Chapter 2

2 Transcendence and Transcendental Strategy

2.1 Making Room for a Transcendental Reading

In the first section of this chapter, I want to ask why Merleau-Ponty is construed to be so amenable to naturalisation that there appears to be no need to "naturalize" his phenomenology, i.e. why no attempt is made to deal with it as a transcendental philosophy. The only question that is raised in cognitive science's engagement with Merleau-Ponty's work is whether and how the autonomy of phenomenology can be preserved if it is to participate in the project of science. Phenomenology may clarify the object of cognitive science, whether construed as consciousness or intelligence, and it does so in a distinctive fashion, i.e. in a way that cannot be replicated in ordinary psychological inquiry, but for all that, it is phenomenology that wants to be science in the mundane reading: either as a preliminary to scientific investigation, laying down explicanda to guide that investigation, or as a legitimate (aspect of) scientific method itself. But what about the project of phenomenology?

By contrast, Husserl is construed as taking up a transcendental philosophical standpoint that is diametrically opposed to a naturalistic inquiry, and which must be overcome in order to appropriate his work for cognitive science. But there is an implicit optimism about the naturalisation of Merleau-Ponty. I will argue that this is because he is broadly construed as either failing to fully adopt a transcendental standpoint, failing to justify adopting it, or as implicitly rejecting it. Thus, the most generous reading of his phenomenology appears to be one that treats his as a kind of phenomenological psychology. That is, the implicit optimism in question is the result of a kind of compassionate neglect of the transcendental aspects of the Phenomenology.

I will suggest that Merleau-Ponty’s relationship with transcendental phenomenology is more sophisticated and more interesting than these readings suggest. In particular, the mundane reading misunderstands Merleau-Ponty’s concern with problems of transcendence. It mistakenly believes that these problems are merely artifacts of representationalism that are overcome by a corporeal account of perception and meaning. I argue that Merleau-Ponty quite clearly indicates that these problems of transcendence survive the shift to a
body-centred view. They are nonetheless transformed. Following Sebastian Gardner, I argue that this should be construed as an attempt to critique the tradition of transcendental philosophy, for the sake of avoiding an implicit return to objectivism and realism. Thus, it is a critique of transcendental philosophy in the service of establishing a more rigorous transcendental philosophy.

However, the question remains whether Merleau-Ponty's work exhibits anything like a transcendental turn or reduction. In the second half of the chapter, I will show how Merleau-Ponty's philosophical practice – in particular, his use of psychopathological case-studies – can be interpreted as a kind of transcendental strategy. A comparison with recent Husserl scholarship shows that this practice can indeed be considered a kind of transcendental reduction with a focus appropriate to a generative phenomenology. Finally, I draw on the work of Natalie Depraz to illustrate how this transcendental reading of Merleau-Ponty opens up an alternative conception of his relationship with cognitive science.

**Compassionate neglect**

*Psychological case-studies*

Let's start with Merleau-Ponty's use of clinical descriptions and psychopathological cases, which seems to be at odds with a transcendental philosophical perspective. One could argue that Merleau-Ponty contradicts himself, since he also announces the transcendental ambition of freeing the phenomena from the constraints and objectifying function of scientific understanding. For example, in the preface, he writes:

> Scientific points of view, according to which my existence is a moment of the world’s, are always both naïve and at the same time dishonest, because they take for granted, without explicitly mentioning it, the other point of view, namely that of consciousness, through which from the outset a world forms itself round me and begins to exist for me. (PhP, ix)

Here, Merleau-Ponty writes as though the whole phenomenological project is an attempt to "return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language." (ibid.) How then can Merleau-Ponty
justifiably call upon this same derivative language to bring this world, the
*lifeworld*, to light?

This criticism is inspired by one of the two popular phenomenological views of
the relationship between phenomenology and science – 1) that phenomenology
precedes and founds scientific research, characteristic of the early Husserl; and
2) the Heideggerian view that science, as technical or ontic thinking (or non-
thinking) is diametrically opposed to phenomenology (as ontological thinking).
When Merleau-Ponty describes science as dishonest, he seems to ascribe to the
Heideggerian view. When he talks of the lifeworld as that of which science
always speaks, he seems to be endorsing the early Husserlian view. In either case,
it seems quite remarkable that he would then proceed in a way that seems so
dependent – even parasitic – upon scientific descriptions.

This use of clinical descriptions might also seem quite strange to one who expects
a transcendental phenomenologist to affirm the primacy of the first-person
perspective. The clinical descriptions Merleau-Ponty deploys are however in the
third person. If, as we read in the Preface: "I am, not a 'living creature' nor even a
'man', nor again 'a consciousness' endowed with all the characteristics which
zoology, social anatomy or inductive psychology recognize in these various
products of the natural or historical process – I am the absolute source..." (PhP,
viii-ix), how can an accounting of such characteristics in the form of clinical
descriptions possibly assist a phenomenology of perception? Do they not merely
"muddy the waters"? Moreover, how could such descriptions be admitted
without contradicting the methodological commitment to bracket the question of
the existence of objects in an external world? How could one possibly pretend to
remain in the reduction while reading clinical case-studies? Are these cases not
paradigmatically described in the natural attitude?

*Failed anti-realism*

Thomas Baldwin, for example, suggests that Merleau-Ponty offers a variety of
transcendental idealism, but that treating his work as a kind of philosophy of
psychology is the only way to grant his claims philosophical significance without
falling into psychologism. Baldwin contends that, despite the fact that Merleau-
Ponty pays far more critical attention to intellectualism than empiricism in the
*Phenomenology*, "Merleau-Ponty's position is a good deal closer to intellectualism
than empiricism." (Baldwin 2004, 12,13) Though Merleau-Ponty's rejection of the
Lockean view of perception as constituted of sensations or simple ideas is compatible with a direct realism, Merleau-Ponty’s remark about transforming the phenomenal field into a transcendental one (PhP, 63), and his emphasis on the need to ‘reawaken perception’, i.e. to move away from the commonsense view that perception is caused by the objects which, in fact, it constitutes, clearly distinguish the author of the *Phenomenology* as a transcendental idealist. (Baldwin 2004, 15, cf. PhP, 63, 57)

According to Baldwin, the central thesis of the *Phenomenology* is presented in the following quote:

> Bodily experience forces us to acknowledge an imposition of meaning which is not the work of a universal constituting consciousness, a meaning which clings to certain contents. My body is that meaningful core which behaves like a general function and which nevertheless exists, and is susceptible to disease. (PhP, 147)

Baldwin poses the question of whether such a thesis can be granted genuine philosophical significance, or whether it is not merely a psychological result. Of course, if the latter turns out to be true, then Merleau-Ponty may well be guilty of a form of psychologism for attempting to come to philosophical conclusions from a psychological premise.

