

MERLEAU-PONTY AND THE "NATURALIZATION" OF PHENOMENOLOGY

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Many people working in the area of cognitive science have recently (during the last twenty years or so) expressed an unexpected interest in Husserlian phenomenology as a potentially valuable resource in the scientific investigation of consciousness. This is because it is increasingly recognized that there can be no such science if first-person experience is not taken into account in a serious way, and phenomenology in the Husserlian tradition seems well-suited to make an important contribution in this regard. This has led to much discussion about the idea of "naturalizing" phenomenology, that is, of rendering it compatible with the naturalistic explanatory framework governing cognitive science. There are various possible strategies for such an undertaking.¹ A major difficulty seemingly facing them all, however, is that phenomenology in the Husserlian tradition is essentially a project of transcendental philosophy, which as such is premised on a strict rejection of naturalism.

Or is it? While that may be true of Husserl, some philosophers and cognitive scientists have pointed to Merleau-Ponty's reinterpretation of Husserlian phenomenology—in particular as this is worked out in *Phenomenology of Perception*, with its well-known emphases on pre-reflective intentionality and the embodied nature of perception—as breaking with the transcendental tradition and hence as being suitably and productively "naturalizable." This essay argues that such a claim is fundamentally mistaken, and that on the contrary Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (at least in its early postwar form) is more accurately seen as representing a development—albeit a radical one—within, rather than a departure from, the tradition of transcendental philosophy stemming from Kant. This has the consequence that attempts to appropriate and assimilate aspects of his work for cognitive science (or for any project based on naturalistic premises) are philosophically misguided—although this does not imply that all such work that draws inspiration from Merleau-Ponty's work or tries to build bridges with it is objectionable.

My essay is divided into three main parts. The first introduces key features of the larger context concerning Kant, Husserl, and cognitive science, following which I discuss Merleau-Ponty in particular, and then offer some concluding reflections. Owing to constraints of time and space the discussion is unavoidably brief and selective, but what I hope to convey is the specific sense in which Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is an exemplary kind of *transcendental practice*.

Kant

Kant's critical philosophy is based on a "transcendental turn" away from objects of experience to their a priori conditions of possibility.² Transcendental claims concern the cognitive constitution of the subject that makes objects possible a priori, something that amounts, for Kant, to "the conditions of the possibility of experience in general."³

Kant distinguished this "transcendental idealism" from what he called "transcendental realism," which denotes all views that conflate appearances with things-in-themselves.⁴ Kant described transcendental realism as wrongly taking all appearances—inner no less than outer—as things existing in-themselves, suggesting that the mistaking of psychological appearance for reality represents the primary—and essentially Cartesian—error of transcendental realism.⁵ Correspondingly, we might say that Kant's own main achievement is expressed in the "Refutation of Idealism," where he contends that "even our inner experience, which for Descartes is indubitable, is possible only on the assumption of outer experience."⁶ The argument turns on the necessity for temporal self-determination of something enduring [*beharrlich*] in perception that is outside of the self, and although its success may be questioned, the result, at least for Kant, is that inner and outer experience are necessarily correlated such that Cartesian certainty pertains, if anywhere, not to empirical but to transcendental self-consciousness.

Much more could be said here, of course, but this suffices for conveying the central

philosophical sense of Kant's transcendental turn. And on this basis, I would just like to note two related points. First, given Kant's concern to defend and justify empirical realism as the basis of natural science, the apriority of transcendental claims involves for him not just necessity, but also universality. But the latter need not be directly inscribed within the meaning of the "transcendental" itself. The second point is that for Kant this universality is a feature of the world. As Eugen Fink put it, Kant's transcendental idealism remains "world-immanent" [*weltimmanent*], in that despite its stance vis-à-vis intramundane beings, it still takes the world itself uncritically as given (even if only its a priori form).⁷ Fink thus thought—and with this I agree—that the transcendental of Kant's position does not mark the outer limit of transcendental thinking.

