3 From Objectivity to Inexhaustibility

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I suggested a reading of Merleau-Ponty as concerned with transcendence and with the motives for taking up a transcendental standpoint. What remains to be seen is how these concerns affect the way we should understand Merleau-Ponty's conception of the body's role in perception, and the nature of his commitment to an anti-naturalist position.

In order to do this, I want to undertake a Merleau-Pontyan critique of John Haugeland's attempt to offer a naturalised account of objective perception. Haugeland's account is worth discussing for three reasons. First, he is a student of Dreyfus' and, like the latter, rejects cognitivism in favour of an embodied, embedded conception of intelligence. Secondly, his account is based on a transcendental philosophical reading of Heidegger's phenomenology, which he places close to Kant. However, thirdly, like Dreyfus Haugeland believes that Heidegger is amenable to appropriation within the context of naturalism. Thus, Haugeland offers a perfect counterpoint for evaluating the significance of Merleau-Ponty's stated anti-naturalism.

Haugeland rejects any symbol-processing account of cognition as an artifact of positing an interface between mind and body. Following a suggestion by Herbert Simon, Haugeland argues that any impartial decomposition of a system into components will only posit an interface between regions which are connected in such a way that the interaction between them is of low intensity. To this Haugeland adds that where there are multiple ways of decomposing a system, the right decomposition is the one that renders the system intelligible.

Thus, when we turn to the mind-body-world "system", and wonder how, perhaps, to decompose it, our considerations will perform be relative to some prior identification of what is to be understood. (HT, 216)

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53 I'm going to focus exclusively on the papers collected in the anthology, Having Thought: Essays in the Metaphysics of Mind (1998), henceforth "HT".
Concerns about the separability of the mental are inspired by our efforts to understand intelligent behaviour. So, the question of whether the mind is a subsystem of an intelligent system becomes the question of whether decomposing the system into mental and corporeal components actually renders its intelligent behaviour more intelligible.

More specifically, arguing for the view that the mind is a separable component of intelligent behaviour would require demonstrating that postulating interfaces between mind and body helps to render intelligent behaviour intelligible. Haugeland argues that there is no evidence of any mind/body interfaces, and only:

a commitment to understanding intelligence as rational problem solving – sometimes assumed a priori – has supported the existence of these interfaces by identifying them with transducers [between high-bandwidth perceptual inputs, low-bandwidth symbol manipulation and, finally, high-bandwidth action outputs.] (HT, 237)

On the contrary, evidence suggests that it is precisely the intensity of the interaction between perception and action – that is, their functional unity and not their functional independence – that distinguishes human intelligence. If this view is accepted, then it becomes reasonable to suggest an alternative way of decomposing an intelligent system: into perception-action, or goal-directed, subsystems. Haugeland turns to Rodney Brooks and J. J. Gibson for examples of such approaches, but he could have appealed to almost any part of the field of animate, situated or embodied cognition. 54

Secondly, and for the same reason, Haugeland argues that there is no need to posit an interface between the perceiving body and the world. He asks "could there be a way to understand the effectiveness of intelligence in terms of meaningfulness, but without representations or a separate inner realm?" (HT, 231) That is, could there be another way to understand "the ability to deal reliably with more than the present and the manifest," other than by positing representations that stand in what is absent? (HT, 230)

Haugeland notes that our tools also allow us to deal with what isn't present and manifest – think of a microscope for a sighted person, or a cane for a blind one.

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54 Including, of course, the animate vision paradigm advanced by Ballard which we discussed in the Preamble to chapter one.
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We take advantage of their interdependence with other objects in the world. Isn't this precisely what we mean by intelligence, though. There needn't be any explicit representation of the other objects that our tools grant us access to, or our relationship to them, in order to legitimately say that we can intelligently cope with (understand) them. But that implies that everything in the world is potentially meaningful, and so there is no part of the world that can be ruled out a priori from a discussion of intelligence. Moreover, all these relationships, between agent, tool and object are high-bandwidth, so postulating an interface between an individualistic intelligence and a mundane world is unjustified.

Perception is thus construed along lines similar to Dreyfus' interpretation of Heidegger. On Haugeland's view perception, at its most basic, is a form of skilful coping with the environment, of being-in-the-world, and not the construction of an adequate representation of the latter.

Haugeland acknowledges his debt to Dreyfus, and in particular the latter's reading of Heidegger. However, it's worth noting the way in which Haugeland's interpretation of Heidegger, and consequently, his own philosophical position, changed over the course of the 1980's and 90's. Haugeland's early work was inspired by a neo-pragmatist reading of Heidegger. The Heideggerian concept he focused on was that of "das Man", "the anyone", which he understood as "roughly equivalent to … a common (public) ‘way of life’." (HT, 167) In an early article on Heidegger, he suggests the slogan "All constitution is institution" to capture this interpretation and the neo-pragmatist position that he saw Heidegger as endorsing. In more recent work, he has come to reject the neo-pragmatist position, as well as the interpretation of Heidegger on which it was based, in favour of a view that places Heidegger and himself much closer to Kant.

Haugeland's shift away from his earlier neo-pragmatism can be attributed to a lingering concern with the transcendence and normative authority of objects of perception. This can be seen in his criticism of his former colleague, Robert Brandom. In a tantalizing footnote, Haugeland challenges Brandom's assertion that the "claim-making practices" described in his book "incorporate practices of assessing claims and inferences according to their objective correctness – a kind of

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56 At one point, Haugeland summarizes his account of objective perception as follows: "Roughly, I'm putting constituted domains and objects where Kant has sensibility, skilful exercises where he has imagination, and the responsive/responsible skills themselves where he has knowledge and understanding. (In other words, my structure is a lot like Heidegger's being-in-the-world.)" (HT, 361, n32)

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correctness that answer to how things actually are" (Brandom 1994, 606-7).

Haugeland argues that while Brandom shows that "there is no legal move ... from
'Everybody believes \( p \) ... to \( p' \)", there is no account of "what could legitimate \( p' \)
instead", and thus "they don't begin to show how \( p' \) could 'answer to how things
actually are' – which is just to say that they don't show how any of the moves
could be claim-makings or fact-statings." (HT, 358n14)\(^{57}\)

In addition, elsewhere in the same article, Haugeland suggests an historical
parallel between pragmatism and psychologism. This is not to say that
pragmatists suffer from psychologism, but that they suffer from a tendency to
"collapse correctness into propriety" that resembles psychologism's tendency to
"collapse the rational normative into the natural nomological", and with the same
putative result, i.e. that they both "obliterate the essental character of thought",
namely its concern with truth. (HT, 317)

Haugeland attempts to distinguish the truth of our perceptions from both their
propriety and their causal origin, by providing an account of how our
constitution of objects within perception grants them the independent normative
authority to determine the objective correctness (i.e. truth) of our perceiving of
them. Thus, the transcendence of the perceived over the perceiving is approached
through an investigation of the possibility of error (objective incorrectness).

For example, the first important move in Haugeland's account of the objects of
perception is to shift from a discussion of the causes of a perceiving to the
normative assessment of it, to its liability to be criticised as a misperception.
"Causal histories as such give no reason to say that I perceive the chess pieces, as
opposed to the photons or even the pulses in my optic nerve," since the chess
pieces "are only one stage in those causal histories, and nothing in the histories
themselves picks out that particular stage as more important than the others,
even counterfactually." But more importantly, "causal histories are not normative.
The content of my perception ... is what is supposed to have caused it, regardless
of what actually caused it." (HT, 296)

The fact that my perception is of a dagger, for example, and not of an
arrangement of photons, or an arrangement of nerve firings, is because whether or
not my perceiving it counts as a misperception turns on whether there is before

\(^{57}\) For more on Haugeland's disagreement with Brandom, specifically on their interpretation of Heidegger,
see Haugeland (2005) and Brandom's response (2005).
me a dagger, while nothing (at least no critical evaluation) turns on the particular arrangement of the photons or nerve firings. The object of a perception is that against which the correctness of that perception is ultimately to be judged. To put the point another way that brings out the influence of Sellars, in order to understand perception as a form of cognition, we need to distinguish between natural and epistemic characterizations of perceptual objects, and restrict ourselves entirely to epistemic characterizations.\footnote{Cf. Sellars (1997), and especially McDowell’s summary of his position in McDowell (1998, esp. 433)} Treating what is perceived as correlated with the norms governing the perceiving allows Haugeland to treat the perceived object and the objectivity of the perceiving as aspects of a single normative structure, i.e. as poles of a structure of intentionality.

The "objecthood" of perceptual objects and the "of-ness" of perception go hand in hand, and are intelligible only in terms of one another, something like the interdependence of target and aim, or puzzle and solution.\footnote{HT, 246} (HT, 246)

However, at the same time, Haugeland’s inquiry into the structure of intentionality is framed by a commitment to materialism/naturalism, a commitment he expresses by posing the question as follows:

Evidently, the most sporting question about intentionality is not "What is its definition?" but rather "How can there be any?" More specifically, given the vapid materialism now generally conceded (roughly: without any matter, there wouldn’t be anything else contingent either), how can it be that any part or feature of the universe represents or is a reason for another? How can there be norms among the atoms in the void? How, in short, is intentionality compatible with materialism?\footnote{HT, 128} (HT, 128)

What distinguishes Haugeland is that he attempts to deal with traditional epistemological questions about the objectivity of knowledge in terms of an account of the structure of collections of corporeal skills. That is, Haugeland attempts what could be described as a corporeal transformation of transcendental epistemology, attempting to understand the object-directedness and normativity of perception in terms of the coordination and assessment of bodily performances. That is, his transcendental epistemology is conducted entirely within a naturalistic metaphysics. For example, immediately after criticising psychologism and pragmatism, he poses the question through which I’ll read Haugeland’s entire account:
How, then, can norms of objective correctness be understood (in a spirit of naturalism, appropriately construed)? (HT, 317)

As I mentioned, it is this adherence to naturalism that distinguishes Haugeland from Merleau-Ponty, and will allow us to evaluate the basis and plausibility of Merleau-Ponty's anti-naturalism in a contemporary context.