The most obvious way in which the thesis above can be given philosophical significance is, Baldwin tells us, to treat it as constituting "the basis for an idealist, or at least anti-realist, theory of meaning which fills out the sketchy immanentist idealism whose possibility I characterised only analogically earlier" (Baldwin 2004, 19). The idea is that body intentionality is supposed to clarify that realm of pre-objective experience from which all meaning derives, and to whose presence and significance genuine philosophical reflection is supposed to reawaken us. For his part, Baldwin regards the idea of tracing all meaning back to such a pre-objective experience or lifeworld, as incapable of commanding "serious assent" in light of twentieth century analytic philosophy from Carnap to Kripke. (Baldwin 2004, 20)

Even though we may rely on ordinary pre-scientific experience to help fix the reference of terms like ‘nebula’, this method of reference fixing is just a ladder we climb before we dispose of it. … So the realist, having noted Merleau-Ponty’s dependence upon this untenable theory of meaning, can pass on unmoved. (Baldwin 2004, 20)
It is possible, Baldwin contends, to extract a softer, pragmatic form of epistemological foundationalism from the *Phenomenology*, something close to Wittgenstein's view of the indispensability of common-sense in *On Certainty*. However, Baldwin admits that this "would be a major distortion of [Merleau-Ponty's] position", since it neglects his claims about "an intentionality that underpins the overt intentionality of judgement". (Baldwin 2004, 21)

Finally, Baldwin resigns himself to treating the philosophical significance of the *Phenomenology* in terms of the philosophy of psychology. That is:

> to recognise, first, that the concept of intentionality always brings with it normative considerations, since in characterising a psychological state in intentional terms, as directed to an 'object' of some kind, it is implied that there is a way in which the state can be appraised as inaccurate, incorrect, or inappropriate; and, second, that the question of the legitimacy of this kind of normative appraisal of psychological states is philosophical. (Baldwin 2004, 21)

Thus, having considered and dismissed Merleau-Ponty's own attempt to establish a transcendental idealism, Baldwin returns to the philosophical aspect of the mundane reading (discussed in the last chapter) as the only viable interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy.

*Ontology, not phenomenology*

The fundamental incompatibility of Merleau-Ponty with transcendental phenomenology is a view that has, until recently, received strong support from mainstream scholarship on both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. Complementing Baldwin from a pro-Husserlian perspective, we find Merleau-Ponty's commitment to the transcendental tradition dismissed by J. N. Mohanty on the grounds that by substituting the living body for constituting consciousness his interpretation of intentionality amounts to a compromise with causal thought. (Mohanty 1989, §2.5)

Similarly, Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1957/67; 1967) has argued that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is guided by ontological presuppositions borrowed from the philosophy of existence. An existential metaphysics is presupposed throughout the phenomenological account of perception, but never justified. The result is a phenomenology that fails to be a rigorous transcendental phenomenology.
A number of criticisms of Merleau-Ponty can be understood as variations on this same theme. Zaner, for example, argues that Merleau-Ponty's existential commitments are presupposed throughout the work but never justified. As a result, Merleau-Ponty does not offer a logic of phenomena, but a logos of the ontos of anthropos, a logic of the being of man. Natalie Depraz's worry that Merleau-Ponty is insufficiently concerned with the question of the praxis of phenomenology (Depraz 2002), and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's depiction of Merleau-Ponty as a "Man in Search of a Method" (Sheets-Johnstone 1999, ch.6) are two more recent examples.

In one way or another, all these criticisms argue that, by introducing ontological themes such as being-in-the-world, the lived body and freedom, Merleau-Ponty is unfaithful to transcendental phenomenology, particularly the reduction, and that such themes distort the subsequent phenomenological analyses. Consider, for example, this remark of Ricoeur's:

Phenomenology becomes strict when the status of the appearing of things (in the broadest sense of the term) becomes problematical. … In this strict sense the question of being, the ontological question, is excluded in advance from phenomenology, either provisionally or definitely. The question of knowing that which is in an absolute sense is placed "between parentheses," and the manner of appearing is treated as an autonomous problem. Phenomenology in the strict sense begins as soon as this distinction is reflected upon for its own sake, whatever the final result may be. (Ricoeur 1967, 202)

A philosophy of transcendence?

The conceptions of the transcendental tradition employed as grounds to dismiss the significance of Merleau-Ponty's relationship with that tradition are, however, rather narrow, and open to dispute. Dan Zahavi argues that, even though it would be erroneous to classify it as a "metaphysical idealism", as Madison's reading suggested, Husserlian phenomenology is not therefore "metaphysically neutral", as Ricoeur and Mohanty claimed. One can recognize that traditional metaphysics is "pre-critical or naïve" without implying that transcendental phenomenology is not concerned with metaphysical issues or is indifferently amenable to all metaphysical positions.

To argue like this is to make transcendental phenomenology indistinguishable from something quite different, namely phenomenological psychology. (Zahavi 2003, 62)
Zahavi would therefore disagree with the basis of Ricoeur's picture of Merleau-Ponty as subordinating transcendental phenomenology to existential ontology: namely, he would dispute the notion that transcendental phenomenology by definition excludes "the question of being".

A more inclusive description of transcendental phenomenology is offered by Anthony Steinbock. Steinbock suggests that "Transcendental phenomenology is a phenomenology of transcendence." (Steinbock 1995, 14) This is important, first of all, because this undermines the centrality of consciousness to the endeavour:

> It is to the end of analyzing how … transcendences are accepted in terms of their modes of givenness that the role of the "subject" is introduced into the phenomenological account of the object. The turn to the subject, in other words, is only one (initial) consequence of this basic concern with transcendence. (ibid.)

So, an objection to construing transcendental subjectivity as constituting consciousness needn't amount to nor commit one to a rejection of transcendental phenomenology.

However, secondly, it is important because, when construed in this way, Merleau-Ponty appears to share the same concerns. Even more important, though, is the fact that his concern with transcendence actually qualifies the description of the role of the body in perception, suggesting that divorcing that description from the question of transcendence – and thus sequestering the transcendental aspects of the Phenomenology – may limit or possibly even distort it in some way. 27

In his chapter on the Thing and the Natural World, Merleau-Ponty considers the relationship between the sides of a die and the die itself. "The die is there, lying in the world. When the subject moves round it, there appear, not signs, but sides of the die." (PhP, 324) The perceived profiles that appear are already sides of the die, they "intercommunicate, run into each other, and all radiate from a central

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27 A concern with transcendence is not sufficient for a transcendental philosophical perspective, but it is necessary. To believe, as the mundane reading suggests, that the philosophical question of transcendence can be finessed by abandoning representationalism and adopting a body-centred view of perception, is certainly to abandon any attempt at a transcendental philosophy. We might construe the relationship between transcendence and transcendental philosophy by saying that transcendental philosophy (including phenomenology) is characterised by the sense that the phenomenon of transcendence poses deep methodological problems for philosophy. Kant's copernican turn and Husserl's reduction are methodological responses on behalf of philosophical inquiry to the problem of transcendence. Where it offers a methodological response to transcendence (which is usually construed in representationalist terms), the mundane reading consistently regards these to be adequately addressed within psychology or cognitive science.
Würfelhaftigkeit [dice-ishness] which is the mystical link between them." (PhP, 324) The question is: How are we to make sense of this Würfelhaftigkeit?

At first glance, Merleau-Ponty claims that the thing itself is nothing other than the correlate of a corporeal stance. The "pre-objective unity of the thing is correlative to the pre-objective unity of the body" (PhP, 314-15) It is "constituted in the hold which my body takes upon it; it is not first of all a meaning for the understanding, but a structure accessible to inspection by the body." (PhP, 320)

On the basis of statements like these, it can appear as though Merleau-Ponty argues that the thing itself, the Würfelhaftigkeit of the die, to which its profiles refer, is actually the thing as the target of my bodily comportment. That it is "the goal of a bodily teleology, the norm of our psycho-physiological setting." (PhP, 322) However, Merleau-Ponty qualifies this claim. He writes that "we have not exhausted the meaning of 'the thing' by defining it as the correlative of our body and our life", and suggests that conceiving of it as a goal or norm provides us with "merely a psychological definition ... which reduces the thing to those experience in which we encounter it." (PhP, 322-23)

By its own right, this may seem to be a surprising and contradictory statement for a phenomenologist to make. Isn't phenomenology's philosophical strategy precisely to reduce the thing to the experiences in which we encounter it? But this is a simplification of phenomenology which distorts it so that it is indistinguishable from introspection. Merleau-Ponty explicitly rejects such a characterisation of phenomenology in the Preface. It will become clearer what Merleau-Ponty thinks is wrong with such a "reduction" once we have described what is neglected, and what is neglected, according to Merleau-Ponty, is the aseity or transcendence of the thing.

