 http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0103-656420160170

Modes of body absence and presence based on bodily sensorimotor *telos*[1]

Danilo Saretta Verissimo*

Universidade Estadual Paulista, Departamento de Psicologia Evolutiva, Escolar e Social. Assis, SP, Brasil

Abstract: Phenomenology shows that our relationship with things and with others essentially involves the question of our bodily reality, and that the circumstances of the appearance of one's own body relates, above all, to its primordial condition not as an object of perception, but as a structure of appearance. In this context, we discuss the modes of absence and presence of the body according to phenomenology, seeking to draw an outline of the topic based on Drew Leder's methodological option: to initiate a phenomenology of the body by the structural principles of sensorimotor activity. We drew on three dimensions described by the author related to our sensorimotor skills: physical, attentional and functional.

Keywords: body, perception, attention, phenomenology.

Introduction

At some point in the so-called *Zollikon Seminars*, Heidegger (1987/2001) asks the audience how the body relates to space. Someone answers: "The body is the closest [element] in space". To which the philosopher rejoins: "I would say it is the most distant" (p. 111). Phenomenology indeed shows that our relationship with things and with others essentially involves the question of our incarnation, that is, of our bodily reality, and that the circumstances of the appearance of one's own body relates, above all, to its primordial condition not as an object of perception, but as a structure of appearance (Benoist, 2007). Concerned with accurately describing the phenomena of which it speaks, in apprehending its specific modes of appearance, phenomenology describes the body as an indelible presence that, to a large extent, retreats from the center of the perceptual field in favor of the appearance of the natural and social world. One could affirm that phenomenology establishes a logic of presence and absence that is related to the modes of appearance of the body and its form of participating in the manifestation of everything comprising our experience.

Considering the place that philosophy and science have always reserved for corporeality, the incarnation of awareness in the body supported by phenomenology acquires a transforming character. The moralist and dualist tendencies in philosophy have reserved for the body the meaning of an obstacle to ascetic virtues and the full exercise of reason. One way or another, in these forms of knowledge the body is defined vis-à-vis the spirit (Chirpaz, 1969). With the advance of the modern scientific project, the impasses of dualism were absorbed by the pragmatism of naturalistic monism, with explanations of the animate nature of the living body now being based on organic functioning, especially neurological structures. This monism is to some extent a return to the body, but it is still about a foreign body in relation to our corporeal experience. This is one of the paradoxes of our experience: our body coincides with all the dimensions of our presence in the world, it is the very expression of our feelings, desires and intentions, and yet at various moments it resists us, revealing either its nature of object, subject to mechanical relationships, or its organic quality, with events that are independent of our will. This objective and organic nature is the view favored by the sciences of the body. In phenomenology, especially through phenomenological investigations of perception, the body, by virtue of a faithful description of the perceptual processes, is claimed as a genre that lies outside the distinction between awareness and object (Barbaras, 2007).

In this context, in this paper we discuss the modes of absence and presence of the body according to phenomenology, seeking to draw an outline of the topic based on a specific starting point. We follow the methodological option of Leder (1990): to initiate a phenomenology of the body via the structural principles of sensorimotor activity. We draw upon three dimensions described by the author related to our sensorimotor skills: physical, attentional and functional.

Perception and movement

The parts of the body that are most directly related to our sensorimotor activity imply our relationship with that which differs from us, or, in prosaic language, with what lies outside us. These areas coincide to a large extent with the bodily surface. "The surface," according to Leder (1990), "is where self meets what is other than self" (p. 11). The bodily surface is covered in points where our perceptual, motor and expressive powers are updated. The eyes, ears, nose, mouth and skin are essential

1 This article is the result of a research funded by Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (Fapesp).

* Corresponding address: danilo.verissimo@gmail.com

sensory structures, they are directly responsible for the exteroceptive field. They are in a state of co-belonging with kinesthetic alterations and proprioception, which concerns our sense of position, posture and muscle tension. We move our eyes to shift the focus of attention, we move the mouth complex to enhance taste. Other basic kinesthesia structures that motivate the diversity of sensory appearances are, for example, the head, arms, hands, legs and feet. As we move our heads, we have access to distinct profiles of things, or to other elements of the perceptual field. These structures also give us our gestural, physiognomic and linguistic expressions, which are directly related to our social experience. The perceptual structures of the body are not, however, the focus of our normal activity. Like other bodily structures, they are effaced in favor of intentional objects (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008).

Let us imagine the following scenario, which may be useful to our argument: as I walk through a town, my attention is suddenly drawn to a bookstore window, more specifically to a book whose title interests me. This book then becomes, according to Gurwitsch's (1957) conceptual vocabulary, the theme of my field of awareness, the central focus of my field of presence. The perceptual theme interacts with a thematic field, that is, with data that are co-present with regards to the theme, from the perceptual background involving elements in relation to where I am situated, even without noticing them, such as the sensory whole of the bookstore, to my literary interest and to the use I hope to make of this book. The thematic field, or context, bears an intrinsic relationship with the theme. It emerges from a field, or a background, to occupy the center of attention. There are, in addition, numerous co-present data with no direct relationship with the theme, like the street I am on and the people walking along it. They make up what can be called, still based on Gurwistch, the margin of the perceptual field. Most of the time, our bodily experience is located precisely on the margin of our perceptual focus.

The perceptual field is equally a field of action. The classic distinction between perception and action relates to a level of abstraction that is incompatible with a heuristic description of our worldliness. Perception and action are inextricably linked dimensions of our living experience, more specifically it is one of the main modes of our bodily existence, namely our being-in-space (être-*à-l'espace*). One cannot but acknowledge that perception itself is a motor activity. Above we mentioned the ceaseless, albeit unnoticed, movements of the head, eyes and legs, which are all involved in our perceptual experience. Moreover, the perceived world "is always saturated by the implicit presence of motility" (Leder, 1990, p. 17). The spatial dimension of the perceived world, the depth of things, their proximity and distance from us necessarily imply a being that moves in space. We therefore encounter, on the part of the world, a constant invitation to action, which helps constitute a field of praxis which is not merely sensory. On the part of the subject, a subject of action is essentially revealed, an "I can" rather than activities of thought or of representation of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2003).