Before I turn to the exposition of Haugeland’s account, let me preview a few distinguishing features. Firstly, Haugeland seems to be indifferent to any pre-conceptual or sensual aspect of perception. Understanding perception for Haugeland means understanding how it enables the acquisition of knowledge\(^{59}\), or what amounts to the same thing, as the application of concepts\(^{60}\).

Haugeland’s epistemology is formulated – as perhaps it must be – as an inquiry into the conditions for the possibility of objectivity and truth. This is a formulation which Merleau-Ponty, following Fink, associates with "transcendental philosophies of the classical type" and contrasts with their own preferred formulation of phenomenology as an inquiry into the "advent of being to consciousness". (PhP, 61) This is not surprising since there is no phenomenological reduction in Haugeland’s work. The closest that he comes is in a passage where he warns against equating an object with "a temporally and spatially cohesive corporeal lump," (HT, 246) but this is really just in favour of promoting an understanding of the object from the perspective of its normative authority, and as such is more akin to Kant's Copernican turn that to Husserl's "back to the 'things themselves'"\(^{61}\).

I’ll argue that a phenomenological reduction would prompt Haugeland to distinguish between body image and body schema, and that without this distinction, he will be unable to distinguish his picture of perceiving subjects holding themselves responsible for the objective correctness of their perceptions from the psychoanalytic picture of body image distortion associated with the pathology of anorexia.

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\(^{59}\) Albeit knowledge that is grounded in the intimate performative relation of coping with one’s environment

\(^{60}\) Haugeland does not, however, see the conceptual abilities at work in perception as necessarily requiring linguistic abilities.

3.2 Objective Perception

Chess perception

Consider what is involved in playing a game of chess. In order to treat some system or person (Haugeland uses the image of a hypothetical super-monkey named "Bobby") as playing chess, it must be possible to treat (at least some) of their behaviour as moves in the game. That means, not only must they be moving what appear to be chess pieces around a chess board, but most of the moves that we take them to make must be legal chess moves. Otherwise, whatever it is they are doing with the chessboard, it would not be playing chess. It may be that Bobby is playing a different game – call it Schmess – which employs the same machinery, but does not have the same rules. He may not be playing a game at all, just toying with these things in front of him. So, for us to correctly treat Bobby as playing chess, he had better be following the rules of chess, more or less.

Here, it is important to distinguish between two types of rules, with different kinds of rule-following: exhibited and governing rules. Exhibited rules have a world-to-rule direction of fit; meaning that events that do not conform to the rule reflect on the rule itself: its comprehensiveness or adequacy. The rules of chess are of the other type, they are governing rules, with a rule-to-world direction of fit; meaning that when (in this case) behaviours do not conform to the rule, this reflects on the behaviours, and not on the rule.

We should not expect Bobby to be completely infallible in his rule-following, though, and we need not, so long as we regard the rules of chess as rules governing Bobby’s behaviour, and not merely rules exhibited by Bobby’s behaviour. So, to see Bobby as playing chess, Bobby must respond to illegal moves in the right kind of way. 'Governing Bobby's behaviour' does not mean completely determining it. The utter absence of illegal moves might even count against seeing Bobby as playing chess. We might be more inclined to see the chess game as the only relevant system, and see it as 'playing' Bobby, who is meanwhile}

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62 This amounts to a revision of the notion of the intentional stance. It is not a matter of someone behaviour exhibiting rules that are constitutive of intentionality, i.e. not a matter of our being able to take a particular stance toward them. Rather, it is a matter of seeing someone as taking a stance toward their own behaviour, including perhaps their perceptions, seeing that their behaviour is governed by rules, which is displayed by how they respond to disallowed behaviours.
reduced to an automated component of that system. To treat Bobby as playing
the game, and not merely as another component of the game (system), there must
be game phenomena that do not conform to the rules, such as illegal moves, for
Bobby to demonstrate his independence through his vigilance against them.

Counting on consistent legality means more than just
expecting it, but something like insisting on it—on pain of
giving up the game. This insistence is a kind of commitment or
resolve not to tolerate illegality: in case an illegal move is
detected, ordinary play is breached, extraordinary measures
are called for—and the game itself (that is, continued play) is
at stake. (HT, 252)

Bobby’s vigilance against illegality, his insistence on the rules, ought to extend to
abandoning the game if he finds that the rules cannot be followed. Yet – and this
is only implied in Haugeland’s account – giving up the game must be a sufficiently
bad outcome for the players to do whatever they can to avoid it. Haugeland
thinks that only something like this kind of commitment to the rules could be
sufficient to count as playing by them. In the terminology of stances, adopting a
stance – playing by its rules – is being demonstrably committed to not tolerating
breaches of its standards, and not abandoning those standards at the first sign
of trouble.

...a stance is more than just an attitude toward or a
perspective on things, more even than a method and
terminology for dealing with them. Adopting a stance is
taking a stand. (HT, 284)

What does a commitment to playing a game of chess involve? Well, there are two
sorts of extraordinary measures that can be taken in response to an illegal move
(so fulfilling one’s commitment) before the game must be abandoned: double
checking the move and double checking its illegality. The first sort of response
consists of two possibilities, re-identification of the piece and re-identification of
the move. These correspond to the two ways one can be wrong about identifying
a move. For example, if I think you have moved your rook along a diagonal, I may
have merely mistaken your bishop for a rook, or a rank for a diagonal. Double-
checking whether this is the case might involve having another look at the piece,
perhaps from a different angle, and, say, checking the orientation of the board. If
the double-checking reveals an error in identification or either the piece or the

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63 This alternative might seem attractive to those subscribing to radical externalism, or Dennett and
Clark’s view that language drives intentionality, and not the other way around. But perhaps this fits best
with the Kantian idea that in the event of genius (here, unbridled expertise), nature gives the law to
reason, i.e. the genius can only be seen as a component of nature and not as its interrogator.
move, the illegality (usually) disappears.\footnote{Of course, it might be that the double-checking merely reveals a different illegality, but nothing changes in that case} That the illegality disappears shows that illegalities, in chess at least, are in fact illegal combinations of performances (e.g. telling that the piece is a rook and telling that the piece has moved along the diagonal). Haugeland describes these performances that make up the content of an illegality as exercises of 'mundane skills'. Double-checking moves is therefore a case of checking the functioning of one’s mundane skills.\footnote{Note that, at this level, there need be no special distinction between perceiving and acting. Moving a rook along a diagonal is just as much a combination of mundane skills as telling that such a move has occurred. Moreover, the possibility of checking these performances separately, the fine grain structure of responding to errors, is what distinguishes Haugeland and Brandom, allowing the separate criticism of occasions and behaviours.} What governs these mundane skills, i.e. what defines when they’re functioning properly? Haugeland says, rather cryptically, that whenever checking does occur, the result is always better, in the sense of "more conducive to chess play, in the long run." (HT, 253)\footnote{Wilfrid Sellars would probably refer to a standard governing the correction of a mundane skill as an ‘ought-to-be’, but Haugeland does not refer to Sellars nor use the term himself. See Sellars (1974)}

The other extraordinary measure that can be taken in being vigilant against an (apparently) illegal move is double-checking the illegality of some combination of performances (e.g. the illegality of moving a particular piece in a particular way). The possibility of this sort of double-checking indicates that it isn't the case that whatever Bobby says, goes; that is, it shows that the standards are in some sense independent of Bobby's enforcement of them, and that conforming to them is an achievement. If we think of Bobby as having an illegal-move alarm that goes off whenever there is an illegal move, we can think of what Haugeland calls Bobby's 'constitutive skills' (we’ll see why they’re constitutive in a second) as the actual functioning of the alarm, and the (constitutive) standards as defining the correct functioning of the alarm. That is, Bobby’s constitutive skills are governed by standards that they may or may not live up to. Failure to coordinate one's constitutive skills with the standards of the game may simply be the result of not knowing or having forgotten the rules of chess – learning the rules would ipso facto be developing the appropriate constitutive skills for the game.\footnote{Although this couldn't be all there was to learning to play, one would also need to learn strategy, which is a different matter to legality. Haugeland doesn’t discuss it, but another reason one might have for abandoning a game is that one’s opponent isn’t playing to win.} Double-checking legality might therefore involve checking a rule book or consulting someone who is an authority on the rules. The commitment I make toward getting my constitutive regulations 'right' with respect to this kind of institutional normative authority is,
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pretty much, how Haugeland interprets Brandom’s notion of a deontic commitment.

A deontic commitment is a socially grounded obligation or duty: something that is incumbent on one, a way one is supposed to behave, in virtue of one’s relations to others. Making a commitment to the rules of a game means, in this sense, undertaking an obligation to play by the rules—say, by entering into (or implying) an agreement. Someone who fails to abide by such a commitment is corrected, or, if incorrigible, rejected as a player. (HT, 341)

If neither the identification of the move (the mundane skills) nor the determination of its illegality (constitutive skills) are malfunctioning, that is, if there is a ‘recalcitrant incompatibility’ among the mundane skills, then the chess player is faced with the choice between taking the move again or abandoning the game. What is not allowed is to continue playing as though the move were legal. If either player refuses to retake their bona fide illegal move, the game must be abandoned.

The objectivity of objective perception

The previous section outlines how Bobby can be said to respond appropriately to chess phenomena, but as yet, neglects to say how the phenomena that Bobby responds to could be objective. Haugeland follows Kant in thinking that ‘the conditions of the possibility of objective perception are likewise the conditions of the possibility of the objects of that perception’ (HT, 254), which is to say that the standards of objective perception are constitutive of the objects perceived according to them. Similarly, in the case of chess play: the conditions of possibility of chess play (i.e. the standards governing the game) are constitutive of the chess pieces and moves themselves. Or better, seeing chess phenomena amounts to seeing that they abide by the standards, where ”seeing that’ is here neutral between ‘finding that’ and ‘seeing to it that’.“ (HT, 342).

This kind of talk raises the fear that these phenomena cannot be regarded as an objective constraint on the standards themselves. Doesn’t constitution make objective perception cheap? If it does, one ought to doubt that the phenomena

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68 Although Haugeland doesn’t discuss it, taking the move again amounts to referring the problem back down to the mundane skills (much the same way that the Supreme Court might refer an appeal back to a district court to retry the case in light of the Supreme Court’s findings).

