symbolic force of linguistic differentiation. See *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* and *Gender Trouble* (1990, New York: Rutledge).

forces as the location of this conflict. This in turn supports my claim that for

Kristeva *the body proper itself is an affective intensity*, such that bodily

boundaries surface through affective intensification. On my reading, the demands

of the symbolic order on their own are relatively weak.[133] It is when they are

adopted and amplified by affects that they achieve felt urgency. My claim that the

body proper is produced through affective force thus entails that the body proper

consists in affective weightiness: it is as affective force that it persists in

organizing perception.

My reading aligns with Kelly Oliver's, which tends to put the emphasis on

a distinction between semiotic *forces* and symbolic *orders*. Oliver writes that

"[f]or Kristeva, all signification is driven by a dialectic between semiotic drive

force and symbolic stases."[134] The semiotic (affects and drives) is a volatile,

potent, energetic, an upsurge of generative force; the symbolic is organized,

articulated, tending more toward stasis and stability. For Kristeva, while they are

distinct tendencies, they are always found together: the symbolic would have no

force without the semiotic, and the semiotic would have no order without the

symbolic.

Thus the original drama of abjection as a struggle for mother-child

distinction is motivated, in Kristeva's analysis, not only by the mother's assertion

of her own boundaries such that they are shared in the affective pre-

communication of the mother-child bond; but also by a "son-mother incest

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[133] Kristeva has a fascinating analysis of the "*weakness of the prohibition*" (1982, 64-65) which draws on Bataille's notion of transgression.

[134] Kelly Oliver (1993), *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. (8; see also 3)

prohibition" (1982, 58) that is integral to the production and maintenance of a symbolic order. Abjection and the advent of a body proper prepares the child to assume a place in a symbolic order. She is borrowing here from Freud's analysis in *Moses and Monotheism*. There Freud's Oedipal story of the formation of a bodily ego through the castration anxiety (developed in reaction to the father's "no," the father figure as an obstacle to the child's desire for the mother) becomes an account of the establishment of a social order through the canonization of a "paternal authority" (1982, 56). This symbolic order is organized around murder and incest taboos. Kristeva insists that "[t]he woman- or mother-image haunts" (1982, 57) his analysis: the "son-mother incest prohibition" implies a "*confrontation with the feminine*" (1982, 58) that Freud does not acknowledge. She argues that while Freud's view only theorizes a "paternal authority" (1982, 56), there must be a maternal authority in play. It is the mother who is the figure of the imperative to separate, to individuate: "Maternal authority is the trustee of that mapping of the self's clean and proper body [*le corps propre*]" (1982, 72).

Though Kristeva's account explicitly theorizes sexual difference in a manner that does not reduce the feminine to the privation of the masculine by introducing a unique authority for the maternal-feminine, the developmental drama she describes is itself that of masculinization, of a son separating himself from his mother. The body proper whose advent she describes is also gendered: it is a masculine body proper. The very introduction of the maternal-feminine as a unique force in the equation demands a unique account of the development of a feminine body proper. In later work she does take up this question, theorizing the

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unique difficulty presented to the feminine child, who must at once distinguish herself from the mother and identify with her.[135] This account of the maternal-feminine as a primary abject and of the unique burden it is to be positioned in this way offers fascinating resources for theorizing sexism. Kristeva's account of abjection is a significant influence on Butler's account of sexism and heterosexism (Butler 1990, 1993). It has also inspired analyses like Kelly Oliver and Benigno Trigo's *Noir Anxiety*, which uses Kristeva's account of the maternal-feminine as abject to analyze the misogyny of the film noir trope of the femme fatale.[136]

The fact that the imperative to separate from the mother is informed by a prohibition makes a difference to its structure. Following Freud and Bataille, Kristeva theorizes *horror as the definitive affect of the prohibition*: the prohibition's discursively defined boundary always borrows its felt force, the pressure it exerts on our bodies and our behavior, from the ambivalent crucible of horror. The maternal authority places pressure on the child through affect transmission and regulation. The imperative to separate is introduced through the felt pressure of the mother's own boundaries, her own body proper making its presence felt through the affect sharing of indistinction. The mother herself feels an aversion to the indistinction she shares with her child; this aversion seeds the child's own aversion to ambiguity. But the particular affect of horror with its repudiating gesture of revulsion is the one at work, creating the violence of

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[135] Julia Kristeva (1989), *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. New York: Columbia University Press.
[136] (2003), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

abjection, because the particular affective forces that bring the demand to bear on the child are inflected with the negating structure of a prohibition.

3.10) Conclusion: Affect and Difference, Ambiguity and Ambivalence

Both Merleau-Ponty and Kristeva describe the process of individuation as an affective drama that becomes a force of *intracorporeal differentiation*. The process of individuation is the production of a difference within the body's relation to itself. It is only through this intracorporeal differentiation that the body can experience "ownness," and in turn alterity. This is consistent with the account of individuation as a process of differentiation rather an accomplished structure. Individuation and exteriority are effects of an ongoing process; inside and outside are never pure of each other.

But these two theories account for very different experiences of difference. At one point in the lecture on "The Child's Relations with Others," Merleau-Ponty says that in adult experience we eventually come to experience a "wall" or a "partition" (CRO, 120) between ourselves and others. But what he ends up accounting for is primarily the experience of a "lived distance" (CRO, 154). I suggested, in making the connection between the account of the crisis at three years and Schilder on the body image, that lived distance can come to be experienced as a wall, a rigid border, in the expression of particular emotions. But the original experience of the body proper that Merleau-Ponty accounts for is that of a "lived distance" rather than a "wall"; insofar as he accounts for the latter, it must pass through the former.

Kristeva clearly describes the experience of a wall, a border—even if it is invariably troubled. However, I want to suggest that Kristeva too describes a kind of lived distance, a liminal space rather than a separation. The difference is that for her, that liminal space is disavowed. That is the drama of abjection: the impossible attempt to expel the borderline, the liminal, the in-between: the distance that opens up between interiority and exteriority that is itself neither one nor the other. The child Merleau-Ponty describes affirms that difference from itself: inhabits it, cultivates it. Kristeva describes a kind of inhabitation of that borderline too, a way of living that distance. But for her, we live the distance in revolt instead of affirmation. So perhaps what at first looks like different accounts of difference are actually different accounts of affective orientations toward difference.

We do not capture the difference between Merleau-Ponty's and Kristeva's accounts by saying, for instance, that while his account emphasizes sameness, her account emphasizes difference. It is not the case that Kristeva's account describes a more radical break between self and other—or between stages of development—at an ontological level. A more radical break is being produced by a more violent affect. This more violent break is not false or delusory: it is not isolated within private experience, but is very much a shared experience, and in that sense is quite real. But Kristeva's is still an account that posits an ontological self-other indistinction. And in fact, one that posits the experience of distinction as layered with and predicated upon that indistinction. Indistinction remains a part of the truth of intercorporeality and intersubjectivity, on her account. But its status is

that of a repressed, archaic past. It persists under a gesture of negation, as the context of an affect of revulsion, the abject of a violent affective rejection.

The difference between these accounts of difference is in fact to be found in the contrasting affective orientations toward indistinction and difference that these thinkers describe. In Kristeva's account, the ambiguity of the mother-child relation is itself what is revolting and rejected. Kristeva sees abjection as a repression of ambiguity or indistinction. Merleau-Ponty does sometimes use "repression" to describe the change at issue.[137] But Kristeva's is a much stronger and more violent repression, not because she has a more ontologically robust account of difference, but because the affect that generates self-other difference is a gesture of violent discharge. Horror as Kristeva describes it involves the rejection of self-other indistinction—a rejection that is nevertheless impossible to accomplish.

In Cynthia Willett's reading of Kristeva, she criticizes this rejection, arguing that it amounts to taking on "problematic theses from traditional psychoanalysis," in which "the *life-giving* maternal space… is propelled by a drive toward *death*" (1995, 18). In this way, Kristeva's account "incorporates elements of classical misogyny into the very core of maternal space" (1995, 23). The alternative Willett sees includes an emphasis on theorizing the way that "our earliest behaviors never leave us" such that "[t]he advent of a higher stage 'does not destroy the earlier phase, rather it embraces it in its own perspective" (Willett 1995, 26).

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[137] See for instance the passage in *Phenomenology* on pure depth (I will discuss this passage at length in Chapter 4), where the acquisition of "lived distance"(PhP, 299/338) is called a "repression" of "overwhelming proximity" (PhP, 304/344).

Willett is undoubtedly correct in finding misogyny in Kristeva's account. The question is whether it is a misogynist theory, or a theory that accounts for misogyny. The answer depends on whether the misogyny is naturalized by the account, or understood as contingent: one possible formation of the body proper among many. If we read Kristeva's account of the body proper as contingent and non-exclusive in that way, then it becomes a powerful explanatory account of sexism: one that places it, not only in habits of perception, but in the development of the basic differentiations that organize sensory experience, especially the felt sense of bodily integrity.

I think we find this contingency on Kristeva's account, not primarily in the symbolic contingency of abjection, but in a contingency preserved in its affective structure. The rejection she theorizes is part of a profound ambivalence. This preserves an indeterminacy at the heart of the rejection. There is some room for contingency in the account insofar as it is clear that the rejecting gesture of abjection is a conceit, a sleight of hand: a repression. In Kristeva's account too, indistinction and distinction co-exist, and distinction depends on indistinction. This is not actually eradicated by abjection. This rejection is realized in the *disposition* of the individual, the affective life of the body, the felt sense of one's own body image and those of others. Indistinction remains, conditioning the rejection that enacts distinction. Affective life hosts the constant reenactment of the drama of abjection precisely because indistinction cannot be eradicated. Abjection does not "destroy the earlier phase" (Willett 1995, 26).

But neither does it, on Kristeva's account, "embrace [the earlier phase] in its own perspective" (Willett 1995, 26). Merleau-Ponty's account, on the other hand, clearly aims to describe exactly that sort of "embrace": distinction for him is not an ambivalent rejection of indistinction. There is, to put it in a pithy manner that is no doubt confusing, an indistinction of distinction and indistinction. Childhood experience is folded into adult experience. The very experience of self-other distinction, as he understands it, is not a *rejection* of indistinction. And this is the core of the difference between his account and Kristeva's.

How shall we understand the difference between these treatments of difference? The issue is discussed by Merleau-Ponty at the beginning of the lecture on "The Child's Relations with Others" when he distinguishes between *ambivalence* and *ambiguity*. In a section on the notion of "psychological rigidity" Merleau-Ponty encounters in a study of "Intolerance of Ambiguity as an Emotional and Perceptual Personality Variable" (CRO, 100-108), Merleau-Ponty distinguishes a Kleinian sense of ambivalence from a notion of ambiguity. Both involve multiple or equivocal affective orientations. Ambivalence is distinguished by the presence of a third, self-referential affect: an aversion to itself insofar as it is equivocal. Ambivalence cannot tolerate itself; it includes a disposition to deny or refuse equivocal dispositions, multiplicity and difference (CRO, 103). This sort of ambivalence is correlated to a "rigid attachment" to one view, or to a dogmatically singular perception of genuinely ambiguous phenomena. The relevant example in the Kleinian context is a dogmatic devotion to a parent who in fact also inspires anger and hostility (CRO, 110, see also 104-108).

Merleau-Ponty cites Klein's distinction of this sense of ambivalence from a sense of ambivalence as "ambiguity" (CRO, 103). It "consists in admitting that the same being who is good and generous can also be annoying and imperfect." Ambiguity is an ambivalence that tolerates itself, in which the person does not "flee" (CRO, 107) the equivocation, but takes it into account in a kind of "lived de-centering" (CRO, 110) that inhabits the ambiguity instead of disavowing it and demanding one or the other of the equivocal possibilities to renounce itself. This discussion finds its echo in Merleau-Ponty's account of narcissism as I elaborated it above. Merleau-Ponty sums the results of the study this way: "a very strong emotional ambivalence shows up, at the level of understanding or perception, as a very weak ambiguity in the things perceived or the subject's ideas of them" (CRO, 105).

The terms ambiguity and ambivalence do not name two different things. Both consist "in having two alternative images of the same object, the same person" (CRO, 102). "Ambiguity," Merleau-Ponty writes, is still ambivalence. But it "is ambivalence that one dares to look at face to face" (CRO, 103). The difference is whether the affective valence of this equivocation is one that demands rupture between the images, or one that allows them to coexist peacefully, even to interact. Ambiguity is an ambivalent attachment with which one has learned to be at peace. Ambiguity in this sense involves our affects about difference. Ambiguity is not just an equivocal, mixed, or undecided situation. It is also an affective orientation toward that situation, one of having made peace with

it, of abiding it instead of repudiating it; of relinquishing "rigid attachments" and allowing oneself to become living space for difference.

The child Merleau-Ponty describes in his account of the mirror stage abides the ambiguity between her visible and interoceptive body in a manner that follows this sense of ambivalence as ambiguity, while Lacan's child adopts the ambiguity in a manner that is amenable to description in terms of the rigid sense of ambivalence: he devotes himself dogmatically to the experience of unity achieved in the visible body, an attachment destined to be perpetually troubled by the self-difference that makes that devotion possible. The image is a dream of unity, and the child's devotion to it is a rigid attachment to its unity and stability, but this will always be a troubled attachment, since the image is still "pregnant with the correspondences that unite the *I* with the statue in which man [sic] projects himself, with the phantoms that dominate him" (Lacan 1977, 2). It is only through interoception that the image can be felt to dominate. Thus the interoceptive body is at once the means of the visible body's mastery, and the betrayal of that mastery as false and dependent. The drama here is very like that of Hegel's master and slave, especially in a Kojevian interpretation.

Kristeva too distinguishes ambiguity and ambivalence, indistinction from a rejection of it. But she theorizes them as packed tightly together. Ambivalence follows closely on the heels of ambiguity in her account. Again, I think if we want an alternative reading of Kristeva to the one Willett gives, in which this tight link between ambivalence and ambiguity amounts to a kernel of misogyny in Kristeva's account, then we must posit the link as contingent; one articulation on

a field of phenomenological variation rather than a naturalized structure. If there is no single, uniform way to have a body proper, no *telos* driving development toward a single goal from the beginning, then we can expect to observe a field of phenomenological variation in experiences of the body proper. Some, however, may produce body images whose central feature is a rejection or repression of other body images. So some may, as part of their unique phenomenology, claim an exclusivity that they do not realize in fact.

Importantly, citing Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty also acknowledges there that social circumstances can make the difference between whether a subject is able to face her ambivalence and inhabit its ambiguity or else live it as a rigid attachment (CRO, 103). In a passage clearly inspired by the analyses of "othering" found in Beauvoir and Fanon, Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that there is a "social aspect of this phenomenon" of rigid ambivalence, explaining that the "dichotomizing" that serves as a repressive reaction to ambivalence can involve "project[ion]" or "externalization" of rejected aspects of oneself onto others. And though later in the section he cites a study demonstrating that "rigid" subjects show "very strong racial and social prejudices" (CRO, 104), he also locates rigidity predominantly in marginalized subjects, saying they are most prevalent in children who come from "authoritarian" and "socially marginal" families.

Though he uses the terms "socially marginal" and "prejudice," Merleau-Ponty's discussion fails to acknowledge the difference that power makes, and so homogenizes two very different phenomena: the situation of the person for whom rigid attachment is an opportunity to claim purity from socially marginal qualities

and so reaffirm one's privilege, and the situation of those for whom it is an internalized version of the struggle with one's oppressed position as the scapegoat on whom those marginal qualities are projected. This homogenization of privileged and oppressed positions means that while Merleau-Ponty names rigidity one sort of damage perpetrated by social marginalization, he fails to acknowledge how the rejection of difference, especially of one's ambivalent attachments, is a mechanism through which marginalization occurs. The discussion of Beauvoir is particularly disappointing in this respect, since it interprets Beauvoir's analysis of the existential-political dimension of sexual differentiation as a kind of "mutual disparagement" (CRO, 104) or fully reciprocal "battle of the sexes" (CRO, 103), where *each* sex "attributes to the other the characteristics of his [sic] humanity that he does not want" (CRO, 103-104). But that reading of *The Second Sex* misses its central point: Beauvoir's claim is that the drama is precisely *not* mutual and reciprocal, that what is projected onto women is the status of Other, a conceit in which men are able to affirm their subjectivity and power by projecting objectification and vulnerability onto women, thus not only disavowing our own status as subjects, but also harming our ability to claim it for ourselves.

My feminist disappointment with Merleau-Ponty's treatment of social marginalization aside, the fact that he offers this account of rigid ambivalence is further evidence that he is not proposing the body proper whose advent he describes as the only possibility for the development of individuality. This passage early in the lecture is a moment where he integrates into his account the

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fact that many children (and adults, for that matter) are not as at peace with their difference, their ambivalent attachments, as is the child his description of the mirror stage imagines.

Insofar as the difference between Kristeva, Merleau-Ponty, and Lacan is a matter of the subject's affective orientation toward difference, these accounts, taken together, should not be placed in competition for a claim of exclusive accuracy, but rather should be taken together as describing a field of phenomenological variation.

Merleau-Ponty's account, however, is normalizing. He suggests that rigid ambivalence is pathological or immature (CRO, 103). What is at stake in this choice to use as the norm of the body proper a sense of bodily integrity that is not identified with unity, but that is at home in its own perpetual renegotiation? What possibilities for theorizing the ethics and politics of difference are opened by a theory (and a practice) of the body proper such as the one Merleau-Ponty describes: a body whose self-difference is inhabited and even incorporated in the sense that it has been cultivated as a kind of living space, a "lived distance," instead of being elided in devotion to an impossible dream of unity (as it is for Lacan), or violently and unsuccessfully amputated (as it is for Kristeva)? One possibility is an account of gender beyond the violence of abjection; of self-other difference not founded in repudiation and constitutive exclusion.

A reinterpretation of the mirror stage framed in an account of affective pre-communication like the one I have suggested in my reading of Merleau-Ponty adds an interesting element here, since that approach suggests that being at ease

with ambivalence is not something we can accomplish alone. If we suffer from rigid attachments, if there are aspects of our experience that we are traumatically excluded from, if we relieve a trauma of intracorporeal difference by projecting it onto others, these are problems that must be addressed at a social level. If they are pathologies and immaturities, they are the pathologies and immaturities of our communities as much as our selves.

The issue of difference and alterity is not only a phenomenological and ontological issue. It is also an ethical and political one. For anyone who is not ignorant or dismissive of the violence and oppression that has marked the politics of difference in the twentieth century of human history, the question of how to think difference, how to imagine it, and how to affirm it is deeply political—perhaps the single most salient ethical and political issue of our age.

So what are the ethical and political consequences of thinking of identity and difference as funded by affective forces in the sense that I have discovered in Merleau-Ponty and Kristeva? If we theorize the borders of self and other, the experience of exteriority and alterity, as affectively cultivated and maintained, then what sort of ethics or politics would follow from that framework for imagining, embodying, and facing difference? While these questions merit far more sustained treatment, for now I will suggest just this. The question for any such ethics or politics of difference would not be the question of how to comport oneself toward an already existing alterity. It would not be a question of how to do justice to a pre-existing difference. It would rather be a question of how to cultivate an alterity appropriately. The ethical and political issue of difference

would shift from the issue of how to *affirm the being* of difference to the issue of how to *participate in its becoming*.

In thus establishing distinction as an affective drama that takes place within indistinction, the layering of affect as pre-individual and individuating force has been established. But the question remains: is difference entirely on the side of distinction? If indistinction is not to be understood as homogeneity, then we must establish what sort of differentiation operates within indistinction.

CHAPTER 4 - Affective Orientation, Difference and "Overwhelming Proximity" in Merleau-Ponty's Account of Pure Depth[138]

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[138] This chapter is a revised version of Whitney (2013, *Chiasmi International* [14]: 415-438). Reprinted with permission.

4.1) Introduction

I have shown in Chapter 2 how the body schema functions as a sympathetic indistinction of interoception and exteroception, demonstrating how affect operates in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy as a pre-individual dynamic of sensibility. And I have shown in Chapter 3 the role of affect in his account of individuation as the advent of the body proper. Affect not only serves as the transitivity of inner-outer borders, it also produces these borders as one of its effects. As I argued in Chapter 1, these two aspects are required of any account of affect capable of describing and explaining both the intra- and intercorporeal transitivity of feeling and gesture I analyzed in Hochschild's work on emotional labor—something that could not be explained by Merleau-Ponty's early account of true and false emotions in the *Phenomenology*.