Our particular interest here is to discuss the role of the body in relation to our sensorimotor power, to our being-in-space and to the constitution of the field of perception-action. How is the body part of the sensory whole? How does it fit into the perceptual field? How are the modes of giving and the absence of one's own body characterized?

Leder (1990) distinguishes three dimensions of the bodily sensorimotor *telos*, or of the intentional nature of one's own body: physical, attentional and functional. Prominent in all of them is "self-effacement" (p. 25), through which one's own body operates, while remaining indirectly and marginally accessible to experience. We will use these categories as guidelines to study the presence of the body in the sensorimotor field. Although their close interrelation does not allow us to identify well-defined boundaries between their main thematic concepts, they enable us to investigate three essential topics: the body as the *nullpoint* of sensorimotor activity; the body as an agent and object of attention; and the atmosphere of generality that marks our actions.

The nullpoint of sensorimotor activity

The physical dimension relates to the realization that our perceptual acts, by a body situated here-and-now, are directed towards non-coincidental objects in space and time. It is a structure that can be expressed by the formula *from-at* or *from-to*. This structure relates to what Gennart (2011) calls gnostic intentionality. We habitually turn to the things around us, so that our perceptual activity seems imbued with an eminently identifying meaning. For the sake of *what*, we forget the phatic, or pathetic, dimension of this activity, which relates to the *how* of perception-action. This implies acknowledging, according to Merleau-Ponty (1945), that our perceptual and practical intentions are concealed by the appearance of things. The manifestation of things carries within it an objective meaning that seems disconnected from our constant view in perspective. This apparent independence of things manifests itself both in time and space. The objects we encounter, in the context of the forgetfulness of bodily intentionality, happen anteriorly and externally to it. The body space remains as an unperceived term of the intentional relationship involved in the appearance of things.

The body therefore figures as the *nullpoint* of sensorimotor activity, retreating, more often than not, to a zone of invisibility, or of productive absence. The "nullpoint" referred to by Leder (1990) relates to Husserl's (1952/1996) characterization of one's own body as the center of our spatial orientation. Everything that appears to us perceptively is exposed from a specific side, from a determined angle, at a certain distance, under a certain

lighting design. The mode of appearance of something necessarily includes a relationship "with a 'here' and its fundamental orientations," affirms Husserl (1952/1996, p. 223). That is precisely one's own body, the nullpoint (*Nullpunkt*) of perception, the essential "here." In a similar vein, Von Weizsäcker (1939/1950), when speaking of biological space as opposed to geometric space, analyzes its genetic configuration, the development of which derives from the "respective here" (*jeweiligen Hier*), the "here" of each one. One's own body, through its capacity for self-motion,[2] shifts its positions in objective space, while never ceasing to figure as the center of perceptual experience. It is in this sense, as in the inalienable center of perceptual activity, that Husserl also characterizes the body as "a point that is not actually seen" (Husserl, 1952/1996, p. 223). Merleau-Ponty (1945, 2011) confers new elements in regards to this tradition of analyzing bodily intentionality through the use of conceptual tools of psychology, especially the concept of the body schema. According to the author, when the word "here" is applied to one's own body, it does not refer to a determinate position in relation to external coordinates, but rather to "the establishment of the first coordinates" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 117). And that is not all. It is intended to determine the situation of the body in relation to its tasks. Bodily space, writes Merleau-Ponty, is "the background of somnolence or the reserve of vague power against which gesture and its aim stand out, the zone of not being in front of which precise beings, figures and points may appear" (1945, p. 117). The structuring of the gesture and its motor precision, its ability to turn to any object or event, demand the disappearance of one's own body as a spectacle. Its parts interconnect synergistically, working in an integrated and silent way to favor the appearance of things, the focus of attention and action. The "here" of the body is not, therefore, the term of an interobjective relationship, says Merleau-Ponty (2011), but rather the place from which self comes into contact with the outside world. Its unity, which corresponds to the "modern notion of body schema" (Merleau-Ponty, 2011, p. 133), is not that of an intentional object; it is rather a "lateral" or "lived" unity, the "background of a praxis" (Merleau-Ponty, 2011, p. 133). We will return to this when addressing the attentional dimension of the bodily sensorimotor *telos*. What matters here is to address the dissension between the body as the opening point of the field of action and the moments in which its absence can be partially circumvented.

We cannot get away from our own body. Our bodily situation implies, at the same time, that we have limited access to the appearances of our own body (Husserl, 1952/1996), which, as such, does not unfold in front of our eyes (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). Our "reflective possibilities" (Leder, 1990, p. 18), which allow the transgression of bodily transparency, are nevertheless abundant. Besides being able to directly see and touch parts of our body, with the aid of mirrors and other reflecting surfaces we can visually access areas or profiles of ourselves that are normally concealed. We are capable, before the mirror, of seeing our eyes, the organs of vision. With little effort we can scratch the palms of one hand with its own fingers, or touch the back of one hand with the other. But the specular, or reflective, phenomenon merely reinforces "the original structure of one's own body" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 107). In the case of seeing our own eyes in the mirror, we can either focus on what we see, the eyes as objects in the world, or on the act of seeing. We are not able to see the gaze (Leder, 1990). Our body has certain material characteristics of color, texture, weight, and is susceptible to all kinds of causal relationships with the outside world, such as contact with energies from discrete sources, the sound of a musical instrument, for example, or from severe sources, capable of impacting it, displacing it and even seriously injuring its physical integrity. But the body is also the "support of feelings" and the "organ that moves around freely" (Husserl, 1952/1996, p. 226), the "body of flesh [*Leibkörper*]" (Husserl, 1952/1996, p. 206), which distinguishes it from other bodies in the sense of physical things. In addition, our sensory impressions are open to an intentional double horizon. If I rest one of my hands on the table, I go through a tactile experience of this object, an apprehension of its smooth and cold appearance. But if I direct my attention otherwise, I have access to a distinct layer of apprehension: I perceive the feeling of pressure on my hand. However, this feeling does not present itself as an object or property of an object; it is felt on my hand. I cannot touch my feeling of touch. In fact, the feeling is inaccurate both spatially and temporally. I can touch my right hand with my left hand and perceive the former's materiality; then, through a new effort of attentional transition, I can perceive the sensory nature of my right hand. That movement, however, does not last long. I soon turn to any object in my intentional field of presence, which includes my own touched hand. That is an essential element of the structure of one's own body, which serves as the background for the appearance of things. And when we apprehend its sensory nature, it does not expose itself explicitly. Our feelings are part of the tacit structure of the "here," of the bodily *from*.