These points may be instructively linked to Mark Sacks's discussion of transcendental reasoning in which he distinguishes between "transcendental arguments" and "transcendental proofs."⁸ His idea is that if the sort of claims that transcendental reasoning is supposed to demonstrate concern necessary epistemic preconditions, then such reasoning cannot take the form of formally valid deductive arguments that only involve inferential relations between propositions. For if it is indeed a priori, and if it does not beg the question, then the crucial ampliative move of the transcendental claim cannot be based on propositional knowledge. Rather, it must be grounded on what Sacks calls "situated thought." Sacks uses this term to denote a thick kind of "phenomenologically embedded and [perspectively] directed" thought that would fall between bare propositional content and raw lived experience.⁹ As Sacks puts it, "in situated thought the content of the thought is informed by the way the subject is epistemically positioned in relation to the facts that make the bare proposition true."¹⁰ It is this, he argued, that warrants the ampliative move in transcendental reasoning. For it is this that conveys its "transcendental necessity."¹¹ Such is the meaning of "transcendental proof"—a form of demonstration that works, not by propositional content, but rather in virtue of "what the situated thinker brings to the thinking of it."¹² Consequently, "as valid deductive inferences tran-

scendental arguments are . . . *parasitic* on transcendental proofs" of this sort.¹³ And, as Sacks adds, concern for this sort of situated thought and its epistemic consequences has historically been found primarily in the phenomenological tradition.¹⁴

Husserl

The aim of Husserlian phenomenology may be expressed thusly: to do for human experience in general what Kant did for scientific experience, *viz.*, provide a transcendental critique of its constitutive conditions.

Although he recognized an important continuity between Kant's project and his own, Husserl was critical of Kant on a number of points. Most importantly, he objected that Kant did not ground his own transcendental approach in intuitional self-evidence. In contrast, phenomenology is firstly a descriptive project of what is given in pre-scientific experience. The canonical formulation is Husserl's "principle of all principles,"¹⁵ which claims that propositions are validly scientific just in case they are demonstrably based on the *what* and *how* of the evidence of lived experience. Phenomenology thus expresses a commitment to consider all experience on equal terms, a commitment that is especially important with respect to those experiences, consideration of the reality or significance of which may otherwise be unduly discounted by unchecked bias.¹⁶

So, whereas Kant was a booster of natural science, Husserl was considerably more wary, seeing science as "naïve" with respect to its own foundations. He thus wanted to rethink the "objective" experience that Kant had assumed as normative. He pursued this by establishing a transcendental theory of consciousness on the basis of an analysis of its intentionality—its always being of and directed toward something. This standpoint is made possible by certain methodological moves designed to suspend the presuppositions of the "natural attitude" concerning what is given in experience. Crucially for Husserl, this would even suspend ordinary belief in the "thereness" of the world itself—hence the famous discussion of the *Vernichtung* of the world¹⁷—in order to disclose and thematize the transcendental "origin" or "ground" of its

(the world's) "objective" sense. Herein lies the key contrast with Kant.

Husserl aimed to reveal this ground in the constitutive activity of subjectivity considered transcendently. He thus did not approach consciousness as an inner region of the world, i.e., the psychic life of an empirical subject, but rather as the site of the "phenomenality" of experience. Whether or not it is philosophically viable, vis-à-vis Kant this approach can be seen as more generally and consistently transcendental inasmuch as it aspires, as Fink put it, to "the realization of a 'world-transcendent' knowing" [*die Verwirklichung eines "welt-transzendenten" Erkennens*].¹⁸

It was along these lines that Husserl articulated his uncompromising critique of naturalism. For Husserl, this is the view that everything real belongs to, or is reducible to, physical nature, and is explicable in terms of natural law. He was particularly concerned about the tendency for naturalism to make consciousness itself part of the natural world. For Husserl, this is "the absurdity of naturalizing something whose essence excludes the kind of being that nature has."¹⁹ Consciousness is the site of the phenomenality of experience, it is that through which alone the world itself is meaningfully opened up and disclosed in the first place. Husserl thus regarded phenomenology as offering nothing less than a fundamentally incompatible alternative to philosophical naturalism.

Cognitive Science

Cognitive science is a multidisciplinary empirical approach to the study of mind and consciousness which, even though pursued on the basis of different models (computational, connectionist, and, more recently, embodied and enactivist), has as its goal to provide a complete understanding of the conscious mind in objective, naturalistic terms.

But recently there has been much skepticism among cognitive scientists as to whether such a reduction of the mental to the natural is possible, even in principle. The concern is based on various objections, the most fundamental of which is that any such move could only work by presumptively stipulating that the events of consciousness just are objectively describable in third-person terms—a move

that simply leaves out of account all first-person experiential aspects of consciousness. The basic problem is that whatever may be the case for other scientific inquiries, here there can be no ideal of subject-independence. For the objective reality of consciousness is tied to its being subjectively experienced—an act of cognition includes the subjective experience of "what it's like to cognize."