What remains to understand is the way that affect functions as a kind of differentiating force in indistinction itself. I suggested in both Chapters 2 and 3 that it cannot be the case that difference is located entirely on the side of the sort of distinction we find in the adult experience of the body proper. I argued that the notion of difference as on the one hand a "wall" and on the other as "lived distance" should not be considered equivalent. The development of the body proper ultimately introduces an experience of difference as a boundary or border, a "wall" between myself and the other. But there must be a production of a kind of "lived distance" within indistinction already. This is required both in order to explain how indistinction is open to the development of distinction; but it is also required in order to account for their continued relationship and interaction in adult life. Thus, already within indistinction, there must be a space-making

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dynamic, something that resists fusion and homogeneity. There must be a dynamic of differentiation operating as a function of indistinction itself that is not yet the difference of separateness or mutual exclusivity, but that generates an opening or depth, *making space* for those kinds of differences to take root. That is, there must be within indistinction itself an active potentiality for disincorporation that distinguishes indistinction from fusion, serving as part of the context for the development of wall-like boundaries, and remaining coexistent with the development of these borders insofar as it serves the crucial function of holding open the possibility of their renegotiation.

In this chapter, I explore what I take to be one of Merleau-Ponty's earliest forays into addressing this problem: it appears in a passage of the *Phenomenology* that is rarely mentioned in scholarly work on the text, but that I find rich with anticipations of the themes of Merleau-Ponty's later work. It offers an account of affective orientation (which, as we will see, is equally the potential for *disorientation*) as preceding and conditioning the experience of spatiality. There is an affective depth, Merleau-Ponty claims here, that makes experiences of perceptual depth possible. This affective depth, or "pure depth" precedes perceptual depth in the sense that it generates the relationship between revealing and concealing, hiddenness and disclosure, that is needed for the experience of what he will later call "perceptual faith": the feeling that what I perceive is really *there*, that my sensations place me in the presence of the real. That relationship between revealing and concealing is here treated as a relationship between "clear space" and "dark space" (PhP, 301/341), or between "lived distance" (PhP,

299/338) and "overwhelming proximity" (PhP, 304/344).[139] As I will explain in Chapter 5, in the later period of his career he will begin treating the mutual envelopment of "clear space" and "dark space" he posits in the *Phenomenology* as the reversibility of "the visible" and "the invisible." "Pure depth" is an affective orientation that is also a mutual envelopment of this "clear space" and "dark space"; and as such it is an orientation that includes the more or less imminent and sometimes overwhelming possibility of disorientation. The mutual envelopment of clear space and dark space that constitutes orientation in pure depth establishes the possibility of experiences of "distance" and depth, but is also dizzying [*vertigineuse*]: an "overwhelming [*vertigineuse*] proximity" (PhP, 304/344), and thus as an orientation, it preserves at its core the imminent potential of its undoing.

We encountered this notion of "dizzying proximity" before: in the lecture from the Sorbonne years on "The Child's Relations with Others" (CRO, 154), it is invoked in opposition to the notion of "lived distance" that the child develops through the advent of the body proper and the development of body images:

> This state of indistinction from others, this mutual impingement of the other and myself at the heart of a situation in which we are confused, this presence of the same subject in several roles—all are met with again in adult life. The crisis at three years pushes syncretism farther away rather than suppressing it altogether. Certainly after three years a neutral or objective ground is set up between me and the other; a 'lived distance' divides us, as Minkowski says. There is no longer that dizzying proximity of others which made possible certain disorders, certain hallucinations, as well as transitivism. (CRO, 153-154)

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[139] The notion of "clear" and "dark" space is Eugene Minkowski's (1970, *Lived Time: Phenomenological and Psychopathological Studies*. Nancy Metzel, trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, esp. 429-430). I will discuss his influence as the chapter proceeds.

"Dizzying proximity" is here associated directly with childhood syncretism, and the transitivity or indistinction that continues to characterize adult emotional life, as well as certain pathological experiences. It is opposed to "lived distance," a notion which Merleau-Ponty here credits to Eugene Minkowski's studies of various pyschological disorders. Notably, the passage on "pure depth" in the *Phenomenology* is inspired by Minkowski's work on depth and "lived distance." This comment in the Sorbonne lectures is a direct reference to Merleau-Ponty's discussion of Minkowski and "pure depth" in his earlier work, where the paired notions of "lived distance" and "dizzying proximity" also appear.[140] There is thus a direct textual link between the passage in the Sorbonne lectures where Merleau-Ponty describes the persistence of childhood indistinction in adult emotional life, and the passage in the *Phenomenology* on pure depth. In order to better understand the notion of "lived distance," its relation to indistinction, and the way that "dizzying proximity" itself functions as an affective dynamic of differentiation within indistinction that prepares both the possibility of "lived distance" and its ongoing precariousness, we must examine this earlier passage on pure depth.

Here we will discover that the "overwhelming" or "dizzying" proximity that is contrasted with lived distance is nevertheless inseparable from it. This "dizzying proximity," though it is indeed proximity—even a hyper-proximity insofar as it is "dizzying" or "overwhelming"—is not the opposite of distance. As

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[140] The French phrase is "*vertigineuse proximité*" (PhP, 304/344). When it appears in the *Phenomenology*, both Smith and Landes translate it as "overwhelming proximity" (Landes, 304/344; Smith, 339). The phrase appears on other occasions in Merleau-Ponty's corpus, sometimes translated as "dizzying proximity" (CRO, 154); or the direct cognate "vertiginous proximity" (WP, 51).

the vertiginous proximity of pure depth, it is not a oneness, a fusion of body and world into a singularity, or a larger individual. The very "dizzying" quality of this proximity disrupts or overwhelms the fully individuated experience of the body as bordered. But it is precisely in this excess, this overwhelming or dizzying intensity, that it persists in being a dynamic of differentiation rather than sameness or fusion.

In Chapter 1, I emphasized tendencies in the *Phenomenology* that run counter to the later work. In Chapter 5, I will continue to emphasize that contrast when I return to Merleau-Ponty's discussion of true and false love that I began in Chapter 1, this time addressing his treatment of the topic in his later work, and showing the change in Merleau-Ponty's account since his discussion of the topic in "The *Cogito*" chapter of the *Phenomenology* as I analyzed it in Chapter 1. First however, I want to show a thread of Merleau-Ponty's thought that anticipates crucial themes from the later period and that is already discernable in his early work. The mutual envelopment of clear space and dark space—or lived distance and overwhelming proximity—that Merleau-Ponty proposes in the *Phenomenology* is an early precedent for the mutual envelopment between what he will in the later work call "the visible and the invisible" (see for example EM, 187, and VI, 215/265). Though the notion of latency or hiddenness will change in the later work, the relation between the visible and the invisible, like that of clear and dark space, serves as an ontologically fundamental principle of differentiation between latency and manifestness, revealing and concealing, hiddenness and disclosure.

4.2) The Question of Pure Depth

Towards the culmination of the *Phenomenology of Perception*'s chapter on "Space," there is a section in which Merleau-Ponty calls our attention to a peculiar experience he identifies as the experience of "pure depth" (PhP, 296/335).[141] He finds pure depth first of all in the experience of being enveloped in the total darkness of night, describing it as a "depth without planes [without foreground or background], without surfaces, and without any distance from it to me" (PhP, 296/335).[142] It is not only a pre-objective depth, but in fact a *pre-perceptual* depth: a "determination of 'place' that precedes 'perception'" (PhP, 298/337).

The quote marks around "perception" here are Merleau-Ponty's own, signalling that what he means in this case by "perception" is a more superficial sense of the word than the original sense the word acquires in his own theory. We should be wary, Merleau-Ponty cautions earlier in the *Phenomenology*, of "view[ing] perception through the lens of its results" (PhP, 17/40). Perception's results include sharply demarcated subjects and objects: a world populated with objectified things and a perceiver positioned either as too active or too passive, sovereign donator of sense or spectatorial receptacle of it. But phenomenological

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[141] The discussion of pure depth and nocturnal space continues through PhP 306/346.

[142] The French reads "*une profondeur pure sans plans, sans surfaces, sans distance d'elle à moi.*" While Landes translates the series of cognates directly, Smith translates "*sans plans*" as "without foreground or background" (2002, 330). I have modified the translation by inserting this phrase because it brings out a relevant sense of the term not carried over in the English cognate: the French *plan* is used in the various paired terms that distinguish foreground and background ("*premier plan*" and "*second plan*"; or "*avant plan*" and "*arrière plan*"). Merleau-Ponty is thus distinguishing "pure depth" from visual depth with its characteristic foreground-background differentiation.

reflection reveals perception as a far more ambiguous intertwining of what will later be distinguished as subjects and objects, the body proper over against the things. The actual process of perception, Merleau-Ponty discovers, hides behind its results. Pure depth is a part of this perceptual dynamic prior to the emergence of the distinctions that will be its product. More specifically, the claim that pure depth precedes perception should be taken in the nuanced sense suggested later in the paper where I discuss the mutual envelopment of "clear space" and "dark space," explaining mutual envelopment of pure depth and perceptual depth.[143]

He proceeds to find experiences of "pure depth" in the spatiality of dreams, respiration, myths, imaginations, sexual desire, homesickness, proprioception, and intuitive homing navigation. Drawing on the work of Eugene Minkowski, a psycopathologist who wrote phenomenologically inspired case studies of his patients, Merleau-Ponty discusses the possibilities of derangement and disorientation proper to the dimension of pure depth. What is this experience of depth that need not include distance, or surface, or visual gestalt, or indeed any perception at all?

At the outset of the "Space" chapter, Merleau-Ponty proposes to find in the phenomenological study of space "a new conception of intentionality" (PhP, 253/290), one which does not repeat the error of understanding meaning as the constituting activity of a subject, donating form to content.[144] What is the significance of the notion of "pure depth" in that project? I explain pure depth in

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[143] See also Cataldi's discussion of the status of pure depth with respect to primordial spatiality (1993, 43-53).

[144] On my reading, it is the Sartrean notion of intentionality that is primarily targeted here. Toadvine (2009, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press) agrees, but also notes the reading of Husserlian intentionality under which it also may be included as another target of Merleau-Ponty's critical amendment (2009, 98).

terms of affective orientation: it is the depth in which a body and its environment

become places that matter, a depth of concern that serves as an original expression

of an embodied situation. Insofar as the experience of depth is an experience of

orientation, that which is at stake in this orientation is not apparent distance and

size; but attraction and aversion, belonging and alienation: in pure depth, the

sense of a situation is established in the form of an affective intensity. This

orientation is manifest as a kind of geography of a situation, a spatiality—indeed,

an original or primordial sense of spatiality. But it is "a spatiality without things"

(PhP, 296/335): rather than a strictly perceptual or observable geography, this

affective intensity that constitutes original orientation is expressed as an

imaginary geography.[145] Pure depth is a spatiality, not of things, but of

"image[s]," of the "unreal" (PhP, 297/336); a "space of fantasies" rather than "a

space of realities" (PhP, 298/337).

However, this space of hiddenness, of phantoms and quasi-presences, is a

"general spatiality in which clear space and observable objects are embedded"

(PhP, 297/336). It is crucial to note that as I have already shown in Chapters 2 and

3 and as I will explore further in Chapter 5, Merleau-Ponty does not (as Sartre

does) draw a strict opposition between the imaginary and the perceptual. As I

explained in Chapters 2 and 3, Merleau-Ponty maintains that the sharp distinction

we tend to draw between the imaginary and perception is itself an expression of

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[145] Compare to Kurt Lewin's notion of "hodological space." Sartre references Lewin's concept in
his *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1971, Philip Mairet, trans. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd)
invoking it in his description of emotions organizing perception (1971, 62). Lewin was an
influential gestalt psychologist whose work was known to Merleau-Ponty since he cites him
briefly on a different matter in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (41/25).

the body image: an effect of the reorganization of perception that begins in the mirror stage when the body schema incorporates a body image.

The mirror image experienced as a double—and other experiences of feeling that are "ubiquitous" (CRO, 129), exceeding the boundaries of the body proper—are "de-realized" as a result of the advent of the body proper. That is, they are distinguished from perception proper and understood as *mere* imagination, deficient or derivative perceptions. Yet, Merleau-Ponty is clear that that distinction is a conceit, a sleight of hand. Here again, perception itself is not transparent: its actual dynamics are occluded by its results. This occultation within perception is itself the operation of the imaginary within it. The de-realization of the imaginary makes way for an experience of robust inside-outside difference, and those boundaries are not thereby *less* than real; but they are real precisely in the sense that the imaginary is. They are themselves a work of the imaginary: the borders of a body as a sentient interiority are not themselves *things*, but images—body images. And rather than doing away with indistinction altogether, they hide it; occlude it. That occultation is no mere illusion or deception: it opens a new dimension of experience based on a sense of personal boundaries over against a common world. In the passage on pure depth, I find an early instance of Merleau-Ponty reflecting on this relationship between the imaginary and the real as a function of affective differentiation. Affective depth is an operation of the difference between the manifest and the latent that functions even in the context of indistinction, prior to inside-outside difference.

Pure depth, as I will show, is a dimension of affective intimacy between body and world that does not rely on distinguishing inside and out, operating through a uniquely affective force of differentiation, and establishing uniquely affective variants of distance and proximity. I argue the passage on pure depth claims that the relation of sense-making differentiation obtaining between body and world, establishing the lines of force that are the orientation or felt geography of an embodied situation, consists of affective forces operating according to an intimate dynamic of differentiation that does not rely on exteriority or negation and instead accommodates ambivalence.

In his recent book on Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of nature, Ted Toadvine distinguishes the earlier and later Merleau-Ponty's commitments with respect to the character of meaningful differentiation (2009, 97-106). He claims that in the *Phenomenology*, meaningful difference is donated to the world by the body subject, who "first introduce[s] a void into nature" (2009, 105). By contrast, the later Merleau-Ponty affirms that "the fundamental spacing of nature, its own expressive *écart*, constitutes the body as a fold of its flesh" (2009, 106). Thus in the *Phenomenology*, meaningful difference is a human invention, introduced into nature by the pure negativity or "void" of the body's difference from its world. Dualism is deferred instead of subverted, displaced from a dualism of mind and body to a dualism of humanity and nature.

I argue that Merleau-Ponty's position in the *Phenomenology* is not univocally Sartrean as Toadvine indicates. Instead, I find a tendency to profoundly radicalize the notion of intentionality in a manner consistent with the

later work. For instance, at the outset of the "Space" chapter when he promises a

"new conception of intentionality," Merleau-Ponty explains that his new

conception will resist establishing a subjective intentional pole that is "absolute

non-being" over against the world (PhP, 253/290). In other words, he declares his

ambition to displace exactly that model of the body subject as a "void" that

Toadvine attributes to him. While I concede that one can find tendencies that run

counter to these intentions and support Toadvine's criticism—indeed, I made a

complementary critique myself in Chapter 1—nevertheless I think it is

worthwhile to illuminate the tendency that lets us place the early work within the

trajectory of thought running through the later. The discussion of pure depth is an

important moment of this tendency: it recasts the body-world difference as

mixture and permeation, mutual envelopment, definitively distinguishing it from a

Sartrean account of intentionality as nihilation.[146]

4.3) Pure Depth and the Spatiality of Night

Merleau-Ponty introduces the notion of "pure depth" in a section entitled

"The spatiality of night" (PhP, 296/335). Drawing heavily on Eugene

Minkowski's description of "clear space" and "dark space" (1970, 429-430),

Merleau-Ponty describes the experience of being enveloped in the total darkness

of night. In this phenomenological reflection he discovers a pre-objective

experience of depth, "a spatiality without things" that he calls an "original

spatiality, a "modality" of our original "implantation" in the world:

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[146] See Sartre (1956, especially 33-85).

The night is not an object in front of me; rather, it envelops me, it penetrates me through all my senses, it suffocates my memories, and it all but effaces my personal identity. I am no longer withdrawn into my observation post in order to see the profiles of objects flowing by in the distance. The night is without profiles; it itself touches me and its unity is the mystical unity of the *mana*. Even cries, or a distant light, only populate it vaguely; it becomes entirely animated; it is a pure depth without planes [without foreground or background], without surfaces, and without any distance from it to me. (PhP, 296/335).[147]

What is described is the experience, not of blindness, but of hiddenness—Minkowski calls it "obscurity" (1970, 429-430). The experience of being enveloped in darkness that Merleau-Ponty describes is not the lack of visual stimuli, nor even the impossibility of seeing, but rather the confounding of perception insofar as perception involves a project of objectification: a demarcation of things and of our selves with respect to them. Thus, not every experience of darkness will be an experience of thorough and indiscriminate hiddenness such as Merleau-Ponty describes in this passage. As Merleau-Ponty notes, "at night I can hold onto the structures of the day, such as when I feel my way through my apartment" (PhP, 296/335-336). The space of my own apartment, even when unlit, is too familiar, too well incorporated already into my body schema, to offer me the experience of obscurity that makes pure depth conspicuous in Merleau-Ponty's example of being enveloped in the darkness of the night. There must be a strangeness, a hiddenness, even an alterity to the darkness in order for my immersion in it to make pure depth conspicuous.

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[147] I have again inserted the phrase "without foreground or background" in order to clarify the translation here (see footnote above). In the French, the whole passage reads as follows: "*La nuit n'est pas un objet devant moi, elle m'enveloppe, elle pénètre par tous mes sens, elle suffoque mes souvenirs, elle efface presque mon identité personelle. Je ne suis plus retranché dans mon posts perceptif pour voir de là défiler à distance les profils des objets. La nuit est sans profils, elle me touche elle même et son unité est l'unité mystique du* mana. *Même des cris ou une lumière lointaine ne la peuplent que vaguement, c'est toute entière qu'elle s'anime, elle est une profondeur pure sans plans, sans surfaces, sans distance d'elle à moi.*"

Thus the experience of pure depth is a pre-perceptual experience, not only in the sense that it is prior to the objectified results of perception, but also in the sense that what ushers us into an experience of pure depth is not any particular thing we see, or hear, or touch, in the darkness. Rather, pure depth becomes conspicuous when our perceptual experience is momentarily confounded and confused; when we are perceptually disoriented.[148] Perception's indefatigable project "to anchor ourselves and to transcend ourselves in things" fails for a time, and there is a dizzying loss of that felt sense of the mutual exteriority of subject and object, that withdrawal into "my observation post" from which objects parade before me, their separateness outlined in clear and distinct "profiles" (PhP, 296/335). The darkness not only envelops but also infiltrates me, suspending my inhabitation of that "[c]lear" and "impartial space" in which objects can emerge as such, claiming their own proper places and keeping a polite distance from each other and me (PhP, 300/339). As the night confounds my efforts to perceive things, it also confounds the undercurrent of this effort: the securing of a tacit identification of the boundaries of my own place on the scene. "[N]ight", Merleau-Ponty writes, "is not an object in front of me", and I cannot withdraw from it into my perceptual look-out post (PhP, 296/336). Without *things over there* that I see *from here*, I experience none of the subject-object distantiation that characterizes depth perception.

And yet in this dearth of perceptual orientations, Merleau-Ponty finds a pre-perceptual dimension of orientation—an orientation that is not simply a trajectory between my own position and that of objectified things. Merleau-Ponty

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[148] Cataldi's discussion of this passage is helpful on this point (1993, 48-53).

insists that in this pitch blackness, there is a *felt* sense of depth, of orientation—it is even billed as "pure" depth. But depth is differentiation, and what is difference without outlines, without separation, without distance—without exteriority? Merleau-Ponty says that "[t]he night… itself touches me"; *the night itself* is in contact with me, "without any distance from it to me" (PhP, 296/335). There is felt difference between the residence of the night and that of my body, a difference that consists, not in separation or mutual exteriority, but in obscurity: hiddenness. There is no distance separating my body and the night, yet there is something it hides. "Depth," as Merleau-Ponty will claim in *The Visible and the Invisible*, "is pre-eminently the dimension of the hidden" (VI, 219/268).[149] To say that depth is the dimension of hiddenness, of occultation, is not to claim that it is a third dimension or a hidden one, but rather, as Merleau-Ponty will write in his later work, that it is "the reversibility of dimensions" (EM, 180). Depth is not one dimension among many, but rather is spatial dimensionality itself: the divergence between the manifest and the latent that differentiates a dimension. This is what Merleau-Ponty means when he distinguishes depth from distance: to experience perceptual depth is to perceive a situation in terms of its occluded aspects. Merleau-Ponty insists that the experience of depth is not a third dimension added to the first two, like a breadth or length seen edgewise.[150] To understand spatial depth as a reversibility of dimensions is to understand it as the thickness of space where it "escapes our attempts to look at it from 'above'" (EM, 175), or to understand it as nothing more than a big container or a quantity of extension. It is

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[149] See also Cataldi's discussion of this passage and the claim that depth is a "hidden dimension" (1993, 30-56).
[150] See PhP (beginning 265/303) and EM (180).

to understand space instead as a fullness richly populated with the possibility of hidden things—including those which are not yet or no longer perceived.