Agent and object of attention

The attentional dimension of the sensorimotor *telos* started being thematized in the previous section, with the close relationship between our perceptual experience and processes of attention. Regarding the attentional structure, it should be stressed that by focusing on something in our perceptual or action field, we do not only take the thematic object into account, but also

2 Weizsäcker (1939/1950) refers to intentional motion, which characterizes the relationship between subject and outer world (Umwelt), as self-motion (Selbstbewegung). The author also speaks of voluntary motion (Willkürbewegung).

a series of conditions and meanings that, although not directly thematized, are part of the framework and contribute to composing the thematic meaning of the perceived object. The act of looking, of paying attention to something, is a matter of, as Merleau-Ponty (1945) says, putting the surrounding in abeyance "the better to see the object" (p. 81), "to lose in background what one gains in focal figure" (p. 82). In the system made up by things, in which an object cannot be focused on without its surroundings becoming horizon, the perceptual background, nevertheless, does not lose importance. The background is that which is present precisely when we do not think about it, and whose effectiveness depends largely on its expressed non-thematization (Merleau-Ponty, 2011). Von Weizsäcker (1939/1950), when referring to this dynamics of perception, states, for example, that the body *sacrifices* (*opfert*) part of its motor attitudes and the apparent movements of the environment in favor of conserving bodily balance and the constant appearance of the environment. However, the idea of sacrifice should not imply contempt or annulment of the elements that retreat as perceptual background. The parts sacrificed during the perceptual performance remain active. It is important to precisely understand their "presence-absence" mode (Leder, 1990, p. 24). Regarding the body specifically, Merleau-Ponty (1945) says that its "permanence is absolute and is the background for the relative permanence of disappearing objects, of real objects" (p. 108). We started this discussion by addressing precisely the "transitive nature of the body" (Leder, 1990, p. 19), that is, the intentional nature of perceptual activity, which turns to things, while one's own body remains, or retreats, as a nullpoint (*Nullpunkt*) of the perceptual horizon. In this sense, one can affirm, alongside Merleau-Ponty, that the figure and background structure implies a third term: one's own body. The philosopher affirms: "every figure stands out against the double horizon of external and bodily space" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 117). The figure-background structure, initially described by Gestalt theory, can therefore be redefined as a background-figure-background structure, with the specification that one of the sides is the bodily horizon. The body is not therefore commonly the focus of attentional activity, as is mentioned above. It is an essential part of our field of action, without which this field would not exist; it nevertheless establishes the bodily background of the attentional center. In Leder's (1990) words, the body "tends to disappear from explicit awareness" (p. 25) in favor of the preeminence of our actions' objectives.

Leder (1990) distinguishes two complementary forms of self-concealment of the bodily surface: focal disappearance and background disappearance, which leads us to consider the condition of one's own body from the Gestalt notion of figure-background. Let us return to the scene of attention as was drawn to the book in a bookstore window. My eyes play an active role in the situation, although at no moment do they become the theme of my attention. They are situated at the level of the *from-to* gnosis structure. Despite their role as organs of focal origin for my field of action, they do not actually appear themselves. This is what Leder calls focal disappearance. In relation to my eyes, other organs of the sensorimotor surface are experienced in the condition called background disappearance. My ears, for example, remain part of my action structure, of my "I can," despite their momentary attentional respite. Background disappearance is even clearer regarding the receding dimension of my body, that is, those parts that do not physically stand out, such as visceral organs.

The distinction proposed by Leder (1990) between focal and background disappearance relates to Goldstein's formulations (1934/1983). This author states, based on the study of neuropathological cases, that the functional precision of operations centered in certain regions of the body, such as vision, is linked to the possibility of this area standing out on a first level of organic functional activity. The other regions of the body must therefore constitute a background that ensures the general balance of the system and support the prominent figure of the proximal field that is most directly involved with a given action. According to Goldstein, damage to the nervous system impairs the organic capacity to function according to the establishment of the dynamics of figure and background, which in turn determines the manifestation of various disorders of the sensorimotor system. Such disorders are said to express reduced levels of organic performance *differentiation*.

Up to now we have emphasized the disappearance of the body. We should, nevertheless, insist on its manifestations as part of the perceptual field, which naturally apply to the attentional level. If I climb onto a chair to reach something and suddenly lose my balance, I instantly realize my dangerous position and try to correct it. In a tennis game, the focus of my attention is mainly on the ball and on the opponent's position, but if I suddenly start feeling intense back pain, the focus of attention is directed to my body. Pain, comments Leder (1990), possesses a "centripetal force" (p. 76), which reminds us of our here-and-now body. When we learn to use an instrument, dance or engage in martial arts, we have to maintain focus on our body. The actual theoretical attention given to the body is a form of manifesting our corporeality. In phenomenological reflection, naive realism is suspended and the body is revealed as the subject of all intentional activity. However, according to Heideggerian phenomenology, this form of bodily manifestation evades the primary mode of experiencing corporeality. Theoretical attention would be a deficient way, with no pejorative connotation, of relationship with the world. This strategy seeks epistemological, aesthetic and contemplative benefits, derivative modes, which require suspending the transitive nature of the body (Leder, 1990). One way or another, it is observed

that the body is also part of the field of action as an intentional object.