From this it follows that the explananda of cognitive science must be taken as necessarily including a dimension of subjective appearance. Recognition of this has given rise to the increasingly common idea among cognitive scientists that—in the words of Petitot, Pachoud, Roy, and Varela—"a successful scientific theory of cognition must account for *phenomenality*, that is . . . for the fact that for a whole set of cognitive systems, and for the human one in particular, things have appearances."²⁰ Such phenomenality is here seen as a matter of data that can only issue from methodologically first-person accounts of experience. While foreign to cognitive science as a naturalistic project, in particular in computational and connectionist forms, such approaches are standard in phenomenology. Thus these writers recommend a turn to phenomenology, noting that "phenomenological data can be adequately reconstructed on the basis of the main tenets of Cognitive Science, and then integrated into the natural sciences."²¹

Such is the sense of the idea within cognitive science of "naturalizing" phenomenology—the attempt to bridge what Joseph Levine called "the explanatory gap"²² between physical processes and conscious experience, by coming to terms, at least to some extent, with what David Chalmers called "the hard problem" of consciousness²³ through the assimilation of a phenomenological account of its phenomenality "into an explanatory framework where every acceptable property is made continuous with the properties admitted by the natural sciences."²⁴

As we have seen, however, there is the difficulty that at least as developed by Husserl, phenomenology is not only not naturalistic, but it is essentially anti-naturalistic. There would thus not seem to be any way for cognitive science to "naturalize" phenomenology without fundamental distortion.²⁵ The two projects are simply not talking about the same

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thing. From one side, consciousness is seen as an empirical, psychological *fact*, while from the other, it is approached as a non-psychological dimension of consciousness—a transcendental condition of any empirical fact. The one side pursues a better understanding of empirical consciousness on the basis of an understanding of the natural world, which includes first-personhood, while the other pursues a better understanding of the natural world—including empirical consciousness—on the basis of a more explicit understanding of consciousness understood transcendently. From the Husserlian perspective, the basic problem with naturalistic cognitive science is that it contents itself with a position of naïveté vis-à-vis the foundational question of objectivity—it does not first clarify the sense of this before uncritically imposing an ontological framework that relegates consciousness to being an inner psychic region of the world, the subjective mode in which the presumed objective world shows up. So, the pivotal point of contention is not that between first- and third-person viewpoints, where all are situated in the natural world, but rather that between any such mundane view and a transcendental—which is to say, extramundane—one.

Before turning to Merleau-Ponty, there are two things to point out: first, there are serious arguments to be made for the naturalizability of Husserl—although these may not ultimately work, it is not the case that the ideas that I have emphasized here necessarily set up an unbridgeable abyss.²⁶ Second, what is important for the present discussion is that even across the apparent abyss there is a basic point of agreement, namely, that there is a determinate sense of “world” or of “nature,” and specifically of what we might term the “naturalness” of the natural attitude—it’s just that whereas in one case this is uncritically embraced (not unlike Kant), in the other it is critically “bracketed out.”

Merleau-Ponty

As mentioned at the beginning, a number of writers have suggested that while Husserl may not offer a suitable model for the phenomenology of which cognitive science is in need, Merleau-Ponty does.²⁷ This is largely because he is seen as having “integrated phenomeno-

logical analyses with considerations drawn from the empirical sciences of psychology and neurology.”²⁸ However, to align with Merleau-Ponty does involve an important shift of focus, so it does not appeal to all cognitive scientists equally. Those who see his work as continuous or congruent with cognitive science—who tend to be working in the embodied and enactivist frameworks—have at least come to the view that cognitive science cannot succeed on representationalist models—in particular, that the body must be brought into the picture. This is linked to the distinction—crucial to Merleau-Ponty, especially in *Phenomenology of Perception*—between reflective and pre-reflective (or bodily) intentionality. This latter, more basic intentionality is the body’s concrete, spatial, and pre-reflective directedness toward the lived world—and for Merleau-Ponty, it is “that which produces the natural and antepredicative unity of the world and of our life.”²⁹ This sort of intentionality shares with reflective intentionality the feature of directedness, but not that of aboutness—it’s a matter of “orientation” without a specifiable objective “content.” This is indicative of the way in which Merleau-Ponty is seen as offering an non-representationalist radicalization of Husserl.

Bodily intentionality is closely linked to other aspects of Merleau-Ponty’s account of the embodied perceiving subject, for example, the notions of “body schema” and “intentional arc,”³⁰ notions which have been taken up respectively by Gallagher in his work on embodied cognition,³¹ and Dreyfus in his work on “skill acquisition.”³² In general, this sort of appropriation of Merleau-Pontian phenomenology includes empirical correction, amelioration, and extension of the phenomenological results—the guiding assumption being that Merleau-Ponty’s work does not pose any “transcendental objection” to this.