James Gibson's discussion of depth as a temporal extension is helpful on this point. Discussing an experiment inquiring after whether the hidden surfaces "seen" in visual depth perception can properly be said to be perceived, or whether they must be understood to be "recalled, imagined, conceived, or perhaps known," Gibson describes his interpretation of the results:

> the surface that was being covered was seen to persist after being concealed, and the surface that was being uncovered was seen to pre-exist before being revealed. The hidden surface could not be described as remembered in one case or expected in the other. A better description would be that it was perceived retrospectively and prospectively. It is certainly reasonable to describe perception as extending into the past and future, but note that to do so violates the accepted doctrine that perception is *confined* to the present (1986, 190).[151]

Depth is the thickness of space when it is more than space, space thick with the hidden spaces of other times. What I will show in my discussion of "pure depth" is that this depth that is not yet the "spatiality of things" is not only depth understood in terms of its temporality, but rather depth understood in terms of affect, which is thereby positioned as a more general dimensionality that in turn accounts for not only the temporal but also the imaginary thickness of perceptual space.

In Merleau-Ponty's description of the enshrouding, occlusive darkness of the night, its occlusiveness not only surrounds but permeates me. Our contact is not confined to a meeting of surfaces, but resonates in depth. Minkowski's description compares the dark space of pure depth to "auditive space," in which "I

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[151] *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Elbaum Associates.

become absorbed in listening to the piece of music that is being played" such that even though "[t]here is space here," it is a kind of spatiality in which "there will be neither 'beside,' nor distance, nor extension; I will feel completely enveloped by the music" so that "I will vibrate in contact with these harmonious sounds" (1970, 430). This vibrating manner of contact involves not the elimination of a gap between borders, such that inside and outside are separate but adjoining. It is not a contact between surfaces, but a vibration in depth. Like an event of electrification, a charge; or like a wave of sound, the night and my body permeate and animate each other. The night is a stranger, a hiddenness that has seeped into and joined forces with the visceral dark of my body, which in turn cannot withdraw from this foreign darkness, and animates it. There is no outside. Ours is a difference of occultation and concealment rather than negation and exteriority: there is no space where the night *is not*, where it and my body do not haunt each other. We form this strange depth, not side by side, as objects, or frontally, as subject facing object. Rather, we abide in "overwhelming proximity [*vertigineuse proximité*]," residing in the same space in utmost intimacy (PhP, 304/344); a space that is nonetheless haunted by what is hidden there, what is latent rather than what is manifest.

I have insisted on understanding this "overwhelming proximity" as difference. Is this not belied by Merleau-Ponty's own description of it in terms of "unity" in the sentence that reads: "Night has no outlines; it is itself in contact with me *and its unity is the mystical unity of the* mana" (PhP, 296/335, emphasis mine)? The mention of *mana* suggests this is a reference to Freud's influential

discussion of the indigenous Pacific Islander concept of *mana* in his analysis of taboo.[152] In either of the two ways I consider reading the equation drawn in this sentence, the "unity" at issue in *mana* is an equivocal or ambivalent unity. Thus, far from submerging my question about difference under the invocation of a homogenous unity, the dynamic of co-residence implied in *mana*'s ambivalence or equivocation may serve as a model of the peculiar heterogeneity invoked in Merleau-Ponty's description of the experience of night.

     Mana, Freud explains, is a Polynesian word denoting an impersonal force or magical influence supplying the contagious or polluting power of taboo actions and things (1913, 22). *Mana* and the taboo it engenders are marked by an ambivalent disposition of both veneration and dread that express their equivocal status as both sacred and forbidden. While in certain religious mythologies these attitudes tend to be reserved for distinct objects, actions, and supernatural entities, Freud attests that in the taboo system they are combined (1913, 26-28).[153] The two valences of "sacred" and "unclean" are amalgamated even in the word *taboo*, which has an equivalent in Latin and Greek, but not in the modern European languages of Freud's acquaintance. The "mystical unity" Merleau-Ponty mentions may refer to this amalgamation of the sacred and the forbidden. That would be interesting for my purposes, since the differentiation proper to this "unity" is enacted in ambivalence: a mixed affective orientation in which horror and

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[152] See the discussion of "*mana*" in *Totem and Taboo*, Chapter 2: "Taboo and Emotional Ambivalence" (1950 [1913], *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol XIII*. James Strachey, ed. London: Hogarth Press: 18-74). *Mana* is later discussed by Marcel Mauss and Claude Levi-Strauss.

[153] Freud's ethnocentrism shows in these passages where he implies that a cultural hierarchy is at stake in this distinction.

reverence are co-present. Affective orientation is the substance of their connection as well as their difference.

But given the comment about permeating contact that is its immediate context, the "mystical unity" to which Merleau-Ponty directs us is more likely the magical power of transference or contagion attributed to *mana*.[154] In that case the unity at issue is the one enacted when a taboo object spreads its influence to another body or thing. Freud compares this transference to an electrical charge: wholly permeating the body possessed by it, the *mana* of the taboo thing is transmissible by contact without diminution in force. Thus when a person touches a taboo object, it is not only her hand or her touch but her whole person with all its own modes of influence that are infected with the *mana*, becoming themselves agents of the polluting influence of the taboo. Nor has that influence been diffused by dispersal into a second body: "anyone who has transgressed one of these prohibitions himself acquires the characteristic of being prohibited—as though the whole of the dangerous charge had been transferred over to him" (1913, 25-26).

On this reading, Merleau-Ponty is suggesting the *mana*'s power of contagion or pollution as a model for the relation between the night and my body, the relation of pure depth. As in the enshrouding embrace of darkness, once I am under the influence of the taboo object, it is no longer an *object*, in the sense of being distinct from me, and having discrete borders. Bataille describes the taboo object as "sticky": "a fetid, sticky object without boundaries" (1991, 95). Contact with it is not a meeting of boundaries, but an infusion, infection, contamination, mixture. The taboo and what it infuses have in this way become indistinct, so that

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[154] See Freud (1913, 24-26)

they are no longer separate, like Minkowski's music vibrating through him in "auditive space" (1970, 430). Yet, this is not to say that there is no difference. While there is no boundary between me and the taboo object when its *mana* inflitrates my whole sphere of influence, a dynamic of differentiation persists between us. The power of *mana* may infect or possess me so that we are no longer separate, but still it is not mine. Our difference is manifest in the ambivalent attitude of horror and reverence. It is a difference that has sense or direction in the form of an intensity of feeling: an inclination or tendency, a meaning of the relationship as attraction or aversion, a pull *towards* and push *away*. Indeed, as the co-residence of the horrifying and the revered, the taboo influence is undecidably both push and pull, not a linear trajectory, but an intensification of multiple, even conflictual, hidden forces. The potential of affective orientations for ambivalence means they resist being understood in terms of an objective spatiality of containment and extension.

Freud explains *mana* in terms of emotional ambivalence toward the objects charged with it (for example, unconscious hostility or fear that coexists with conscious affection or veneration). He builds an analogy between this ambivalence and the attitude of the obsessional neurotic toward the object of her obsession. Again, the ethnocentric presumptions of this analogy should not pass without remark: the analogy establishes an equation between the cultural system of taboo and pathology. But pivotal for my purposes is the fact that Freud's explanation positions affects as the actual purveyors of the taboo influence. That is, Freud explains *mana* in terms of a concentration of affective forces. Instead of

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dismissing the taboo's hold on people as mere superstition, Freud accepts that it has real influence. However, the force of this influence consists, not in the activities of supernatural powers, but in the potential of the phantom motion of an affective "pull" to operate without respect to everyday borders, and charge a situation, thing, or person with a hidden force.

Thus Merleau-Ponty's citation of Freud not only bears out instead of undermining my claim that pure depth is productively understood in terms of difference, but also supports my reading of pure depth as affective orientation. It also suggests a non-accidental link between these two: between on the one hand this peculiar structure of a difference without borders, a heterogeneity that thrives in a context of permeation and mutual envelopment, and on the other hand the unique forces of affects and affective phenomena. I will return to this connection in following sections.

4.4) Depth and Pure Depth in the "Space" Chapter

Before exploring further what is meant by the claim that pure depth should be understood as affective orientation, let us establish the link Merleau-Ponty makes between depth and orientation in general, and note its role in the broader project of this chapter of his *Phenomenology*. One of Merleau-Ponty's central aspirations in the "Space" chapter is to offer a counter-example to Kant's division of space into either a conceptual form of experience, or the sensual content given in it. Merleau-Ponty finds a third alternative in the experience of space as *orientation*, which he identifies with the lived experience of *depth*, usually

exemplified by visual depth perception. To see in depth is to experience space not as the setting "in which things are laid out, but rather the means by which the position of things is made possible" (PhP, 253-254/290-291), the means whereby words like "upright" or "inverted" become intelligible (PhP, 257/294). Orientation is neither a reflective analysis like an "act… of signification" nor sensory material whose form depends upon determination by such a procedure (PhP, 266/304). It is rather an "expressive experience": as orientation, depth "announces a certain indissoluble link between the things and me by which I am situated in front of them" (PhP, 267/305). The existential situation that is my body's visceral connection to its environment is expressed as a "pulsation" or "existential tide" (PhP, 298/337) that does not merely indicate but "genuinely contain[s its] sense" or direction, leaving no intelligible room for a separation of conceptual form and sensory content (PhP, 298/337). As orientation, space is neither an "ether in which all things are immersed [*baignent*]," nor a "characteristic they would all share" (PhP, 254/291). It is rather a "power… enabling [things] to be connected," an event in which directions and positions emerge as elaborations of the communion of my body and its environment, allowing my body and the perceived things to adopt places and distances with respect to one another on a common scene.

It is in the course of this argument that Merleau-Ponty makes his oft-cited distinction between depth and distance. To a superficial examination, depth perception may seem to be an experience of looking out from an absolute position to fix objects in place by determining their distance from that position. The

assumption that depth is a perception of distance figures in rationalist accounts of perception (especially Descartes' and Berkeley's). In this rationalist tradition, one does not actually *see* depth; it is a derivative dimension, an inference of the cognitive subject.[155] What this description fails to account for is that my experience of objects in depth includes an experience of finding myself placed among them. My own position is at stake in perceptual depth, just as much as the position of the perceived things. When Merleau-Ponty explains depth as orientation, he means that the accomplishment of seeing in depth is not simply a matter of establishing the distance from my body toward the objects, as if my body serves as a fixed point. Rather, it includes an obscurer operation, more or less eclipsed by its results, whereby the objects qua perceived reveal the perceiving itself, quietly placing my body on the same scene in which they are placed.

This is the key revelation of the notion of "lived depth," first described in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, and returned to in "Eye and Mind." The reversibility of this oriented relation is emphasized in "Eye and Mind," but it is already part of the earlier phenomenological account.[156] Seeing places visible things in perspective, and meanwhile the seeing is itself given place within the visible. *Depth perception is not perception of distance, but a lived phenomenon of orientation in which perception of distance is at stake*. The corollary of this is that my seeing body, even where that is considered not as a visible image but as a

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[155] For critical commentary, see PhP (beginning 265/303); also Gibson (*The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*), Cataldi (*Emotion, Depth, and Flesh*) and Morris (*The Sense of Space* (2004), Albany: State University of New York Press).

[156] See PhP (265-267/303-305): "Of all the dimensions, depth is so to speak, the most 'existential'…. It announces a certain indissoluble link between the things and me by which I am situated in front of them" (305-273).

perceptual perspective, cannot be modeled as a non-visible—a void of the visible, absolutely outside it, as if made of a different stuff. It must rather be understood, to borrow the terms Merleau-Ponty will use in his final writings, as an invisible *of* the visible: an opacity or obscurity that belongs to the illuminations of visibility as its out-of-sight or hidden reverse side, a latency always adumbrated in what is manifestly visible.

The account of pure depth as an affective dimension of orientation solves a problem in Merleau-Ponty's account of depth perception. Merleau-Ponty writes that neither convergence nor apparent size *cause* depth perception, because the perception of these qualities already presupposes orientation.[157] For example, the convergence of the railroad tracks as they run ahead of me into the distance only appears as convergence once I have come to feel oriented toward them as parallel rails that extend perpendicular to my position (rather than, for instance, two converging diagonals right in front of me).[158] The trouble is that this implies that we must be oriented toward things before we even perceive them.

In "Eye and Mind," this problem of vision's apparent "clairvoyance" (EM, 162-163) is solved by invoking "the imaginary texture of the real" (EM, 165): vision depends on the flesh of the world lending itself to the sort of *felt* aspects of perceptual experience that we might otherwise think are reserved for proprioceptions like the experience of the body image. We might say that in that text, the flesh of the world accommodates an imaginary texture akin to the one the

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[157] See PhP (267-273/305-311); especially, for instance, "convergence of the eyes is not the cause of depth, and that it itself presupposes an orientation toward the object at a distance" (270/308).
[158] Merleau-Ponty's distinction between "causes" and "motives" is relevant here. Convergence and apparent size, Merleau-Ponty writes, are in the experience of perceptual depth, neither like a sign nor like a cause, but rather "in the way that a *motive*… is present in a decision" (307-308/299). See also 71-77/56-63.

body acquires in the incorporation of body images, and vision is our participation in that imaginary texture. In the *Phenomenology*, it is pure depth that solves this puzzle: it supplies an account of a dimension in which we are oriented toward things prior to perceiving them. At the beginning of the chapter on sexuality, Merleau-Ponty claims that if we aim to "reveal the genesis of being for us," how things come to give themselves in experience as existing beyond what they show of themselves, and as having "no need of being perceived in order to exist," then we must turn to our "affective milieu," and witness "how an object or a being begins to exist for us through desire or love" (PhP, 156/191). In an earlier chapter, he cites Kurt Koffka saying: "an object appears to be attractive or repulsive before it appears to be black or blue, circular or square" (PhP, 26/48). The passage on pure depth supplies his own account of this affective life that is the provenance of my orientations. Depth perception is not caused, but motivated by an affective force that orients my body toward what concerns me.

4.5) Pure Depth as Affective Orientation

Now let us turn to the question of precisely what it means to say that there is a "pure depth," an original sense of what we mean when we speak of *orientation*, that is uniquely affective. In pure depth, "[t]here is", Merleau-Ponty claims, "a determination of up and down and, in general… of 'place' that precedes 'perception'" (PhP, 298/337). So for instance, "[w]hen one speaks of a high or low morale, one does not extend to the psychological domain a relation that could only have its full sense in the physical world" (PhP, 297/336). When

we say that (for example) "morale is on the rise," the sense of rising or falling we mean is not simply a metaphor, derivative of the more mundane spatial sense of these terms, a measure of locomotion across distance. It is rather an orientation in pure depth, governed by the "existential tide[s]" of disappointments, fascinations, and attachments. In that original mode of spatiality, "directions and positions are determined by the residence… of great affective entities" (PhP, 298/337). Merleau-Ponty mentions orientation in respiration: the urgency with which we strain upwards in gasping for air is not necessarily a trajectory established in relation to perceived objects or distances. As an expression of its "coexistence" with the world, my body's terror of separation from its vital medium "polarizes experience and makes a direction appear suddenly" (PhP, 263/300).[159] My body's visceral attachment to air is incarnated in this upsurge, expressing the status of air as one of those "great affective entities"—one whose residence is "up." To be clear, undoubtedly we might perceive distance in this situation—for example, the distance between me and the surface of water in which I am submerged. But this distance matters as an extension I can perceive only insofar as it is first a presence I can feel in affective depth: a looming threat, a presence of mortal danger closing in on me, enjoying an "overwhelming proximity" with me, as darkness does in the night. Even without seeing the surface of the water, it is manifest in an imaginary sense: a phantom or image that is the crystallization of an affective urgency.

     I am doing some creative work to develop this example of pure depth. In the text, the discussion of respiration is complicated with a discussion of the

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[159] "To conjure (up)" is another possible translation for the *faire surgir* that Smith translates as "to induce" and Landes as "to make suddenly appear."

spatiality of dreams, myths and sexual desire (PhP, 296-298/335-337). Merleau-Ponty's overall point in gathering these particular examples is to support his claim that the value of rising and falling in phrases like "morale is high" are not simply derivative of the physical or more mundane spatial sense of these terms. The manner in which directions in these theaters of experience have a meaning is, he argues, distinct from the reference of "sign to signification" (PhP, 298/337). Feelings and images of rising and falling can themselves contain vital and affective meaning without being a sign of something else. His support for this claim is that these meanings are limited neither to a particular notional *content*, nor to a particular *form*. A sense of direction and the kind of meaning it expresses is spectacularly labile, such that it can transmogrify itself between these "different theater[s]." For instance, there are cases where dream images of rising and falling can be correlated to respiratory movements—and, he adds, to "sexual drives," referring enigmatically to the "sexual significance of up and down." [160] He does not, however, give a developed phenomenological description of any one of these experiences, so in the discussion of respiration I have taken the liberty of some improvisation.

One example that Merleau-Ponty elaborates upon more fully is that of homing navigation. A note before I continue: in this example, Merleau-Ponty

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[160] I find the mention of the "sexual signification of up and down" (PhP, 297/336) puzzling. It is possible that Merleau-Ponty is conflating the phallic and the sexual, a common sexist error. That is, he may be talking about erections. A mention of the "phallic significance of up and down" would have been far less mysterious. But if this is indeed what was meant, calling it "sexual significance" is at best an awkward euphemism, and at worst participates in the sexist practice of privileging masculine embodiment, allowing the masculine to metonymically serve as the generic and occlude sexual difference. There is a second possibility, which is that he is using the term "sexual" here in the manner that he did in the chapter on "The Body as a Sexed Being," where it is distinguished from genital sexuality, and used synonymously with "erotic" and "affective life."

invokes the ethnocentric vocabulary of the "primitive person [*un primitif*]" (PhP, 298/337). The example asks us to imagine the "primitive person" who may find her way home in an intuitive manner that depends on attunement to affective urgency more than observable data:

> For a primitive person, knowing the whereabouts of the clan's encampment does not involve locating it in relation to some landmark: for the encampment is the landmark of all landmarks. Rather, to know this location is to tend toward it as if toward the natural place of a certain peace or a certain joy, just as, for me, knowing where my hand is involves joining myself to this agile power that is dormant for the moment, but that I can take up and discover as my own… for me my right hand and my left hand are respectively the embodiment of my dexterity and my clumsiness. In the dream, as in the myth, we learn *where* the phenomenon is located by sensing [*en éprouvant*] what our desire moves toward, what strikes fear in our hearts, and upon what our life depends. (PhP, 298/337).

This word "primitive" has a deeply troubling colonial history, used by Europeans to racialize indigenous people and justify colonial conquest. In the *Phenomenology* as well as in his Sorbonne lectures, Merleau-Ponty participates in the use of this term, which functions as if it has a referent independent of colonial practices; as if it has a straightforward anthropological or psychological meaning instead of one that was largely a political instrument of domination and marginalization. For instance, Merleau-Ponty's discussion assumes that there exists such a thing as a "primitive mentality," a psychological profile that these vastly diverse groups of people share. He resists the tendency among his contemporaries to reduce this "primitive" psychology to an immature, underdeveloped or childish version of "civilized" mentalities, just as he resists reducing child psychology to an incomplete version of adult psychology. Yet Merleau-Ponty does identify particular perceptual practices as held in common

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between "the child and the primitive person" (PhP, 303/343); his understanding of these figures is also linked to his description of Minkowski's delusional patients. In the passage I am discussing, he positions these figures as illustrations of orientation in pure depth: he sees a kind of "animism" in the perception of children, delusional persons, and so-called "primitives" that testifies to a perceptual organization more governed by the imaginary geography that expresses the "physiognomic characteristics" of things (appearing cheerful, or forbidding, etc) than by, for instance, their quantitative spatial properties, such as apparent distance and size. The imaginary or hidden aspects of a situation are, for these figures, not de-realized.

Thus Merleau-Ponty's use of these examples is anything but dismissive; but it is instrumentalizing, romanticizing, and reductive.[161] Merleau-Ponty depends on the figure of the child and the "primitive" to supply instances of more intimate, affectively integrated and phantasmatically animated relations between body and environment than the ones that he implies will be familiar to his European readers, who are thereby positioned implicitly as having more thoroughly repressed their affective proximity with their environment, and in general as more analytical and more reflective than children and "primitive" people. This style of appeal to the child alongside the "primitive" in order to bring under consideration a more pre-reflective mode of perception is repeated in the lecture on "The Child's Relations with Others," also a text in which the affective moorings of perceptual experience are at issue: in that lecture, "ubiquity" (a felt sense of place that exceeds the boundaries of the body proper) is a perceptual

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[161] Many thanks to Alia Al-Saji for clarifying the nuances of this point.

practice imputed to both "primitive" peoples and children, as well as associated with some pathological symptoms (CRO, 129).