Schema, image and attention

The dynamics between the body as a regulator of the perceptual field and the body as part of the perceptual field itself appears in discussions regarding the concepts of body schema and image. We have referred to the body schema and its nature, not as intentional object, but as background for action. Gallagher (2005), in a similar vein, characterizes the body schema as a recessive sensorimotor system, while reserving the idea of a "system of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs" (p. 24) to the concept of body image that are geared towards the actual body. The author is concerned with differentiating both concepts, the use of which comes from a variety of disciplines such as psychology, neurology, psychoanalysis and philosophy. According to the philosopher, there is, historically, a terminological, methodological and conceptual confusion that is related to the two concepts, which entails, for example, inconsistencies in experimental outcomes concerning the study of corporeality, as well as in clinical applications. Gallagher's (2005) distinction is grounded on the difference between "having a perception of (or belief about) something and having a capacity to move (or an ability to do something)" (p. 24). In this sense, the body schema refers to motor skills, abilities and habits that allow and model movement and postural maintenance. Its primary mode of operation is related to occasions in which the intentional object of perception is distinct from one's own body. Body image, in turn, involves intentional states and dispositions whose object is one's own body, configuring a way reflective intentionality, that is, one that is related to the self.

Does the body schema, as defined by Gallagher (2005), fit the notion of body self-concealment? The system of sensorimotor functions suited to the body schema operates "below the level of self-referential intentionality" (p. 26), says the author. These are tacit, "preconscious" (p. 26) performances, "subpersonal" (p. 26) and automatic processes involved in the regulation of posture and movement. Such characterizations are in line with some of the early definitions of body schema, such as those found in the work of the neurologist Henry Head (Corraze, 1973). To move around in the world we do not need to keep the body constantly as a percept. "In this sense," Gallagher (2005) writes, "the body-in-action tends to efface itself in most of its purposive activities" (p. 26). We can direct our attention to the position of our limbs or to our movements, monitoring them. Although such body awareness has an influence on the body schema, it should not, however, be confused with it. In the words of Gallagher (2005), "the body schema is always something in excess of that of which I can be conscious" (p. 38). Nor is it a question of bringing the body schema closer to the idea of reflex. The automatism of the body schema concerns precisely its functioning outside the sphere of thematic attention. If I move my hand toward a book that interests me, I may have a voluntary experience, directed towards an end, without the movement necessary to achieve the action being monitored or even known. The focus of my attention is the book, it is not my movement or the parts of my body involved in the action. In this context, body schema can be understood, according to its early historical meanings, as a somatic reality capable of sustaining action and perception, a reality that is not actually perceived (Corraze, 1973), and which therefore relates to the idea of body self-concealment.

Regarding body image, Gallagher (2005), through bibliographic analysis, identifies three types of intentional contents that give it meaning: *body as a percept*, which concerns the perceptual experience of one's own body; *conceptual body*, related to the conceptual understanding we can develop about our body, including elements of common sense and scientific knowledge; and *affective body*, which is based on our emotional attitude to our body. The body can express itself as a percept even if it does not have our direct attention. In this case, our awareness about it is marginal. At times when the body becomes an explicit object of attentional awareness, it tends to express its differences from the environment more clearly, becoming a part of the sense of personal self. Its appearance as an intentional object is part of the personal experience of consistency (Gennart, 2011), i.e., of existing within certain limits, albeit indefinite, as is evidenced by the example of the artifacts we are able to incorporate, such as our clothes, glasses, etc. It should be mentioned that perceptual attention to the body is never wholly encompassing. Gallagher (2005) comments: "Even 'global awareness' is only an awareness of the general features or outlines of one's own body; it is not a consciousness of every part in holistic relation to every other part" (p. 29). We do, therefore, pay attention to parts of the body. One should equally consider that certain body parts may deserve more or less attentional relevance, depending on their relative position in the direct visual field or on the various conditions and circumstances to which the body may be exposed, such as the type of activities engaged in by the subject, regularly or in special situations such as intense experiences of pain or pleasure and the state of health or illness.

But the body is not merely perceived. Going back to the types of intentional contents related to body image, as listed above, one should consider that we remember, imagine, conceptualize, study, love or hate our own body (Gallagher, 2005). This variety of intentional acts also includes inconsistencies and contradictions among them. My knowledge of my body may not overcome the power of insecurity or anxiety directed against it. This is clear, for example, in cases of anorexia. In an excerpt from a clinical vignette presented by Ripa Di Meana (1999 apud Knockaert & Steenhoudt, 2005), one reads: "I feel fat, I'm full of anxiety. I'm ashamed of myself . . . I'm

revolting, I hate myself. I'm angry with myself, because I feel swollen. Maybe this isn't really the truth, but it's the way I see things" (p. 283). Despite the significant loss of body mass that anorexics may achieve, they still see themselves as fat. Another important aspect of anorexia is subjects being submitted to the gaze of others. Other people's comments about their body raise feelings of horror and fear and trigger the compulsion to modify their body.

The issue of alterity in anorexia highlights the intersubjective dimension, not only of the constitution of body image, but also of body schema. Apart from the signs of others in almost everything around us, the other exposes himself through "concrete bodily manifestation" (Gennart, 2011, p. 135). The transitive nature of intentionality keeps the presentation of our own corporeality latent, while the bodily presentation of the other usually occurs immediately. This other, who manifests himself bodily, directs his gaze, his gestures, his speech and his physiognomy towards me, exposing the reality of my own bodily unity. According to Gennart (2011), the take-body (*prendre-corps*), that is, our appearance, is in effect an inter-appearance (*entre-apparaître*), in the sense of the interweaving that unites the being-body and the being-with-the-other.