As all this falls within Merleau-Ponty’s general treatment of perception, it is helpful to recall a paper by Gary Madison provocatively titled, “Did Merleau-Ponty Have a Theory of Perception?”³³ Madison answered this question in the negative, on the grounds that the standard notion of perception belongs to the conceptual apparatus of “modern objectivistic naturalism,” and that this notion thus “plays no role whatsoever in . . . *Phenomenology* [of Per-

ception].”³⁴ Sebastian Gardner has recently taken this thought further, claiming with regard to cognitive science that Merleau-Ponty’s view “implies that there *cannot be* a theory of perception . . . of the sort that the philosopher of mind attempts to provide.”³⁵ The idea is that what is going on in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is a process of disclosing general structures of intentionality as necessary, a priori transcendental conditions of experience,³⁶ and hence that notions such as “body schema” and “intentional arc”—understood within this context, wherein they have in effect been denaturalized—are incompatible with naturalism. And if that’s the case, then there are grounds for claiming a kind of “unnaturalizability” for Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology. For, like Husserl’s, it is not talking about the same thing—or rather, it is talking about the same thing, but fundamentally differently. It is along these lines that Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology should be understood as belonging to the transcendental tradition.

Against *le préjugé du monde*

Merleau-Ponty did often describe his phenomenology in transcendental terms, a label he glossed as follows: “a philosophy becomes transcendental . . . not by postulating the total explicitation of knowledge, but by recognizing as the fundamental philosophical problem this *presumption* on reason’s part.”³⁷ This says that the transcendental turn is effected by rejecting “objective thought,” thought that assumes an a priori knowability of the world—that is, that assumes that the “world” is just *there*, always already consisting of a fully determinate realm of objects. This assumption is what Merleau-Ponty called “*le préjugé du monde*,” and it is central to his view of the “natural attitude.”

Merleau-Ponty thus expressed support for Husserl’s rejection of naturalism,³⁸ and there are many moments at which he employs distinctly transcendental modes of reasoning with respect to a necessary apriority of experience—in particular, the enduring, “permanent” presence of the body is described as a necessity that is not “merely physical” but rather “metaphysical”—arguing that it cannot be “a necessity of fact, since such necessity presupposes” it, and that “factual situations can only impact upon me if my nature is already such

that there are factual situations for me.”³⁹ As Gardner points out, here as elsewhere Merleau-Ponty invokes a distinction between transcendental and empirical necessity that does not differ substantially from Kant’s view, and to a considerable extent he accepts the idea that claims about subjective modes of cognition—now understood in terms of the body—have a certain priority over those concerning the objects of experience.⁴⁰

Merleau-Ponty’s guiding philosophical concern is to understand critically the “objective” character of experience—which for him means in pre-objective terms. As is well known, Merleau-Ponty’s basic strategy in *Phenomenology of Perception* (which is reminiscent of Kant’s approach in the Antinomies) is to jointly critique the two opposed forms of “objective thought” (*viz.*, empiricism and intellectualism) in a way that serves to expose their common error—namely, *le préjugé du monde*—and, in suspending that, to “decisively transform the phenomenal field into a transcendental one.”⁴¹ This would ultimately lead to a new account of objectivity, according to which it would be in virtue of the pre-objective nature of perception that the subject of experience is confronted with an objective field, while also enabling us to understand how that subject ordinarily subscribes to the mistaken prejudice of the “natural attitude” concerning the determinate reality of this field. The crucial point in this—and this disrupts any attempt to “mine” *Phenomenology of Perception* for particular insights—is that the descriptions of pre-objective experience that Merleau-Ponty presents cannot be taken as some sort neutral evidence for any philosophical claim, for they are already the methodological products of an overarching transcendental approach.

Out-Kanting Kant?

But the decisive question concerns how to understand Merleau-Ponty’s transcendentalism. In particular, is he an idealist? Perhaps even a transcendental idealist? Such is precisely what Gardner has argued—what he calls simply the “Transcendental Interpretation” of Merleau-Ponty, which is opposed to the “Psychological Interpretation.” The latter would effectively denote a family of philosophically neutral readings that identify and isolate a the-

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ory of perception in Merleau-Ponty's work that is basically congruent and continuous with naturalism. The chief problem with this view is that it is incapable of supplying a complete account of Merleau-Ponty's work—in particular, it tends to bifurcate *Phenomenology of Perception* itself. Opposed to this, then, Gardner's Transcendental Interpretation reads Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as "a form of idealist metaphysics"—specifically, an idealist metaphysics of *ambiguity*.⁴² Although this strikes me as mistaken, it will be instructive to consider how Gardner develops the affinities and differences between Merleau-Ponty and Kant.