All things considered, the use of the category "primitive" is troubling, as is the all too easy analogy with children (not to mention pathology). And not only because it participates in a discourse that has been used to incite and excuse racist violence and colonial occupation. For we may also worry that it functions as a nostalgic summons to an immemorial past in which we enjoyed a more or less immediate and undifferentiated union with our environment. This use of the notions of "the primitive" and "the child" thus lends itself to a third tendency in the *Phenomenology*, distinguishable both from Toadvine's reading as well as my own. This one suggest a nostalgic unity or indifference of body and world, as opposed to the tendency Toadvine criticizes in which the body is positioned as introducing a force of negativity that is not found in nature. I am developing in this chapter a reading of the *Phenomenology* (or at least, of one chapter of that text) in which body and world coexist in an affective process of differentiation without distance, a differentiation of occultation or latency prior to any gestures of negation. But the text, as I acknowledge in the introduction, does offer resources to counter–interpretations. We must be wary around the rhetoric of "the primitive," not only for its socio-historical baggage, but also for its philosophical implications.

But to return to the example of homing navigation: Merleau-Ponty writes that a person may find her way home without the use of maps and landmarks, for it is "the landmark of all landmarks", the abode "of a certain peace or… joy"

(PhP, 298/337). Those of us with more troubled or complicated affective orientations toward home may still recognize our own experiences in Merleau-Ponty's example: if I have a spatial intuition of the presence of home, this is made possible in part by its presence in an affective depth in which I have never really left it, whatever the particular valence of that intimacy. "[W]e learn *where* the phenomenon is located by sensing [*en éprouvant*] what our desire moves toward, what strikes fear in our hearts, and upon what our life depends" (PhP, 298/337). This sort of navigation is compared to proprioception. In the affective sense, there may be no distance between my right hand and my left. Even when stretched far apart, each hand may be felt as "here." Merleau-Ponty explains that besides "the physical and geometrical distance… between me and… things, a lived distance links me to things that count and exist for me, and links them to each other…. [T]his distance measures the 'scope' of my life" (PhP, 299/338).

In this notion of *lived distance*, Merleau-Ponty is distinguishing an affective or emotional distance from perceptual or geographical distance. Cataldi's work on this passage, which I cited above, also argues that "lived distance is an emotional depth" (1993, 44)—as well as offering a fascinating study of the way the vocabulary of depth and distance functions in vernacular and literary contexts to describe affects and emotional states.[162] For instance, when my friend asks "Are you close to your mother?" he isn't asking if she is nearby. He is asking if we are intimate, if we are close in terms of attachment, if we have a *deep* affective investment in each other. The answer could be "yes" even if my mother

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[162] See Cataldi (1993, 43-7), as well as "Introduction" and "Flat Affects vs. Deep Emotional Experience" (1-28).

and I are rarely in the same room. And it could be "yes" whether the quality of our attachment is one of mutual love, animosity, or a mixture of both. As anyone who has been in an abusive relationship with a friend or family member can attest, fear and enmity are not opposites of intimacy and attachment. Indeed, under certain circumstances, intimacy itself can be terrifying and threatening. So what are the polarities, the variations of being "close" in this sense? If intimacy is literally a kind of proximity in an affective depth, what is this "lived distance" Merleau-Ponty invokes?

Before I answer, it is useful to mention that the key modification Merleau-Ponty makes to Minkowski's description of the spatiality of night is in his insistence, against Minkowski, that we never find the clear space of lived distance and the dark space of overwhelming proximity in pure and mutually exclusive forms (PhP, 300/339). Pure depth is always an expression of their mutual envelopment.

The answer Merleau-Ponty provides to the question about lived distance as an affective variant of overwhelming proximity involves the relationship between pure depth and perception. He associates lived distance, not only with the possibility of "objective thought," but also with the world of "everyday perception" (PhP, 304/344): a "common world" (PhP, 300/339) in which things appear (as they do in casual perception), *in* perspective without seeming to be *of* it, appearing as things in themselves that "have no need of being perceived in order to exist" (PhP, 156/191), having anonymous, impersonal, public presences which I may notice and feel without having to reside in "overwhelming

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proximity" with them (PhP, 304/344). "Sometimes," he writes, "between me and events there is a certain leeway (*Spielraum*) that preserves my freedom without the events ceasing to touch me [*me toucher*, which could also be translated as "concern me" or "move me"]" (PhP, 299/338).[163] This margin of neutral or impersonal feeling is not an absence or negation of affective orientation, but a "distanced" variation of it that enables me, for instance, to feel that a landscape is forbidding without being thereby overwhelmed by a sense of foreboding; or to feel, for instance, someone's judgmental disgust without thereby feeling condemned—or at least, as we say, without feeling it "too deeply." The affective orientations in which we experience pure depth are not all characterized by unmitigated overwhelming proximity. Like perceptual depth, pure depth is not to be equated with a certain distance. It is rather a phenomenon of orientation in which affective distance is at stake; that intimacy out of which a certain distance or proximity comes to be determined. This "lived distance" *makes space* for things to concern me while attenuating how deeply that affect encroaches in the context of my life, how much the things at issue in that affect are permitted to take "root… in [the space of my] body" instead of "keep[ing] their distance" and "only touch[ing me] with respect" (PhP, 304/344).

While not a lack of concern with their object, these "lived distances" may be distinguished from a personal concern with it. Lived distance occurs when there is room in my affective environment for things to matter in their own ways; when they enjoy the affective equivalent of perceptual adumbration, and so

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[163] The French reads: "*Tantôt il y a entre moi et les événements un certain jeu (Spielraum) qui ménage ma liberté sans qu'ils cessent de me toucher*" (331).

appear to matter beyond how they matter *for me*, at this moment, from this standpoint. Merleau-Ponty links lived distance to our possibilities for inhabiting the "clear" and "impartial space" of perceptual depth. Experiencing a perceptual scene, in which "objects remain in front of me," facing my perceptual standpoint even as they appear within it, both depends on my body's relation of "overwhelming proximity" with the world, but also requires a "repress[ion]" (PhP, 304/344) or occlusion of that overwhelming proximity, an occlusion accomplished in lived distance. Lived distance gives me an external world at the same time as it gives my life a "scope" of its own.

We have already seen in Chapter 3 Merleau-Ponty's developmental account of the emergence of this "lived distance"; what is interesting here is the account of it as a "pure depth" between clear and dark space, a spatiality of things or a "space of realities" on the one hand, and on the other a "space of fantasies" (PhP, 298/337). This was anticipated in the discussion of the mirror stage to the extent that the advent of the body proper, the incorporation of the body image, and the development of lived distance there—all corollaries—involve a reorganization of the imaginary within perception; a reorganization that is itself a work of the imaginary. Introducing the lecture course on "The Child's Relations with Others," Merleau-Ponty writes of the topic of the course that it will concern "a primordial operation by which the child organizes the imaginary, just as he [sic] organizes the perceived" (CRO, 98). But in this passage of the *Phenomenology* on pure depth, we find Merleau-Ponty positing a differentiation between clear and dark space, between the real and the imaginary, that is not the

exclusion between them and the de-realization of the imaginary produced by the advent of the body image. It is a more original relation, and a more original sort of difference.

Insofar as depth is a dimension of hiddenness, pure depth is always an occlusion of clear or dark space, so that there permeation of each other is never transparent and always involves the possibility of destabilizing or disorienting concealment—or unconcealment (the revelation of an unfamiliar or alienating situation can be as disorienting as being plunged into darkness). We must thus read Merleau-Ponty's description of the spatiality of night a bit differently than Minkowski's: where Minkowski understands dark space as a second, separate space of "pure depth," and wonders what the relation of this space is to the clear space of everyday perception (1970, 432), I read Merleau-Ponty's description of the spatiality of night as describing pure depth as an occlusive relationship between clear and dark space, made conspicuous in a sudden disorienting reversal of the usual occlusive relationship by the event of envelopment in pitch darkness.

In the separation of the imaginary and the real that de-realizes or deflates the imaginary, there is, if not falseness, still sleight of hand, conceit—in a word, the separation is itself imaginary. But the status of this separation as imaginary does not render it false, a mere illusion or deception. Hiding or occluding the reality of indistinction by de-realizing the imaginary creates a space for the development of personal boundaries—body images, themselves a work of the imaginary—and for the development of public spaces, "lived distance" as that "neutral or objective ground... between me and the other" (CRO, 154) that is

made possible by the concentrated attachment of the child's felt sense of place to a body image. The occlusion of indistinction should not be dismissed as a lie or as a loss: through the occlusion of indistinction, a whole new dimension of experience is opened, and its status as imaginary makes it no less real.

But that does not mean that in truth the imaginary is completely coincident with the observable. Even though the imaginary thoroughly permeates perception, there is a difference. This difference is not between positive entities, as if the imaginary is a positively distinct mode of appearance than the perceived. That way of describing them belongs to the de-realization of the imaginary in its exclusion from perception, and thus while it is not entirely false, it is inadequate and even misleading as a description of their fundamental relationship. Their difference is rather a difference that consists in the dimension of hiddenness—the *depth*, indeed the *pure depth*—that is the mutual permeation of the imaginary and the perceived, and the occlusiveness proper to that mutual permeation. There is an affective distance that emerges in pure depth which is not a metaphorical extrapolation from perceptual space, but a condition of its possibility, persisting within perceptual space as its hidden reverse side. We must think of the relation between pure depth and perceptual depth in the same way: strictly speaking, they cannot be separated; but that does not mean there is no difference, for even in their indistinction, there is a hiddenness, an occlusion, that holds open the possibility of its own reversal.

This pure depth—the mutual permeation of the imaginary and the perceived, and the occlusiveness proper to that mutual permeation—is an

affective intensity; its variants are expressed as variants of affective intensity. The primary variants Merleau-Ponty discusses—"lived distance" and "overwhelming proximity"—are respectively an affective relief or relaxation on the one hand, and an affective urgency on the other. "Lived distance" provides that "impartial space" for the perceptual present in which "all objects have the same importance," and may concern me without yet exerting a deeply intimate pull on me (PhP, 300/339). Overwhelming proximity on the other hand is an intimacy, an affective closeness like the one that obtains between the intimate spaces of things like my home and my hands, or whatever aspects of experience enjoy a deep affective proximity or closeness that gives them their status as "here" even when they are far away. Lived distance allows me to feel the anger on my interlocutor's face, but to feel it as something happening *over there*, a modification in her body image, and not as something that consumes me and crowds wholly into "overwhelming proximity." On the other hand, if I am especially "close" to my interlocutor in that affective sense of closeness, or if the boundaries of my own body image are vulnerable or sensitive to something about this particular encounter with her, then it may be difficult for me to avoid becoming caught up in her anger, to be overcome with affective intensity myself—whether the quality of that intensity is a simple sympathetic anger, or some more complicated complementary quality such as fear, dismay, or even satisfaction.

In lived distance, the affective distance that emerges in pure depth persists within perceptual space as its hidden reverse side. In the spatiality of night and in suffocation, a dramatic affective intensification reverses this relationship so that

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"overwhelming proximity" is no longer occluded, and instead eclipses "lived distance." The hiddenness of dark space extinguishes much or all of boundaries and polite distances available in clear space, hiding them, making them present only in their absence. Phantoms overshadow the things they normally hide within, and the observable is eclipsed by the urgent.

Elaborating on the divergence between affective proximity and perceptual proximity, as well as their sensitivity to each other, Merleau-Ponty goes on to relate an example that is surely autobiographical. While settling in "a village for the holidays," he writes, it becomes close to me not only as the scene of my perceptions, but as "the center of my life" (PhP, 299/337). As I settle into and embrace the rhythms and familiar presences of village life, they become charged with proximity in affective depth. I acquire a sense of belonging among them: I become more deeply concerned with them, and they are "here" whether or not they are in view. A perceptual proximity becomes an affective proximity.

But much like the reversibility of feeling and gesture in Hochschild's description of emotional labor, while perceptual proximity and affective proximity can influence each other, they can also diverge. Theirs is a relationship of dimensional difference, of depth: the dimension in which the affective sense of place or closeness can endure absent immediate perceptual support (as in the homing navigation example, where home is affectively close despite being perceptually and geographically far away, is also the dimension in which it can be displaced from the perceptual present. Continuing the example of the country holiday, Merleau-Ponty writes: when "a friend comes to see me and brings news

from Paris, or if the radio and newspapers tell me that there are threats of war, then I feel exiled in this village, excluded from real life, and imprisoned far away from everything" (PhP, 299/338). Things Merleau-Ponty cares about in his Paris home are threatened, and his affective investment in the space of the village proliferates: he now feels alienation as well as belonging—indeed, he feels alienation about the belonging.

The sense of place established in pure depth, like the sympathetic indistinction of childhood perception, admits *ubiquity*: being in multiple places at once. I am referring to the sense of "ubiquity" that Merleau-Ponty invokes in "The Child's Relations with Others." As I explained in Chapters 2 and 3, in that text, the sympathetic indistinction that characterizes body schematic functioning in childhood renders it a mode of lived space in which the felt sense of place is not isolated to the body proper, but feels itself to be where the child looks or hears or touches as much as within the confines of her skin. There he reiterates that this ubiquity is not eliminated in the advent of the body proper. That troubling colonialist notion of the "primitive" is invoked as an example (CRO, 129); but he clearly sees this as an example of the rule rather than an exception: perception in general continues to admit this ubiquity, but on a reorganized basis, one that de-realizes it as merely imaginary. The notion of ubiquity can also be found in Merleau-Ponty's characterization of the presence of seeing within the visible in "Eye and Mind" (170); it is crucial for understanding his claim that not only the intimate sense of touch, but also senses like vision that act at a distance, are reversible. It is notable that this notion of ubiquity is already present in the

Phenomenology—though not under that name. Here it is described in terms of the "overwhelming proximity" of pure depth.

In the example of homesickness, Merleau-Ponty not only describes mixed or ambivalent feelings; he also describes second order feelings: an affective orientation about those first order affective orientations. His attachment to Paris as an affective "here" coexisted with the sense of place he had cultivated in village life. When the news of war arrives, it provokes, not a displacement of his closeness with the village in favor of his devotion to Paris, but rather a third orientation: one of aversion to his intimacy with the village. Instead of being eliminated, that attachment begins to feel odious insofar as it is associated with a feeling of being left out of events transpiring in Paris. Orientations in pure depth can reverse and double such that otherwise conflicting orientations coexist without displacing each other because the affective differentiation at work involves variants of mutual permeation, and does not depend on the exclusions of spatial distance. Orientations of attraction and aversion co-exist because their difference is one of depth and occlusivity rather than exteriority and negation.

Merleau-Ponty's story testifies to a circuit of influence between affective orientations and perceptual ones. It is possible for perceptual proximity to breed affective proximity, but it is also possible for an aversion to what is perceptually proximal to attenuate the sense of reality, of perceptual presence, that it exerts. "Our body and our perception" Merleau-Ponty writes, "always solicit us to take the landscape they offer as the center of the world. But this landscape is not necessarily… [that] of our life. I can 'be elsewhere' while remaining here, and if I

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am kept far away from what I love, I feel far from the center of real life" (PhP, 299/338). The very robustness of perception, perceptual *presence* as such; the feeling that perception has placed me in the presence of the real which Merleau-Ponty later calls "the perceptual faith" (see for example VI, 50/74) can become attenuated in the event of displaced or ambivalent affective attachment to it.

Thus when Merleau-Ponty says that our orientation in pure depth teaches us "*where* the phenomenon is located, by sensing [*en éprouvant*] what our desire moves toward, what strikes fear in our hearts, and upon what our life depends" (PhP, 298/337), he is not only claiming that space *acquires* affective significance. His claim is that the value of rising and falling in phrases like "morale is high" are not simply derivative of their more mundane sense in terms of measurable spatial location. Rather, the original adhesion of body and world is affective intimacy, a pure depth: an orientation among affectively meaningful presences. And given the structure of difference that pure depth exhibits, the claim is not just that affect is the tie that binds body and world; it is also a dimension of hiddenness that establishes a differentiating dynamic between body and world prior to their bounded location. The occlusivity of overwhelming proximity is not the opposite of "lived distance"; both are variants of pure depth. The differentiation without separation that we can experience in affective depth makes the experience of exteriority, extension, and separation possible, and can also weaken them.

Pure depth as affective intensity, like the temporal extension of perceptual depth that Gibson demonstrates, opens a chasm in the perceptual present. The power of affective orientation to motivate perceptual orientation, which extends to

the potential to attenuate the sense of perceptual presence as such, shows the extent to which the apparent borders of the perceptual present do not isolate it, and are themselves imaginary.

4.6) Derangement, Disorientation and Difference in Pure Depth

Drawing on Minkowski's case studies, Merleau-Ponty discusses the possibilities of derangement and disorientation in pure depth. Indeed, the entire passage on pure depth is a response to Minkowski's studies.[164] The example of envelopment in darkness is originally used by Minkowski as a speculative route to understanding his delusional patients' experience of lived space. For Minkowski, this experience is "a particular kind of space" (1970, 430) and he speaks of "two ways of living space" (431), one darkened and one clear and luminous. As I have noted above, Merleau-Ponty argues for a mutual envelopment of the two (PhP, 299-300/339).

Minkowski worked to interpret the experiences of his delusional patients as modifications of lived spatiality. He was particularly impressed with the prevalence of a symptom in which the patients believed that others were speaking about them, or that impersonal artifacts like public notices were referred to them personally (1970, 408-414). In general, Minkowski's patients could not avail themselves of the relief of "lived distance." The perceptual present for them offered little "impartial space": everything resided in overwhelming proximity.

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[164] See also Cataldi (1993, 48-53).

While Minkowski assumes the dark space of overwhelming proximity and the clear space of lived distance are mutually exclusive, aligning them respectively with pathological and normal spatiality, and wondering which surrounds the other (1970, 432), Merleau-Ponty explains the relation between these by invoking the style of differentiation we have seen in the obscurity of pure depth. He insists on their mixture or mutual permeation: the "clear space" in which everyday perception can take root "is not merely surrounded, but also wholly penetrated by another spatiality," the intimate space things share in pure depth (PhP, 300/339). For Merleau-Ponty, the experience of darkness reveals, not a pathological spatiality, but a pure sense of depth, an irreducible dimension of hiddenness or latency in spatiality. This "dark space" operates inconspicuously in every experience of orientation as a non-coincidence between body and world that is not a separation between them, but an irreducible obscurity that persists even in their indistinction.

As Merleau-Ponty reads Minkowski's case studies, the patients plagued by hallucinations and delusions are not living wholly in dark space; nor are those of us untroubled by such apparitions living in wholly clear space. Rather, what has been disturbed for these patients is the pure depth that is the relationship between clear and dark space. Its potential to establish stable lived distances has been undermined such that "the lived distance" has grown "at once too short and too wide" (PhP, 299/338). Pure depth has grown dizzying not only in the contractedness of its proximity, but also because it is without bearing or limit in its expansiveness. For the delusional patient, whether she experiences them as

threatening or cajoling, others, public notices and even landscapes crowd her instead of taking up affective residence of their own.[165] There is no "leeway" (PhP, 299/338), no margin of impersonal concern in which other anonymously persisting affective presences may be established, magnetizing affective space elsewhere than the patient's body and present perceptual situation (*Lived Time* 399-433). Most events "cease to count for me [the delusional patient], while the nearest ones consume me. They envelop me like night" (PhP, 299/338). At the same time, "*les événements s'agglomèrent entre eux*": the events conglomerate among themselves, building spontaneous connections so that they seem to conspire against me when I look away. Minkowski's patient does not inhabit a space populated by multiple places and presences with their own affective centers of gravity, polarizing space elsewhere than "here." Everything demands intimate residence, and in that ubiquity of "overwhelming proximity," a lived distance in the depth between clear and dark space does not take root, so that the patient's life has no "scope." Rather, he "centers himself everywhere" (PhP, 299/338).

"Lived distance" is a phenomenon in which clear space and dark space themselves establish the kind of differentiation that belongs to the spatiality of night, such that dark space is not a "second space permeating visible space," but integrated into it, providing "the imaginary texture of the real" Merleau-Ponty speaks of in "Eye and Mind" (EM, 165). The felt presence of what is hidden is nevertheless integrated into perception. The development of lived distance Merleau-Ponty associates with the advent of the body proper and the

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[165] To be clear, I am using Minkowski's and Merleau-Ponty's descriptions, and not endorsing the distinctions they are making between pathological and normal spatiality.

incorporation of a body image in his account of childhood perceptual development involves a distinction between the imaginary and the real such that the imaginary dimension of perception is de-realized, allowing "lived distance" to develop, and affective boundaries to form.