69 A more interesting outcome occurs when the players are still committed to the game, but find it impossible to make any legal move, as is the case in a stalemate. This outcome is interesting because it shows that there is an extent to which chess moves may be considered to be empirical phenomena.
governed by standards to which one is committed are objective at all. However, one should not be spooked by the idea of standards constituting the very phenomena they govern, because, though the chess standards constitute chess phenomena, in the sense that there would be no chess phenomena without these standards, this does not make getting the phenomena to conform to these standards a *fait accompli*. At this point, it is important to note that these standards include but are not limited to the rules governing available moves, the regulations. After all, not everything will do as a chess board, nor will every collection of manipulable tokens do as a set of chess pieces. Baseball has similar standards: not everything will do as a baseball or a bat or a diamond. Focusing on the standards that don’t apply to the players as much as to the components of the game reveals a different way in which the game may become unplayable. For example, it is impossible to play baseball with a broken bat, impossible to play chess on a boat in a storm without a magnetised board, etc. Playing the game may sometimes require more than ensuring that all the players follow the regulations, it may involve being committed to finding magnetised pieces to play with, or repairing a broken bat. That chess pieces should be magnetised and that broken bats should be mended are not usually among the standards that one needs to acquire to learn how to play chess. But these are standards that may have to be found to make the game playable. However, if one understands chess, then presumably one can play it with – or at least recognize when it is being played with – different chess boards and different manipulable tokens under different conditions. So, understanding chess is to be able to cope with both the context dependence of the standards and the multiple realisability of chess phenomena, and this is no mean feat.

Finding a way in which playing chess can be possible therefore fulfils a commitment to the game of chess that seems to go above and beyond the deontic commitment to ensuring that all the moves are legal. There can be no question of appealing to some other authority, like a rulebook, to find out how the game should be played using this particular board or these particular tokens as pieces or under these particular conditions. If the role of one’s constitutive skills is extended to include ensuring the playability of the game, these skills cannot be judged by comparison with other constitutive skills, even those developed by experts. The only way they can be judged is by their ability to cope with all the phenomena, including those that threaten to make the game unplayable, i.e.
recalcitrant incompatibilities, and this makes them sufficiently independent of the prevailing standards to be properly objective.

Haugeland argues that we should not get caught in the 'false predicament' of expecting an independent constraint to be unrelated to its domain of authority. The important characteristic of an independent constraint is not that it is external to the domain, but rather that 'the limits or demands it imposes are not under the control of, or already prearranged by, that which is supposedly constrained... A genuine independent constraint is one that could, in the end, bring the system down.' (HT, 347) Phenomena can function as independent criteria – i.e. they can govern the revision of the norms governing objective practice – because their behaviour is in no way guaranteed by those norms. By virtue of the fact that the existential commitment exceeds the prevailing standards, the misbehaviour of the phenomena themselves can force an adjustment to those standards. This element of misbehaviour and unpredictability – or, to put the point more generally, the finitude of any set of norms – makes every domain of empirical practice 'precarious'. The objectivity of the domain is just the mirror image of this precariousness or vulnerability of the constitutive skills. Their sensitivity to the phenomena they constitute grants the norms their objective status, and gives the constituted phenomena their normative authority.

Empirical domains and existential commitment

What differentiates an empirical domain from ordinary game play, in Haugeland’s scheme, is that there is another extraordinary measure that can be taken in the face of recalcitrant incompatibilities: revision of the standards. That is, though only permissible in response to a stalemate-like event, the rules of an empirical 'game' can change to accommodate the unusual situation. The important difference being that in the case of ordinary games, illegal moves - those disallowed by the standards governing play – often prompt the abandonment of the game, though they rarely (if ever) prompt revision of the rules. In fact, in an empirical domain this measure plays a similar role to abandoning the game in being a 'last resort' way of fulfilling one's commitment to the standards. So, it is not only true that the standards can be adjusted in light of incompatibilities, they should be so adjusted, but only when those incompatibilities are recalcitrant. The commitment to an empirical stance therefore in a sense exceeds the content of that stance – the standards that one first
adopts – in prescribing the correction of that content if it makes the commitment (as vigilance against disconformities) impossible. The impossibility of the commitment is, as it were, ruled out by the commitment itself, and, as we shall see, 'reflected' back onto the recalcitrant incompatibilities, disclosing them as phenomena bearing an independent normative authority.

Existential commitment differs from the deontic commitment we described above by the fact that:

*Existential commitment*, by contrast, is no sort of obligation but something more like a dedicated or even a devoted way of living; a determination to maintain and carry on. It is not a communal status at all but a resilient and resolute first-personal *stance*. (Marriage and monastic vows may be deontic commitments; love and faith are existential.) Such commitment is not "to" other players or people, or even to oneself, but rather an ongoing, concrete game, project, or life. Thus, it is no more a psychological or an intentional state than it is a communal status; rather it is a *way*, a *style*, a *mode* of playing, working or living—a way that relies and is prepared to insist on that which is constitutive of its own possibility, the conditions of its intelligibility. (HT, 341)

Insisting on that which is constitutive of the possibility of one's commitment is being vigilant against that which compromises that commitment. When some combination of mundane skills threatens the possibility of one's commitment by failing to comply with the prevailing standards, the appropriate response is to be vigilant about the proper functioning of the skills. However, if that combination proves to be recalcitrantly incompatible with the standards in the face of double-checking, the focus moves from the mundane skills to the standards themselves, which are now caste as inhibiting the fulfilment of the commitment. Preserving the possibility of the commitment, ensuring that the game remains playable, requires insisting on the validity of that combination of skills, at the expense of the standards that exclude it. Existential commitment to any domain is therefore a 'determination to maintain and carry on' even if the standards of the domain need to change to make that possible; it is a commitment to overcome the impossible by finding a way to make it possible.

An existential commitment to an empirical domain is a commitment to finding a way of adjusting the standards of perception of objects within that domain so
that no impossible (magical) objects are perceived\textsuperscript{70}. This is a different kind of achievement, for which Haugeland, following Heidegger, reserves the term 'disclosure'.

Finding that a game is playable [i.e. coping with the context dependence of the standards and the multiple realizability of game phenomena] – or, better, finding a game that is playable [i.e. empirical constitution] – is therefore a kind of achievement, one that includes an element of discovery about the world. This element of discovery is quite different, of course, from the sort of discovery that is possible within a game. If we call such "meta discovery" disclosure, we can reserve the word 'discovery' for ordinary or mundane findings within the game. What is disclosed, then, is the playable game as such, including the intelligible domain within which its phenomena make the sense they make. (HT, 331)

Learning to play chess, it seems, is disclosing a domain of chess phenomena, as much as physics discloses the domain of physical phenomena.\textsuperscript{71} Emphasis on the regulations conceals the empirical content of chess, which we can now describe as what is required of the component phenomena (including the environmental conditions) for a chess game to be playable.

**Objective skills, resilience and expertise**

With this schema in place, we can say more about what is to be expected of mundane skills. In the context of a precarious domain (one in which the standards or the game are at stake), mundane skills are properly 'objective skills', in that incompatibilities between them may indicate the objective incorrectness of the constitutive skills (unplayability of the game).\textsuperscript{72} Maintaining one's objective skills in good shape is ensuring that the incompatibilities between them do reliably indicate objective incorrectness. Haugeland reserves the term 'resilience' for this kind of reliability, in order to distinguish it from the reliability required of a differential responsive disposition. Resilience is similar to basic reliability, but exceeds it (much the same way the existential commitment exceeds the prevailing standards). Ensuring the resilience of one's mundane skills means ensuring that they are in the right kind of relationship with the constitutive skills. It involves ensuring that only recalcitrant incompatibilities bear on the constitutive

\textsuperscript{70} Perceptions are still just exercises of mundane skills, and so 'perception' can be substituted for 'action'. In which case, one would be adjusting the standards so that no one actually does the impossible (magic).

\textsuperscript{71} There is a chess stance, as 'really' as there is a physical stance.

\textsuperscript{72} Reliable differential responsive dispositions have no mechanism for making the standards by which they are authorized responsive to the same phenomena as them.
standards, i.e. that only they can force the abandonment of the chess game or the revision of the standards of objective perception. Resilience is therefore the counter concept to recalcitrance, it effectively authorises certain performances (recalcitrant perceptions, tellings, reports) to compel revision of norms.

In a move that is reminiscent of Dreyfus' account of the acquisition of skills, when Haugeland comes to describing resilience, he borrows the metaphor of an expert to clarify the term.

I have in mind, as a paradigm of resilience, the expert who "knows full well" that he or she can do something – and so is not turned aside or discouraged at the first, or even the second, sign of recalcitrance. Adjust a bit here, try that a little longer, don't fall for every semblance of trouble: these are the stuff of resilience as we admire it in physicians and mechanics, scientists and school teachers. (HT, 322)

'Knowing full well' is central to Haugeland's account of normative revision, since it is the criterion by which incompatibilities are authorized to compel a revision of the prevailing norms. Haugeland is, in effect, resurrecting the idea – introduced by Sellars73 - that the reporter's own awareness of her skill should play a part in the authorization of her report. Haugeland adapts the Sellarsian emphasis on the reporter by taking the focus off self-knowledge and placing it on the reporter's involvement or participation in the events being reported on.

... to return attention to the first-person position need not be, and is not here, an attempt to rehabilitate any supposed epistemic security or privilege. It is rather to recover something else that gets lost when one restricts consideration to what is outwardly observable – namely, the participants' own involvement in what is going on. (HT, 339; orig. emphasis)

Haugeland wants to point out that, in expert performances like reporting, there is something other than knowledge attribution, proper scorekeeping, or even community cohesion, at stake.

What is at stake is the reporter's own intelligibility to herself. In one article, Haugeland compares the reaction of a dog and a human to the same bizarre, unintelligible scene. Imagine coming home to find that:

what looks like Sister sounds like Father, moves like Grandma, and smells like Kid Brother ... And moments later,

73 See Sellars (1997), esp. 74f.
they switch again, with new divisions and new participants. What would you say? Surely something like: "Egad! Am I going crazy? Am I being tricked or drugged? I can't really be seeing this – it's impossible". (HT, 261-2)

Notice how finding something 'impossible' places one's own intelligibility to oneself in question. The danger is that, if I am really seeing this, then I must be going crazy, because what I am seeing is impossible. My very intentionality is at stake.