Schilder (1935/1968) devotes part of his celebrated study on body image to the sociological aspects of corporeality, or rather to the "relational identity of body image" (Saint Aubert, 2013, p. 124). The author writes: "Body image is a social phenomenon" (Schilder, 1935/1968, p. 233). This statement gains special importance when one considers the relationship that the author establishes between perceptual processes and emotional or libidinal processes. The separation between perception and emotion is a theoretical device with negative implications for understanding the scope of our social experience. Our emotions, states Schilder (1935/1968), are directed towards others and "always have a social dimension" (p. 234). Our libidinal tendencies are largely directed towards body images that are present in the outer world. According to the author, "the desire to be seen, to be looked at, is as primitive as the desire to see" (Schilder, 1935/1968, p. 233). Our own body image and the other's body image are "two pieces of information from primary experience" (Schilder, 1935/1968, p. 250) and make up "a permanent flow of mutual exchange" (Schilder, 1935/1968, p. 242). According to Merleau-Ponty (1956-1960[3] apud Saint Aubert, 2013), Schilder finds a system between the "organization of my body" and the "organization of its relationships with other bodies", in short, an "intercorporeality" (p. 131). In more precise sociological terms, one must acknowledge the close relationships between body image and sociocultural standards and contexts. There is, in our social experience, a schematic, symbolic and normative perception of bodies that plays a role in determining our affections and judgments in the sphere of corporeality (Gallagher, 2005; Simondon, 2013).

In the light of such considerations, one must acknowledge the difference between the body as agent of attention and the body as object of attention. Despite some correspondence between this variation in the attentional dimension and the distinction between body schema and body image, they cannot be simply put side by side. Gallagher (2005) poses the following question: "am I always conscious of my own body as an intentional object, or as part of an intentional state of affairs?" (p. 27). If the term "aware" implies that the body is a focus of attention, then the answer must be negative. As seen above, the body largely recedes as background, or margin, of the field of perception-action, or, in Gurwitsch's (1957) terminology, the field of consciousness. The question is how to impart a positive status to the perceptual background, in this case, to the body. Merleau-Ponty (2011), for example, speaks of "effective imperception" (p. 59) when referring to the role of the perceptual background in the appearance of the intentional object. The body is precisely an ever-present background. One could even affirm that one of the general aspects of Merleau-Ponty's work is to show, based on phenomenology, that there is no human activity, however detached it may seem, such as when we sleep or try to solve an abstract mathematical problem, whose subject is not the body.

Regarding body image, despite its characterization as a complex of states and dispositions in which the intentional object is one's own body, one should admit that several aspects of this intentional relationship are outside the scope of the thematic or conscious attention. Acknowledging this is important to avoid reducing the distinction between body image and schema to dichotomies such as being aware and unaware, explicit and tacit, among others.

One should also ask whether the univocality established by Gallagher (2005) regarding the boundaries between body schema and image would not compromise the definition and interweaving of perception and motricity. Moreover, does the clarity of definitions not presume, in this case, a reduction of the examined phenomena, namely our being-in-space and our being-with-others? According to Saint Aubert (2013), the distinction sought by the author leads to an antinomy between the automatism of the body schema, which dispenses with bodily perception, and the body image, sustained by perceptual control. We would thus have a revival of two objectifying postures regarding the body: on the one hand, the formulation of a subconscious neurological structure underlying the action, and, on the other, an intellectualist system of body representation. We lose sight of the fact that "all perception implies an implicit movement," that "there is no perception of movement without the awakening of motor projects" (Saint Aubert, 2013, p. 48). In the theoretical field, it is useful to point out that if the approach to body schema and image by authors such as Schilder and Merleau-Ponty lacks concern with the exact meaning of the terminologies used, then they

3 These are unpublished work notes on the body written between 1956 and 1960, kept in the Bibliotèque Nationale de France and researched by Saint Aubert.

draw on, besides neurology, references to disciplines such as psychoanalysis and Gestalt psychology. The concept of body schema in these authors has as a horizon the concept of desire and ideas such as structure, field and perceived unity. Such points of reference make it possible to outline an experienced bodily unit, whose assumption by the subject of perception does not depend on its definition as a neurological process, nor as an object of thought linked to an explicit system of percepts. Gallagher's recourse to phenomenology is not enough to offset the lack of psychoanalytic and gestaltic devices explored in depth by authors such as Schilder and Merleau-Ponty. We will resume the critical examination of the concept of body schema below.

Atmosphere of generality

We now examine the third dimension of the sensorimotor *telos* referred to by Leder (1990), the functional dimension, which complements the physical and attentional dimensions, highlighting some issues that, despite being part of both previous themes, can be discussed within a specific sphere. There is a limit to the awareness of the bodily self, or of "self-presence" (Leder, 1990, p. 19) in perceptual activity. Gallagher and Zahavi (2008), supported by Sartre, assert that the living body is invisibly present, it is existentially lived before being known. We cannot bring the numerous processes that sustain perception and action to expressed awareness. Leder (1990) comments: "In pursuing my explicit goals, I act toward the world from an unthematized functional power" (p. 20). When I turn visually to any object, vision itself appears as something that is part of my countless possibilities of action and yet rests on a dimension of ignorance. I just want to see, and I see. A volitional impulse is enough to grant the vision of the object. I do not need, nor would know how, to voluntarily mobilize my bodily structures of vision. In view of our knowledge of neurophysiology, we can say that we see not only with the eyes, but with the retinal nerves and the visual cortex, although these are structures that remain marginal to the experience of seeing. I can equally concentrate on my stride, but I never have direct access to the physiology of the walking movement. We have a tacit command of our body (Leder, 1990). We perform countless activities that we would not be able to do in a reflective way. How to walk by the conscious manipulation of one's own muscles? Would we know how to send nerve signals to our cerebral cortex? Refined knowledge of physiology barely changes the tacit use of the body. A neuroscientist can objectify the body of the other, but not his own. There are limitations to applying objective bodily knowledge to one's own body, which evades the control of its functional power.