Consider the following (well-known but not often-discussed) comment from Merleau-Ponty: "One of Kant's discoveries, the consequences of which we have not yet fully grasped, is that all our experience of the world is woven entirely from concepts which lead to irreducible contradictions if we attempt to take them in an absolute sense or transfer them into pure being."⁴³ What Merleau-Ponty meant was basically this: in the same way as Kant sought to avoid contradictions within reason by asserting the distinction between the empirical world of appearance and the rational idea of the world as an unconditioned totality of things in themselves, so too has he—Merleau-Ponty—asserted in his treatment of perception the need to distinguish the world as lived and experienced perceptually from how it is understood and known in "objective thought." So, whereas Kant aimed to demonstrate that empirical reality is a matter of conceptually (universally) determinate appearance, Merleau-Ponty's argument aimed to show that the perceptual world is a matter of "pre-objective being"—still structured by a priori necessities,⁴⁴ but precisely not yet exhibiting the sort of (universal) objectivity that Kant took for granted.⁴⁵ Merleau-Ponty thus upped the ante, so to speak, on Kant's notion of appearance by looking to the appearance of appearance, the phenomenon of the phenomenon.⁴⁶

On the basis of this sort of analysis, which he develops with admirable clarity, Gardner made the following striking suggestion: that Merleau-Ponty applied to the faculty of understanding [*Verstand*] the sort of argument that Kant applied to reason [*Vernunft*], thereby subjecting Kantian transcendental idealism to the

same sort of critique to which Kant subjected transcendental realism, a result that could be described, not merely as a transcendental idealism, but as a second-order transcendental idealism.⁴⁷

Although this characterization is not inaccurate, I do nevertheless think that Gardner's view is mistaken. For it is incomplete. It is correct insofar as it implies that Merleau-Ponty succeeded where Husserl failed. But it overlooks what makes this possible and what it entails. This can be seen most clearly in terms of how it mischaracterizes in overly narrow and passive terms Merleau-Ponty's conception of philosophy. According to Gardner, for Merleau-Ponty "the task of philosophy" is completed through the attainment of certain privileged, non-propositionalizable states of mind.⁴⁸ To be sure, this does in a way reflect the goal of philosophy as Merleau-Ponty put it in the Preface to *Phenomenology of Perception*—viz., "to learn to see the world anew."⁴⁹ But something is missing. Consider how Gardner puts the broader idea: "Expressed in general terms, Merleau-Ponty's mode of solution to philosophical problems is . . . to reduce them to representations . . . produced by objective thought in its confrontation with pre-objective being. All that remains of those problems, after this fact has been grasped, is the recognition that there is in reality, i.e., in pre-objective being, an irresolvable 'ambiguity.'"⁵⁰

The sense of deflation here is quite out of tune with Merleau-Ponty's repeated invocation of the very practical idea of the "realization of philosophy," in particular as this implies the realization of the world. For, inasmuch as the objective representation of the world—*le préjugé du monde*—is, in Merleau-Ponty's words, "a rationalization of [our] primordial faith [in the world],"⁵¹ then the recognition of this amounts to the desire to better realize that faith as the background for shared human experience. Whereas Kant and Husserl—along with naturalism—uncritically take for granted a determinate sense of "world," Gardner's account correctly recognizes that, for Merleau-Ponty's transcendentalism, such does not obtain. But it loses the recognition—which was thoroughly alive in Merleau-Ponty's thought—that the world's realization can be approached through *praxis*. This is how universality re-enters the picture—

for Merleau-Ponty, it is a normative goal in which phenomenology issues. Whereas in Gardner's account universality is forsworn, Merleau-Ponty's view was that the wrongness of the philosophical positions that he opposed lay in their having "taken universality for granted, whereas the problem is its realization through the dialectic of concrete intersubjectivity."⁵²

Extending Sacks' account of transcendental arguments and transcendental proofs, I would characterize Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as a transcendental practice—it is a matter of generating "situated thought" that expresses our bodily-intentional orientation to the (singular and common) world—e.g., in practices of anti-oppression. This reminds us that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, and hence its transcendentalism, exceeds the bounds of philosophy *per se*. It is the failure to appreciate Merleau-Ponty's insistence that philosophy is not "separate" that ultimately leads Gardner to his idealistic conclusion.⁵³