This is what makes the commitment to getting one's intentional states right, to correcting the prevailing norms of interpretation, an existential commitment, in the sense that it integrates individual events and performances into the biography of an individual. Elsewhere, Haugeland discusses this integration as follows:

A single act cannot be embarrassing, shameful, irresponsible, or foolish in isolation, but only as an event in the biography of a whole, historical, individual – a person whose personality it reflects and whose self-understanding it threatens. Only a being that cares about who it is, as some sort of enduring whole, can care about guilt or folly, self-respect or achievement, life or death. And only such a being can read. This holism ...I call (with due trepidation) existential holism. (HT, 58-59)

Haugeland binds our capacity for shame and our cognitive abilities as two sides of the same coin. We must be capable of suffering a setback to our own intelligibility to ourselves for a confrontation with an incompatibility to compel a revision of cognitive norms. That is because our cognitive norms are a part of the existential whole within which events in our lives make sense.

We care about who we are, and about our capacity to understand ourselves. Embarrassing, shameful, or irresponsible actions can threaten that understanding. Similarly, perceptual acts (exercises of objective skills) that are seemingly "impossible" also threaten it, compelling revision of our strategies of interpretation (stance). Therefore it isn't because of what others think of us or what we would fail to achieve in the absence of resilient skills that makes their resilience so important. Resilience is important because if we can't do what we 'know full well' we can do, then we don't really understand ourselves at all. Our existential commitment to understanding ourselves 'as some sort of enduring whole' governs the repair of our mundane skills, and, failing that, of our constitutive skills (concepts). It inspires self-disciplinary practices with the aim of preserving this self-understanding. In that 'strong' sense, it is sui-generis.
3.3 Comparison and Critique

The unity and diversity of sensibility

For Haugeland, our coming to grips with our environment is construed as a collection of mundane skills, which are independent of one another. The independent exercise of these skills makes it plausible to postulate another layer of skills (constitutive skills) to coordinate them. But can our most basic, mundane engagement with the world actually be analysed in this way? I suggest that Merleau-Ponty would argue that it cannot. Instead of a collection of independently exercised skills, Merleau-Ponty would find articulations or moments of a nascent, synaesthetic expression.

In its own critique of the constancy hypothesis, post-cognitivist cognitive science has multiplied the modes of receptivity, and contested their reduction to neuro-physiological surfaces. As we saw in the preface to the first chapter, vision as the receipt of a retinal image gives way to visual behaviours, passive touch to tactile exploration, hearing as auditory sensitivity to listening behaviours. This is why Haugeland can talk about mundane skills rather than the traditional five senses. However, the question we now ask is whether this reconceptualisation of the senses goes as far as reconceiving the basis of their unity.

To be sure, there needs to be some sort of unity to sense experience because if the senses contributed severally to the perception of objects, the latter would be nothing more than a bundle of sensations. This is what prompts Haugeland to posit constitutive skills which embody normative standards and coordinate these skills; i.e. Haugeland makes the unity of the sensible within a perceived object an intentional unity. But we need to be careful how we conceive of this coordination of skills, of what is shared among the senses (no matter how we multiply them), "otherwise we shall merely slip back into the intellectualist analysis which we rejected earlier." (PhP, 230)

Gradually we should come to find that there was no longer any difference between the perceptual and the intellectual syntheses. The unity of the senses would then be of the same order as the unity of the objects of science. (PhP, 230)

Now, instead of positing a level of constitutive skills, Merleau-Ponty argues that "Synaesthetic perception is the rule" (PhP, 229) That is, the coordination of the senses (however construed) is not an order or form imposed upon the senses.
from above (e.g. by constitutive skills). It emerges within the senses themselves. "The constitution of an intersensory world must be effected in the domain of sense itself." (PhP, 225)

At the same time, this precludes treating what is shared by the senses as an intellectual significance. Even though Haugeland does avoid treating this significance as a propositional content, a belief, or a sentence in some language of thought, his construal of our mundane skills as being coordinated by higher-level skills which collectively embody normative standards still abstracts what the mundane skills share to a higher, governing level.

As such, it overstates both the diversity and the unity of our senses in actual experience. It overstates the unity in that it neglects the fact that our senses "can never be exactly transposed." (PhP, 225) Merleau-Ponty talks about the surprise reported by a person who sight has been restored.

After the operation he marvels that there should be 'such a difference' between a tree and a human body. It is clear that sight has not only added fresh details to his knowledge of the tree. What we are dealing with is a mode of presentation and a type of synthesis which are new and which transfigure the object. (PhP, 224)

Our modes of sensory engagement are not meaningful only in so far as they confirm a unitary sense which they all share. "They are united at the very instant in which they clash." (PhP, 225) As we shall see, on Haugeland's account there can be no productive tension between the senses, since any tension is construed as disconfirmation of the validity of constituted sense.

On the other hand, the diversity of the senses is overstated, and while Haugeland does not return us to a notion of sensation as stimulus or quality, his presentation of the senses as the discrete performance of skills generalises what is actually a highly refined mode of being-in-the-world.

Like that of the sensible quality, the experience of the separate 'senses' is gained only when one assumes a highly particularized attitude... (PhP, 225)

… far from being co-extensive with perception, [it] is the peculiar product of an attitude of curiosity or observation. … it is the reply to a certain kind of questioning on the part of my gaze, … which I exercise either when I am afraid of being mistaken, or when I want to undertake a scientific study of the spectacle presented. (PhP, 226)
By contrast, "natural perception ... we achieve with our whole body all at once, and ... opens on a world of inter-acting senses." (PhP, 225) Beneath the refined attitude in which the senses are properly distinct, Merleau-Ponty finds a "natural attitude of vision" in which I "surrender myself to the spectacle"; "a 'primary layer' of sense experience which precedes its division among the separate senses." (PhP, 227)

It is not that Haugeland’s account is incorrect, only that the disclosive posture he describes needs to be recognized as founded. To borrow a Husserlian term, Haugeland’s account of "objective perception" is actually a description of something more like "categorial intuition". Even if it is not linguistic or propositional, it should nonetheless not be confused with what Merleau-Ponty means by perception.

I have tried to show that the crucial aspect lies in the way the unity and diversity of the senses (i.e. mundane skills) is to be conceived. Haugeland attributes the unity of sense experience to an existential commitment to certain standards embodied in constitutive skills. This is therefore a unity that is imposed upon and organises an otherwise disordered sense experience, albeit a unity that can be revealed as objectively incorrect by that experience. By contrast, Merleau-Ponty seems to suggest that, rather than being organised through a commitment to perceiving something as F, my body is "polarized" by the very spectacle that it confronts.

**Immanent critique: revision as revolution**

A possible response to this may be the following: "You have demonstrated only that Merleau-Ponty and Haugeland are interested in different levels of intentionality. While Merleau-Ponty is concerned with our pre-reflective engagement with things, Haugeland is concerned with the possibility of objectivity and truth. Why should someone who finds Haugeland’s account convincing be concerned about the differences you point out?" To this, I would like to retort that the claim that objective perception is founded on pre-reflective being-in-the-world is thicker than the claim that they represent different phenomena requiring different explanatory accounts.
Let me illustrate this by modifying an existing critique of Haugeland’s account, offered by Robert Cummins. Cummins suggests that, on Haugeland’s model, in order to have something as an object against which the objective correctness of your perception is to be evaluated (i.e. to have what Cummins calls a “target”), you already need to be able to accurately perceive it, because the objectivity of perception (its openness to objective evaluation) and the objects of perception themselves are two sides of the same coin. Thus,

...what you do doesn't count as perceiving knight forks unless you can do it all, that is, recognize them in various media, and distinguish them from schnight forks (configurations that look like knight forks, but are part of schness, not chess) in the usual media. But this conflates two very distinct issues:

1. How good is the system at recognizing knight forks?

2. Are knight forks among its targets, that is, are some of its representational efforts to be assessed for accuracy against knight forks?

I can, for example, be arbitrarily bad at recognizing colors (I am color blind), and yet have the color of the vegetable in my hand as a representational target. I won't hit it reliably, but it does not follow from this that it isn't my target. In order to understand error in learning, you don't want to think that your targets somehow depend on what you can hit. (Clapin 2000, 132)

Cummins vigorously defends the position that there can be targets for a system even where the system has no knowledge of what its states are aimed at. That is, he defends the idea that there can be targets for us about which we know nothing. Cummins doesn't think that Haugeland agrees with this, but thinks that he'd better, otherwise the only targets that a system can have – the only phenomena that it could be trying to come to grips with – are those that it already understands – i.e. those that are already constituted as objects – which would seem to make learning miraculous.

To put this back in Haugeland’s terms, Cummins argues that Haugeland sets the bar too high for disclosure, making it an all or nothing affair, which makes it hard to see how it could get going. That is, it makes adopting a new stance magical. How could one come to understand the game of chess if, in order to recognize

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74 Cummins’ criticism is drawn from his contribution to Clapin (2002)

75 One might also worry that Haugeland’s position would lead quite naturally to a view of cognition as the self forever returning to itself.
any component of the game (as a component of the game), you already have to be able to commit yourself to the game's constitutive standards, that is, understand chess?

This is reminiscent of Meno’s paradox, and Merleau-Ponty’s summary of the dialectic of empiricism and intellectualism.