One cannot, as we have said, conceive any perceived thing without someone to perceive it. But the fact remains that the thing presents itself to the person who perceives it as a thing in itself, and thus poses the problem of a genuine in-itself-for-us. (PhP, 322)

What poses the problem of a genuine in-itself-for-us is the phenomenon of the thing itself. That is, Merleau-Ponty does not think that transcendence is only a problem for varieties of objectivism, so it is not a problem that can be ignored once one has adopted an embodied perspective on cognition.
Merleau-Ponty's project is that of a transcendental phenomenology, in so far as it sets itself the task of accounting for "all problems of transcendence" (PhP, 433). The mundane reading of Merleau-Ponty does not direct itself to the same project, in so far as it is content to rest at a critique of forms of representationalism.

The all-too-human world of the mundane interpretation

I have focused on the transcendence of the perceived thing, because the mundane interpretation of Merleau-Ponty concerns itself solely with empirical perception, and in doing so, skews its reading of Merleau-Ponty's conception of the sensible and the body. The mundane interpretation focuses on our capacity to deal with familiar things. The picture is overwhelmingly one of the body as an expert at dealing with its surroundings. The concept of "know-how" is frequently employed, and to good effect, in combatting the presupposition that all intelligence is the result of the combination and manipulation of explicit, symbolic representations. The body is a repository of "know-how" and thus provides a normative framework in which one's modes of engagement with the environment can be corrected to achieve an optimal perceptual situation.

Dreyfus, for example, speaks of "abiding in the meaningful", i.e. of being at home in the world, a world which constantly offers us situations which are familiar and motivating for us. Consider the way that John Haugeland summarizes the third part of *What Computer’s Can’t Do*:

Its principal theses are: that human intelligence is essentially embodied; that intelligent bodies are essentially situated (embedded in the world); and that the relevant situation (world) is essentially human. (Haugeland 1996, 119)

It is the presentation of the world as "essentially human" that I find inadequate. But let me make myself a little clearer by emphasizing that I do not object to following characterisation:

*When* we are at home in the world, the meaningful objects embedded in their context of references among which we live are not a model of the world stored in our mind or brain: *they are the world itself.* (Dreyfus 1992, 265f, my emphasis)

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28 Cf. “The human world... is prestructured in terms of human purposes and concerns in such a way that what counts as an object or is significant about an object already is a function of, or embodies, that concern.” (Dreyfus 1992, 261)
It is one thing to say that the world itself is meaningful for us when we are at home in it, and quite another to suggest that this exhausts the world's significance for us. For if it did so exhaust the meaning of our situation, there would be no need to make ourselves at home. Nothing would present itself as "a genuine in-itself-for-us." (PhP, 322)

This problem, which is a deep concern of Merleau-Ponty's, does not rate a mention within the mundane interpretation – and its neglect has interesting ramifications. The first of these is that there is a tendency to emphasize the absence of any interface between body and perceived objects, i.e. to treat them as components of a single system.

To say that intelligence abides in the meaningful is not to say that it is surrounded by or directed toward the meaningful, as if they were two separate things. ... Intelligence is nothing other than the overall interactive and interdependent structure of meaningful behavior and objects. (Haugeland 1996, 125)

While this is perhaps an important step in the refutation of representationalism, from the perspective of an attempt to make sense of the perceived as in-itself-for-us, treating perceiving body and perceiving objects as components of a single system does not resolve the problem. At best it reiterates the actual problem, which is how to conceive of the transcendence of the perceived without locating it in some transcendent realm to which we have only indirect or supersensible access.

Sebastian Gardner criticises the reading of Merleau-Ponty for cognitive science in a similar way. He suggests that "a non-metaphysical philosophy of psychology culled from the Phenomenology of Perception would have an oblique relation to what Merleau-Ponty actually argues." (Gardner Forthcoming, 26) Though it does so at the expense of any account of a reduction, Gardner's reading is important in that it locates Merleau-Ponty within the transcendental tradition and attributes philosophical significance to this. According to Gardner, Merleau-Ponty is concerned with accounting for the "objectual character of experience". Merleau-Ponty's contribution lies in arguing that:

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29 In his paper, what I have described as the mundane reading is labelled the "Psychological Reading". I prefer my term because a) it does not presuppose an opposition between psychology and transcendental philosophy, and b) it allows me to speak of the philosophical aspects of this reading.

30 This is part of a more general interpretive strategy on Gardner's part, to understand the existential phenomenologists as responding to issues raised within the German idealist tradition. For example, Gardner stresses Sartre's proximity to Fichte in Gardner (2005).
the fundamental ground and explanation of the objectual character of experience lies in perception conceived as pre-objective: the pre-objective being of perception is, he argues, what makes it possible for a subject to be presented with an articulated realm of objects, and it also allows us to understand how reflection can be led astray into thinking that what makes this realm possible is instead either the objects themselves or our thoughts of them. (Gardner Forthcoming, 8)

Gardner challenges the mundane reading to account for the metaphysical claims that one finds in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. For example, Gardner interprets Merleau-Ponty's claim that the figure-ground structure is "the very definition of the phenomenon of perception" in a very different manner to Carman. (PhP, 4; cf supra) This remark can be treated – as it is by Carman's mundane reading – as articulating a claim about what any theory of perception must explain, and as a critique of the positing of impressions as a purely theoretical postulate, without any phenomenological support. However, Gardner argues that it can also be understood as endorsing "Kant's claim that the subject's mode of cognition has explanatory priority over the objects of cognition." (Gardner Forthcoming, 7) This is the first key move of Gardner's transcendental interpretation: what the mundane reading treats as an *explicandum*, to be explained by a more phenomenologically accurate cognitive science, the transcendental reading treats as an *explanans*.

In his own summary of the *Phenomenology*, published in the *Primacy of Perception* collection, (PriP, 13) Merleau-Ponty offers the example of perception of an object whose hidden side is unseen, and asks after the status of this hidden side. Merleau-Ponty rejects three different philosophical analyses:

1. 'I *represent* to myself the sides of this lamp which are not seen.'

2. 'The unseen sides are *anticipated* by me.'

3. 'The unseen sides are simply *possible perceptions*.'

He rejects these analyses, because they do not do justice to the presence of the hidden side. Each analysis explains only how I might know the unseen side without living it. In place of these, he offers only the claim that "The unseen side is present in its own way." (PriP, 14)

Gardner argues that Merleau-Ponty's response "does not amount to an analysis at all." There is no "rival explanation of the cognitive achievement in question"
being offered here, and in Gardner's opinion, Merleau-Ponty is "simply refusing the question".