The impoverishment of lived distance Minkowski observes in his delusional patients correlates with what he calls a "desocialization" of space" (1970, 421-422).[166] When Minkowski discusses with one patient the voices he hears, it seems that "he is not at all concerned to know whether others hear them or not" (421). The patient acknowledges the news that he alone hears the voices with little reaction. The patient has not simply failed to notice that others don't corroborate his experiences. The voices were always the sort of phenomena that crowded the patient, that never assumed an anonymous, public presence. The delusional patient's trouble, as both Merleau-Ponty and Minkowski argue, is not that he cannot distinguish which objects others would deem hallucinatory. If the issue was limited to isolated hallucinatory objects, all other things being equal, such isolated problems should be relieved by simply informing him of those objects' hallucinatory status, and assisting him in identifying which perceptions are illusory. The trouble is instead with the whole structure of the patient's space, in which dark space occludes clear, so that the patient does not enjoy the relief offered by lived distance. But it is not, on Merleau-Ponty's reading, an elimination of clear space: "The dark space that invades the schizophrenic's world can only justify itself as space and provide its spatial qualifications by linking itself to clear space" (PhP, 301/341). The patient's hallucinations "borrow" from

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[166] See also PhP (303-304/343-344).

clear space the "prestige" of the spatiality of observable things without ceasing to be "phantoms" (PhP, 301/341). The inflated reality that things enjoy in the de-realization of the imaginary is reversed in the lived space of the delusional person. But the difference between the perceived and the imaginary is not thereby homogenized: phantoms are not confused with observable things.

Without the impersonal concern made available in lived distance, the patient's space does not readily admit anonymous presences: presences that seem to face his perspectival standpoint from a space of their own even as they appear within his perspective. And this is just to say that his space has become "desocialized," that he no longer lives in a "common world," but in a "private" one (PhP, 300/339). The patient is not surprised that others do not hear the voices he hears: his hallucinations always belonged to a hidden space, a space of perceptual obscurity. But the pure depth that they populate has, through the "prestige" the hallucinations "borrow" from "the clear world" (PhP, 301/341), become a "second space" that is thereby "dissociated" from the clear space of perception and "cut off from the common world" that it offers (PhP, 300/339). The fact that the corroborating perceptions of others are of no particular interest and the fact that the patient hears voices and suffers from paranoid delusions are both corollaries of the same trouble. In both cases, his space is not hospitable to what we might call "significant others": affective presences that hold their own, appearing to matter in ways independent of how they might concern him intimately.

"What protects the healthy man [sic] against delirium or hallucination," Merleau-Ponty writes, "is not his [sic] reason [*sa critique*], but rather the structure of his space" (PhP, 304/343-344). Without a web of affective anchors that open "impartial spaces" of lived distance, not only pure depth but also perceptual depth grows shallow, admitting hallucinations and paranoid delusions. Unlike Merleau-Ponty's home-sickness, this attenuation of perception is not motivated by an intense desire to be elsewhere, but by a loss of affective moorings in all elsewheres, and the lived distance that makes that affectively robust sense of "elsewhere" possible. On Merleau-Ponty's reading, rather than inhabiting dark space instead of clear, Minkowski's patient experiences a shrinkage of the dark dimension as well as the clear one, so that his concern crowds entirely into the present perceptual situation, which in turn no longer presents him with an impersonal "there" in which things and others can appear "before" him, "keep[ing] their distance and… touch[ing the patient only] with respect" (PhP, 304/344). Again we must refer to Merleau-Ponty's description of pure depth as a space charged with the presence of great affective entities: it is only when I experience the presences of bodies and things as places that matter in ways that do not depend on intimate concern with them that they can provide the affective weight needed to anchor the expansiveness of lived space, stretching my affective environment into "lived distances" so that pure depth itself does not grow shallow, does not shrink into overwhelming proximity. Lived distance lends the structure of my space an anonymous hospitality in which perceptual depth and

perceptual faith may crystallize even as they are lined with the imaginary, with what is as yet latent and hidden in perception.

Far from being a sovereign power that I could author or sustain on my own, my sense of pure depth grows shallow the more it is centered on my body and the present perceptual situation to which it summons me. It consists, not in an intentional activity that radiates out from a single point, but rather in anonymous cohabitation among places and presences. In the experience of the delusional patients, the more they are returned relentlessly to their own bodies and the perceptual present as the center of their space, the more alienating, fearful, and burdensome this space becomes. Being stuck "here," stuck to one's place, corresponds to a certain derangement: an unhinging from the world as a shared and public commons; a withdrawal of the general power of being someone to whom places matter; and a loss, not only of one's bearings, but of the elasticity, expansiveness, and hospitality of space that make its "bearings" possible. The pre-perceptual orientation at stake in pure depth is thus not something the body subject could conceivably donate to the world, not only because it precedes the emergence of the body subject as such, but because it is at root the body's mixture with the world, where our difference is not a gesture of negation donated by the body subject, but is rather a latency or occlusiveness active as a differentiating principle even in our mutual permeation and sympathetic indistinction.

To make sense of this, we must conceptualize between body and world a differentiation that anticipates Merleau-Ponty's critique of the philosophy of negativity in the second chapter of *The Visible and the Invisible*, a differentiation

that does not rely on exclusion and negation: an *écart* rather than a *néant*. Thus

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of space demands a notion of meaningful

differentiation that diverges definitively from Sartrean nihilating activity. Instead

of an "othering" gesture in which consciousness grasps itself through the

expulsion of its objects, there is for Merleau-Ponty an original affective intimacy

of the body and its environment that includes a heterogeneity preceding

boundaries, a difference whose structure is that of the hiddenness and

dimensionality of depth rather than the exclusion and exteriority of negation.

Just such a notion of difference is suggested in Merleau-Ponty's account

of pure depth. The difference that Merleau-Ponty finds in the spatiality of night is

a pure difference, not reducible to distance, to a negative space between positive

terms. The passage on pure depth thus distinguishes Merleau-Ponty's account of

intentionality from the Sartrean one. But is the account of meaningful

differentiation we are left with really a "new conception of intentionality," or

something altogether different? It is telling that Merleau-Ponty fulfills the promise

he makes at the beginning of the "Space" chapter of a "new conception of

intentionality" only to the extent of offering a probing and rich phenomenological

analysis of depth as a fundamental dimensionality with an inalienable latency or

occlusiveness that prevents any disclosure of a foundational, grounding level. He

does not offer an analysis that explicitly applies these results to a reinterpretation

of, for instance, the noesis-noema distinction. This is not surprising if the

occlusiveness or latency of pure depth is resistant to description in terms of

noesis-noema distinctions. In the "overwhelming proximity" of body and world in

pure depth, we witness Merleau-Ponty anticipating a key innovation undertaken

in his later work on the notion of the flesh: the renunciation of "the bifurcation of

the 'consciousness of' and the object" (VI, 141/184). In the central conceptual

apparatus of the later work the nomenclature of intentionality is markedly absent,

replaced by the reversibility of the visible and the invisible, proximity and

distance. While the vocabulary of intentionality persists in this chapter of the

Phenomenology, a radical revision of its conceptual schema is already underway

in the analysis of clear space and dark space in pure depth.

4.7) Conclusion

If my analysis is correct, it offers fresh resources for reading Merleau-

Ponty as a thinker of difference. With critical precedent established by Levinas,

Derrida, and Irigaray, the claim that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy fails to offer a

robust enough account of difference has enjoyed considerable currency.[167] To do

them justice, one would have to address these critiques in their specificity.

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[167] See Levinas (1990,"Intersubjectivity: Notes on Merleau-Ponty," "Sensibility." *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*. Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith, eds., Michael B. Smith, trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 55-66); (1996, Meaning and Sense." *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 33-64), Irigaray (1993 "The Invisible of the Flesh: A Reading of Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 'The Intertwining—The Chiasm.'" *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill, trans. New York: Continuum: 151-184) and Derrida (2005, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*. Christine Irizarry, trans. Stanford: Stanford University Press). The secondary literature is replete with references to this line of criticism. Another influential one is Claude Lefort's "Flesh and Otherness," originally a lecture delivered at the 1987 meeting of the International Merleau-Ponty Circle, and later published in the volume *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty* (1990, Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith, eds. Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 3-13). There are a few concerted rebuttals to specific versions of this criticism. See Butler's reply to Irigaray's critique (2008, "Sexual Difference as a Question of Ethics: Alterities of the Flesh in Irigaray and Merleau-Ponty." *Chiasmi International* 10: 333-347), and Ann Murphy's excellent discussion of the dispute between Derrida and Merleau-Ponty (2010, All Things Considered': Sensibility and Ethics in the Later Merleau-Ponty and Derrida." *Continental Philosophy Review* 42: 435-447).

Nevertheless the general concern can be noted: this line of criticism tends to focus on the later work, where Merleau-Ponty is, as I see it, undertaking an ontological development of the notion of difference his phenomenology requires (and even, as I suggest, anticipates in the passage I have analyzed here). "Where are we to put the limit between the body and the world," Merleau-Ponty asks, "since the world is flesh?" (VI, 138/180). Criticizing not only Sartrean nihilation, but also the notion of negation he finds in it (see VI, 50-104/74-139), Merleau-Ponty instead renders the otherness at stake in sensibility and sociality in terms that insist on intimate proximity: "difference without contradiction" (VI, 135/177), "distance [that] is not the contrary of… proximity" (VI, 135/176); a "kinship," "prepossession" (VI, 133/174); or even a "narcissism" (VI, 139/181). Where other theorists in the twentieth century French tradition have insisted on the disruptive figures of alienation, mourning, irretrievable loss, nihilation, abjection and absolute exteriority to describe experiences of difference, in describing the same phenomena Merleau-Ponty employs a persistent conceptual vocabulary of mutual envelopment, encroachment, intertwining, intimacy and proximity. The radical exteriority and rupture that is thought to be characteristic of alterity is markedly absent. The general concern among this set of critics has been the question of where, in such an account, there can be room for the encounter with the Other, or that with which we can't or won't be proximal and intimate.

I see my reading of Merleau-Ponty's account of pure depth as suggesting a new approach to the figures of proximity and mutual permeation or encroachment that persist throughout Merleau-Ponty's corpus, gaining prominence in the later

ontology of the flesh. Recall the description of the experience of utter darkness, in which the night permeates and haunts my body, and yet the occlusiveness of this "overwhelming proximity [*vertigineuse proximité*]" is dizzying and disorienting (PhP, 304/344). Far from serving as a return to a romantic wholeness untroubled by the strange and unfamiliar, proximity and intimacy in pure depth can be an experience of dispossession: "night… envelops me … and it all but effaces my personal identity (PhP, 296/335)." The figures of proximity and intimacy do not obstruct or compromise this passage's description of alterity; rather, it is precisely in the "overwhelming proximity" as such that we find a peculiar but unmistakable experience of otherness: an alterity that thrives in intimacy. Here proximity and intimacy, rather than signalling a reduction to the self and the same, provide the occasion for a unique variety of differentiation, one that is original and provocative precisely insofar as it departs from difference understood as rupture and negation. Pure depth exemplifies an alterity before exteriority; indeed, even a pre-personal or "anonymous" alterity: a heterogeneity of anonymous life prior to the identifications of the personal. It is a difference that does not depend on boundaries, but is rather an opacity or obscurity that persists even in indistinction, refusing to allow it to collapse into fusion.

This intimate differentiation we find in pure depth declines the differentiating mechanisms of othering and exclusion, but not by relying on the nostalgic fantasy of an original unity that rehabilitates difference in a final harmony. Rather, it posits a dynamic of differentiation that precedes and conditions the distinction of interiority and exteriority, a difference that does not

rely on the boundaries and borders of personal space. Instead what is manifest in perception is lined with a hidden or latent dimension, clear space with dark space; and it is this manifest-latent difference that is the original dimensionality or thickness of experience, a space for affective orientations to form and serve as a pure depth prior to inside-outside distinctions. Pure depth is an affective intensity that then motivates or animates the perceptual robustness of space in the usual sense, with its borders and surfaces and hidden depths, providing that "imaginary texture of the real" Merleau-Ponty speaks of in his later work (EM, 165).

In *The Visible and the Invisible,* the chiasm is tellingly described as "that divergence between the within and the without that constitutes its natal secret" (VI, 135-136/177). What if, instead of reading statements like these under the sign of a reduction to sameness, we read them as an account of the primordial fission of a pure and anonymous difference: difference prior to numeric identities, before positive terms and the negativity that separates them? The interpretive possibility that opens here is one of reading in the chiasm the operation of *difference itself* as "ontological vibration" (VI, 115/153) the silent, anonymous life of a heterogeneity thriving without reliance on the exclusionary gestures of negation and alienation, vibrating with the throes of an intensive self-differentiation without borders, eventually folding into interior and exterior leaves "by dehiscence or fission of its own mass" (VI, 146/189).

Even more, if it is true that exclusionary differentiating mechanisms are in fact identifying gestures—if they are correctly understood as belonging to the behaviors of identification, as their structure or internal logic—then we must

consider the possibility that the reading I have proposed of the figures of proximity and encroachment in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy suggests a conceptual imaginary of difference that is not less but more radical than negation and rupture.[168] That is, a reading of the reversibility of the flesh that takes its hermeneutic cues from my analysis of pure depth would be positioned to discover in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy an account of difference that is even less subordinated to sameness than accounts of difference as negativity or exteriority.

Perhaps the most unusual point I have made, however, is the invocation of affect as a force of differentiation. To say that the overwhelming proximity and lived distance that are variations of pure depth are affective orientations is to say that they *virtually* enact some variant of proximity or lived distance rather than *actually* determining things' places through some operation of division or separation. The process of differentiation is a work of feeling, an "existential tide" (PhP, 298/337): a "pulsation" or wave of phantom motion that leaves in its wake, not an actual segregation of places, but a tendency or leaning that "haunts" a certain situation as its "systole and diastole," its pulse. The difference at issue is thus a phantom difference that need not coincide with an actual rupture. Though we often use the word "orientation" to describe the geographical arrangement of things in space, the phenomenology of orientation always involves this phantom or imaginary sort of movement: movement in the sense we use when we say, for example, "her speech was so moving."

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[168] My summation of this point owes a great deal to Ann Murphy's commentary on an earlier version of this paper at the 2011 Eastern Division meeting of the American Philosophical Association. Many thanks to Murphy for the spectacularly helpful commentary. I of course take full responsibility for mistakes or errors.

The pre-personal character of this differentiation can be witnessed in the role affect plays in generating a situation: like the impersonal force of the Pacific islanders' *mana*, this variety of movement is not necessarily anchored in an individuated party to the situation, since it may function as an affective intensity or quality of the whole situation. Instead of issuing from a personal self, it may be a tide of feeling that the self gets "caught up" in, such that my carefully cultivated personal boundaries as the subject and center of "my" feelings evaporates. I can be swept up in sentiment that belongs neither to myself, nor to some second person, but resides, as it were, "in the atmosphere"; a circumstance we refer to when we speak of a feeling that is "in the air" or "in the room." We can understand this transitivism in terms of the status of affect as virtual rather than actual movement, akin to the motor sympathy I experience when, while watching someone jump, I undergo a feeling of surging or straining upwards, even without actually attempting the leap. Whether I take the leap or not, I was moved to do so: my kinaesthetic system was infected with the "expressive sense" of the gesture (PhP, 304/344). While the various phenomena we call affect also often involve actual gestures and movements, they always involve these virtual or phantom movements. When I am repulsed or frightened by something, I may in fact take a step backwards, or I may resist the inclination to flinch; in either case, the repulsion consists in the urgency of the inclination, the aversion that enacts a felt force of recoil or expulsion whether or not the position of my limbs is quantitatively altered in its wake. In the case of complicated affects like the "sticky" horror of the taboo I discussed above, aversion can coexist with

attraction: I may hesitate to take that step back, not out of stoicism, but because in addition to my urge to withdraw I feel a certain fascination. My inclination to turn away coexists with an inclination to turn towards. Difference without exteriority, ubiquity and ambivalence: these aspects of the structure of pure depth are possible because the medium and force of affect as orientation consists in this virtual modality of movement, whose latency suffers the coexistence of variants that would otherwise be incompossible.

And thus in the final analysis, my claim that we should understand pure depth as affective orientation is not the claim that there is a special genre of orientation that is the affective variety, but rather that the phenomena we call "orientation," when considered in a sufficiently radical manner, always involve affective forces; and that what we mean by "affects" always involves these phantom movements, these "feelings" that we find in any phenomenon of orientation.

With this is mind, we should recall Merleau-Ponty's description of the intimacy of the flesh as the "tissue that lines and sustains" the proximity of being with itself; a tissue that "is not matter" but its "dehiscence or fission," a "coiling" or "doubl[ing]" of materiality upon itself that takes place in sensibility and sociality, which testify to the tendency of materiality to proliferate into phantom variants of itself (VI, 132/173, 146/189). The flesh, Merleau-Ponty insists, "is not a thing, but a possibility, a latency, and a *flesh* of things"; a "narcissism" (VI, 139/181). The project of understanding the chiasm as difference more radical than

negation and exteriority will require attending to the intimacy and proximity of flesh as an affective phenomenon, and understanding its "latency" in those terms.

CHAPTER 5 – Imaginary Love and the Narcissism of Flesh: Affect in the Concepts of Institution and Invisibility

5.1) Introduction

In Chapter 4, I showed that Merleau-Ponty gives a description of being enveloped in the darkness of night that develops into a discussion of the affective, oneiric, and imaginary invisibles that haunt perception. A more general account ensues of "clear" and "dark" spaces that pervade each other, and both are involved in perceptual manifestation. This mutually pervasive and yet occlusive relationship between clear and dark space, I argued, is figured in the early work as an affective depth that is an operation of differentiation between the manifest and the latent. It is a differentiation that functions even in the context of indistinction, preparing inside-outside difference but not dependent on it. This is no doubt a foreshadowing of the invisible of the visible in the later work. But there is

something truly new in Merleau-Ponty's later texts, and in this chapter I aim to approach these later ideas in their uniqueness.

I will focus primarily on the account of "imaginary love" in the lectures on *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the College de France (1954-1955)*, explaining Merleau-Ponty's account of love as institution through its influences in Henri Bergson's ontology of time. I will then turn briefly to Merleau-Ponty's final unfinished manuscript, *The Visible and the Invisible*, understanding some of the key concepts of that ontology through the notion of institution.

In *Institution and Passivity*, Merleau-Ponty revisits the question he addressed unsatisfactorily in his account of true and false feelings in "The *Cogito*" chapter of the *Phenomenology*: the question of how to account for the difference between a superficial feeling and a deep one. In this later treatment of the problem, he gives an account of this difference in terms of the original concept of *institution* he is developing in these lectures. The account suggests a logic whereby an affect not only functions in the way we observed in Chapters 2 and 3 —such that it circulates in a pre-individual body schema, and becomes individuated. In these lectures, Merleau-Ponty theorizes affect as something that does not only realize the reversibility of human bodies with respect to their situations and to others. It is rather also a force that generates the contexts within which bodies meet, and keeps those contexts alive to revision, even recursive reorientation.

This recursive reorientation is only possible if there is a relation between something like "clear" and "dark" space that is not only a matter of the structure

of experiences of orientation and disorientation, but is also an ontological structure; an indeterminacy in the real. A more profound sense of latency is needed, something that goes beyond the pre-reflective, and beyond the indistinction I share with others in syncretic sociality. We find this in the Institution lectures in the notion of institution as the dimensionalizing of an original past.

5.2) Imaginary Love

One of the most striking reversals of Merleau-Ponty's views between his early and late work can be found in the account of love on the lecture on the "Institution of a Feeling" in the notes from his lecture course on *Institution*. There Merleau-Ponty dramatically alters his view on true and false love as he developed it in "The *Cogito*" chapter of the *Phenomenology*. While in the *Phenomenology*, "imaginary feelings" are dismissed as "fictional" and "false" (PhP 397-399/437-439), in the lecture course on *Institution*, Merleau-Ponty concedes to Proust that love is imaginary, and indeed that it is always imaginary; but he also insists that it is not thereby unreal.[169] The reality of love is that of the imaginary.

By far the most famous revision Merleau-Ponty makes to his early views is his criticism of the thesis of the tacit *Cogito*, and that is indeed at stake here. For as I explained in Chapter 1, the distinction between affective surfaces and depths, understood in the chapter on the tacit *Cogito* as a difference between true and false feelings, is presented as a vindication of the notion of the tacit *Cogito*. In

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[169] Proust is the explicit interlocutor, but as Durfourcq notes, Sartre is undoubtedly an implicit one (2005, "Institution et Imaginaire: La Réflexion Merleau-Pontyenne sur les Illusions Amoureuses." *Chiasmi* 6: 303-342, my translation).

the service of making the anti-Cartesian case that affects are not an inner reality

occupying a closed domain of conscious immanence, in the *Phenomenology*

Merleau-Ponty argues for the possibility that affects can be false, inauthentic: I

can be confused about my own feelings, wrong about the very things that might

otherwise be considered the most intimate aspects of the psychological self.