Empiricism cannot see that we need to know what we are looking for, otherwise we would not be looking for it, and intellectualism fails to see that we need to be ignorant of what we are looking for, or equally again we should not be searching. (PhP, 28)

Haugeland might try to answer Cummins objection, by arguing that learning proceeds by trial and error. One guestimates how the objects are meant to behave and then corrects these standards through responding appropriately to incompatibilities as they arise. But this leads to a related, and I think, far more damaging, objection that focuses on the possibility of the objective correction of a stance – what I’ll call the "normative revision of norms". For this trial and error process to work, one must not be sent back to square one in the face of every error. Objectivity, on Haugeland’s account, is closely bound up with vulnerability to inaccuracy. At times, Haugeland calls the constituted objective domain a precarious equilibrium among mundane and constitutive skills. Cummins, somewhat indirectly, highlights the fact that this implies that perceptions which are not well understood do not, properly speaking, have objects, they are not about anything at all. It therefore seems that, in order to make perception epistemically robust, Haugeland may have made its intentionality extremely fragile. Thus, while the objects of perception have the independent normative authority to bring the whole representational domain unstuck, they cannot guide the disclosure of the domain itself, because, until the domain is fully constituted, there are no objects, properly speaking, against which its adequacy might be assessed.

Haugeland actually acknowledges, in response to Cummins, that he may face a similar problem to the one that faces Kuhn in explaining the emergence of a replacement domain in a scientific revolution, i.e. ‘the question of how a whole new, what I call domain, could open up and gel for us… How that could emerge

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76 Merleau-Ponty would agree with Cummins’ charge, though not with his solution, since Cummins’ thinks that there is a fact of the matter about which targets a system has. Cummins and Merleau-Ponty would agree that intentionality is cheaper than objectivity, but Cummins seems to want operative intentionality for free, and in doing so substitutes an objective body for the phenomenal body.
What Haugeland doesn’t appear to recognize, but I think Cummins objection reveals, is that this problem of ab initio constitution is fairly widespread. The trouble is, since every domain is such a precarious equilibrium, there can be no partial breakdown, and every event that persistently contradicts the standards will provoke the domain’s utter collapse.

It might be worth taking a moment to compare the problem to the one facing coherentist accounts of objectivity. Haugeland argues, rightly I believe, that he is not a coherentist, because the phenomena themselves act as independent constraints on the objective correctness of the system. The standards must not only cohere, but also comprehensively make sense of the behaviour of the phenomena. However, like coherentist accounts, the domain stands and falls altogether. For coherentists as for Haugeland, objectivity is attributable only to the domain as a whole, and not to its parts. As a result, all revisions of the domain are necessarily revolutions, and the reason why replacement domains pose a particular problem is because there is nothing left after the collapse of the old domain from which to build the new.

Those familiar with Haugeland’s work may recognize a symmetry between my criticisms and a paradox that Haugeland addresses directly and purports to solve: the paradox of intelligible error. Take the example of a rook. If we identify a rook by the ways in which it can move, i.e. let a rook be just whatever moves along ranks and files, then anything that moves along a rank or file is a rook. But in that case – if the only norms of proper identification are constitutive regulations that govern legal moves – it would be impossible to say that a piece has been moved illegally, since whenever a pawn moves like a rook, it is a rook, by virtue of the way it moves. Similarly, if you were to complain that I had moved my rook along a diagonal, I could simply say that it is now a queen, by virtue of the way it moves. We are confronted with what appears to be a paradox. If we are adamant that a rook is defined by its legal moves, then a rook that makes an illegal move is not a rook at all, or else, what amounts to the same thing, all illegal game phenomena are impossible, since they are, by definition, not game phenomena at all.

Presumably, you could point to another piece and say ‘But that’s your queen there, and you can’t have two!’ But this only highlights the problem. If pieces can only be identified by the way they are moved, there is no room for attributing moves to pieces, since the two are inseparable: the move maketh the piece. Even the idea of multiple queens stops making sense, unless I make two moves at once, or find some way of attributing past moves to a particular piece. But I can’t do that without some other criteria of piece identification.
This ‘paradox’ is intended to grant plausibility to Haugeland’s idea of an *excluded zone*. He argues that, since we readily cope with game phenomena, there must be two distinct senses of ‘can’ involved in answering the question ‘what can rooks do?’ Roughly, one that corresponds to what is conceivable for a rook, and another that corresponds to what is actually legal (or possible). Haugeland argues that playing a game of chess (or for that matter, maintaining or constructing any constituted domain) requires that what is conceivable include and be more extensive than what is possible (legal). Moreover, play requires that the region of conceivable-but-illegal moves – the so-called ‘excluded zone’ – actually be empty.

The excluded zone seems to solve the problem of the intelligibility of individual misperceptions, but in fact it just displaces the problem onto the domain as a whole. The intelligibility of misperception depends on the existence of the excluded zone (i.e. a non-zero difference between the set of legal moves and the set of conceivable moves). However, in cases of genuine objective incorrectness that misperception persists, and effectively compromises the objectivity of the domain. At that point, the formerly meaningful (though strictly speaking impossible) perception is rendered utterly meaningless, since there is no representational content without semantic content. Mundane skills are not perceptual skills – do not have objects - unless governed by standards through constitutive skills. Thus, Haugeland’s account falters on exactly what it attempts to capture – genuine objective incorrectness – although, somewhat ironically, it handles *faux* incorrectness (which is correctable by double-checking the exercise of mundane or constitutive skills) perfectly well.

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78 Indeed, it is precisely its meaninglessness that illuminates the inadequacy of the domain’s semantics.
Haugeland’s account can be criticized on the grounds that while it provides a picture of how we demonstrate the resilience of our stance in the face of apparent incompatibilities, it leaves us utterly stranded in the event of a truly recalcitrant incompatibility, i.e. the exercise of some excluded combination of skills that is sufficiently persistent and immune to double-checking procedures to warrant the revision of the constitutive standards, and the re-constitution of the domain.

No doubt, Haugeland would like to say that in such an event, the components of that flawed stance, our mundane and constitutive skills, provide the basis for the constitution of a new stance. However, it seems to me that Haugeland implies that our mundane skills should revert to being mere behaviours when the constitutive standards are brought into question. After all, what distinguishes him from Cummins is precisely the claim that it is only in the context of the standards that these behaviours can be seen as attempts at perceiving or acting, and so only in this context can they be regarded as achieving or doing anything, or similarly be evaluated for accuracy.

As I have presented it thus far, this criticism of Haugeland focuses on the conditions of possibility of a normative revision of norms, and so does not amount to a phenomenological objection, since it presupposes this phenomenon. A more phenomenological approach would involve describing the phenomenon itself. The challenge would then be to describe the normative revision of norms in a presuppositionless way, or at least to demonstrate that Haugeland’s description of the phenomenon is distorting.

**Phenomenological critique: pathological commitments**

As I pointed out in the last chapter, in order to critique intellectualism and empiricism, Merleau-Ponty presents the case of a pathological subject who embodies the subject as presupposed by intellectualism and empiricism. Indeed, Schneider’s case is remarkable in that aspects of his behaviour embody both empiricism and intellectualism, thereby demonstrating that they neglect the pathological character of Schneider’s experience. In the same way I hope here to show that Haugeland’s account can’t distinguish between a normal perceiving subject and from someone suffering from anorexia nervosa.

I want to draw on a recent attempt by Gail Weiss to understand anorexia in terms of the role of abjection in the constitution of a body image. Anorexia
nervosa is a condition that plagues millions of people (mostly women) who become convinced that they are chronically overweight, and who effectively starve themselves in order to rectify what they consider to be a pathological weight problem. The first thing we should note about anorexia is that, regarded from a third-person perspective, the person suffering the disorder regards themselves (mistakenly) as pathologically overweight.

Secondly, the condition is usually described as a case of distorted body image. Clearly, though, what is being described by the term "body image" is not merely a description or conception of the one's own body. The body image has a normative significance, and not only for the anorexic. The constitution of a body image is an important part of normal child development, as Lacan pointed out with his celebrated description of the mirror stage, in which the subject comes to identify itself with its mirror image. Recent feminist interpretations of Lacan bring out the normative significance of the body image, by focusing on the role of abjection. Abjection is the exclusion of a diverse range of bodily sensations from the resulting body image. As Elizabeth Grosz puts it:

> Abjection … is a refusal of the defiling, impure, uncontrollable materiality of the subject’s embodied existence. It is a response to the various bodily cycles of incorporation, absorption, depletion, expulsion, the cycles of material rejuvenation and consumption necessary to sustain itself yet incapable of social recognition and representation. (Grosz 1989, 72)

These sensations are not merely left out of the account; they are, as it were, no longer tolerated by the subject. In order for the body image to have significance as the image of normal embodiment, it must exclude certain modes of embodiment as intolerable, and bodily processes as in need of discipline. This can be illustrated in a very intuitive way by pointing to the fact that nearly everyone tries to avoid throwing up or wetting their pants. There is nothing unnatural about either bodily process, yet both are construed as pathological if unconstrained in any way.

The first point of comparison I wish to make with Haugeland is that this account of the constitution of the body image strongly resembles Haugeland’s account of the constitution of a disclosive posture or stance. In both cases, we have the establishment of a normative structure (body image / stance) through a process

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79 Comedy, particularly toilet humour, thrives on its disobedience with respect to precisely these taboos.
of abjection. But is it appropriate to identify the notion of an excluded zone with that of the abject? I think it is, and Haugeland’s own description of the experience of a breach of the standards, i.e. of the appearance of an excluded phenomenon, supports this view.

"Egad! Am I going crazy? Am I being tricked or drugged? I can’t really be seeing this – it’s impossible". (HT, 262)

In Haugeland’s text, the emphasis is making sense of that last word: ‘impossible’, but I want to suggest that the other phrases, which describe a certain paranoia or loss of control, are just as much a concern here, and just as central to Haugeland’s account.

It is important to note that, according to Haugeland himself, we should analyze the sense we have that this scene is impossible, in terms of an excluded combination of mundane skills, which are themselves bodily processes. Moreover, the advent of such a combination indicates the breakdown of the discipline of the mundane skills by the constitutive skills that embody the standards of the stance. Thus, to extend the analogy, constitutive skills are those that enforce the exclusion of the abject.

None of this should be taken as criticism of Haugeland. On the contrary, all I’ve done is demonstrate that his account of the constitution of a stance is compatible with Lacanian psychoanalytic account of the constitution of the body image, and I do not mean to disparage either... yet.

Let’s return to the person suffering from body image distortion. The task is to account for what is pathological about their situation. We already mentioned a good starting point, i.e. that the anorexic’s view of their own body as chronically pathological is itself pathological. An unending self-pathologization seems to be essential to the condition.