Merleau-Ponty is inviting us to regard the content of perception as not requiring explanation or permitting analysis … This makes full sense on the Transcendental Interpretation, since if perception is a fundamental transcendental condition, then it could not receive explanation. (Gardner Forthcoming, 13)

If this is what Merleau-Ponty is up to, then it has the important consequence of being entirely tangential to the concerns of the naturalist.

The Transcendental Interpretation may not give Merleau-Ponty an argument against the naturalist, but it does give him an argument – an argument addressed to his transcendental predecessors. (Gardner Forthcoming, 13)

Empiricism, naturalism, scientific realism, physical reductionism are all present and collectively, play an important role within the Phenomenology. However, Merleau-Ponty is not out to offer a convincing refutation of them – and thus, criticisms like Baldwin's that Merleau-Ponty fails to refute them miss their mark. Rather, Merleau-Ponty wants to show how his predecessors within the transcendental tradition fail to break adequately with these views. (Gardner Forthcoming, 12)

From arguments to motives

Ultimately, I think that Gardner misses something important because of his focus on understanding the Phenomenology as offering a transcendental metaphysics, i.e. an a priori explanation of the objectual character of experience. He is right that Merleau-Ponty takes the transcendental standpoint as a sort of fait accompli, but not as the premise of an argument that would seek to correct the intellectualist characterisation of the transcendental.

Merleau-Ponty is not concerned with providing an argument for the transcendental standpoint, but he is concerned with how to take up that standpoint. Gardner comes close to acknowledging this in his discussion of Merleau-Ponty's conception of philosophy, i.e. his view of the transcendental standpoint as a kind of experience, but he never considers the problem of achieving that experience. In fact, the closest Gardner comes is in pointing out that there will be a problem for Merleau-Ponty in achieving a transcendental
standpoint, so long as he construes that standpoint as the 'inverse' of common sense (VI, 157; cf. Gardner Forthcoming, 10). 31

This challenge is closely related to one Henry Pietersma proposes. Pietersma suggests that, since phenomenological ontology rests upon a transcendental turn, we should ask: how is this transcendental turn justified? How, that is, does the transcendental phenomenologist argue that the realism of common sense and science is inadequate and in need of transcendental repair? Pietersma lists the variety of ways in which transcendental philosophers characterise realism – as naïve, abstract, unphilosophical, etc – and notes that this is really nothing but name calling, unless it stands for an argument.

The controversy is clearly dialectical. The transcendentalist argument begins by assuming that there is a problem, but the realist retorts by denying there is. How is the matter going to be settled and by whom? Who can decide the fundamental question at issue: What is, and what is not, a problem? Use of terms such as "abstract" and "concrete" (and the others mentioned above) does not decide any philosophical point. (Pietersma 2006, 575)

The controversy revolves around the question of motive for adopting a transcendental standpoint – traditionally, some objection to realism. Now, while it may be true, as Pietersma suggests, that Heidegger presumes a motive for the transcendental turn (Pietersma claims that he fails to make its significance for his ontology explicit), I would argue that this is not true of Merleau-Ponty. Quite the contrary. For Merleau-Ponty, the motives for adopting the transcendental standpoint are constantly at the forefront of his thinking – to such an extent that it is true to say that he barely mentions transcendental philosophy except to remind us of its duty to take account of its motives.

What's more, as I'll show, this concern with motives is connected to his interest in psychology, and particularly, cases from the annals of pathological psychology. Thus, the question of whether a non-transcendental reading of Merleau-Ponty is legitimate, and the question of whether he has an adequate motive for adopting a transcendental standpoint, are deeply intertwined.

31 Gardner puts Merleau-Ponty a little too close to Kant, and a little too far away from Husserl.
2.2 Pathology and the Sceptic

The role of the sceptic in transcendental philosophy

Merleau-Ponty's critique of classical transcendental philosophy is that it cannot become truly radical until it takes account of its own origin as reflection.

Reflection cannot be thorough-going, or bring a complete elucidation of its object, if it does not arrive at awareness of itself as well as of its results. We must not only adopt a reflective attitude, in an impregnable Cogito, but furthermore reflect on this reflection, understand the natural situation which it is conscious of succeeding and which is therefore part of its definition ... A philosophy becomes transcendental, or radical, not by taking its place in absolute consciousness without mentioning the ways by which this is reached, but by considering itself as a problem ... (PhP, 62-63)

This is normally taken as a general point against the presumption that our pre-reflective life (the perceived world) can be entirely recuperated by reflection. Taken this way, it places a lower limit on reflection, but does nothing to modify the methodology of phenomenology. In this section, I want to discuss the methodological significance of this point. In particular, I want to try to demonstrate how this critique of transcendental philosophy relates to Merleau-Ponty's interest in reporting cases of pathological psychology.

Transcendental philosophy is no doubt a complex and heterogenous beast, but one common way of approaching it is as a response to scepticism. Kant famously cites Hume's scepticism as having awakened him from his dogmatic slumbers, and is commonly read as attempting to provide transcendental arguments that will effectively put to rest any sceptical doubts about the objectivity of knowledge. Kant's search for the conditions for the possibility of knowledge is therefore taken to be at the service of an attempt to show that knowledge is indeed possible.

The scepticism to which transcendental philosophy traditionally responds is that of a radical sceptic, or one who "cannot help wondering whether the whole of

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32 Setting aside, for just a moment, the question of Hume's sincerity in proposing or endorsing his sceptical arguments.
33 Kant (2004/1783, 10)
34 As opposed to the so-called 'healthy' scepticism or methodological doubt that is an integral part of any rational inquiry.
experience is anything more than a conviction or a vast web of beliefs to which we adhere." (Pietersma 2000, 13) Now, it may be possible to argue that such concerns are in fact only apparent, and should not really concern us. That is, it may be possible to find a way of ignoring the sceptic. However, what distinguishes a transcendental philosopher is that she takes the concerns of the sceptic seriously. A sensitivity to scepticism may be what those of us who feel what Strawson called 'a tenderness for transcendental arguments' have in common.35 One will only be in the business of refuting the sceptic, as the transcendental philosopher is, if one sees the sceptic's position as worth discussing, indeed, requiring refutation. Thanks to the sceptic, the transcendental philosopher can no longer treat the possession of knowledge as unproblematic. Her slogan could therefore be the following: "take scepticism seriously by demonstrating the possibility of knowledge by way of a refutation of the sceptic." (Pietersma 2000, 13)

The transcendental response to the sceptic is based on the recognition that sceptical arguments thrive on a range of presuppositions that the sceptic shares with the rest of us. In particular, the sceptic shares a broadly realistic approach to the objects of knowledge – what Husserl described, at least initially, as the 'natural attitude'. To know (or perceive) is to know about (or to perceive) something that exists independently of our knowing it. The sceptic raises a series of concerns about whether such a knowledge (or perception) is indeed possible.