His description redeems affects from reduction to "mere" feelings: to be in

love—truly in love—is far more than simply my awareness of my own warm

feelings. It is an orientation, an engagement with the world, Merleau-Ponty

argues. And I can be wrong about my own loves because they may not engage my

whole person, and those boundaries are lacunary to me: the *Cogito* is tacit. The

love that I feel may have been absorbed from others, or from my situation, or

from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (PhP, 398-399/ 438-439). Merleau-Ponty

describes these shallower, more superficial loves as "fictional emotions" or

"imaginary emotions" (PhP 399,401/ 439, 441), and he distinguishes them sharply

from real or authentic emotions.

Merleau-Ponty is partly right to demand that our account of affects

accommodate something like a true-false distinction. And not only for the anti-

Cartesian reasons that explicitly motivate his discussion of the issue in "The

Cogito" chapter of the *Phenomenology*. Affective phenomena themselves exhibit

a variety of internal differentiation that invites such description, as I show both in

my analysis in Chapter 1 and above in the discussion of affective surface and

depth. But we must be cautious with the categories of "true" and "false," as the

discussion in Chapter 1 showed. While there is a difference in need of description

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between affective surfaces and depths, describing this as a difference of the true and the false is counterproductive. It frames the question as if what we need is a standard of authenticity for affects: a way to distinguish between the ones that really come from or belong to the self from the ones that are influenced by others or are too superficially felt. But what is really needed is a way of understanding the process through which affective surfaces and depths metamorphose into each other, and the ways in which the very parameters of the self are at stake in that genesis or reversibility.

I have explored in previous chapters more promising approaches to that question offered in Merleau-Ponty's early work. The account of institution provides a markedly different one in his later work. Merleau-Ponty defines institution as "those events in an experience which endow the experience with durable dimensions, in relation to which a whole series of other experiences will make sense, will form a thinkable sequel or history" (IP 77/124). I will explore this in more detail as the chapter unfolds, but at a glance, the account of institution posits a generativity of time, such that an oriented movement—a narrative or a history—emerges without being authored, serving as a dimension in the sense that it offers latent parameters within which individual things and events can place themselves with respect to each other in a series or a narrative space. This configuration then contributes to the ongoing production and revision of the dimensional parameters, continuing to orient the development of the movement in an impersonal, unauthored way. Thus "contingencies are recentered by institution and end up receiving a sense that surpasses them" (IP 40/[42](33)).

The claim that institution allows contingencies to become central to a history after the fact is one that is a special focus of the lecture on the "Institution of a Feeling." Merleau-Ponty begins his lecture on "Institution of a Feeling" with the question "[h]ow does a feeling 'take hold'?" (IP 28/[26](20)). He references the sort of distinction he made in the *Phenomenology*: there is a "[d]ifference between hysterical feeling and relatively authentic feeling" (IP 29/[27](21)). But here he wants to know: "Where does it come from?" (IP 29/[27](21)). What is the genesis of this difference between superficial feeling and a deep one?

Merleau-Ponty commences the lecture by sketching a pessimistic view of love, according to which love is understood as fundamentally illusory, imaginary in a dismissive, deflationary sense that is opposed to reality and synonymous with deception and falsity. Citing Proust's fiction, but undoubtedly also thinking of Sartre's discussion of love in *Being and Nothingness* (1956), Merleau-Ponty describes three illusions with which love is identified. First, there is a "mirage of common life" (IP 28/[26](20)). Love involves a yearning for an impossible union with an other. Second, there is the "mirage of the other person" (IP 29/[27](21)). The blindness and bias affection introduces are well known. But they raise the question: if love makes me blind to my beloved's faults, and biases my perception of her, do I love the actual beloved at all, or only an idolized image of her, a personal fantasy (IP 28/[26](20), 77/90)?

Finally, there is the illusion of necessity (IP 29/[26](20)). Merleau-Ponty comments on this in his discussion of true and false love in the *Phenomenology*, calling it a "retrospective illusion" (PhP, 400/440): the projection of the present

into the past. Though he does not note it there, he owes this term to Henri Bergson; I will have more to say about this in the next section. A closely related term, "the retrograde movement of the true," appears in the *Institution* lectures (IP 52/[55](42)). What Merleau-Ponty uses this Bergsonian concept to describe, both in the *Phenomenology* as well as later in *Institution*, is the way that love tends to claim an artificial necessity for itself. Love installs itself at the center of my life; it purports to have absolute importance. Of course there must have been a time when this was not so: I and my partner might never have met. Once met, we still had to become acquainted and fall in love—the feeling had to "take hold" (IP 28/[26](20)). It is easy to think of the myriad of contingencies that could have derailed this course of events, and sent us toward quite different futures ("if you hadn't been in the library that day"; "if my friend hadn't cancelled so that we ended up doing that road trip together," etc.) Love tends to produce a narrative that denies the contingency of its beginnings. A fiction about the past develops in order to justify the apparent necessity of the love we feel in the present: "I loved him from the minute I saw him," or "I didn't know it at the time, but I was already in love with her."

This description becomes much more compelling for someone like myself, who does not indulge in a fantasy of fated, star-crossed love, when I observe that love feels like a need. I may refuse sentimentality and scoff at the notion of a soul mate, and honestly deny having illusions about love at first sight. Yet even without these beliefs in destiny or the pre-ordained necessity of my love, I must admit that the felt experience of love carries with it a conviction of necessity, a

sense of need as an affective force. The claim then is not that love always

involves positing its own inevitability as a *belief*. I know very well that it was not

impossible for me never to have met my partner and fallen in love. Yet to love

someone is to feel that I cannot live without them. Contact, talking, seeing one

another, hugs and caresses: there is no question that we form attachments in

which these become vital to us. "I need you," say the love songs, old and new,

over and over. "I can't live without you." People do not often literally die of a

broken heart, but the need is nevertheless one of the most urgent in human

experience.

Yet there is something artificial about this necessity, as we see when we

admit the actual contingency of our relationships. For one, "[i]nstant by instant

love is intermittent and appears to be artificial" (IP 29/[28](22)). Proust

painstakingly traces these intermittencies. This felt sense of necessity cannot

provide its own proof; the need is not simply a matter of self-evidence. In order to

claim that it is something more than a mirage, we must appeal to something more

than the immanence of the feeling.

Further, we often discover a suspicious element of repetition in our

attractions. Merleau-Ponty notes that Proust's narrator is aware of a "generality"

of love (IP 33/[34](26)), such that he may, "in the presence of the most divergent

types of woman," have "felt the same hopes, the same agonies, invented the same

romances" (*Cities of the Plain* [Sodome et Gomorrhe], 2:827).[170] He concedes that

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[170] (1981, *Volume II: The Guermantes Way; Cities of the Plain.* Moncrieff, C.K. Scott and Terence Kilmartin, trans. USA; Vintage Books) I cite this work according to the pagination of the vintage edition cited in Merleau-Ponty's notes as they have been transcribed in Leonard Lawlor and Heath Massey's 2010 translation. In that edition all the novels that make up *Remembrance of Things Past* are published in three volumes. Thus I cite Proust by title of the novel, followed by volume number and page number, following Lawlor and Massey's practice.

his "actions bear no close and necessary relation to the woman [he] love[s]" (*Cities of the Plain* [Sodome et Gomorrhe], 2:827).

If we look even further back, we may find, Merleau-Ponty observes, that "a way of loving learned elsewhere or in childhood is being transferred" (IP 77/124). Many of us are all too aware that we play out childhood conflicts with parents or other authority figures in our adult relationships, or that our adult attractions are shaped by the affective dramas of our childhood.

The comparisons of love and addiction that pepper pop culture and the mythology of love are implicit admissions of this. The need is real, but on the other hand it is contingent. Even a healthy, well-adjusted love is easy to see as a dependency: an addiction cultivated and amplified through its own satisfaction. It could have been otherwise. Shall we conclude then that there is something fictional, illusory, about all love? Merleau-Ponty concedes that love is imaginary: "All of these criticisms are true" (IP 29/[27](21)). "But," he asks, "do they exhaust the question?" (IP 29/[27](21)).

Dufourcq's analysis of this lecture emphasizes that Sartre is an important implicit interlocutor (2005, 303), and this is no doubt true. In the introduction to the course when he forecasts the themes of the lecture on feeling, there is a clear disagreement with Sartre: he denies that to love is to want to be loved (IP 10/[7] (6)), a claim that Sartre makes in *Being and Nothingness* (1956, 478). However, Merleau-Ponty clearly focuses on Proust's account of love in this particular lecture, suggesting that Proust understood that this pessimistic account of love as a mirage, a deception or mere illusion, is "only half of what is true" (IP 2/[28]

(22)). These "mirages," Merleau-Ponty will claim, are not mere illusions. Love is indeed imaginary. But it is nonetheless real (IP 31/[31](23*)). And its reality will be that of the imaginary, properly understood: it is "the reality of what is not immediately sensed" (IP 38/[39](30)). As Dufourcq concludes, Merleau-Ponty uses Proust's narrative to show that "it is *always and inevitably* in the imaginary that love must realize itself" (2005, 328).

Merleau-Ponty cites Proust's reflections on time to reconcile the status of love as both real and imaginary. Indeed, Proust is credited with the notion of temporal "simultaneity" (IP 7/[4](3); 77/124) that is central to theorizing time's capacity to be generative in the way the account of institution requires. But as several scholars have shown, Merleau-Ponty's later work takes a distinct (if often unacknowledged) Bergsonian turn.[171] The account of institution owes as much or more to Bergson as it does to Proust.[172] In the following section I will explain Merleau-Ponty's theory of love as institution through his adaptation and revision of Bergson's understanding of the "retrospective illusion," as well as his unacknowledged dependence on Bergson's notion of the virtual simultaneity of an original past.

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[171] See Al-Saji (2012, "When Thinking Hesitates: Philosophy as Prosthesis and Transformative Vision." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 50 (2): 351-361), Lawlor (2008, ""Benign Sexual Variation': An Essay on the Late Thought of Merleau-Ponty." *Chiasmi International* 10: 47-56), Al-Saji (2007, "The Temporality of Life" Merleau-Ponty, Bergson, and the Immemorial Past." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 45 (2): 177-206), Barbaras (2010) "The Turn of Experience: Merleau-Ponty and Bergson." *Merleau-Ponty and the Possibility of Philosophy: Transforming the Tradition.* Flynn, Bernard, Wayne Froman and Robert Vallier, eds. Albany: SUNY Press: 33-60"). Al-Saji points out that Merleau-Ponty's adaptation of Bergson in *The Visible and the Invisible* is a more "positive re-reading" (2007, 185).

[172] See especially Al-Saji (2012) and Al-Saji (2007) on this point. Husserl is also an important influence on Merleau-Ponty's account of institution, but I have chosen to focus on Bergson.

5.3) Bergson's Retrospective Illusion and Original Past

In the *Phenomenology*, Merleau-Ponty had noted a "retrospective illusion" of love in which I fall prey to the delusion in which "everything I will later learn about myself"—for example, the fact that I am in love—seems to have been "introduced to me as an explicit object" at some prior time, thought perhaps in a hidden form (PhP 400/440). His aim here is to distinguish the tacit *Cogito* from the Cartesian one, understanding the tacit *Cogito* as a lived, corporeal synthesis rather than a synthesis through presence to consciousness. I have already discussed in Chapter 1 the way that though this displaces a conscious immanence with a bodily immanence, it nevertheless entails the assumption of a sphere of immanence as a point of departure, occluding the possibility of a genetic account of ownness and its relation to pre-individuality.

I said above that the retrospective illusion of the possible, also called the "retrograde movement of the true" is a Bergsonian concept.[173] It is notable that in this earlier use, Merleau-Ponty invokes the concept in a straightforwardly Bergsonian sense. That is, he understands the "retrograde movement" as indeed an "illusion." But as we will see, in the lectures on institution, he proposes to adapt the concept in a revisionary and critical way. As he writes in the *Institution* lectures, "[t]here is truly a retrograde movement of the true (and not only a retroactive effect of the *discovery* of the true" (IP 52/[55](42)). Bergson's retrospective illusion is adapted by Merleau-Ponty in the *Institution* lectures, becoming something more than mere illusion. Merleau-Ponty posits an actual recursive effect of the present on the past. But the contrast between Merleau-

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[173] See Bergson (1946, *The Creative Mind*. Westport: Greenwood Press), esp. 7-31, 106-124.

Ponty's position and Bergson's is ultimately not as sharp as Merleau-Ponty suggests. There is a genuinely Bergsonian mode of thinking inflecting Merleau-Ponty's understanding of time in the *Institution* lectures, and to the extent that this is a crucial aspect of his later work, the direction of that work is usefully understood through a Bergsonian ontology.[174]

As Bergson explains the retrospective illusion, we tend to project the present into the past, as if once something exists, "it existed by right before existing in fact" (1946, 22). But this, he argues, is a mirage. "[I]t is the real which makes itself possible, rather than the possible which makes itself real" (1946, 122). It is true that once something is real, "by that very fact it becomes retrospectively or retroactively possible" (1946, 117-118). The future work of art, for instance, is not something that already exists in a possible state. Rather, "it *will have been possible*" (Bergson 1946, 117). Not only art, but nature too follows this principle (1946, 120).

When we read Bergson carefully however, we find that for Bergson, all retroactivity is not an illusion. There is a sense for him in which the present really does effect the past. What is an illusion is the retroactive movement that disavows itself, insisting that because something exists in the present, it must always have existed in a positive form. Bergson is thus also criticizing the reduction of the possible to the real. The "mirage" (Bergson 1946, 118) is the notion that the possible is something already contained in the real, as if the possible was only reality minus realization, already prepared and "stored up in some cupboard

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[174] See Lawlor (2003a, *Thinking Through French Philosophy: The Being of the Question*. Bloomington: Indiana Press), esp 77, 86-92, Barbaras (2010, "The Turn of Experience"), Al-Saji (2007, "The Temporality of Life") and Al-Saji (2012, "When Thinking Hesitates").

reserved for possibles" (1946, 117), but hidden from view by its deficiency as reality, the lack of some key ingredient needed to firm up and become tangible and visible. This is indeed a projection in the sense of the present infusing itself into the past in a gesture that disavows itself, pretending that what it infuses into the past was in fact hidden there all along.

Yet there is a far more profound recursive movement of time that Bergson is describing and positing as the reality behind this illusion. The recursivity is not reducible to a mirage. We can see this in Bergson's correction of the illusion, when he says that rather than having already been possible, the work of art "*will have been possible*" (1946, 117). As Alia Al-Saji explains the point, "truth, once posed, begins at that very moment to have always been possible…. [E]vents create and institute their own fields of possibility" (2012, 353). This retroactive movement must be understood through a Bergsonian ontology, in which the possible is different in kind from the real, associated with a virtual aspect of existence Bergson theorizes in *Matter and Memory* as a dimension of time as simultaneity.[175] This virtual simultaneity of time accounts for the indeterminacy of the past, the irreducibility of time to the present, and the generativity of time. There is a "continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty" which "philosophy has never admitted" (Bergson 1946, 106, 122). Bergson attributes this omission to the idealism of the ancients, and the positivism of the moderns, suggesting that correcting it will allow us to overcome the failings of those philosophical traditions. Neither made room for the reality of time as "ever-recurring novelty, the moving originality of things" (1946, 123).

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[175] Bergson (1988), *Matter and Memory*. New York: Zone Books.

Bergson thus posits a real indeterminacy in the past that makes it amenable to this recursive action. Time "is indetermination in things" (Bergson 1946, 109). But he is also insisting on a generativity of time that is due to this indeterminacy: as "indetermination," time is also "a vehicle of creation and of choice" (1946, 109). Indetermination is not "a competition between possibles" (1946, 122); that would invoke the sense of the possible as a deficient form of the real, the possible as the real minus realization. "That one can put reality into the past and thus work backwards in time is something I have never claimed," Bergson writes (1946, 118). "But that one can put the possible there, or rather that the possible may put itself there at any moment, is not to be doubted" (1946, 118). How shall we understand this retroactive production of possibility?

We must understand what is produced as a field, comparable to the planes of pure memory Bergson theorizes in *Matter and Memory* (1988; see especially the figure on 162). What alters is not something singular or atomic, like the insertion of an event into a timeline. It is not time as succession that changes, but time as simultaneity. A new configuration of a temporal whole is introduced. As Al-Saji explains this virtual simultaneity of pure memory: "Pure memories are not atomistic or separable moments, but planes in which the whole past coexists at different levels of tension […] Each plane instantiates a different style or configuration of pastness, a different perspective of the past" (2007, 192). Thus "[p]ure memory is not the empirical or factual content of the past, but its dimensionality—not recollection, but what sets the tone, or style of our recollections and perceptions" (2007, 192). The production of possibility is the

production of a new configuration of the past in pure memory. "Backwards over the course of time a constant remodelling of the past by the present, of the cause by the effect, is being carried out" (Bergson 1946, 121). The retrograde movement is a "remodelling" of the whole past *qua* virtual simultaneity.

This simultaneous movement intersects with the successive movement involved in the passing of the present. These intersecting movements make the present pass: they explain how perception becomes memory, and how memory becomes perception; that is, which aspects of the past shape the perception of the present, and also which aspects of the present are remembered.[176] These intersecting movements also bring to pass a novel future, where the novelty of the future corresponds to a novel configuration of the past: to introduce something new into time is to introduce something new into all of time, not only the present.[177] The production of the possible is the dynamic intersection of time as simultaneity and succession.

While *Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution* offer more detailed variations of Bergson's theory of the interaction of perception and memory and the generativity of time, he describes the process briefly in the essay on "The Possible and the Real," where a sustained discussion of the "retrospective illusion" is found:

> As reality is created as something unforeseeable and new, its image is reflected behind it into the indefinite past; thus it finds that it has from all time been possible, but it is at this precise moment that it begins to have been always possible, and that is why I said that its possibility, which does not precede its reality, will have preceded it once the reality has appeared. The possible is therefore the mirage of the present in the past; and as we

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[176] See Bergson (1988), *Matter and Memory*
[177] See Bergson (1911, *Creative Evolution*. New York: Henry Holt and Company)

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know the future will finally constitute a present and the mirage effect is continually being produced, we are convinced that the image of tomorrow is already contained in our actual present, which will be the past of tomorrow, although we did not manage to grasp it. That is precisely the illusion. It is as though one were to fancy, in seeing his reflection in the mirror in front of him, that he could have touched it had he stayed behind it. […] [T]he possible would have been there from all time, a phantom awaiting its hour; it would therefore have become reality by the addition of something, by some transfusion of blood or life. […] But the truth is that more is needed here to obtain the virtual than is necessary for the real, more for the image of the man than for the man himself, for the image of the man will not be portrayed if the man is not first produced, and in addition one has to have the mirror (1946, 118)

There is thus a retrograde movement of the true that Bergson dismisses as illusion, and yet there is also a true retrograde movement we discover once the illusion is debunked. Al-Saji makes a helpful distinction between "the retrospective illusion by which the future is reduced to present *possibility*," and on the other hand "a *virtualization* of present events, the ripples they send into the past" (2012, 354). The real retrograde movement is a movement of reality becoming virtuality, or "image," in Bergson's sense of the term.[178] But there is also an accompanying illusion in which the possible is projected into the past as if it preceded the real, a projection which is disavowed, and negates the generativity of time.

We cannot put real events back into the past. And we are deluding ourselves when we project them there as we do in the retrospective illusion, projecting the real events of the present back into the past stripped of their realization, as if the works of Shakespeare do not integrally belong to his time, but were long before his birth laying in some invisible cupboard in the past, waiting

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[178] See *Matter and Memory* (1988) for Bergson's sustained reflection on images as the virtuality of the real.

to be written. But the events of the present do alter the past *qua* a field of possibilities, a simultaneity of past, present and future, such that the present event is a novel occurrence entering into history, and still appears as a sequel to a series of events.

The retrospective illusion is thus precisely the illusion that there is no real retrospectivity; that the future is contained in present possibilities, just as the present is contained in past possibilities. The illusion is that time consists solely of succession, and includes no dimension of simultaneity. The claim that there exists a "pure memory" or an original past should thus not be understood through the notion of past as succession, as if it is a former present, more or less remote. Time does have the element of present, of succession, and this is why there is a particular moment in which the real "begins to have always been possible" (1946, 118). Yet in order to account for time to bring to pass a novel future, it also must include an element of simultaneity, such that the novel future is also a novel configuration of time as a whole. If time is only a succession of presents, then its only influence or potency is the unfolding of effects from causes that have already occurred, and the only novelty of the future is the novelty introduced by the deficiency of our knowledge of past presents. In order to account for novelty in time, we must understand time as irreducible to what is derived from the present. Bergson's proposal is that time as a succession of presents must be intersected by time as virtualization into fields of simultaneity.