What does seem to be clear is that when bodies are at odds with their own body images, when that which is needed to sustain the body (e.g. relationships with other people, food, drink, clothing, shelter) becomes the abject other, distortion may turn out to be the only viable strategy for survival, and, paradoxically, an affirmation predicated on a negation of life. (Weiss 1999, 50)
One common and popular way of understanding this self-pathologization is in terms of the enormous social pressure of the cultural body ideal. The anorexic is acutely sensitive to the difference between the body that they have, and the body they are supposed to have. As Susan Bordo writes: "the anorectic [sic] does not 'misperceive' her body; rather she has learned all too well the dominant cultural standard of how to perceive" (Bordo 1998, 57) 80

However, Weiss argues, while this may be true of the anorexic, it is just as true of most of the rest of us as well, and so ignores the specificity of the anorexic's condition. After all, the dominant body image is of a young, thin, white, male, heterosexual. (Weiss 1999, 52)

Weiss goes on to suggest that:

rather than view the anorexic as an incoherent or contradictory subject, I am claiming that she is too coherent, psychically and corporeally dominated by what "Ellen West," the pseudonymous anorexic subject of Ludwig Binswanger's famous case, repeatedly identified as her idée fixée [sic], namely, the "dread of getting fat." Indeed, the "mocking" phantoms that accompany her desire to be an ethereal or "fleshless" body, phantoms that remind her that she can never realise her ideal, do not destabilize the dominance of this idea but actually reinforce its hegemony. (Weiss 1999, 54)

What distinguishes the anorexic, in Weiss's view, is that the process of abjection never reaches a point at which the body image itself comes into question. The anorexic's body image is hegemonic in the sense that there is no exception to it which can compromise its status as the norm, and the advent of any abject experience only contributes to the urgency or importance of better living up to that norm.

In order to adequately describe normal vs anorexic embodiment, Weiss suggests, modifying Lacan, that we introduce the notion of corporeal fluidity. That is, that we recognize the productivity of the turbulence of corporeal lived experience in which the body image has its source. While this turbulence "is psychically rejected in favor of a projected (imaginary) identification with the specular image", it also represents the "gestation of the subject", and as such grounds the replacement of one body image by another. (Weiss 1999, 53; cf. Lacan 1977, 2-3)

80 Of course, this is not the claim simply that the cultural ideal causes anorexia, but that the anorexic takes on the cultural ideal as her own body image, with all its associated normative significance. Thus, even though we are speaking of the effect of a cultural ideal, this is not at the expense of the subject's (first-personal) involvement in the process, her self-constitution.
Chapter 3

Weiss puts this fluidity in terms of a multiplicity of body images, but I think doing so abandons the genetic aspect of the account. On a genetic view, the sense of the body image is rooted in its genealogy, the ambiguity of which lends the subject the requisite corporeal fluidity. Another helpful way of putting the same point is to suggest that the anorexic’s body image takes on a disciplinary or governing role entirely at the expense of its expressive role. That is, because the body image is no longer constituted as the symbolic expression of corporeality, but only as its governing norm, that corporeality has no significance other than as the abject.

The question that this discussion of anorexia raises, then, is whether there is any way, in Haugeland’s own terms, to distinguish the anorexic’s pathological over-commitment to a body image from the normal (indeed, valuable) existential commitment to a stance that characterizes objective perception. That is, what makes the rampant and unending self-pathologization exhibited by the anorexic inappropriate as a response to a continual confrontation with recalcitrant incompatibilities?

I suspect that the complementarity between the concepts of resilience and recalcitrance may pose a problem here. Haugeland defines a recalcitrant incompatibility as an incompatibility which persists once we have exhausted the double-checking of the exercise of our mundane skills. Thus, the resilience of these skills, the fact that we "know full well" what we can do, ought to provide the normative force for the revision of the constitutive skills (i.e. the stance itself). But the example of the anorexic shows that a irresolvable conflict between constitutive and mundane skills needn’t lead to a revision of the former. It can simply lead to something like a pathologisation of mundane skills, which, breaching the standards as they have, are indistinguishable from bodily processes in a non-normative sense.  

3.4 Inexhaustibility and Pre-Personal Involvement

The difference between Merleau-Ponty and Haugeland could be articulated simply by saying that, beneath the body image that Haugeland describes,

81 In fact, describing the mundane skills as losing their normative (and thus their epistemological) significance may be rather apt. It reveals that the equivalent to the anorexic’s self-pathologization which turns out, on Haugeland’s account, to be indistinguishable from the normal perceiving subject is something like a progressive distrust of the veracity of one’s own senses – in short, radical scepticism.
Merleau-Ponty finds a body schema. However, this would pass over the very benefit of the comparison, which is to permit us to understand the relationship between body image and body schema in terms of a concern with transcendence and in confrontation with a form of pathology. We would thereby be using a psychological distinction to clarify a phenomenological one, and miss the opportunity to articulate this difference in what I've been suggesting are Merleau-Ponty's own terms.

Transcendence and world-horizon

Merleau-Ponty understands this transcendence in two apparently contradictory ways. Initially, he attempts to clarify the transcendence of the thing in terms of its "total appearance".

The thing is that manner of being for which the complete definition of one of its attributes demands that of the subject in its entirety; an entity, consequently, the significance of which is indistinguishable from its total appearance. (PhP, 323)

This quote suggests a holistic account of the meaning of sensation. On the following page, however, in an effort to distinguish the real (i.e. perceived) thing from an imagined object, he characterises the real as that which "lends itself to unending exploration; it is *inexhaustible.*" (PhP, 324, my emphasis)

These two descriptions of the transcendence of the thing appear to be contradictory, because the inexhaustibility of the second seems to deny the possibility of the total appearance to which the first refers. I think the two can be reconciled if we stress that the first refers to a "complete definition" of the thing, and is therefore presented from an "analytical" or intellectualist perspective, while the second is a properly phenomenological description. Thus, the notion of a "total appearance" is the intellectualisation of the experience of the thing as perceptually inexhaustible.82

Merleau-Ponty denies that such a total appearance can ever be achieved:

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82 In his defense of the *Phenomenology* at the Société française de philosophie, Merleau-Ponty make the same point: "What prohibits me from treating my perception as an intellectual act is that an intellectual act would grasp the object either as possible or as necessary. But in perception it is "real"; it is given as the infinite sum of an indefinite series of perspectival views in each of which the object is given but in none of which is it given exhaustively." (PrP, 15)
The ipseity of the thing is of course, never reached: each aspect of the thing which falls to our perception is still only an invitation to perceive beyond it, still only a momentary halt in the perceptual process. If the thing itself were reached, it would be from that moment arrayed before us and stripped of its mystery. It would cease to exist as a thing at the very moment when we thought to possess it. What makes the reality of the thing is therefore precisely what snatches it from our grasp. (PhP, 233)

The metaphor of invitation is one way Merleau-Ponty characterises the transcendence of that which is perceived, its irreducibility to the perceiving of it. It captures both the inseparability and the distinguishability of perceived and perceiver by construing them as invitation and invited. This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that the same metaphor is used to clarify the relations between the sensible and the sensor in the following passage:

The sensor and the sensible do not stand in relation to each other as two mutually external terms, and sensation is not an invasion of the sensor by the sensible. It is my gaze which subtends colour, and the movement of my hand which subtends the object's form, or rather my gaze pairs off with colour, and my hand with hardness and softness, and in this transaction between the subject of sensation and the sensible it cannot be held that one acts while the other suffers the action, or that one confers significance on the other. Apart from the probing of my eye or my hand, and before my body synchronizes with it, the sensible is nothing but a vague beckoning. ... Thus a sensible datum which is on the point of being felt sets a kind of muddled problem for my body to solve. I must find the attitude which will provide it with the means of becoming deterimate, of showing up as blue; I must find the reply to a question which is obscurely expressed. And yet I do so only when I am invited by it, my attitude is never sufficient to make me really see blue or really touch a hard surface. The sensible gives back to me what I lent to it, but this is only what I took from it in the first place. (PhP, 214, second emphasis mine)

In so far as I am invited by it, and must be for my attitude to provide me with a perceived thing, the sensible remains independent of me. But in so far as it can only achieve a determinate sense through my taking it up, the sensible is, for all that, nothing (no thing) in the absence of a perceiver like me. I lend the sensible a structure within which it can have a specific meaning, a body through which to

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83 As Pietersma points out, "In a sense esse non est percipi, because reality is never reached in a perception. But within the unique concrete whole, called transcendence [by which he means the transcendence of the body-subject in its exploratory movement 'toward' the thing], they do belong together in such a manner that there is also a sense in which esse est percipi... because the being of things is aimed at in transcendence." (Pietersma 2000, 142)
speak. The resulting expression is neither correct nor incorrect, because there is no other ideal experience to which it might be compared. It is one of “so many ways of ‘singing’ the world” (PhP, 187)

As I contemplate the blue of the sky I am not set over against it as some acosmic subject; I do not possess it in thought, or spread out towards it some idea of blue such as might reveal the secret of it, I abandon myself to it and plunge into this mystery, it ‘thinks itself within me’, I am the sky itself as it is drawn together and unified, and as it begins to exist for itself … (PhP, 214)

The sky exceeds my expression of it as blue, but the excess is not simply disconfirming of my current perception; as we’ll see, it is suggestive of its replacement. It therefore cannot be reduced to the way the actual combinations of mundane skills might exceed those tolerated by the constitutive standards.

On Merleau-Ponty’s view, like Haugeland’s, the perceived world has the significance that it has through the organisation of the body. What can be determinately perceived is correlative and limited to the body’s means of engaging with the world. However, here the significance of the perceived world is not exhausted by this correlation. The world is not to be defined by its independent authority over the veracity of perception, although we can comport ourselves in such a way that it plays this role. Rather, what makes it a world is its inexhaustibility, or we might say, its fecundity. The following quote sums up Merleau-Ponty’s position well, and might be taken as a direct criticism of Haugeland:

Each thing can, after the event, appear uncertain, but what is at least certain for us is that there are things, that is to say, a world. To ask oneself whether the world is real is to fail to understand what one is asking, since the world is not a sum of things which might always be called into question, but the inexhaustible reservoir from which things are drawn. The percept taken in its entirety, with the world horizon which announces both its possible disjunction and its possible replacement by another perception, certainly does not mislead us. There could not possibly be error where there is not yet truth, but reality, and not yet necessity, but facticity. (PhP, 344; original emphasis)

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84 This term itself plays a more prominent role in “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence”, published just after the Phenomenology in 1947, but I feel it is appropriate here. See Signs, 59, 72.