If this is indeed the sense of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, then we see that in radicalizing Husserl's own radicalization of Kant, Merleau-Ponty is not at a further remove from Kant. Rather, it is by pushing Kant's own strategy further that Merleau-Ponty is able to critique the critical position and make the audacious claim that fundamental philosophical aporias dissolve when approached on the basis of the perceptual world. For this, as he said, is "the true transcendental"⁵⁴—and this not despite but precisely on account of its ambiguity and contradictoriness. It is the determinate actuality of universality that Merleau-Ponty puts at issue.

This is central to the meaning of "transcendental" that is in question here: the refusal to take natural-attitudinal "naturalness"—the world of the *Weltglaube*—for granted as the incarnate paradigm of objectivity. This is what crucially distinguishes Husserl from Kant. Yet while Husserl does not take the world for granted, by taking its constitution for granted he does take for granted that there is a world to be taken for granted. An even more consistent way to discharge the transcendental task, then, would be to ask, not about its presumed constitutive origin, but whether there truly is a com-

plete, singular, and common world—whether, in other words, universality obtains concretely.

What distinguishes Merleau-Ponty from Husserl, then, is the recognition that the original pregivenness of the world is corporeally idiosyncratic, and that universality is normative. It is given, and it is given in perception, but it is given horizonally as a task to be realized. There is thus a double transcendental sense in Merleau-Ponty: to thematize the world, but also to realize it. And this is why he can look like a second-order idealist—but his position offers a totally different sense. Merleau-Ponty's turn back to Kant, and to the body, is not a matter of intensifying the subjective character of cognition, but rather its intersubjective character.⁵⁵ The key move is not to "deconstruct" the first *Critique*, but to accord epistemological priority over its account of theoretical reason to the account of "reflecting" [*reflectierend*]—as opposed to "determining" [*bestimmend*]—judgment that Kant gives in the third *Critique*.⁵⁶

The outcome of *this* transcendentalism thus becomes a matter of practical reason. The incompleteness of "the world" accounts for Merleau-Ponty's limited view of theoretical reason. But the point is to recognize the realization of the world—and thus of philosophy—as an unfinished task. The transcendental character of this task, which (crucially) subsumes the question of the meaning of nature, thus fundamentally lies in an orientation to reality that is practical and normative—whether we take it such as it is as the touchstone of objectivity (or lack thereof), or else whether, on the grounds of some form of *Urdoxa*, we orient ourselves toward a (greater) universality to come.

Hence, concerning cognitive science, results borrowed from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception are not necessarily falsified, and may be productively applied. But they cannot have the same meaning. For not only do they deal with the conditions of the objectivity that is uncritically assumed in naturalistic contexts, and which, as such, cannot in general be admitted as data. But, moreover, they are implicated in a transformative approach to the sense of "Nature" that undergirds naturalism—an approach that is oriented toward what Renaud Barbaras provocatively described as a deobjectivated and dialectically

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participatory “anti-Nature.”⁵⁷ If empirically-based research in cognitive science can be accommodated methodologically within such a framework, then that would be a welcome development.⁵⁸ But, far from a “naturalization of

phenomenology,” this would amount to, and could only be understood as, a “phenomenologization of naturalism.”

