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The Mediating Role of the Body in Structuralism and the Phenomenological Tradition

Abstract

The phenomenon of the body has been neglected or placed lower in the hierarchy of importance for the almost entire philosophical tradition. This is especially noticeable in the problems of modern dualism, which struggled to reconcile the gap between the soul and the body. Although placed in the lowest position on the ontological scale, the phenomenon of the body played a very important role in Ancient Greek philosophy, especially in poetics and praxis philosophy. German idealism, which, led by Hegel, tries to overcome modern dualism and adopt classical ancient dialectics, reaffirms the important role of the phenomenon of the body, showing its mediating place both in the field of theoretical truths and in the field of objective spirit. Although contemporary philosophy departed from idealistic logic, this paper emphasizes how the phenomenological method led by Husserl also affirmed the phenomenon of the body. By distinguishing between the perceptual (Gegenwärtigung) and the imaginary consciousness (Vergegenwärtigung), Husserl allows us to approach the phenomenon of the body in different ways, also showing its independence in the field of aesthetics. This made an influence on structuralist tradition, especially Rancière, who develops the idea of the free field of praxis through the notion of the sensible which represents the mediating role of the body and conceives of the sphere of aesthetics as a free regime.

Keywords

dialectics, phenomenology, poetics, mediation, perception, body, image, Edmund Husserl, Jacques Rancière, Maurice Merleau-Ponty

On Body Phenomenon

By way of introduction, I will outline the reasons why Husserl's phenomenology can be used in addressing various questions in aesthetics. One of the most common objections to Husserl's transcendental position is that it did not elaborate on the phenomenon of the body clearly enough because it requires to fulfil the ideal of pure science. To overcome Brentano's psychologism and naturalistic assumptions, the idealist position neglects the role of the body in cognitive processes. However, if we look at the consequences of Husserl's research, we can find many places where Husserl tried to reintegrate the phenomenon of the body in a new way that denies the materialist thesis but manages to place it in the *context of perceptual apprehension*. This is especially emphasized in the passages where Husserl explores the *manifold role of the imagination*. His methodology overcomes the modern divisions of subjectivity that distinguish the sensual, rational and mindful parts of its apprehension. These are the reasons why his considerations of the aesthetic and the world of praxis are not systematically presented, but we can only show the metrological foundation for its validation.

Husserl's critique of Kant's term of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) shows that the body cannot have the mediating role in dialectical methodology.

Instead of using this term, Husserl uses the notion of phantasy (*Phantasie*). Husserl shows that we need to explore different ways of subjectivist apprehension to show where the phenomenon of the body stands in these processes. Distinguishing three fundamentally separate ways of apprehension, Husserl shows that the field of aesthetics and the world of praxis belong to the *phantasy apprehension* because it explores not just the positive facts but also the *possibilities*. The aim of this research is to emphasise the manifold ways in which we can approach the phenomenon of the body. With a fundamental difference between perceptual (*Gegenwärtigung*), re-presentational (*Vergegenwärtigung*) and fantasy apprehensions (*Phantasie*), Husserl allows the field of imagination to be completely independent.¹ This means that the aesthetics and philosophy of praxis are also independent from the realm of theoretical philosophy and the *Zeitgeist* if they rely on the field of imagination.

Another preliminary remark relates to the reasons for reconciling transcendentalism and materialism as a basis for explaining the role of the body. Methodologically, it is hard to understand how it is possible to explore the role of the body after the *process of neutralisation*, since this process explicitly dismissed the materialistic conception of the world. However, if we look closely at Husserl's analysis, we can see that the phantasy apprehension in imaginal processes has a similar role as *epoché*, which means that we need to approach the role of the body in a very different way from the traditional way. This means that Husserl not only assimilates the body as a positive fact of perceptual apprehension, but also shows its status in field of modifications and *possibilities*, which definitely separates his approach from naturalistic considerations of the body. Husserl shows that the neutralisation of the factuality opens up the space for a new methodology that does not have the linear form of traditional dialectics, in which each sphere of subjective apprehension has its place in the hierarchical and mediating structure of subjectivity. This is the reason why later structuralist authors such as Jacques Rancière approached the sphere of aesthetics as a regime independent of the theoretical sphere.

Aristotle's conception of the link between the body and the imagination played an important role in Husserl's thinking on this subject. The insights Husserl gained in his later research show that it is necessary to return to the Ancient Greek concept of "first philosophy" in order to recover the original ideal of science. For this reason, it is necessary to return to the original Greek thought on the matter. In Husserl's later writings we can see how he succeeds in finding in the Aristotelian framework the inspiration for imagination which is the foundation for aesthetics and the philosophy of praxis. Husserl's movement towards the history of philosophy occurred in his late period, and perhaps we can say that his *Crisis* was the turning point in his from a purely transcendental to an ontological position. His appeal to Aristotle comes not only in order to understand the idea of first philosophy but also the manifold uses of imagination and the body. He shows that Aristotle already discovered the *re-productive use of phantasy* – not necessarily as something negative, which was the case in the Platonists' use of *mimesis*.² Aristotle was the first one to show how the notion of imagination should be reconsidered in a subjective structure because it is related to the question of *pure possibility*, which will later be one of the fundamental considerations in the phenomenological approach to this notion.³ The role of imagination is fundamental in the process of subjective knowledge because it is the driving force of all the different

possibilities for action and reflection. For Aristotle, imagination does not have just an *aesthetic* but also an *epistemic* role, and it is fundamental for the *world of praxis*, too.⁴