85 Cf PhP, 360; where Merleau-Ponty extends the point: “I call such and such a perception into question only in the name of a truer one capable of correcting it; in so far as I can deny each thing, it is always by
What passes for perceptual error in Haugeland’s account has a positive significance – but no determinate content – for Merleau-Ponty. It is the inexhaustibility of the ways in which the world invites us to embody and express it. To be sure, the world does not express itself, and this is the truth of the disenchantment of nature. But at the same time, it is not merely the case that the world is simply that which can contradict the sense I take it to have. That would be to forget that this sense is an expression of my inherence in this world, and the taking up of a sensible invitation to perceive.

The description of the world-horizon and its role in guaranteeing the transcendence of the perceived offered above shows that Merleau-Ponty can be read as providing a transcendental conception of the **Lebenswelt**. Moreover, what I described above as the fecundity of the sensible world is clearly correlative to the corporeal fluidity which, following Weiss, I argued that the anorexic lacks. The question, though, is how can one perceive in the absence of the transcendental conditions for perception? This forces us to recognize that corporeal fluidity is not simply lacking in the pathological case, but suppressed.

In order to understand that suppression of corporeal fluidity, i.e. that over-commitment, we need to see it in the light of the intersubjective character of the world-horizon, to which I now turn.

### A world held in common

The core theme in this chapter has been that of transcendence of the perceived, and it is in terms of this theme that I wish to approach Merleau-Ponty on intersubjectivity. That is to say, the approach is not directly in terms of the transcendence of the other, but indirectly in terms of the transcendence of the thing, and the intersubjective reference it contains. In order to do this, I'll borrow a distinction Dan Zahavi deploys in his exposition of Husserl, between a) the *concrete experience of others* and b) *open intersubjectivity*.

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86 It is not simply the case, as Haugeland (following Joan Wellman) puts it, that "The world’s the boss," i.e. if you and it differ, it wins. (Clapin 2002, 165) The world is in a sense also the *source*.

87 Compare my emphasis on the metaphor of invitation with Steinbock’s comment that, understood transcendently, “the lifeworld as horizon is that from which we are conscious of something as something given” (Steinbock 1995, 106).

88 That is, following Merleau-Ponty, we take the phenomenon of anorexia, like all pathologies, to be irreducible to a simple lack, and treat its expression as the product of "substitute functions".
The concrete experience of others is just that, my actual perception of Peter or Paul, although in the existential phenomenological tradition it is associated with a whole range of problems, in particular the possibility of having such an experience without compromising the other's alterity or otherness. By contrast, the concept of open intersubjectivity is far from familiar. It is a kind of intersubjectivity that is implicated in the very transcendence of things. It is best introduced in the context of Husserl's discussion of the hidden side of a perceived entity.89

Every transcendent thing that is given to perception is given as having sides that are co-existent but nonetheless hidden. Two possibilities immediately suggest themselves as explanations of my experience of the thing having a hidden side:

1) that the hidden side is what I will see if I change my position relative to the object, and look at it from over there,

2) that the back side is something I imagine at the same time that I witness the present side of the object – it is what I imagine I would see, were I over there right now.

The first explanation, however, does not account for my perception of the object as having a hidden side which exists simultaneously with the presented profile. It actually describes the hidden side as currently absent, to be presented in the future, when in fact my experience is of a side that is currently present in its absence.

The second explanation preserves the simultaneity of both sides, at the expense of the reality of the hidden side, which is relegated to the status of a fiction. This too fails to accord with what I see. The object is presented as existing as a unified whole, even though it is only partially given to me at any moment.

We are left with the conviction that, to explain the horizonality of the perceived thing, we need to account for the possibility of not only simultaneous aspects, but the possibility of simultaneously actualized perceptions of those aspects. Only in this way can the hidden sides have the status of "currently actually existing aspects". (Zahavi 2001, 48) Husserl therefore concludes that there must be a reference to intersubjectivity in the experience of transcendent things, since:

89 The following is based on Zahavi's interpretation in Zahavi (2001). See esp. §II.4 and §II.5.
One subject cannot simultaneously have two aspects of the orthological manifold. But a plurality of aspects can be simultaneous if they are distributed across various subjects, and they must be simultaneous if these subjects are simultaneously experiencing the same physical thing. (Hua 13/377-78; Quoted in Zahavi 2001, 48)

Thus, there is a reference to some sort of intersubjectivity in the very appearance of things as having hidden sides. We find a telescopic version of the previous argument in the *Phenomenology*.

It is true that I see what I do see only from a certain angle, and I concede that a spectator differently placed sees what I can only conjecture. But these other spectacles are implied in mine at this moment, just as the reverse or the underneath side of objects is perceived simultaneously with their visible aspect... The experiences of other people or those which await me if I change my position merely develop what is suggested by the horizons of my present experience, and add nothing to it. (PhP, 338)

It is clear though that I do not need to have a concrete experience of another lived body in order to be presented with something transcendent that has co-existing sides. The objects in my world do not cease to have undersides and back sides and all manner of hidden aspects, even when I am entirely alone. So, the intersubjective reference in question can be distinguished from any concrete experience of others. What grants the hidden side its transcendence is not my experience of its being actually perceived by others, but its simultaneous perceptibility. Again, in the *Phenomenology*, we can find references to a mode of intersubjectivity is that it is not a frontal relationship between subjects, but a lateral relationship that is co-original with the perceived world. Indeed, in the following quote, this lateral or open intersubjectivity serves to define the perceived world.

The perceived world is not only my world, but the one in which I see the behaviour of other people take shape, for their behaviour equally aims at this world, which is the correlative not only of my consciousness, but of any consciousness which I can possibly encounter. (PhP, 338)\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{90} Compare this with the following quote, from the introduction to *Signs*, which is more explicit: ”Everything rests upon the insurpassable richness, the miraculous multiplication of perceptible being, which gives the same things the power to be things for more than one perceiver, and makes some of the things – human and animal bodies – have not only hidden faces but an “other side,” a perceiving side, whose significance is based upon what is perceptible to me [un autre sentir compté partir de mon sensible].” (S, 16)
However, if, as we saw earlier, the reality of things consists in the inexhaustibility of their sensible character, we will need to talk of the thing's simultaneous perceptibility by an indefinitely large number of possible others. It is the reference from the perceived thing back to an unbounded co-existence that makes this intersubjectivity both transcendental and "open". It is transcendental in being a condition for the experience of things as transcendent, and "open" because the co-existence implied is unbounded. Thus, the theme of transcendence in the *Phenomenology* is intimately bound up with that of intersubjectivity. "Transcendental subjectivity," that is, the subjectivity to which things can appear as transcendent, "is a transcendental intersubjectivity" (PhP, 361), in the sense that something given as transcendent is always already given in common.91

Once this picture of the world-horizon as simultaneously an intersubjective horizon is in place, Merleau-Ponty's remarks about the concrete experience of others become clear.

> No sooner has my gaze fallen upon a living body in process of acting than the objects surrounding it immediately take on a fresh layer of significance: they are no longer simply what I myself could make of them, they are what this other pattern of behaviour is about to make of them. … Already the other body has ceased to be a fragment of the world, and becomes the theatre of a certain process of elaboration, and, as it were, a certain 'view' of the world. (PhP, 353)

Now, Merleau-Ponty goes on to say that I recognize this pattern of behaviour as another "because this living body has the same structure as mine," (PhP, 353) but we should not take him to mean that there is some objective similarity in anatomy of even specific gestures, since what is revealed is "another living being, but not yet another man" (PhP, 354). He immediately qualifies this thought by pointing out that:

> I experience my own body as the power of adopting certain forms of behaviour and a certain world, and I am given to myself merely as a certain hold upon the world; now, it is precisely my body which perceives the body of another, and

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91 Renaud Barbaras is correct, then, when he writes that "Merleau-Ponty's project can then be understood as the fulfillment of a program called for by Trân Duc Thao, namely, as the attempt to invent a new meaning of the thing on the basis of characteristics of experience clearly seen on the level of the intersubjective world. It is a matter of grasping the thing not as a unity of sense but as something that even while appearing is still endowed with the transcendence inherent in the fact that the thing is given in common – that is, that the transcendence of the other is inscribed in it. The thing is precisely the correlate of the intersubjective universe. … We perceive the world as the correlate of a community, the thing as 'mounted' on the dimensions of interpersonal experience. … The other, then, is given not as an alter ego in front of me, but as a relation to a world that is also mine, or rather as inscribed in an anonymous relation to the world, that is, as a dimension of the visibility of the world." (Barbaras 2004, 33)
discovers in that other body a miraculous prolongation of its own (*ses propre*) intentions. (PhP, 354-5, translation modified)

Merleau-Ponty's point is that my primordial experience of others is my experience of them as extending my intentions. But must I not already see them as the kind of things that can have intentions, before I see them as extending my own? This will remain opaque, until we remember the metaphor of invitation, which is much more powerful than intention here. If the sensible world presents itself to me as a host of invitations, as we said earlier, to find the attitude that will bring them to expression, and if, as we just pointed out, it also presents itself as open to other views of it, then it becomes understandable that our first contact with others can be of them taking up such invitations, as it were; of bringing them to expression for us, or in our place, and in so doing, extending our expressive powers.

**From first-personal to pre-personal**

I mentioned that Haugeland's aim in developing the notion of an existential commitment was to re-introduce the sense of first-personal involvement which was needed to account for the cognitive vigilance required for objective perception. I also mentioned that my opinion is that Haugeland's account is not so much incorrect as reified, in the sense that the corporeal stance he describes is a founded one.