This helps to explain transcendental philosophy's presentation of realism as "dogmatic". I mentioned that scepticism thrives on the presuppositions it shares with our general ('natural') attitude toward things, an attitude which is broadly realistic. From a transcendental perspective, a theory of knowledge or perception which attempts to present this pre-philosophical attitude as a philosophical one (Realism with a capital R), is dogmatic or insufficiently self-critical precisely because it fails to take the sceptic seriously enough. Philosophical Realism should be embarrassed by its proximity to the scandal of scepticism, and the fact that it is not suggests that it is, to some extent, uncritical of itself. Unlike the realism of everyday experience, since Realism claims to be philosophical, it can be held responsible for this lack of self-criticism and accused of dogmatism. The

accusation that Realism is dogmatic is closely linked to its relationship to scepticism, in particular, its failure to take that relationship seriously enough.36

Dogmatism, scepticism and philosophical reflection are thus closely related terms in the transcendental tradition. The aspect I’d like to focus on is that scepticism is much more than the negation of philosophical reflection, it actually motivates the latter. The sceptic plays the role of a kind of catalyst that exposes the need for a transcendental reflection in the sense of a critique of presuppositions. This is no doubt why both Kant and Husserl regarded Hume as absolutely essential to the development of their thought. Were it not for the sceptic, philosophy would remain dogmatic in the sense that Realism is dogmatic. Hopefully, it’s becoming clear that I want to stress the positive significance of scepticism in the triadic relationship that animates the transcendental tradition. I think that this conception of the relationship is the one that Merleau-Ponty inherits.

The structure of the transcendental approach that I’ve outlined encourages us to view the sceptic as the motive for transcendental reflection. Returning to Merleau-Ponty’s critique of this tradition, it seems that, when he speaks of the need for transcendental philosophy to take account of its motivation, Merleau-Ponty is suggesting that it needs to acknowledge this debt it owes to the sceptic.

There are two problems with this claim that immediately arise. It seems at odds with the standard interpretation of this critique, in terms of the impossibility of a complete recuperation in reflection of our entire pre-reflective life. This is one problem. More striking still is the fact that, as we’ve learned from Gardner, Merleau-Ponty does not actually provide any transcendental arguments in the Phenomenology of Perception. We certainly find criticisms of a kind of dogmatic thought, though Merleau-Ponty’s target – objectivism – is broader than classical realism. We also find philosophical reflections in the transcendental sense of attempts to articulate the conditions of experience. But no refutations of scepticism are offered. In fact, the figure of the sceptic barely appears at all in the Phenomenology.

A figure that does re-appear in the Phenomenology, over and over again, is that of the pathological subject. I want to suggest that recognizing a parallel between the role of this pathological subject in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy and the role of the sceptic in traditional transcendental philosophy is imperative to

36 For a similar argument, see Putnam (1996).
understanding Merleau-Ponty’s proximity to and distance from the tradition. The key idea is that the pathological subject offers a similarly motivating scandal that exposes a latent dogmatism.

Before we move on to discuss how the pathological subject plays the role of the sceptic in Merleau-Ponty’s thought, it is essential that we get clear on the positive significance of scepticism I mentioned above. Treating the sceptic in this way – the way that Merleau-Ponty implies (at least in part) by the claim that, in order to become radical, transcendental philosophy must take account of its motives – changes the nature of the threat to philosophy or, more generally, to reason. Whereas, it is often assumed that it is the sceptic who undermines our philosophical capabilities, I am arguing that – at least on Merleau-Ponty’s reading of the tradition – it is dogmatism that poses the real threat. The sceptic, however unintentionally, raises the alarm.

On its own, I think this reading of the tradition has some merit, since it allows several apparently contradictory aspects or positions to appear as complementary. For one, the sceptic need not endorse the position that she represents. She may be as surprised by her position as the transcendental philosopher who attempts to refute it. Hume’s reluctance in his scepticism may thus not in any way undermine its significance. Secondly, treating dogmatism as the threat and the sceptic as revealing that threat undermines the significance of any argument that transcendental philosophy is unnecessary simply because the sceptic does not require refutation. As a refutation of scepticism, transcendental arguments can deter those who suspect that such a refutation cannot succeed, or for those who see it as entirely unnecessary, and a consequence of taking scepticism “more seriously than it deserves” (Stern 2000, 4). This position becomes particularly tempting when what seems to be threatened by the sceptic is some kind of infallible knowledge. Such a deflationary position with regard to transcendental philosophy presupposes that responding to the sceptic is the objective, and not merely the occasion, of a transcendental inquiry. If we regard the sceptic as a motivating position, it needn’t be definitive of the inquiry it motivates. There may be other ways of making the need to avoid dogmatism palpable, which needn’t necessarily involve scepticism. Thirdly, one could respond to the claim that scepticism is in fact the product of, and not the justification for, transcendental ambitions, by saying that this transformation of a motivating factor into an effect of that which is motivated is common to our
understanding of motives generally, and is itself a product of a dogmatic restriction of the possible modes of relation to causal or justificatory modes.

We can also already see how such a view of the sceptic as the motive, but not the real target, of transcendental philosophy might link up with Husserl's critique of the tradition in *Crisis*. There, Husserl suggests that while critical thought managed (in his opinion) to demonstrate the necessity of a transcendental turn, it failed to demonstrate the possibility of such a move, in particular from out of a subjectivistic psychology. (Husserl 1954/70, §57, esp. 200f) We could say that the necessity is demonstrated by arguing that this is the only way to adequately respond to the sceptic. The Lockean psychology of the day was then criticised for being at odds with the results of the ensuing transcendental inquiry. In Husserl's view, the reason that these results fell upon deaf ears was that the transcendental inquiry seemed so utterly unrelated to the practice of science, and no way was found of showing why the psychologist *qua* psychologist should be concerned by the threat of scepticism. It could conceivably be argued that Husserl's own attempt to make the need for transcendental reflection pertinent to the sciences depends upon seeing the crisis that Husserl points toward as irreconcilable in any other way.

**Schneider, pathology and the sceptic**

I now want to look at the criticisms of intellectualism and empiricism in light of my claim that the pathological body plays the role that the sceptic plays in critical thought.

The negative, critical moment of the *Phenomenology* is sometimes taken as simply clearing the ground for an alternative, Gestaltist, life-world ontology. My argument, however, is that Merleau-Ponty does not critique intellectualism and empiricism simply to make this non-objectivist ontology more plausible. He is demonstratively performing a kind of "transcendental strategy". In the context of such a strategy, whatever ontology is generated plays the role of a transcendental metaphysics.

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37 In any case, this would jar with his claim in the working notes to the Visible and the Invisible that "One cannot make a direct ontology." (VI, 179)

38 This is a term I borrow from Stern (2000), who distinguishes such strategies, which (traditionally, at least) are ways of responding to or refuting the sceptic, from transcendental arguments which have the form: For Y to be possible, X must be the case. Naturally, transcendental arguments (usually) play a central role in any transcendental strategy. As I will show, however, that is not true in Merleau-Ponty’s case.
In order to understand Merleau-Ponty's transcendental strategy, we should be just as concerned with how intellectualism and empiricism come to be criticised, as we are with any articulation of that criticism. Intellectualism and empiricism come to be criticised in the wake of the discovery that they render pathological phenomena invisible\(^39\). The intellectualist reduces pathology to recalcitrance (deep down, the madman knows he's mad\(^40\)), while the empiricist evacuates the distinction between normal and pathological of any normative significance.

In the case of Schneider, we have a patient who exhibits a dissociation of pointing and grasping behaviours. Schneider's pointing behaviours, having been entirely severed from his pre-reflective habits, require reflective, conscious control, and have deteriorated as a result.

A patient [Schneider], asked to point to some part of his body, his nose for example, can only manage to do so if he is allowed to take hold of it. If the patient is set the task of interrupting the movement before its completion, or if he is allowed to touch his nose only with a wooden ruler, the action becomes impossible. (PhP, 103)

Merleau-Ponty's criticisms of empiricism and intellectualism in this section focus on the fact that these theoretical paradigms cannot accommodate the peculiarities of Schneider's pathology. Empiricism cannot help us understand how it is that Schneider could be able to grasp his nose, but not touch it with a ruler, because it is committed to restricting itself to explanations in terms of differences in physiological stimuli. Intellectualism, on the other hand, because it restricts itself to explanations in terms of a symbolic function that constitutes geometrical space, sees the collapse of this function in Schneider's inability to point, but then cannot explain his ability to perform other concrete spatial tasks.