In order to contribute to clarifying the problem of the functional dimension of the sensorimotor *telos*, we propose a distinction between the functionality at the level of the *latent body*, according to the terminology used by Thinès (1968) and whose meaning differs from that given by Leder to body latency, and at the level of the phenomenal body, which interests us here. According to Thinès (1968), one must identify a dualism between patent corporeity and latent corporeity, the latter corresponding "to all that psychology can, *as a science*, call psychological" (p. 21, emphasis added). Latent corporeity results first and foremost from our experience of a "constitutional dualism" (Thinès, 1968, p. 21), which separates the accessible and inaccessible bodily dimensions. We experience a physical closure of our body, whose perception admits the idea of "an organism containing a definite number of constructions and organs, whose direct exploration is always refused to me" (Thinès 1968, p. 21). Thinès (1968) comments: "The whole reverse of my corporeity is given and refused to me at the same time," and what is presented as the core of intimacy is "a stranger that I carry within and that is me" (p. 21). The author's work is to show how experimental psychology, since the end of the 19th century, using this constitutional dualism, and in order to scientifically address the problem of subjectivity, has situated consciousness in corporeity, treating it as "interiority concealed but susceptible to revelation" (p. 13). The basic assumption of this experimental psychology, which can be extended to contemporary neuroscience, is the understanding of consciousness as a momentary invisible within the framework of the positivist promise of total accessibility to things, a temporarily concealed dimension. It is "an interiority capable of breaking free one day" (Thinès, 1968, p. 14), as happens in physiological research through *full dissection*. Neurophysiology's lack of knowledge on nerve structure and function is considered to be a temporary state and should be overcome by methodological refinement.

The concept of body schema is often addressed at the latent body level, as can be deduced from the analyses above. Gallagher (2005) refers not only to the experiential level, but also to the neurological level of the body schema, as conceptualized in neuroscience as a "repertoire of motor schemas" (p. 47), be they innate or learned, related to complex patterns of neuralactivation of pre-motor and motorcortex areas. Berthoz (1997/2013), in turn, speaks of "mechanisms of superior control of balance and posture" (p. 247) that constitute a schema of possible actions. The author reports experimental protocols that involve subjects carrying out body recognition cognitive activities while undergoing brain imaging tests. The goal behind this experimental design is to map the neural bases of the body schema, and the guiding question of its concept is how these local neural systems fit into a body schema.

Sheets-Johnstone (2012) criticizes the concept of body schema as a cerebral motor system, designed to associate inputs and outputs. In this sense, the term "motor" no longer refers to the dynamics of living bodies, but rather to a "driving force" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2012, p. 55), "something inside, something hidden from view"

(Sheets-Johnstone, 2012, p. 55). Is not this the very core of the idea of the latent body presented by Thinès (1968)? Sheets-Johnstone (2012) further states that "a body schema has no basis in experience" (p. 61) and is merely an explanatory convenience, "a hypothetical entity in the brain" (p. 61). Based on the work of Russian neuropsychologist Aleksandr Luria, the author proposes, within the awareness of one's own body-in-motion, the idea of kinetic melodies organized in the form of kinesthetic memories. These concepts take us back to the sphere of the phenomenal body, although it should be noted that, in spite of Sheets-Johnstone's criticisms of the concept of body schema, we consider the appropriations of this concept at the phenomenal body level valid. Merleau-Ponty (1945) had already pointed to the ambiguity of the notion of body schema, a concept whose full development would involve a "reform of methods" (p. 114), a critical reference to the neurological theories of his time.

According to Sheets-Johnstone (2012), kinetic melodies are inscribed in our body as "dynamic patterns of movement" (p. 49), and constitute the basic and potentially expandable repertoire of "I can" that permeates our lives, such as walking, talking, holding, hugging, etc. This repertoire is expanded in the constitution of the most varied activities of the professional, sportive and aesthetic fields. Kinetic melodies possess an automatic trait, in the sense that a single impulse, whether voluntary or involuntary, is capable of activating them. This neither affirms the impossibility of awareness of movement nor implies that initiating a kinetic melody suffices to guarantee the entire motor performance. The movement flows in a coherent dynamic insofar as "we know and remember the flow in a corporeally felt sense: we kinetically instantiate what we know kinesthetically," says Sheets-Johnstone (2012, p. 53). Kinesthetic memories are therefore not abstract entities. On the contrary, they are present in the body as specific and enacted bodily dynamics, which therefore emerge contextually.[4]

Kinesthetic, or proprioceptive, information cannot be suppressed from our field of presence. We can close our eyes and ears and cease to have visual and auditory sensations, but we cannot abandon the sphere of awareness of our own body-in-motion. The presence of our tactile-kinesthetic body can therefore present itself in varying degrees of awareness, from marginal to maximal. We also have the possibility, whenever we wish, to pay attention to the dynamics of customary movements, performing a sort of "focal attention on kinesthetic memory" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2012, p. 47). Even the "qualitatively structured dynamics of movement" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2012, p. 45) can be experienced in the form of gesture and rhythm, as is true in regards to dance.

The neurological dimension of movement remains, in turn, closed to direct experience. One may, however, develop a neurological theory based on phenomenological description, avoiding the conception of the theoretical apparatus in the area of what Thinès (1968) calls the latent body. That is observed in the work of authors of "descriptive biology" (Merleau-Ponty, 1942/2006, p. 170) such as Goldstein, Weizsäcker, Buytendijk, and, why not, Luria. Sheets-Johnstone (2012) insists on considering kinetic melodies as a "particular neurological and experiential dynamic" (p. 62). Considering what is known of the structural functioning of nerve activity, of its irreducibility to strategies of causal thinking, nothing could be sounder than basing neurophysiological knowledge on the structures that govern an organism's ability to act. Such structures are apprehended by both self-perception and perception of third-party behavior, the so-called perspective of the foreign spectator. However, historical errors must be avoided, such as the theory of radical isomorphism proposed by Gestalt psychology, whose motto is to affirm the reducibility of perceived structures to neurophysiological structural processes. In this case, the form of brain activity would ultimately be the reason for any perceptual experience. The intellection genre required in biology, on the other hand, recognizes the organism as a "unit of signification" (Merleau-Ponty, 1942/2006, p. 169) whose gestures and attitudes are coordinated in a sense or structure of behavior. Only then can nerve function be recognized as a "kinetic melody", "wholly present at its beginning," as Merleau-Ponty (1942/2006, p. 168)[5] says. Sheets-Johnstone (2012), in this sense, states: "Kinetic melody is not a *thing* in the brain" (p. 62, emphasis in the original). Noë (2004), a representative of "enactive" approaches to perception, follows a similar path. According to him, perceptual awareness is not a function of brain events, and must be understood based on "patterns and structures of skillful activity" (Noë, 2004, p. 227). In these terms, it is evident that, in spite of being causally dependent on the brain, the experience does not occur within it, but rather in the world.