Thus, when Merleau-Ponty writes in his lecture course on *Institution* that "[t]here is truly a retrograde movement of the true (and not only a retroactive

effect of the *discovery* of the true)" (IP 52/[55](42)), he is not as distant from Bergson as it might at first appear. Merleau-Ponty's misreading of Bergson is well-documented, and I will not comment on that further here.[179] My aim is to show the way in which Merleau-Ponty's concession that love is indeed imaginary, but that to denigrate it as illusion is thus "only half of what is true" (IP 29/[28] (22)), in fact parallels quite closely Bergson's understanding of the retrograde movement of the true. The "mirages" of love Merleau-Ponty speaks of in the *Institution* lectures are like the "mirage" of the present in the past in Bergson's retrospective illusion. On the one hand, love will show itself to be something that lends itself to the production of certain illusions. On the other hand, it lends itself to these illusions precisely because it involves real retroactive generativity.

5.4) Proust: Love as Retrospective Illusion and Retrograde Movement

I am focusing on the particular lecture on "Institution of a Feeling" in Merleau-Ponty's lecture course on *Institution and Passivity*, in which Merleau-Ponty discusses at length Marcel Proust's ruminations on love in his epic work *Remembrance of Things Past* (À la recherche du temps perdu). However, it is Proust that Merleau-Ponty credits with a notion of "simultaneity" of time: "The analysis of love in Proust presents this 'simultaneity', this crystallization upon each other of the past and the future" (IP 77/124; see also 7/[4](3)).[180] The claim of the *Institution* lectures is that time as a dynamic, as a genesis, does not proceed

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[179] See Al-Saji (2012), Lawlor (2003a,), Barbaras (2010)
[180] See Carbone (2004, *The Thinking of the Sensible: Merleau-Ponty's A-Philosophy*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press) (xv, 46, 35, 53); see also Lawlor (2003a, 86-87) on Deleuze's reading of Proust as positing an original past or pure memory.

only by succession. There is also a "simultaneity" of past and future, such that occasionally events called "institutions" occur; events that "crystallize" the past and the future "upon each other" as a whole new dimension. "Time is the very model of institution" (IP 7/[4](3)), Merleau-Ponty notes. It is through this explicitly Proustian and implicitly Bergsonian register that we should understand Merleau-Ponty's definition of institution as "those events in an experience which endow the experience with durable dimensions, in relation to which a whole series of other experiences will make sense, will form a thinkable sequel or history" (IP 77/124; see also IP 8-9/[5](4)).[181] "Institution" in Merleau-Ponty's sense is the institution of a temporal dimension, a reconfiguration of history that dimensionalizes virtual simultaneity.

What does this mean in the context of love? Love is an affective institution, the "[i]nstitution of a [f]eeling" (IP 28/[26](20)). It is the ontology of institution that will allow Merleau-Ponty to explain how a feeling "take[s] hold" (IP 28/[26](20)). Love as institution will establish a personal history, a style not only of being myself, but of being toward others. But it does this through generating a temporal dimension, a pre-individual field of possibilities. This pre-individuality however is not the somatic indistinction of syncretic sociability, folded into the affective drama of cultivating and negotiating the boundaries of body images. It is rather the temporal indistinction of past and future in a virtual simultaneity, folded into the affective drama of crystallizing the configuration and parameters of a dimension.

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[181] See Al-Saji (2007, 187) for a comparison of Bergson and Merleau-Ponty on the notion of the opening of a register or dimension.

Merleau-Ponty first considers Proust's treatment of the retrospective illusion of love. Referring to a famous passage in *The Captive* where the narrator compares the relationship between his earlier loves and his love for Albertine to the relationship between Vinteuil's earlier works and a sonata that the narrator regards particularly highly, the narrator reflects: "if I now considered not my love for Albertine but my whole life, my other loves too had been no more than slight and timid essays that were paving the way, appeals that were unconsciously clamoring, for this vaster love: my love for Albertine" (1981, 3:254).[182] Retrospectively, a series appears, a pattern. It seems to the narrator that his love for Albertine was already present as a possibility contained in the past, lacking only realization. His early loves are reduced to failed attempts to realize this "vaster love," his true love for Albertine.

Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that it seems that "[l]ove is clairvoyant; it addresses us precisely to what is able to tear us apart" (IP 38/[39](30)). In retrospect, love seems to have been able to see the future: how did I manage to fall in love with precisely the person who would turn out to be the one I would need so desperately? It is easy to imagine that fate must have been at work. Yet surely the contingencies of love must overwhelm this conclusion. There is genuinely something about love that lends itself to the retrospective illusion, and yet we must acknowledge that this necessity is imaginary.

Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the status of love as imaginary, but refuses the conclusion that it is an illusion. The imaginary status of love does not render it

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[182] Marcel Proust (1981), *Volume III: The Captive; The Fugitive; Time Regained.* USA; Vintage Books.

false, a deception or error; a simulation or duplication. Rather "the error lies in believing that it is only an error" (IP 37/40). In her essay on this lecture, Anabelle Dufourcq sums up Merleau-Ponty's argument: he "establish[es] the authentic reality of love by integrating its imaginary dimension" (2005, 343, my translation). Merleau-Ponty accomplishes this by taking the Bergsonian line that runs, largely unacknowledged by him, through the whole ontology of institution: "The "contingencies, which lead to that [true love], are reordered; love, not effect, but cause" (IP 38/[39](30)). The narrator's love of Albertine appears as the goal of all his other loves—and indeed truly becomes their goal—only by installing itself as the virtual center around which events of the past and future crystallize. It mobilizes the indeterminacy which the events of these other relationships enjoy as a simultaneity, giving them a certain orientation or configuration, and thus producing a new field of possibilities in which the present events may take their own place, coming to pass into that field as its sequel.

"It is quite impossible to claim that the present love is nothing but an echo of the past," Merleau-Ponty writes; "On the contrary, the past takes on the outline of a preparation or premeditation of a present that exceeds it in meaning although it recognizes itself in it" (IP 77/124). The love the narrator feels for Albertine is not a possibility contained already in the past, a reality lacking only realization. It "exceeds" the meaning of past events. But it does this precisely in the sense that it establishes a dimension that reconfigures the narrator's personal history, such that these earlier loves form a series. "The other loves [are] calls towards this one," Merleau-Ponty writes, but "this one is the rebirth of the others" (IP 38/[39](30)).

Merleau-Ponty finds in Proust not only a suspicion of love as retrospective illusion, but also an account of love as retrograde movement. He quotes Proust from *The Fugitive*: "Even as imaginary as the beginning of a love is, 'in exchange for what our imagination leads us to expect… life gives ourselves something which we were very far from imagining'" (IP 35/[36](28)). In the cited passage from *The Fugitive*, Proust's narrator recalls his longing for his mother's good-night kiss as a youth:

> But in exchange for what our imagination leads us to expect and we give ourselves so much futile trouble trying to find, life gives us something which we were very far from imagining. Who would have told me at Combray, when I lay waiting for my mother's good-night with so heavy a heart, that those anxieties would be healed, and would then break out again one day, not for my mother, but for a girl who would at first be no more, against the horizon of the sea, than a flower upon which my eyes would daily be invited to gaze, but a thinking flower in whose mind I was so childishly anxious to occupy a prominent place that I was distressed by her not being aware that I knew Mme. de Villeparisis? Yes, it was for the good-night kiss of such an unknown girl that, in years to come, I was to suffer as intensely as I had suffered as a child when my mother did not come up to my room. And yet if Swann had not spoken to be of Balbec, I should never have known this Albertine who had become so necessary, of love for whom my soul was now almost exclusively composed (1981, 3:511)

The affectively charged image of his longed-for mother became an avatar for other loves, charged anew through the encounters with Albertine, who he meets much later in life, such that the particulars of his future beloved are unknown and unexpected, but also a surprising rebirth of that childhood longing, a successor or sequel to his long-forgotten yearning for his mother. His mother never came and kissed him good-night. That distress healed, and was long forgotten, only to be recreated and take on unforeseeable importance under the influence of a later feeling "tak[ing] hold" (IP 28/[26](20)). Unimaginably in retrospect, Albertine

was at first a stranger. She will come to be familiar to the narrator only after and through the attachment that crystallizes upon the sight of her as a stranger against the horizon of the sea—an attachment that draws its strength from a reconfiguration of the past, in which the longing he felt for his mother's kiss as a child in Combray takes on unforeseeable significance. The image of the narrator's mother has a potency that is not reducible to what it meant as a former present. The yearning he felt then, even when it fades in the succession of time, persists in time as simultaneity, and can "break out again one day," its intensity reborn in the crystallization of a new temporal dimension that remakes the narrator, changes the course of his life, who he is, and what he desires. Merleau-Ponty finds in this passage evidence that Proust was aware not only of love as imaginary, but also of the other "half of what is true" about love: the fact that love is real precisely as "the reality of what is not immediately sensed" (IP 38/[39](30)).[183] Love is a simultaneity, a dimension: "all love is in each love" (IP 10/[6](5)).

This understanding of love as institution; that is, as a retrograde movement of dimensionalization, accounts for the "mirage" of the necessity of love. Just as in Bergson's retrospective illusion, there is indeed a mirage, a mistake, in understanding love in a manner that reduces the future to what is already contained in the present—whether by indulging the fantasy of love as destined, or by deflated present love to a mere echo of the past. Yet this mirage is not arbitrary. There is a reason that love appears "clairvoyant" (IP 38/[41](32)). There is a genuine retrograde movement exhibited in love: a feeling "take[s] hold" (IP

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[183] Deleuze too finds a theory of the original past in the reflections of Proust's narrator on Combray. (1994, *Difference and Repetition.* Paul Patton, trans. New York: Columbia University Press). See Lawlor (2003a, 86-87) for a discussion of Deleuze's reading of Proust on a pure past, and its relation to Bergson's notion of pure memory.

28/[26](20)) through institution, a dimensionalization that remodels the past as a field of possibility.

This accounts for the third mirage, the mirage of the necessity of love. But Merleau-Ponty litsts three: there is also the mirage of the beloved, and of the common life. How then can we account for the other mirages?

5.5) Love as Institution of a Personal History: Dimensionalization as Individualization

The full title of the course on institution is "Institution in Personal and Public History." In the course summary, Merleau-Ponty introduces his lecture on the "Institution of a Feeling" as treating the institution of "personal or intersubjective history" (IP 77/124). I have explained institution as the production of a temporal dimension, a configuration of virtual simultaneity. This dimension is a history, time reorganized as a field of possibilities with a certain orientation, such that the present appears as a sequel to certain series of past events. But Merleau-Ponty's claim here is that in producing a dimension, an individual is also produced. To say that institution is the institution of "a history," a "personal" or a "public" history (IP 76/123), is to say that it is the institution, not only of a temporal dimension, but also of a field within which the parameters of a singular history can appear. In producing a dimension of time, institution can also generate the parameters of an individual's history, a temporal individual.

In "Institution and Life," the first lecture after the introductory one, Merleau-Ponty explored the production of the biological and social individual as a history—a temporal individual—through the institution of life, with puberty as a

crystallizing event. In the lecture that follows the "Institution of a Feeling," he analyzes the production of a singular movement in art history—a school or oeuvre as a temporal individual—with a work of art as the crystallizing event. In the "Institution of a Feeling," which falls in between these other lectures, he explains the production of an individual personality through the institution of an affect. Here it is an encounter with an other that is the crystallizing event. A love affair, Merleau-Ponty writes, is "[t]he crystallization, or cathexis by means of someone" (IP 9/[6](5). It "announces to me what I will be" (IP 9/[6](5). In stark contrast to the *Phenomenology*, where the test of a true love is whether it engages the depths of my true self, such that even "[a] true love ends when I change" (PhP 398/438), here the true love changes me. Love is not grounded in the pre-existing self. Rather, the personality is crystallized by the sort of encounter with the other that occurs in love. Love is the institution of a personal history.

Accompanying his notes on the "[r]eality of love" (IP 31/[31](23)), Merleau-Ponty writes: "Love and the problem of personality: perhaps there is no perception of Her, but there is the fact that he is no longer himself" (IP 31/[31] (*23)). He copied out the following passage from *Swann's Way* in the margin:

> 'She'—he tried to ask himself what that meant; for it is a point of resemblance between love and death, far more striking than those which are usually pointed out, that they make us probe deeper, in the fear that its reality may elude us, into *the mystery of personality*. And this malady which Swann's love had become had so proliferated, was so closely interwoven with all his habits, with all his actions, with his thoughts, his health, his sleep, his life, even with what he hoped for after his death, was so utterly inseparable from him, that it would have been impossible to eradicate it without almost destroying him; as surgeons say, *his love is no longer operable*. (1981, 1:336, emphasis mine)[184]

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[184] (1981), *Volume I: Swann's Way; Within a Budding Grove.* Moncrieff, C.K. Scott and Terence Kilmartin, trans. USA; Vintage Books.

What does it mean, after all, that for the lover, the beloved is an image, is

imaginary? "[P]erhaps there is no perception of Her," Merleau-Ponty writes, "but

there is the fact that he is no longer himself" (IP 31/[31](*23)). The context of the

long passage I quoted above features Swann struggling with a curious

imperception of Odette. One night she seems curiously "ugly" to him; then,

"When his eyes fell upon the photograph of Odette on his table, or when she came

to see him, he had difficulty in identifying her face, either in the flesh or in the

pasteboard […] He would say to himself, almost with astonishment, 'It's she!'"

(*Swann's Way* 1981, 1:336). This love affair is crystallizing a dimension—

something that is not only perceived, but is that according to which he perceives.

As Al-Saji describes this relationship between dimensions and

imperception or invisibility: "It is the level according to which one perceives, and

as such cannot itself be perceived" (2007, 193). These perceptions of Odette are

also imperceptions because they are an institution: they are at work crystallizing a

dimension, crystallizing Swann's personality, his personal history, as a field of

possibilities for his love affair with Odette. Odette is indeed an image, an

imaginary love; but she is that "virtual image" (1946, 327)[185] Bergson speaks of

that ripples back through the whole of the past and radiates into the whole of the

future, remodelling time to revolve around this image as its virtual center, what

[185] Bergson's usage of the phrase "virtual image" is awkward here with respect to the rest of his work. In *Matter and Memory*, virtuality is associated with pure memory, which cannot be an image; an image is a mixture of memory and perception. This phrase comes from Bergson's discussion of the retrospective illusion, when he makes an analogy between the claim that the possible has always existed (as a real minus realization) and the claim that my mirror image has always existed independent of my looking in a mirror. Bergson may be using "virtual" here in a sense that is specific to mirroring and reflections, since it is not consistent with his original sense of virtuality. However, given the context of my topic, in which Merleau-Ponty is bringing the imaginary aspect of imaginary love into correspondence with a simultaneity of time that corresponds to Bergson's virtuality, it seems appropriate to use Bergson's phrase "virtual image."

orients a plane of virtual simultaneity. Swann's personality surfaces as a temporal individual insofar as this dimension allows a series of events to surface and claim this love affair, his perception of Odette, as its proper sequel.

"Like death, love is what reveals the 'personality'" (IP 38/[39](30)), Merleau-Ponty writes. But it does not do this by showing me what already existed about myself. The full quote continues, explaining that "love is what reveals the 'personality'," because "[i]t allows us to see everything that someone is, how someone is the world itself, being itself, a world, a being from which we are excluded" (IP 38/[39](30)). Love reveals my personality—indeed, crystallizes my personality anew—by showing me that this other is, as we say, "my whole world." My personality crystallizes when the experience of an other institutes my personal history; when the whole of my past and my future achieve a virtual simultaneity configured around this other as its center, its impetus, its *raison d'etre*.

Again, there is retrospective illusion and retrograde movement. I am wrong if I think that am actually joined with the one I love. An other person is never transparent to us, never fully revealed as a positive presence. "But… there is another relation with the other person: the other person as occupying the entire horizon of my life and not as a positive being" (IP 34/[35](27)). Even in the case of an unreciprocated love, or an affection for someone who I do not really know or am deeply mistaken about, I am not only in love with an "image" in the sense of a false thing. Rather, this image is the virtual image that Bergson describes reflecting back through the virtual simultaneity of time. It is the crystallization of

my personality, my temporal individuality. In the same way, it is possible for this love affair to institute a dimension in which a "we" can form: there can be "an institution of a *between* the two" (IP 30/[3](22)). Just as the advent of the body image opened a new dimension of experience that involved selfhood and sociality, so the advent of a love opens a new dimension of experience that involves intimacy. The "common life" as well is no mere "mirage."

Not all love is shared—no doubt more often, it is unreciprocated. And unreciprocated love carries with it not only the danger of heartbreak, but the danger of failing to support and participate in boundaries this other may be trying to cultivate with respect to me. It does not follow that common life is false, mere mirage. As retrograde movement, the institution of a common life will however be fragile and revisable. To the extent that one is established, it can seem necessary: absolute and eternal But this is retrospective illusion. It can be undone: the history of "us" can be rewritten; it can even turn out that after all, as so many heartbroken and disenchanted lovers discover, there was never really an "us." The field of possibilities may be reconfigured, so that it will have been the case that after all, our love was never possible; as we say "it could never work."

The account of love as the institution of personality also emphasizes a multiplicity of personae that are crystallized in love (IP 38-40/[41-42](32-33)). Where the *Phenomenology* held that a love that engaged a certain persona was thereby rendered inauthentic, in the lectures on institution Merleau-Ponty understands love as involving a virtual simultaneity of various personae, for the beloved as well as myself. There is an interesting passage in which he suggests

that heterosexual love always involves a kind of homosexuality—indeed, a "[p]olysexuality" (IP 39/[41](32)) insofar as it involves an imaginary participation in the opposite sex partner's experience: a "research [*recherche*—we should hear Proustian inflections in this word choice] of the same sex by way of the other sex" (IP 51/75). I am wary of this particular way of analyzing the issue, since it risks occluding the specificity of same-sex love, the unique and contingent political and social risks that accompany it. It does, however, raise the interesting possibility of sexual orientation as institution, along with the question of how to understand sexual difference on this account.[186]

The context of this proposed "polysexuality" is Merleau-Ponty anticipating a heteronormative objection to his use of Proust's account of love: "Someone will say: contingencies of Proust"; "Homosexual love hidden in heterosexual love" (IP 38/[41](32)). Lawlor reads this as the anticipation of the worry that "Proust being homosexual is a contingency that distorts the conception of love that Merleau-Ponty has developed" (2008, 56). While entertaining the objection as such only makes sense from within an assumed heteronormativity, Merleau-Ponty distances himself from that implicit heteronormativity by inches: "No. Even heterosexual union cannot pass for the *accomplishment* of love" (IP 39/[41](32)). Merleau-Ponty's broader point in this section is that while it is true that there is no "*accomplishment* of love" (IP 39/[41](32)), that *union* is never actually achieved, and that the "common life" is a fiction, imaginary in the sense of belonging to a virtual simultaneity; it is nonetheless (and indeed, is *thereby*)

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[186] Lawlor's (2008) "Benign Sexual Variation" raises a related question. For a Merleau-Pontian analysis of sexual orientation, see Wilkerson's (2010) *Ambiguity and Sexuality*.

real. Love as institution organizes the field of possibilities that is the context of all my personae, my various body images, my sense of self and personal boundaries, into a personality: a history or oriented virtual simultaneity that makes sense of me, or makes sense of us. This instituting force, which allows us to be genuinely intimate, to really belong to each other in this love affair as the culmination of our personal histories; this is also what prevents that intimacy from ever being accurately described as fusion, what preseves the germ of a potential for the renegotiation of that intimacy, and the miscarriage of that intimacy.

The account of affect as individualizing force that we find in *Institution and Passivity* is thus very different than the one I developed in Chapter 3 in my reading of Merleau-Ponty's Sorbonne lectures. There, individuation was understood in terms of the production of the body proper through the assumption of a body image. In the case of the institution of an affect, individuation is the production of personality through the crystallizing experience of an other. However, we can still see a strong link between affect and bodily boundary. That is, there is still a sense in which personality is a bodily boundary. But where the discussion of the body proper in terms of the body image focused on the spatiality of bodily boundaries, the discussion of the body proper in terms of personality focuses on the temporality of bodily boundaries. Fascinatingly, both are understood as affective dramas. In both cases, the mode of appearance of bodily boundaries is affective; and in both cases, the forces at stake are affective forces.

The account of love as institution also suggests an account of affect as pre-individual force. But again, it is quite different from the one I developed in

Chapter 2, reading the Sorbonne lectures. There, the affective forces were pre-individual in the sense of belonging to the affective rhythms of a syncretic sociality. Here, the force of affect is still both pre-individual and individuating, but underwritten by a more general force of time as institution, one that is attributed, not only to a human community, but to Being; and that takes on a life of its own as institution. Love as institution is not grounded in a particular sociality; it is rather what allows the sociality that appears to ground it to take shape as a temporal singularity. What is uniquely affective about this force appears precisely when it becomes a purchase on the production of personality, but instituting force is at work in other modalities as well, producing other kinds of histories.