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\(^39\) “Between empiricist explanation and intellectualist reflection there is a fundamental kinship, which is their common ignorance of phenomena. Both construct the hallucinatory phenomenon instead of living it. [For example, with regard to intellectualism] if the hallucinated subject objectively knows or thinks of his hallucination as being what it is, how is hallucinatory deception possible?” (PhP, 336)

\(^40\) “Analytic reflection believes that it knows what the dreamer or the schizophrenic experience better than the dreamer or the schizophrenic himself. What is more, the philosopher believes that, in reflection, he has a better knowledge what he perceives than he has in perception itself. And it is under these circumstances alone that he is able to reject human spaces as confused appearances of the one true, objective space, … We cannot have it both ways: either the person who experiences something knows at the time what he is experiencing, in which case the madman, the dreamer or the subject of perception must be taken at their word, and we merely need to confirm that their language in fact expresses what they are experiencing. Or else the person with the experience is no judge of what he experiences, and in that case the test of self-evidence may be an illusion. In order to divest the experience of dreams, myths or perception of all positive value, and in order to reintegrate these various spaces to geometrical space, we must to all intents and purposes deny that people ever dream, or that they ever go mad, or ever really and truly perceive anything.” (PhP, 289-290)
It must therefore be concluded that 'grasping' or 'touching,' even for the body, is different from 'pointing.' (PhP, 103)

Schneider does indeed demonstrate that there can be grasping without pointing, concrete movement without abstract movement, i.e. that something can be present in a concrete, practical space without having a determinate, abstract location in geometrical space. And Merleau-Ponty does want to criticise intellectualism and empiricism for being unable to explain Schneider's condition, because of their commitment to levelling existence down to one of two forms of being: idea or thing. But often this is taken to mean that grasping and pointing can be entirely separated, or else to associate pointing with a representationalist view and suggest that this shows that our most basic engagement with the world is not through representations. Remarkably, some commentators go on to look for the distinctive physiological basis for grasping behaviour.  

What this ignores is the fact that what is described here is a pathological phenomenon.

In a way, it is easy to see how such a reading gets off the ground. After all, grasping behaviours are the ones that can't be accommodated by intellectualist psychology, and most of Merleau-Ponty's supporters are out to refute cognitivism as a kind of intellectualism. But it needs to be said that this reading misunderstands Schneider's pathology. Schneider can passively grasp, and he can actively reason, but he can't point. For Schneider there is no internal relation between the constituted objects he explicitly perceives, and the situations that motivate his bodily responses – "perception is not carried directly into movement". (PhP, 132) It is as though Schneider's powers of constitution are entirely divorced from his corporeal existence, that is, from his life.

Schneider's behaviour has bifurcated into passive and active moments, into bodily habits and mental activities. Schneider can move his arms, but only as instruments. His explicit intentions are not taken up by his body, though familiar situations release complex grasping behaviours from him, as if by magic. Merleau-Ponty describes his situation thus:

The world in its entirety no longer suggests any meaning to him and conversely the meanings which occur to him are not embodied any longer in the given world. We shall say, in a word, that the world no longer has any physiognomy for him. (PhP, 132)

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41 This is how the proposal that Merleau-Ponty advocates for a kind of non-conceptual content gets going, for example, in the work of Sean Kelly.
The lesson to be learned from Schneider is that this separation of activity and passivity is pathological. The world no longer offers Schneider motives for action. Behaviour is split into the passive introjection of cause and the active projection of intentions, which are entirely unrelated in Schneider’s world. It would be a mistake to take Schneider’s situation as demonstrating the independence for the rest of us of grasping from pointing in a normal subject. When Merleau-Ponty writes that "the normal subject reckons with the possible," he means to indicate that, for normal subjects and in opposition to Schneider, abstract situations engage concrete motilities. We are able to place ourselves in imaginary (virtual) situations, such as pretending that one is a soldier, in such a way that those situations "speak" directly to our bodies; for example, by calling for a fluent, concrete salute.

Recognizing this opens up a reversal in our view of Schneider’s relationship to empiricism and intellectualism. As well as being the basis for Merleau-Ponty’s criticism of intellectualism and empiricism, especially of their presentation as the only legitimate alternatives, because he escapes analysis under both, Schneider actually also embodies the opposition between them. That is, Schneider reveals the intimate connection between the two positions by living the either-or of their opposition. This adds to the case for their untenability, because Schneider’s condition is clearly pathological. In other words, the pathology that Schneider lives – the disjunction of the intellectualist idea and the empiricist mechanism – becomes a kind of corporeal instantiation of our own objectivist presuppositions.

Note that Schneider now embodies or represents our own presuppositions to ourselves, not negatively, in terms of their limitations, but positively. Merleau-Ponty trades on the intuitive strangeness of Schneider’s existence to prompt an alienation from our own dogmatic modes of reflection.

How does this relate to the idea that the pathological subject plays the role of the sceptic in Merleau-Ponty’s brand of transcendental philosophy? Merleau-Ponty’s...
gripe is with objectivism, no doubt. But as I suggested earlier, it is just as important to notice how intellectualism and empiricism come to be criticised as what they are criticised for. It is the pathological figure of Schneider who, as it were, motivates the critique by embodying that objectivism itself. In the same way that the sceptic reveals the dangers of dogmatic realism by embracing it, and then showing that it undercuts our sense of ourselves as rational or as holding justified beliefs, Schneider's pathological status puts objectivism at odds with our understanding of ourselves as normal, non-pathological subjects.

The sceptic motivates a transcendental reflection that attempts to recuperate a distance between ourselves and the sceptic's position. Similarly, the discussion of Schneider's pathology motivates a transcendental reflection that attempts to recuperate a distance between ourselves and that pathological condition.

As has often been said, there is a diagnostic aspect to transcendental reflection, in that in attempting to refute the sceptic, it uncovers a 'large piece of philosophizing' on which the sceptic's argument rests. I think it is important to point out that this diagnosis actually cuts both ways. It cannot be construed simply as a diagnosis of the sceptic, since it is also true that the sceptic's position is a parasitic one, and relies for its bite on its proximity to our own position, so that the diagnosis is at once of how the sceptic might have come to think the way she does, and how it could have been possible for us to think that way along with her.

If this account is correct, then it also becomes clear why, as Gardner points out, we do not find in the Phenomenology anything that would count as a transcendental argument. In replacing phenomena of pathology for the figure of the sceptic in the role of motivating transcendental reflection, Merleau-Ponty removes the sense in which that reflection aims at any kind of refutation, even though, following Merleau-Ponty, we still remain in a position to criticise certain ways of thinking as dogmatic, precisely for failing to be appropriately motivated by the phenomena in question.