The question this seems to raise is the following: what sort of first-personal involvement does Merleau-Ponty describe that could be regarded as founding Haugeland's existential commitment? The key to understanding the relationship between Merleau-Ponty and Haugeland is to recognize that the kind of involvement that founds Haugeland's existential commitment is, properly speaking, not *first-personal* at all – though, it would be better to say that it is not personal in any sense. It is *pre-personal*.

Perception is always in the mode of the 'One', it is not a personal act by which I can give my life a fresh significance. (PhP, 240; translation modified\(^{92}\))

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\(^{92}\) Colin Smith includes the word "impersonal" in his translation, though there is no corresponding term in the original French (cf. PhP Fr, 277). For our purposes, describing this non-personal or, as I've suggested, pre-personal character of perception as "impersonal" would only encourage its confusion with a third-person process.
At the outset, we can say immediately that pre-personal involvement can't be reconciled with talk of a sub-personal structure or process, because the latter do not capture any sense of involvement whatsoever. In fact, the great advantage of approaching Merleau-Ponty's notion of the pre-personal through a phenomenological critique of Haugeland may be that it allows one to keep one's eye on the properly phenomenological sense of the pre-personal, which must surely be the basis of any phenomenological conception of the body schema.

But what is this pre-personal, phenomenological sense of involvement that we find in Merleau-Ponty? Haugeland employs the concept of commitment, and a first pass at the pre-personal can be made by recognizing a second sense of what it means to be committed. On the one hand, I may be committed in the sense of resolutely setting myself a particular ambition, task or project; but on the other hand, I may be committed in the sense of being past the point of no return.

For example, we might say of a footballer that they are committed to a tackle, and by this we mean simply that while they may perform this tackle in any number of ways, that is, while there is still a range of tackles or a field of expression open to them, this field is nonetheless constrained to an extent that whatever they do will have the significance of a tackle. Even if they actively resist tackling their opponent, their performance will have the sense of a half-hearted or aborted tackle.

This is where I believe the metaphor of invitation is again useful, in the sense that an invitation is an event that constrains the field of expression in such a way that one is committed in the sense described above to some sort of response.

The metaphor of invitation thus allows us to describe an experience in which one finds oneself to be so committed. Unlike the example of the footballer, it needn't be one's own prior action that commits one in this way. I open the email, and find an invitation from an estranged friend who I had hoped never to see again.

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93 I therefore agree wholeheartedly with Sara Heinämaa when she writes that “The generality of the anonymous body should not be confused with the generality of the body as a biochemical system described by natural scientific laws. The anonymous body is not a sophisticated mechanism but a special form of intentionality. When investigating it, Merleau-Ponty does not abandon Husserl’s phenomenological method in favor of the natural scientific approach. Instead, his aim is in giving a more detailed description of the living body as it is experienced before scientific objectifications.” (Heinämaa 2003, 42-43)

94 Sean Gallagher, for example, does a terrific job of ensuring that the body schema is not confused with the body image. It's therefore unfortunate that he does not make any distinction between a psychological and a transcendental conception of the body schema; or if you like between its empirical and metaphysical significance. See esp. Gallagher (1986).
Straightaway, I wish that I hadn't read it. The email itself holds me captive, constrains me. Instantly, I am no longer free of my former friend, because while I am free to accept or decline the invitation, nothing I do or say can free me of the task of communicating with this person. Even if I ignore the email, even this is an implicit refusal and, as it were, a move in a game I no longer wish to play.

My decision draws together a spontaneous meaning of my life which it may confirm or repudiate, but not annul. (PhP, 447)

I am pre-personally involved in a situation in the sense of being always already invited by it, and in the sense that all forms of personal expression take place within the field delimited by that invitation. Even deliberative action and self-perception follows and articulates an invitation that predates it. The novelty in Merleau-Ponty's view, and what distinguishes it from a doctrine of fate, is that the locus of this pre-commitment is the sensible itself. It is not a destiny behind appearances, but a spontaneous and incomplete meaning within appearances (which are therefore never merely appearances).

There is an autochthonous significance of the world which is constituted in the dealings which our incarnate existence has with it, and which provides the ground of every deliberate Sinngebung. (PhP, 441)

This autochthonous significance does not set a limit to our freedom, and does not make epiphenomena of our personal commitments; but rather gives that freedom a field (champ) within which it can find its expression. (PhP, 438)

Though it might also be described as a background or horizon, what is meant by a "field" here is something quite different to the arrangement of skills within which a single perceptual performance is understood. Haugeland is right to describe the latter as correlated with a personal commitment, and what we have in mind is, as it were, the background of those commitments, i.e. the world-horizon that we described above.

So, the sense of involvement that is essential to perception is pre-personal in the sense that it is prior to any personal commitment; it is an involvement in a similar sense to the way in which one is involved by being invited.

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95 When Dreyfus quotes the same passage, he implicitly transforms the sense of "the dealings which our incarnate existence has with it" to mean precisely the exercise of mundane skills at the service of an interrogative inquiry that Haugeland expresses. This confuses precisely the distinction I am trying to reassert between personal and pre-personal embodiment.
But this sense of involvement is also pre-personal in a second sense. It is prepersonal in the sense of being pre-individual, or anonymous, in that it is prior to any sense of who I am. If we wanted to construe perception as a kind of responsibility, we would have to present it as a responsibility that "falls to me", like an invitation addressed only to "the reader".

Every perception takes place in an atmosphere of generality and is presented to us anonymously. ... So, if I wanted to render precisely the perceptual experience, I ought to say that one perceives in me, and not that I perceive. (PhP, 215)

Being prior to any sense of my individuality, it is also prior to any distinction between myself and others. That is, I am involved in the perceived world as one among others. I have already described this intersubjective aspect of Merleau-Ponty's conception of the Lebenswelt. Here I am extending it to our prepersonal perceptual involvement with the world, that is, to the conception of the living body.

At this point, a Merleau-Pontyan description of what distinguishes the anorexic from the normal subject can now be ventured: the anorexic attempts to recuperate at a personal level every aspect of her prepersonal involvement with the world. All of us try to carve a personal life for ourselves out of this prepersonal involvement. The anorexic's attempt is pathological because it attempts to be comprehensive. The anorexic is thus caught in a personal recuperation of the prepersonal; a recuperation which is passively undertaken and without any natural limit, because the personal is transcendentally founded on the prepersonal.

It's not too far from this to a view of anorexia as a pathological refusal of others. Corporeal fluidity lies in the sensible fecundity of things themselves. However this fecundity points back to others – i.e. the transcendence of things refers back to an open intersubjectivity; the world-horizon which Haugeland forgets is necessarily intersubjective. So, we would expect Merleau-Ponty to describe anorexia in terms of such a refusal, and this is indeed how he describes it.

Loss of voice does not merely represent a refusal of speech, or anorexia a refusal of life; they are that refusal of others or refusal of the future, torn from the transitive nature of 'inner phenomena', generalized, consummated, transformed into de facto situations. (PhP, 164)

_Umwelt, Welt and beyond_
What distinguishes this world held in common from the all-too-human world for which I criticised the cognitive science reading in chapter two? The answer is simply that the all-too-human world I criticised neglects transcendence, while the world as described here is held in common through its very transcendence. The point can be made in terms of interests. The world that cognitive science describes is one that is limited to the correlate of my interests – usually, my possible range of behaviours. This is why (ironically given that it is the product of an attempt to naturalise Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology) I describe it as all-too-human. It reflects my interests, without ever being a source of interests (though it can solicit the expression of those interests, for example, the gathering of food in response to hunger). By contrast, the world held in common is one in which things refer not only to my own interests but are perceived as open to the interests of others.

It is on this basis alone that it makes sense to speak, as Merleau-Ponty does, of another as awakening my interest in something I was previously unaware of.

Paul’s finger … is not a finger-for-me that I think of as orientated towards a church-tower-for-me, it is Paul’s finger which itself shows me the tower that Paul sees. (PhP, 405)

The transcendence of things in this world is not a degree of inaccessibility, but rather an accessibility we have to things by virtue of there being others, which is to say an accessibility which cannot be achieved without them.96 (Moreover, as Merleau-Ponty notes, these others need not be human, although humans do play a special role.97) This transcendence as accessibility through alterity applies to my own body. I do not exhaust the significance of my body by considering my awareness of it. It transcends my consciousness of it by virtue of its being accessible to others, and to some extent only ever accessible to me through the attention of others. The mirror phase is an attempt to incorporate that significance for myself. This task is incompletable, though, as every psychoanalytic account of the Symbolic order recognizes; an incompletability which constantly frustrates the anorexic.

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96 Why do the readers of Merleau-Ponty for cognitive science ignore passages like the following: "The fact that the spectator and myself are both bound to our bodies comes down in sum to this: that that which can be given to me only in the mode of actuality, as a concrete perspective, is given to him only in the mode of virtuality, as a signification, and conversely." (StrB, 217)

97 "All of which makes another living being, but not yet another man." (PhP, 354)
The moral of chapter two was that we cannot properly understand our environing world or Umwelt unless we recognize that it is always a Welt, i.e. the locus of transcendence. However, chapter three has shown that one cannot simply attempt to characterise this transcendent aspect of experience in abstraction from our prepersonal involvement, i.e. our embeddedness in an Umwelt. Just as the Umwelt should not be characterised by a thorough-going familiarity, what distinguishes the Welt should not be reduced to a source of error.

In the end, the distinction between Welt and Umwelt may hinder as much as it helps.98 What we have is an embeddedness that can be more or less explicit.

[A person] is not a psyche joined to an organism, but the movement to and fro of existence which at one time allows itself to take corporeal form and at others moves towards personal acts. (PhP, 88)

But I hope to have shown that, in addition, this embeddedness is not indifferent to its explication, and that it actually calls to be made explicit; that it invites its expression in us.

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98 “Man is not a rational animal. The appearance of reason and mind does not leave intact a sphere of self-enclosed instincts in man. ... Man can never be an animal: his life is always more or less integrated than that of an animal. But if the alleged instincts of man do not exist apart from the mental dialectic, correlatively, this dialectic is not conceivable outside of the concrete situations in which it is embodied. One does not act with mind alone.” (StrB, 181)