The individual and the pre-individual are perhaps even more integrally folded into one another in the account of institution. We see this even more in the ontology Merleau-Ponty was working on when he died. The later courses on *Institution and Passivity* and on *Nature* clearly involve studies for that work, but its most developed forms can be found in the unfinished manuscript of *The Visible and the Invisible* and the last text Merleau-Ponty himself prepared for publication: the essay "Eye and Mind." It is in the latter that Merleau-Ponty writes, "[e]very visual something, as individual as it is, functions also as a dimension" (EM, 187). If a dimension functions as an individual, it is equally true that an individual functions as a dimension.

5.6) The Invisible as Dimensionalization and the Narcissism of Vision

Lawlor brings together the lecture on the "Institution of a Feeling" and Merleau-Ponty's final manuscript *The Visible and the Invisible*, pointing to a passage in the final pages of the chapter on "The Intertwining—The Chiasm" where Merleau-Ponty writes that "[n]o one has gone further than Proust in fixing the relations between the visible and the invisible, in describing the idea that is not the contrary of the sensible, that is its lining and its depth" (VI, 149/195; see also Lawlor 2008, 49). While Lawlor explains institution in terms of invisibility, I propose to approach the connection between these texts from the other direction, and understand invisibility in terms of institution. Al-Saji's work (2007, 185, 188, 193) is a precedent for this reading, arguing for a "positive re-reading of the Bergsonian past in *L'Visible et l'invisible*" (2007, 185). Merleau-Ponty does indeed explicitly explain the invisible in terms of "pure memory" in that text, crediting Bergson with the notion (VI, 122/163). Recalling Bergson's critique of possibility and the retrospective illusion, Merleau-Ponty theorizes "a possibility that is not the shadow of the actual but is its principle" (VI, 152/199).

The notion of a virtual simultaneity appears in that text as well; in the working notes for *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty writes that "the visible landscape under my eyes is not exterior to, and bound synthetically to… other moments of time and the past, but has them really *behind itself* in simultaneity, inside itself and not it and they side by side 'in' time" (VI, 267/321). While the account of institution explored pivotal or "crystallizing" events that institute new dimensions of virtual simultaneity, *The Visible and the Invisible* explores the relation of that simultaneity to perception in general. In the lectures

on institution, only certain perceptual events will serve as institutions; not every event is the advent of an institution. But in "Eye and Mind," Merleau-Ponty writes:

> Every visual something, as individual as it is, functions also as a dimension, because it gives itself as the result of a dehiscence of Being. What this ultimately means is that the proper essence [*le propre*] of the visible is to have a layer [*doublure*] of invisibility in the strict sense, which it makes present as a certain absence" (EM, 187).

We can understand this claim that every individual is a dimension in terms of the claim that there is a genuine retrograde movement, that it is not mere illusion or mirage. There is "a possibility which is not the shadow of the actual" (VI, 152/199). The claim that every individual is a dimension, that to be visible is to have a lining of invisibility, is to claim that reality is itself not fully positive. There is an indeterminacy of things that is not reducible to the lacunae of perception. Things do not gain an indeterminacy only in virtue of whether and when they are perceived by us, as if novel events were already contained in the past and merely hidden from view. An individual thing is not itself fully determinate. It has a kind of wake, rippling through the past. That wake is shifted by subsequent events, changing the meaning of the thing.

Elsewhere in the working notes of *The Visible and the Invisible*, the visible is explained explicitly in terms of the temporal logic of institution:

> With the first vision, the first contact, the first pleasure, there is initiation, that is, not the positing of a content, but the opening of a dimension that can never again be closed, the establishment of a level in terms of which every other experience will henceforth be situated. The idea is this level, this dimension. [...] [I]t is the invisible *of* this world, that which inhabits this world, sustains it, and renders it visible, its own and interior possibility, the Being of this being (VI, 151/196).

The invisible is described here both as dimensionalization, but also as sensible ideality, "an ideality that is not alien to the flesh, that gives it its axes, its depth, its dimensions" (VI, 152/197). The example is "the passions" (VI, 149/196). Like the passions, "this invisible, these ideas… cannot be detached from the sensible appearances and be erected into a second positivity" (VI, 149/196). "[I]t is essential to this sort of ideas [sic] that they be 'veiled with shadows', appear 'under a disguise'" (VI, 150/197). The passions are the example: they appear as a "disguise"; a face. Yet they are both the appearance and that which bodies forth in it, what radiates in the appearance, even as it is "veiled with shadows."

Perhaps the most developed example is reflection on the redness of a red dress that Merleau-Ponty offers in the opening paragraphs of this chapter of *The Visible and the Invisible* (VI, 131-132/170-173). He writes: "this red is what it is only by connecting up from its place with other reds about it, with which it forms a constellation, or with other colors it dominates or that dominate it, that it attracts or that attract it, that it repels or that repel it" (VI, 132/172). The red as a perceptual sense is shaped by the space carved out for it within a "constellation" of associations between other visible things, a constellation maintained by a web of affective forces. Consistent with the affectivity of perception that we find throughout Merleau-Ponty's work, this "constellation" is not confined to the immediate perceptual field. But the affective forces that circulate in this constellation do not take my body as their center or point of reference: the reds attract and repel each other.

To say that the visible thing is a dimension is to say that I do not perceive it, but that I perceive according to it. If there is indeed a pure memory at work, then the memories that become perceptions, the elements of the past that influence my perception of this red, must not be selected only by the principle of my own concern and utility.[187] In order for that to be possible, the visible things must be able to participate in each other in a manner that is not reducible to their relation in my perceptual field. "Between the alleged colors and visibles, we would find anew the tissue that lines them, sustains them, nourishes them, and which for its part is not a thing, but a possibility, a latency, and a *flesh* of things" (VI, 132-133/173).

Merleau-Ponty begins to use the term "narcissism" to describe this auto-affective participation of the visible in its invisibility. He writes that there is in "the flesh of the visible," as in signification, "a relation to Being through a being, and like it, it is narcissistic, eroticized, endowed with a natural magic that attracts the other significations into its web, as the body feels the world in feeling itself" (VI, 118/156). The indistinction of sensing is here attributed to the visible itself, as an internal dynamic of diacritical differentiation that is also understood as an autoeroticism. The model of diacritical difference and that of narcissism should prove more consistent in light of the uniquely Merleau-Pontian understanding of narcissism that I developed in Chapter 3, in which it is less a dogmatic devotion to unity than an ecstasy of echoing amplification. A color or "a visible, is not a chunk of absolutely hard, indivisible being," but rather something that "makes

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[187] See Al-Saji (2007, 179-185) for a discussion of virtuality organized by utility and embodied agency in Merleau-Ponty and Bergson.

diverse regions of the colored or visible world resound at the distances" (VI, 132/173), a play of visible in terms of invisible depths, as the child lets her visible and interoceptive body "resound at the distances" as she plays in the mirror. It is "less a color or a thing, therefore, than a difference between things and colors, a momentary crystallization of colored being or of visibility (VI, 132/173).

Thus the red dress is "[a] punctuation on the field of red things, which includes the tiles of roof tops, the flags of gatekeepers and of the Revolution, certain terrains near Aix or in Madagascar" (VI, 132/172). But there is nothing definitive about that constellation: "it is also a punctuation in the field of red garments, which includes, along with the dresses of women, robes of professors, bishops, and advocate generals, and also in the field of adornments and that of uniforms" (VI, 132/172-173). These two constellations are unique crystallizations of virtual simultaneity:

> its red literally is not the same as it appears in one constellation or in the other, as the pure essence of the Revolution of 1917 precipitates in it, or that of the eternal feminine, or that of the public prosecutor, or that of the gypsies dressed like hussars who reigned twenty-five years ago over an inn on the Champs-Elysées. A certain red is a fossil drawn up from the depths of imaginary worlds (VI, 132/172-173).

The Bolshevik Revolution, sexual difference, religious authority: the immediate perceptual sense of the red dress crystallizes a certain orientation of virtual simultaneity that nonetheless maintains its ties with all of these. A shift in the configuration of that virtual geography changes the course of the perceptual sense.

While in the *Phenomenology* the notion of a unit of sensation was always complicated with the gestalt structure of the phenomenal field, and even as I showed in Chapter 4 with a notion of affective depth and imaginary texture, here

we see a much more profound latency, one that threatens to displace the primacy of perception itself:

> the present, the visible counts so much for me and has an absolute prestige for me only by reason of this immense latent content of the past, the future, and the elsewhere, which it announces and which it conceals […] [T]here is no individual that would not be representative of a species or of a family of beings, would not have, would not be a certain style, a certain manner of… radiating about a *wholly virtual center* (VI, 114-115/151-152, emphasis mine).

The play of presence and absence here, of revealing and concealing in phenomenalization, is no longer a dimension of hiddenness in perception, or even a latency in the strict sense of something dormant and waiting to be revealed. It is rather a dimensionalization of time as virtual simultaneity, a past that has never been present, and that enjoys a mode of being different in kind from that of the present. The perceptual sense itself is made protean and indeterminate, not by the lacunary character of the body proper, but by lining or coexistence of the visible with invisible dimensions. These dimensions are organized with an affective force that belongs not to a body or a syncretic sociality, but to vision itself: "There is a fundamental narcissism of all vision" (VI, 139/181).

Mentioning Narcissus again (VI, 256/304), Merleau-Ponty writes that "The flesh is a mirror phenomenon" (VI, 255/303). The ubiquity of vision, understood in the Sorbonne lectures as part of the indistinction that characterizes the child's perception, and as attributable to the body schema, is here reconfigured through the Bergsonian notion of a virtual simultaneity. The narcissism of the mirror stage, according to Merleau-Ponty, is an attachment to a play of interoception and exteroception; before they are actually distinguished, the mirror

is experienced as a double that allows the same movements to be felt in two places at once, one where they are also seen, and one where they are unseen. The affective force built up around this mirror play facilitates the assumption of the body image, and a whole dimension of experience organized it. To understand the flesh through narcissism, and say that it is a mirror phenomenon, is to say that there is an elemental affective dynamic that is the reciprocal becoming of the visible and the invisible, producing individuals and dimensions.

5.7) Conclusion

There is thus a marked reversal of Merleau-Ponty's thought apparent in the contrast between the treatment of imaginary love in the *Phenomenology* and in the lectures on *Institution and Passivity*. The difference between affective surfaces and depths, the treatment of the question of bodily boundaries, appear in sharp contrast in these two texts. They are different still from the treatment of these issues in the Sorbonne lectures. There affect is understood as both a pre-individual and individuating force, in contrast to the *Phenomenology*. In *Institution and Passivity*, affect is pre-individual and individuating, but in surprisingly different way.

We have already seen in the Sorbonne lectures and even in the *Phenomenology* affects positioned as pre-individual in the sense that they are shared, and that their transitivism is not only a contagion of a particular affective quality, but rather indicates that affects function as the means of my body's participation in other bodies and in the world.

But in *Institution and Passivity* we encounter a more profound sense of the pre-individual character of affects. It is not only pre-individual in the sense that it belongs to a syncretic sociality or a body-world communion rather than a body proper. It is rather pre-individual in the sense that the affect itself takes on a life of its own. In the vocabulary of institution, the affect itself becomes, not only an individual, but a dimension. Affect as pre-individual is no longer only a force that realizes the indistinction and reversibility of human bodies with respect to their situations and to others. Rather, it can marshal a force that generates the contexts within which bodies meet, and keeps those contexts alive to revision, even recursive reorientation.

There is also a more profound sense of affect as individuating. In the lecture on "Institution of a Feeling," Merleau-Ponty theorizes "the foundation of a *personal history* on the basis of contingency" (IP 36/[39](29), my emphasis). Love is the institution of a personal and intersubjective history (IP 77/124). So this account too, like that of the mirror stage, is an account of affect as the force of individuation. But here the bodily boundaries at stake in individuation are understood temporally. It is not only a body image being produced, but a personal history—a personality, a personal past. Indeed, understanding body images as emotions—personalized affects—in the way that I proposed in Chapter 3 may help to understand the intersection of the temporal and the spatial sense of bodily boundary.

I will conclude with a more speculative point that I cannot fully develop here, but that bears further reflection. In his essay "Essence and Language: The

Rupture in Merleau-Ponty's Thought," Lawlor writes that "In these last courses, Merleau-Ponty places language at a level more fundamental than perception" (2003b, 162)[188]. Merleau-Ponty certainly reconsiders his account of language in relation to perception in his later work. But between the treatment of imaginary love in "The *Cogito*" chapter of the *Phenomenology* and the treatment of imaginary love in *Institution and Passivity*, we see another reversal in Merleau-Ponty's thought, this time around the status of affect with respect to perception. In Chapter 4 I explored a sense in which affect is prior to perception already in the *Phenomenology*. But there is a much stronger sense in which affect is prior to perception in the lectures on *Institution and Passivity*. There a feeling can "take hold" (IP 28/[26](20)) through the mobilization of an original past, a pure memory as virtual simultaneity. And in *The Visible and the Invisible*, it is an affective force that serves as the diacritical tissue of the constellations of visibility, the "natural magic" Merleau-Ponty calls "narcissistic" (VI, 118/156).

Thus after this analysis, we must question the tendency to specify as *language* that which is more fundamental than perception. While "language" can be a very capacious term, if what is being reconsidered here is also affect, and ontogeny and kinship and art, not to mention time and space, as unique dimensionalizing forces, then we must be cautious of the risks of focusing too tightly on language. Understanding Merleau-Ponty's difficult notion of the flesh will require thinking through multiple dimensions of invisibles, and the "*universal dimensionality*" (VI, 265/313) in which they intersect.

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[188] (2003b) in *Studia Phaenomenologica* 3-4: 155-162.

CONCLUSION

One important set of conclusions from this work concerns the

development of Merleau-Ponty's thought. My reading suggests that the move

away from both a methodological commitment to the body proper as a point of

departure and from the thesis of the tacit *Cogito* begins far earlier in Merleau-Ponty's corpus than the final lecture courses. It can be found already in his middle period, in the lectures on child psychology, just four years after the publication of the *Phenomenology*. Merleau-Ponty is already in that period shifting to a pre-individual point of departure, one that asks after the advent of individuality rather than assuming it.

Further, my reading casts the crucial development of the later work as a shift in the way that pre-individual context is conceptualized. Instead of a syncretic sociality, it is an elemental ontological force that generates dimensions as well as individuals. Affect is cast in a close relationship with the temporal modality of this force, which produces the affective dimensions as the parameters of personal and intersubjective temporal individuals.

Crucial arguments and concepts of Merleau-Ponty's take on altered meanings when we track them through the register of affect. I argued in Chapter 2 that in fact "the theory of the body schema is a theory of perception," as Merleau-Ponty famously claims in the *Phenomenology*, only insofar as the theory of the body schema is a theory of a transitivity of affect: an operation of affect as a sympathetic participation of my body in its world, including not only objects, but also the inner lives of others. In Chapter 3 I argued for a revised understanding of the distinction between the body schema and body image, proposing that the body image is a restructuration of the body schema in accordance with the advent of the body proper, rather than an independent phenomenological structure. Following a suggestion from Schilder, I proposed that body images are emotions, understood

as personalized affects, affects that have been "owned," and set the tone for the felt sense of the ownness in the body at a given time. In Chapter 4 I proposed that Merleau-Ponty's reflections on "pure depth" in the *Phenomenology* position affect as original spatiality. Then of course there is the claim in Chapter 1 that the thesis of the tacit *Cogito* itself should be understood through the example of true and false feelings, and the positing of affect as the dimension that sets the parameters of a personal history in Chapter 5.

Between the *Phenomenology* and *Institution*, we see an important reversal in Merleau-Ponty's thought around the theme of affect. Sometime in the four years after publishing the *Phenomenology*, Merleau-Ponty abandoned the thesis of the tacit *Cogito*. The question of how to account for the genesis of bodily boundaries, of individuals, is a crucial motivator of his reflections throughout the remainder of his career. But his early intuition that that affects are central to this question, demonstrated in his use of a distinction between true and false love (and in general feeling) as the key evidence of the bodily synthesis he calls the tacit *Cogito*, is never abandoned. Affect remains central to his approach to the question of the genesis of bodily boundaries—and of individuals—throughout his oeuvre. Nowhere is this demonstrated more strikingly than his return to that example of true love in the lectures on *Institution*, where we see an explicit reversal of his earlier view, and a well-developed alternative to the thesis of the tacit *Cogito* in the notion of a true love as the crystallization of a personal history.

But if we see a rupture when we place the account of affect in the *Phenomenology* (at least in the chapter on "The *Cogito*") side by side with the

lectures on *Institution*, between the two accounts of affect as pre-individual and individuating in the middle and late periods, I think we find a more continuous development.

From Chapter 2 onward I have been working to understand affect as a unique dynamic of differentiation. In Chapter 2 this was the mimetic differentiation of sympathy, in Chapter 3 the amplifying differentiation of narcissism, in Chapter 4 the occlusive differentiation of the manifest and the latent that serves as spatialization prior to exteriority. In Chapter 5, temporality understood as the divergent yet intertwining movements of succession and simultaneity suggests another account of affect as differentiation. But the account developed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 is distinct from the one in Chapter 5: it positions affect as a spatializing operation, productive of an imaginary geography of the body. Chapter 5 positions affect as a temporalizing operation, productive of a virtual simultaneity and a personal history.

Can these accounts be folded into one another? While the notion of time as virtual simultaneity in *Institution* offers a much richer account of latency than depth as occlusive permeation in the *Phenomenology*, there is no conflict in principle between the spatializing function of affect as pure depth on the one hand, and the temporalizing function of affect as virtual simultaneity on the other.

A stronger link can be made between the two accounts of affect as pre-individual and individualizing: the account of the imaginary geography of the body schema and body image through child development in the Sorbonne lectures and the account of affect in terms of temporality in *Institution*. As an account of

development, the view of affect we find in the Sorbonne lectures is temporal, but its temporality is assumed rather than explicitly theorized. The requirement also runs in the other direction: the ontology requires an account in terms of concrete development, the imaginary geography of the body schema and body image. This follows from Merleau-Ponty's methodological commitments: when he proposes to undertake ontological explication of the results of his phenomenology in his later work, Merleau-Ponty takes as his mandate producing an "[o]ntology that defines being from within and not from without" (N, 220). In *The Visible and the Invisible*, he goes so far as to claim that "*[o]ne cannot make a direct ontology*" (VI, 179/231); that accordingly, his will be an "indirect" method that approaches Being only from within being.[189]

Merleau-Ponty accedes to the need for his later ontology to return to an account of the imaginary geography of the body most clearly in the third course on the concept of nature (N, 201-284). The first course approaches the study of nature through a revisionary account of treatments of the concept of nature in the history of philosophy, and the second course develops an account of animality and generativity in nature that is related to the account of institution. The third course returns to the study of the human body in terms of the concepts of body image and body schema. Heavily indebted to Schilder and Klein, it also acknowledges Bergson's influence, casting the notion of "image" under Bergsonian lights.[190] The body schema is reconceptualized in terms of the "*[t]heory of the flesh*" (N 209). The aim of the lecture course is to understand "in

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[189] I am indebted to Alia Al-Saji for drawing my attention to this point.
[190] See for example (N, 210, 218).

what dimension the perceiving body must be sought," and on the way to clarify "how the invisible is a divergence in relation to the visible" (N, 208). The investigations of the first two courses and the third are expected to have a reciprocal relationship, such that the perspective of the theorist as a perceiving human body will be placed in nature, and discussion of nature that preceded will be understood through an understanding of the position from which the reflection proceeded (N, 208).

Interestingly in light of the project of reading Merleau-Ponty's work through the register of affect, the central difference in the way the body schema is understood in this lecture is the explicit reconfiguration of the body schema as a "libidinal structure" (N, 210). "Parallel to the esthesiological body," Merleau-Ponty writes, "we would have to have a study of the libidinal body" (N, 210). And again, there is a "libidinal dimension of the corporal schema" (N, 218). His program for doing this involves returning to the relation with the mirror double (N, 278-279), and the notion of "emotional distance" (N, 279). Without being able to explore this connection fully, I can only suggest here that Merleau-Ponty provides hints that the two accounts of affect as pre-individual and individuating force, the one somatic and spatializing, and the other virtual and temporalizing, in fact require each other, and should be theorized together. Taken together, they offer a rich context for exploring connections between the Deleuzian thread of the affective turn with its emphasis on virtuality, and the thread that emphasizes the somatic, and traces its pedigree through James and Tomkins.

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