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44 Stern describes the “diagnostic element” of a transcendental argument as that through which such an argument can be seen as an attempt, “not … to establish some truth that otherwise we would not be sure of, but (more negatively) to undercut the ‘large piece of philosophizing’ on which the sceptical position is built, but which the sceptic leaves unquestioned.” (Stern 2000, 5) Merleau-Ponty can be read as taking this diagnostic element very seriously, indeed as central to the whole entreprise of transcendental philosophy.
There are, broadly speaking, two ways of responding to scepticism in the
tradition. One is to ignore the sceptic, and the other is to refute her.\textsuperscript{45} What both positions share is a desire to, as it were, \textit{be done with scepticism}. By contrast, in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy, the pathological subject provokes quite a different response. Although pathologies (along with other genetic phenomena like learning) motivate his transcendental reflection as the sceptic has traditionally done, there is no attempt to be done with pathology.\textsuperscript{46} Quite the contrary, the aim is constantly to find the positive significance of the pathological phenomenon in question, and if we consider the \textit{Phenomenology} from a methodological standpoint, it’s clear that Merleau-Ponty actively seeks out such phenomenon. From his own perspective of what makes transcendental philosophy radical, Merleau-Ponty’s is radical in making its motives explicit and incorporating their discovery and recognition as an integral part of doing transcendental philosophy.

\textbf{Intersubjectivity and the reduction}

Readers of the \textit{Phenomenology} might choose to ignore or downplay the transcendental aspect of Merleau-Ponty’s thought, either because they regard Merleau-Ponty himself as rejecting the transcendental tradition (e.g. Dreyfus), or because they consider his arguments against realism to be founded on a spurious account of meaning (e.g. Baldwin). What I’ve tried to show above is that another reading of Merleau-Ponty is possible.

What my alternative reading makes immediately plain is the central importance of intersubjectivity to the transcendental aspect of the \textit{Phenomenology}. Merleau-Ponty’s entire transcendental strategy is built on the presumption of the possibility of the perception of others as others. It’s important to note that this reverses a convention among commentators to treat the problem of intersubjectivity as a central point of dispute between transcendental and post-transcendental phenomenological traditions. The problem of intersubjectivity is usually interpreted as grounds for rejecting a transcendental reduction which, it is said, makes alterity unintelligible because it culminates in an egology.

\textsuperscript{45} To be sure, there are very many ways of doing either, and transcendental philosophy itself has, at times, been regarded as falling into the former category, albeit in a non-dogmatic way. See, e.g. McDowell’s stated aim “not to answer sceptical questions, but to begin to see how it might be intellectually respectable to ignore them, to treat them as unreal, in the way that common sense has always wanted to.” (\textit{Mind and World}, 113) See Stern (2000) for an excellent overview of the kind of arguments available in response to a wide variety of scepticisms.

\textsuperscript{46} Cf. “When questioning the possibility of the reductions, he [Merleau-Ponty] does not suggest that we should give up the phenomenological project, but rather that we should not assume that the end point of this interrogative project is in the form of a solution or an explication.” (Heinämäa 1999, 51)
This convention has recently begun to be challenged by a reconsideration of methodological development of Husserlian phenomenology in light of the continued publication of the Nachlaß, a seminal example of which is Françoise Dastur's paper, "Réduction et intersubjectivité".

In that paper, Dastur argues that "the problematic of the reduction and that of intersubjectivity, far from being irreconcilable, form instead one sole problematic." (Dastur 1989, 61)47 She points out that the theme of intersubjectivity appears as early as 1905, in the famous Seefelder Manuscripts where the discovery of the phenomenological reduction is first announced.

The sense that the two themes are incompatible derives from a Cartesian interpretation of or 'way to' the reduction, which Husserl himself entertained for a long time. Husserl himself, in Erste Philosophie II, recognized the key shortcoming of the Cartesian way to the reduction to be the fact that it did not permit access to intersubjectivity, and argues there for an "extension" (Erweiterung) of the epochē to accommodate it. If we look at Dastur's characterisation of Husserl's extension of the phenomenological reduction, we find strong resemblances to the transcendental strategy outlined above.

There are two features of the Cartesian way that come to be criticized by Husserl. Firstly, the Cartesian way to the reduction treats the reduction as a preliminary step. The reduction is to be regarded as a propaedeutic to properly transcendental philosophy. This is most evident in the characterisation of phenomenological sphere in the famous §49 of Ideas I as a kind of "residue" left behind after the reduction. By presenting the reduction as the loss of the world, and absolute consciousness as the starting point for the recuperation of what has been lost through the reduction, the Cartesian way implies that the reduction is a "provisional" or preparatory step, like Descartes' method of doubt.

However, Dastur argues that a mature view of the reduction will recognize that while "Descartes doubts in order to leave doubt and find that which resists doubt: the indubitability of the cogito [, phenomenology] is not established, as it is in Descartes, against doubt and in order to refute scepticism ... Phenomenology establishes itself, by contrast, within the epochē..." (Dastur 1989, 45)

47 All translations of this text from the French are my own.
Though Husserl sees in the Metaphysical Meditations of Descartes the prototype of meditations which give birth to philosophy, it would be erroneous to consider transcendental phenomenology to be a simple reprise of Cartesianism. Because Husserl's problem is not at all Descartes': he does not ask in effect *if* things outside of me really exist – at no moment does he doubt the outside world – but how one can know the transcendent from within immanence. ... This is why it is in no way a question for him of guaranteeing the certainty of the existence of the world against the sceptic, but solely of *understanding* the sense of the being of the world. (Dastur 1989, 57)

Thus, on a post-Cartesian interpretation of the reduction, its relation to philosophy is not propaedeutic, and its aim is not the refutation of scepticism. I just demonstrated that the same can be said for Merleau-Ponty's transcendental strategy. We can now imagine Husserl endorsing Merleau-Ponty's description of the reduction as incompletable, because we can see that this is not a criticism of the reduction, but a clarification of its relation to philosophical inquiry. Philosophy is not undertaken subsequent to the reduction, and so to "complete" the reduction is not to provide oneself at last with a sure foundation or starting point for philosophical inquiry, but precisely to abandon the task.

This is not to say that there is no significant difference between the two approaches, because Husserl never considers it necessary to incorporate a concrete experience of others into his account of the reduction the way Merleau-Ponty does.

Secondly, the Cartesian way to the reduction is animated by a Cartesian identification of immanence with absolute self-evidence. Given the context of our critique of the mundane reading, which tends to treat the *Phenomenology* as an exercise in pre-transcendental, descriptive psychology, it is worth taking a moment to dwell on the novelty of the Cartesian way with respect to the descriptive methodology of the *Logical Investigations*. Husserl's descriptive psychology differentiates itself from empirical psychology in so far as it eschews explanation (*Aufklärung*) in favour of elucidation (*Erklärung*). However, Husserl became self-critical of this methodology as he came to recognize an objection, posed primarily by the neo-Kantians, to be legitimate. That is, he came to see that so long as immanence is conceived in terms of psychological immanence, that is, as a limitation to sensations animated by an interpretive sense, "subjectivity is not conceivable in its totality, but only as psychological subjectivity, i.e. subjectivity which can still be grasped as mundane," and phenomenology as
descriptive psychology does, to this extent, "lapse into psychologism." (Dastur 1989, 49-50)

The novelty of the Idea of Phenomenology is that the opposition between immanence and transcendence is reconfigured, and it now takes on the sense of the distinction between absolute self-givenness and presumptive existence. This is an important step, because Husserl no longer confuses that which can function as the basis for a philosophical understanding of the advent of transcendent being for consciousness with psychological contents, and so phenomenology, as a philosophical inquiry into the conditions of transcendence can break once and for all with the pseudo-philosophy of introspective psychology. 48

The cost of this transition is, however, to install a Cartesian maxim of "indubitability" in place of "presuppositionlessness" as the guiding methodological principle of phenomenology. 49 It is to make apodictic self-evidence and adequate thought the only forms of evidence appropriate to philosophical inquiry.