ENDNOTES

1. See Jean Petitot, Bernard Pachoud, Jean-Michel Roy, and Francisco J. Varela, “Beyond the Gap: An Introduction to Naturalizing Phenomenology,” in *Naturalizing Phenomenology: Issues in Contemporary Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, ed. Petitot et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 63–72.
2. “I entitle *transcendental* all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects insofar as this mode of knowledge is to be possible *a priori*.” Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. P. Guyer and A. W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), A11–12/B25.
3. *Ibid.*, A158/B197.
4. “I understand by the *transcendental idealism* of all appearances the doctrine that they are all together to be regarded as mere representations and not as things in themselves, and accordingly that space and time are only sensible forms of our intuition, but not determinations given for themselves or conditions of objects as things in themselves. To this idealism is opposed *transcendental realism*, which regards space and time as something given in themselves (independently of our sensibility)” (*ibid.*, A369). Transcendental realism can thus be described as including “any doctrine which defines the ‘real’ independently of our conceptual scheme, and which is thus forced to regard the problem of knowledge as one of explaining the relation between two ontologically distinct realms.” Henry Allison, “Transcendental Idealism and Descriptive Metaphysics,” *Kant-Studien* 60 (1969): 232.
5. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A490–07/B518–25.
6. *Ibid.*, B275.
7. “Even though Criticism raises itself above the positivity of experience and works out a philosophical questioning which, in opposition to all dogmatic metaphysics, ‘clarifies’ beings by returning to a *meaning* which is prior to all beings and makes beings what they are, its formulation of the problem fundamentally rests upon the basis of the world. Its interpretation of the problem of the world remains *world-immanent* (precisely because it returns to an ‘*a priori* world-form’).” Eugen Fink, “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism” in R. O. Elveton, ed., *The Phenomenology of Husserl: Selected Critical Readings* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1970), 95.
8. Mark Sacks, “The Nature of Transcendental Arguments,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 13 (2005): 439–60.
9. *Ibid.*, 444.
10. *Ibid.*, 446.
11. *Ibid.*, 453.
12. *Ibid.*, 445.
13. *Ibid.*, 451 (emphasis added).
14. *Ibid.*, 455.
15. “That every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originally . . . offered to us in ‘intuition’ is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but only within the limits in which it is presented there. . . . Every statement which does no more than confer expression on such [originary] data by simple explication and by means of significations precisely conforming to them is . . . called upon to serve as a foundation.” Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1982), §24.
16. Husserl gave a nice gloss on this idea in “Philosophy as Rigorous Science”: “What is needed is not the insistence that one see with her own eyes; rather it is that she not explain away under the pressure of prejudice what has been seen.” *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 147 (translation modified).
17. Husserl, *Ideas*, §49.
18. Fink, “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl,” 98 (translation modified).
19. Husserl, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” 107.
20. Petitot et al., “Beyond the Gap,” 1.
21. *Ibid.*, 48.

22. See Joseph Levine, "Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64 (1983): 354–61.
23. See David Chalmers, "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2 (1995): 200–19.
24. Petitot et al., "Beyond the Gap . . .," 1–2.
25. As Dan Zahavi puts it, "to suggest that the phenomenological account could be absorbed, or reduced, or replaced by a naturalistic account is for Husserl sheer nonsense." "Phenomenology and the Project of Naturalization," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 3 (2004), 336.
26. See Petitot et al., "Beyond the Gap," 43–56. Also, Jean Petitot, "Morphological Eidetics for a Phenomenology of Perception," and Roberto Casati, "Formal Structures in the Phenomenology of Motion," both in *Naturalizing Phenomenology*. But cf. the critical discussion in Len Lawlor, "Becoming and Auto-Affection (Part II): Who are We?" *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 30:2 (2009): 1–20.
27. E.g., Hubert Dreyfus, Shaun Gallagher, Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Alva Noë, among many others.
28. As Gallagher and Varela put it: "There are many thinkers well versed in the Husserlian tradition who are not willing to consider the validity of a naturalistic science of mind. . . . On the one hand, such negative attitudes are understandable from the perspective of the Husserlian rejection of naturalism, or from strong emphasis on the transcendental current in phenomenology. On the other hand, it is possible to challenge these attitudes from perspectives similar to the one taken by Merleau-Ponty, who integrated phenomenological analyses with considerations drawn from the empirical sciences of psychology and neurology long before cognitive science was defined as such." "Redrawing the Map and Resetting the Time: Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences," in *The Reach of Reflection: The Future of Phenomenology*, ed. S. Crowell, L. Embree, and S. J. Julian (Boca Raton: CARP and Electron Press, 2001), 17–18.
29. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, rev. F. Williams (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), xviii.
30. Merleau-Ponty borrowed the notion of 'body schema' primarily from the work of Henry Head and Paul Schilder, while that of the "intentional arc" (cf. *Phenomenology of Perception*, 136) comes from Kurt Beringer ("intentionalen Bogen").
- Note that Merleau-Ponty attributed this term to a 1930 article by Franz Fischer ("Raum-Zeit-Struktur und Denkstörung in der Schizophrenie," *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie* 124: 241–56), but in that article Fischer himself explicitly credited Beringer with the term (250), as well as the ideas of its "scope" [*Spannweite*] and its "slackening" [*Lockerung*].—see "Denkstörungen und Sprache bei Schizophrenen," *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie* 103 (1926): 190.
31. See Shaun Gallagher and Jonathan Cole, "Body Schema and Body Image in a Deafferented Subject," *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 16 (1995): 369–90. See also Gallagher's *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 17–64.
32. This is taken up by Dreyfus in his analyses of "skill acquisition." See, e.g., "The Current Relevance of Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Embodiment," in *The Electronic Journal of Analytic Philosophy* 4 (1996), <http://ejap.louisiana.edu/EJAP/1996.spring/dreyfus.1996.spring.html> ; see also "A Phenomenology of Skill Acquisition as the Basis for a Merleau-Pontian Non-Representationalist Cognitive Science" (<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~hdreyfus/pdf/MerleauPontySkillCogSci.pdf>).
33. Gary Madison, "Did Merleau-Ponty Have a Theory of Perception?" in T. W. Busch and S. Gallagher, eds., *Merleau-Ponty: Hermeneutics and Postmodernism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 83–108.
34. Ibid., 85.
35. Sebastian Gardner, "Merleau-Ponty's Transcendental Theory of Perception," unpublished manuscript (available online at www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctyseg/merleauponty.pdf).
36. Merleau-Ponty's refiguring the question of apriority merits detailed treatment and is omitted from the present discussion. Helpful contributions include Harrison Hall, "The A Priori and the Empirical in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*," *Philosophy Today* 23 (1979): 304–09; and M. C. Dillon, "Apriority in Kant and Merleau-Ponty," *Kant-Studien* 78 (1987): 403–23.
37. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 63.
38. E.g., *ibid.*, 60.
39. Ibid., 91.
40. Gardner, "Merleau-Ponty's Transcendental Theory of Perception," 7. Cf. Chris Nagel, "Knowledge, Paradox, and the Primacy of Perception,"