Merleau-Ponty's (1945) references to what we call the functional dimension of the phenomenal body help to conclude this discussion. "Every perception," says the philosopher, "takes place in an atmosphere of generality and is presented to us anonymously." And he continues: "I cannot say that *I* see the blue of the sky in the sense in which I say that I understand a book or again in which I decide to devote my life to mathematics" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 249, emphasis in the original). Perception, he says, "expresses a given situation" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 249): I am sensitive to blue, whereas personal acts create situations. Every sensation, and one must recall that there is no sensation without bodily adaptation, that is, without movement, "carries within it the germ of a dream or depersonalization", adds Merleau-Ponty (1945, p. 249). The same is true when it comes to movement specifically. Our bodily movements "directly anticipate the final situation" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 110), that is, the movement is

4 For the concept of enaction, see Varela (1988/1996).

5 Merleau-Ponty (1942/2006, 1945) also speaks of "kinetic melody," which does not prevent Sheets-Johnstone's (2012) severe criticism of his theory of motor intentionality.

directed to its object from the beginning. The body, in the phenomenal sense, transcends its processes towards the world. We move objects from one point in space to another. Our body, however, is directly moved. We do not find it in a given point in space, we do not have to look for it or know its parts explicitly, "it is already with me" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 110).

It is worth recalling that the body as totality and its potentialities change permanently. As we mentioned above regarding the contributions from Sheets-Johnstone (2012), our sensorimotor repertoire is transformed by the acquisition of new skills and habits which usually involve the use of instruments or even artificial organs. And if absence is a structural dimension of the lived body, then the extensions of its sensorimotor powers must encompass some degree of absence (Leder, 1990). The learning of new habits and the skill to use new instruments involve the dynamics of transferring explicit attention from the body, from the rules of performance and the nature of the instrument, to the effacement of these bases in order to fully exercise the activity. When we learn to dance or play an instrument, our own body, as well as the form and rhythm of our movements, becomes the focus of the activity, namely the "to" to which we must continually turn. Over time, the "to" returns to the "from" position; that is when we can say that the movements or the instrument have been assimilated to corporeality. The partner, the choreography or the music to be performed, and no longer the body and its movements, become the intentional objects. This process of incorporation has not only a temporal aspect, but also a spatial aspect. It is about extending the limits of one's own body and its functionality. Merleau-Ponty (1945) analyzes the acquisition of bodily habits. The process of development of customary actions implies reorganizing and restructuring what the philosopher calls body schema. "The blind man's stick has ceased to be an object for him," comments Merleau-Ponty (1945), "it is no longer perceived for itself, its point has become an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch" (p. 167). The stick, when incorporated, ceases to be a perceived object to manifest itself as an instrument for perception. It may be said that its perfect manifestation involves its disappearance as an object of perception. Regarding both the acquisition of a new movement and the incorporation of an instrument, it is about making them "part of the bulk of one's own body" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 168) and integrating them into the spontaneity and "melodic" nature of its actions.

Final remarks

We approached bodily perception from the viewpoint of phenomenology, addressing its modes of presence and absence in the sensorimotor field. We focused on the discussion on structural principles of sensorimotor activity, following the methodological strategy adopted by Leder (1990). Three dimensions of the bodily sensorimotor *telos* described by the author, namely the physical, attentional and functional, served as reference points for the study. We saw the extent to which they are interrelated, despite allowing analyses of three distinct topics: the body as a *nullpoint* of sensorimotor activity, as an agent and object of attention, and the generality involving the sensorimotor experience.

The phenomenological assumption of the effacement of bodily perceptual structures in favor of intentional objects was maintained. The body is part of the perceptual field as a reference system and a horizon from which we turn to non-coincident space-time objects. Although one's own body may become the focal point of attention, awareness of the bodily self has significant limits. It could not be different. The physical dimension of the sensorimotor *telos* is a case in point. For things to appear in perspective, for them to show only one side at a time, the body must occupy a place, the nullpoint of the field of presence, which resists perspective variation, otherwise we would need a second body to observe the first (Merleau-Ponty, 1945).

It should be stressed that the discussion of corporeality based on the phenomenological description of sensorimotor activity displaces the traditional pillars of thought about the body. Although the functional dimension of the sensorimotor *telos* relates to organicism, it differs from this doctrine as it addresses the pre-personal quality of corporeality rather than the principles of physiology. On the other hand, the phenomenology of the body requires that the classic distinction between being as consciousness and being as transcendent, that is, as an object that announces itself to consciousness, be modified according to a cognizant body, which inhabits the world.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing the heuristic value gained by the theme of attention as a category capable of coordinating the dimensions of presence and absence that mark the sensorimotor *telos*. It is important to note that the theme of attention fosters research on principles of organization of intentional activity, based not only on attentional focus, but also on its contextual and marginal elements.