What changes Husserl's mind about the Cartesian identification of philosophical experience with absolute self-evidence is the study of genetic phenomena. He comes to recognize that relations of motivation, for example, the way one perception motivates expectations regarding other perceptions, do not presuppose the existence of worldly entities or the empirical subject. These expected perceptions are certainly a part of the experience, without being open to explicit reflection, since they are not actually present (as the intentional object of experience). One can therefore put out of play the world and the empirical subject, without being left solely with the present and self-evident. The point is that even self-evident experience, which is presuppositionless and capable of acting as evidence in a philosophical inquiry, has horizons of motivation. Thus, the maxim of indubitability once more gives way to presuppositionlessness, and non-absolute experiences are included in the phenomenological sphere interrogated within the reduction.

The phenomenological field of experience therefore comprises not only actual lived experiences, accessible by reflection, but also presentifications (Vergegenwartigung) and among them

48 Cf. Merleau-Ponty's distinction between phenomenology and introspective psychology in his Preface to the Phenomenology.
the lived experiences which are tied to actual lived experiences in a relation of motivation... (Dastur 1989, 63)

Thus, it is possible to undertake a "transcendental psychology", "a science of lived experiences in the phenomenological reduction". 50

This has dramatic consequences for the possibility of a transcendental inquiry into intersubjectivity. While one subscribes to the Cartesian way to the reduction, with its conception of the phenomenological sphere as the residue left when all presumptive existence was bracketed, one cannot discover in transcendental consciousness, "the least trace of a foreign subjectivity," because the other is only ever apperceived, i.e. always transcendent to my experience. (Dastur 1989, 59)

However, in the context of genetic phenomenology, since the perceptual lived experience of the foreign living body is connected by a relation of motivation to my own, this enables the expansion of the phenomenological field to become:

a sphere of a plurality of self-enclosed streams of consciousness... which are joined together with my stream through contexts of motivation of empathy. (Husserl 1977/2006, 102 [Hua 12/88])

One finds the same point expressed in Erste Philosophie II. As Dastur points out:

It is in effect by the same critique of the limitation of the phenomenological experience to the actual, indubitable given that the reduction will be extended to intersubjectivity. It is "precisely because foreign subjectivity does not enter into the sphere of my possibilities for original perception [that] it does not dissolve into intentional correlates of my own life." 51 It is because an other is not and cannot ever be given absolutely, originally, that he never becomes an objective correlate and that a transcendental community is possible. (Dastur 1989, 64)

What this demonstrates is that the very phenomena of motivation and anticipation through which Merleau-Ponty elucidates the role of the lived body, need not be construed as grounds for abandoning transcendental phenomenology or the phenomenological reduction. On the contrary, they are the basis, even in Husserl, for an intersubjective transformation of transcendental phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty takes on just such a transformation implicitly in the Phenomenology.


51 Dastur's reference is Philosophie première, Vol II, p 203, Chapter II: "The second way toward the opening of the sphere of transcendental experience.'
2.3 Merleau-Ponty and Cognitive Science Revisited

In light of the preceding discussion, it is now possible to return to the motives of the thesis, and to ask how our re-appropriation of the transcendental themes in Merleau-Ponty might modify conceptions of the relationship between his phenomenology and cognitive science. That is, having disclosed a transcendental strategy at the heart of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical engagement with pathology, we are now open to conceptions of this relationship that respect the difference between transcendental and mundane inquiries.

I take my lead here from an account of the relation between cognitive science and transcendental phenomenology offered by Natalie Depraz in her response to the Naturalizing Phenomenology project (Depraz 1999). Depraz' account is striking because she does not attempt to formalise a systematic convergence of the two forms of inquiry into one, but rather sees a developmental analogy between them, as though they developed along separate but parallel paths.

The heart of Depraz’s developmental analogy is a parallel between the emergentist hypothesis in post-cognitivist cognitive science and the genetic reformulation of transcendental phenomenology. While by no means identical, Depraz argues that both express a commitment to anti-reductionism; on the one hand, through a process of naturalisation and, on the other, through the phenomenological clarification of the reduction. The analogy can be depicted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergentist Cognitive Science</th>
<th>Transcendental Phenomenology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( Computationalism )</td>
<td>( Objectivist Psychology )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectionism</td>
<td>Static Phenomenology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enactivism</td>
<td>Genetic Phenomenology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>???</td>
<td>Generative Phenomenology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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The table needs to be understood dynamically, so that it should be read as saying, for example, that connectionism is to computationalism what static phenomenology is to objectivist psychology, and so forth.

The important point for our purposes is that the analogy is an incomplete one. That is, Depraz suggests that the movement of phenomenology from its genetic focus on passive constitution and individual development to a generative focus which embeds this individual development in a communitarian, historical horizon is yet to find an analogical expression in cognitive science.

[G]enerative phenomenology opens up on a double horizon, originally communitarian and historical, while enactive emergentism remains centered around an individual and his ontogenetic history. If genetic constitution can avail itself of both the connectivist and enactive options of emergence, generativity, in the final analysis, discloses a phenomenological dimension to which, up to now, the cognitive sciences, even when nourished by the evolutionist scheme, have not enjoyed the right to appeal. (Depraz 1999, 482)

The exposition attempted here of the transcendental aspects of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology* makes it possible to reconceive the relationship with cognitive science along the lines presented by Depraz. In particular, it seems plausible to locate the *Phenomenology* somewhere between genetic and generative phenomenology. Locating the work at that transition point in Depraz' scheme seems to account for three important aspects of its mundane reading for cognitive science:

1) The sense of a convergence between Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology and post-cognitivist cognitive science has its ground in a recognition of similar anti-reductionist ambitions.

2) Nonetheless, an identification of Merleau-Ponty’s descriptions and the naturalistic explanations of cognitive science is rash, in that it neglects the transcendental aspect of Merleau-Ponty’s thought. (The reading mistakenly treats what is actually a parallel development as a precursor.)

3) We should expect to find that Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology echoes the generative stress on intersubjective rather than intrasubjective phenomena. This is what I have found in my discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical practice –
which makes intersubjective experience central to the practice of phenomenological reduction.

Conclusion to Chapter Two

In this chapter, I have tried to illustrate the way Merleau-Ponty's interest in pathology constitutes a transcendental strategy, and indeed a sort of transcendental phenomenological reduction. I have also tried to show that this reduction plays a similar role in his thought to that envisaged by Husserl in his mature conception of phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty's aim, I argued, is not to be done with the pathological subject, nor to refute scepticism, but rather to ensure that one maintains a genuinely radical philosophical inquiry; that is, an inquiry that is aware of its motives. A transcendental philosophy which attempts to rid itself of its own origins by presenting them as a doctrine to be refuted promises to cut itself off from the source of its own significance.

In the final chapter, I want to show how this alternative, transcendental reading of Merleau-Ponty opens up a different locus of engagement with contemporary philosophy of mind; different, that is, from the kind of engagement I described as the philosophical aspect of the mundane reading. I want to return to the theme of transcendence, for the sake of clarifying Merleau-Ponty's transcendental metaphysics, and to show that his philosophical practice can be re-enacted in a contemporary setting. I show that it can even be employed to critique a philosophy that is sensitive to both embodiment and transcendence, like that offered by John Haugeland.