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41. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 63.
 42. Gardner, “Merleau-Ponty’s Transcendental Theory of Perception,” 1, 15ff.
 43. Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences,” in *The Primacy of Perception, And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 18.
 44. See Dillon, “Apriority in Kant and Merleau-Ponty,” 419–23.
 45. On this, see Diana Coole, “The Aesthetic Realm and the Lifeworld: Kant and Merleau-Ponty,” *History of Political Thought* 5 (1984): 503–26.
 46. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 63.
 47. Gardner, “Merleau-Ponty’s Transcendental Theory of Perception,” 16–17. Cf. Drew Leder, “Merleau-Ponty and the Critique of Kant,” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 9 (1983): 68–73.
 48. Gardner, “Merleau-Ponty’s Transcendental Theory of Perception,” 15.
 49. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xx; cf. 456.
 50. Gardner, “Merleau-Ponty’s Transcendental Theory of Perception,” 17.
 51. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 409.
 52. Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror: An Essay on the Communist Problem*, trans. J. O’Neill (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 35n11.
 53. Philosophy “comes into being by destroying itself as separate philosophy” (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 456). Cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Hubert and Patricia Dreyfus (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 133.
 54. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 364. Cf. Théodore F. Geraets, *Vers une nouvelle philosophie transcendantale: La genèse de la philosophie de Maurice Merleau-Ponty jusqu’à la Phénoménologie de la perception* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 160–71.
 55. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xiii, 361; *Sense and Non-Sense*, 134. Cf. Dan Zahavi, “Merleau-Ponty on Husserl: A Reappraisal,” in Ted Toadvine and Lester Embree, eds., *Merleau-Ponty’s Reading of Husserl* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), 23–28.
 56. See Coole, “The Aesthetic Realm and the Lifeworld,” 512–20. As Merleau-Ponty argued: if there can be an awareness of “a harmony between the sensible and the concept, between myself and others, which is itself without any concept,” and if the subject of this awareness is not a ‘universal thinker’ but an embodied perceiver, then “the hidden art of the imagination must condition categorical activity. It is no longer merely aesthetic judgment, but knowledge as well which rests upon this art, an art which forms the basis of the unity of consciousness and of consciousnesses.” *Phenomenology of Perception*, xvii. He was making the same point when he claimed that “the understanding . . . needs to be redefined, since the general connective function ultimately attributed to it by Kantianism [i.e., in the first *Critique*] is now spread over the whole intentional life and no longer suffices to distinguish it” (*ibid.*, 53).
 57. Renaud Barbaras, “The Movement of the Living as the Originary Foundation of Perceptual Intentionality,” in *Naturalizing Phenomenology*, 537. Despite the term, of course, this is closer to nature truly than the “Nature” of naturalism.
 58. Gallagher’s work, for example. See the nuanced methodological discussion, co-authored with Zahavi, in *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 19–41.

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