Modos de ausência e de presença do corpo a partir do telos sensório-motor corpóreo

Resumo: A fenomenologia evidencia que nossa relação com as coisas e com outrem envolve, fundamentalmente, a questão da nossa realidade corpórea, e que as circunstâncias de aparecimento do próprio corpo remontam a, sobretudo, sua condição primordial não de objeto de percepção, mas de estrutura do aparecer. Nesse contexto, discutimos os modos de ausência e de presença do corpo segundo a fenomenologia, buscando traçar um panorama da questão com base na opção metodológica

de Drew Leder: iniciar uma fenomenologia do corpo pelos princípios estruturais da atividade sensório-motora. Pautamo-nos por três dimensões discriminadas pelo autor e que se reportam às nossas capacidades sensório-motoras: as dimensões física, atencional e funcional.

Palavras-chave: corpo, percepção, atenção, fenomenologia.

Modes d'absence et de présence du corps à partir du telos sensori-moteur corporel

Résumé: La phénoménologie montre que notre relation avec les choses et avec les autres implique, au fond, la question de notre réalité corporelle, et que les circonstances de l'apparaître du corps remontent, surtout, à sa condition primordiale non pas d'objet de perception, mais de structure de l'apparaître. Dans ce contexte, nous discutons les modes d'absence et de présence du corps selon la phénoménologie, en faisant un panorama de la question à partir de l'option méthodologique de Drew Leder: commencer une phénoménologie du corps par les principes structurels de l'activité sensori-motrice. Trois dimensions de nos compétences sensori-motrices – les dimensions physique, attentionnel et fonctionnel, discernées par l'auteur – servent de référence à notre étude.

Mots-clés: corps, perception, attention, phénoménologie.

Modos de ausencia y de presencia del cuerpo a partir del telos sensorio-motriz corpóreo

Resumen: La fenomenología pone de manifiesto que nuestra relación con las cosas y con los demás implica, fundamentalmente, la cuestión de nuestra realidad corporal, y que las circunstancias de la aparición del propio cuerpo se refieren, principalmente, a su condición primordial no de objeto de la percepción, sino de estructura del aparecer. En este contexto, discutimos las formas de ausencia y presencia del cuerpo según la fenomenología, tratando de esbozar un panorama de la cuestión con base en la opción metodológica de Drew Leder: iniciar una fenomenología del cuerpo por los principios estructurales de la actividad sensorio-motriz. Tres dimensiones de nuestras habilidades sensorio-motrices (física, atencional y funcional), discriminadas por el autor, sirven de referencia.

Palabras clave: cuerpo, percepción, atención, fenomenología.

References

Barbaras, R. (2007). Âme: l'âme et le corps. In Marzano, M. (Org.), *Dictionnaire du corps* (pp. 52-57). Paris, France: PUF.

Benoist, J. (2007). Phénoménologie. In Marzano, M. (Org.), *Dictionnaire du corps* (pp. 708-711). Paris, France: PUF.

Berthoz, A. (2013). *Le sens du mouvement*. Paris, France: Odile Jacob. (Trabalho original publicado em 1997).

Chirpaz, F. (1969). *Le corps* (2a ed.). Paris, France: PUF.

Corraze, J. (1973). Introduction. In *Schéma corporel et image du corps* (pp. 7-19). Toulouse, France: Privat.

Gallagher, S. (2005). *How the body shapes the mind*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Gallagher, S. & Zahavi, D. (2008). *The phenomenological mind: an introduction to philosophy of mind and cognitive science*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Gennart, M. (2011). *Corporeité et présence: jalons pour une approche du corps dans la psychose*. Argenteuil, France: Le Cercle Herméneutique.

Goldstein, K. (1983). *La structure de l'organisme: introduction à la biologie à partir de la pathologie humaine*. (E. Burckdardt & Jean Kuntz, trads.). Paris, France: Gallimard. (Trabalho original publicado em 1934).

Gurwitsch, A. (1957). *Théorie du champ de la conscience*. Bruges, Belgique: Desclée de Brouwer.

Heidegger, M. (2001). *Seminários de Zollikon* (G. Arnhold & M. F. Almeida Prado, trads.). São Paulo, SP: Educ. (Trabalho original publicado em 1987).

Husserl, E. (1996). *Idées directrices pour une phénoménologie et une philosophie phénoménologique pures: livre second: recherches phénoménologiques pour la constitution*. Paris, France: PUF. (Trabalho original publicado em 1952).

Knockaert, V. & Steenhoudt, K. (2005). Anorectics and the mirror. In H. De Preester & V. Knockaert, *Body image and body schema: interdisciplinar perspectives on the body* (pp. 283-297). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Leder, D. (1990). *The absent body*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945). *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Paris, France: Gallimard.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2003). *L'institution, la passivité: notes des cours au Collège de France, 1954-1955*. Paris, France: Belin.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2006). *La structure du comportement* (3a ed.). Paris, France: PUF. (Trabalho original publicado em 1942).

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2011). *Le monde sensible et le monde de l'expression: cours au Collège de France, notes, 1953*. Genève, Suisse: MētisPresses.

Noë, A. (2004). *Action in perception*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Saint Aubert, E. (2013). Être et chair: du corps au désir: l'habilitation ontologique de la chair. Paris, France: Vrin.

Schilder, P. (1968). *L'image du corps: étude des forces constructives de la psyché*. (F. Gantheret & P. Truffert, trads.) Paris, France: Gallimard. (Trabalho original publicado em 1935).

Sheets-Johnstone, M. (2012). Kinesthetic memory: further critical reflections and constructive analyses. In S. Koch, T. Fuchs, M. Summa & C. Müller, *Body memory, metaphor and movement* (pp. 43-72). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Simondon, G. (2013). *Cours sur la perception (1964-1965)*. Paris, France: PUF.

Thinès, G. (1968). *La problématique de la psychologie*. La Haye, Pays-Bas: Martinus Nijhoff.

Varela, F. (1996). *Invitation aux sciences cognitives*. (P. Lavoie, trad.). Paris, France: Seuil. (Trabalho original publicado em 1988).

Von Weizsäcker, V. (1950). *Der Gestaltkreis: theorie der einheit von wahrnehmen und bewegen*. Leipzig, Deutschland: Georg Thieme Verlag. (Trabalho original publicado em 1939).

Received: 11/19/2016
Approved: 01/04/2017