If we were to look for what was in common to poetics and the philosophy of politics from the earliest days, we would see that what brings the two together is a specific way in which these two disciplines relate to the phenomena of the *body* and *possibility*. Aristotle shows that poetics and the philosophy of politics, unlike theoretical philosophy, have different criteria of truth. Unlike theoretical philosophy that deals with eternal and necessary truths, the realms of praxis and poetics deal with the problem of things that *may be different* precisely because they belong to the area of *things made by free human spirit*.⁵ The history of understanding the phenomena of the body involves different methodologies; however, what some of them have in common is that they always somehow compare the body to the soul. The Sophistic tradition, which examines the relation between the notion of *physis* and *nomos*, was trying to overcome this distinction in their decompositional method. With the first subjectivists, these two phenomena were addressed for the first time in the Sophistic philosophy in the context of the problems of reason and argumentation by exploring whether cognitive methods can overcome these differences. It is Socrates who will attempt to fully resolve this problem through

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In *Husserliana XXIII*, the author explains these differences in detail, showing that perceptual consciousness is the basis of apprehension but also that it has its variations, memory and imagination. Husserl shows that the notion of phantasy is usually understood as ability and possibility in a wider sense, like a mental disposition or in an artistic sense. He emphasizes the multiplicity of imagination to highlight its functions in the field of praxis and aesthetics. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung. Zur Phänomenologie der Anschaulichen Vergegenwärtigungen. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1898–1925)*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Hague, Boston – London 1980, p. 2, §1, ff. 5.

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Cf. *ibid.*, p. 575, ff. 10.

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Aristotle's concept of imagination is ambiguous; it explains not just behavior that seems to be guided by reason, but also those cases where the agent lacks the capacity for rational judgment. He was the first to show the *manifold role of phantasy*. In his text *De anima se*, he deliberates on some of these functions. He shows that no action could be possible without the process of imagination. Cf. Arist. *De Anima*. 403a3–403a25. Aristotle also shows that imagination is different and more fragile than sensation. Cf. *ibid.* 428a5–428a18. According to Aristotle, as much as we are free in thinking, we cannot escape the truth by being able to imagine a different outcome. Cf. *ibid.* 427b7–427b27.

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Cf. Tanja Todorović, “The Manifold Role of *Phantasie* in Husserl's Philosophy”, *Filozofija i društvo* 32 (2021) 2, pp. 246–260, here p. 248, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2298/FID2102246T>.

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Aristotle shows that politics is the purpose of all particular sciences because it gives them particular direction of play: “And politics appears to be of this nature; for it is this that ordains which of the sciences should be studied in a state, and which each class of citizens should learn and up to what point they should learn them; and we see even the most highly esteemed of capacities to fall under this, e.g. strategy, economics, rhetoric; now, since politics uses the rest of the sciences, and since, again, it legislates as to what we are to do and what we are to abstain from, the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the good for man. For even if the end is the same for a single man and for a state, that of the state seems at all even something greater and more complete both to attain and to preserve; for though it is worthwhile to attain the end merely for one man, it is finer and more god like to attain it for a nation or for city-states. These, then, are the ends at which our inquiry, being concerned with politics, aims.” – Arist. *NE*. 1094a18–1094b11.

his conceptual philosophy in which the notion of knowledge has primal state. After that, Plato's ontology definitely places the soul and the body in a hierarchy, but at the same time also in a unity that must be confirmed through rational mediation.⁶ This mediation that, on the one hand, manifests itself in the rational process, while on the other, in the life of the community, finds its ontological foundation and unification in the theory of ideas. Although he spells out this theory clearly in the *Republic*, his reflections on the body and the soul most often remain mythical and represented/presented through stories and images.⁷ One of the important problems for modern phenomenology that Plato has already discovered is the idea that there is no direct approach to the problem of the body because it is precisely the body itself that is the "most direct" relation to the environment in the epistemological process.

Reading classical interpretations, one most often comes across the idea that Plato's ontological world is ultimately dualistic and that this dualism is also present in the constitution of the soul.⁸ According to such interpretations, the body and sensuality are placed on the lowest level of the ontological scale. Nevertheless, by reading the *Republic*, one can arrive at a different conclusion. Plato's concept of *paideia* shows how important it is for the political community to form a body in the proper way.⁹ Although we cannot speak about the differentiation between ontological and epistemological spheres in Plato's theory in modern terms, we can still somehow reconstruct his thought and show that the body is important through the mediational process itself. Even though the body is just a phenomenon of the real world, some people spend all their lives in this sphere because the real division of labour takes place in this world.¹⁰

The essential question that emerges from Plato's *Republic* is what *justice* is and whether it is the same thing as *equality*.¹¹ Plato examines the question of justice through the notion of the possibility of an ideal Republic in which everyone should do their job and not interfere with others. Plato does this to avoid sophistic pitfalls in which the problem of equality is banalised and the question of justice is reduced to the examination whether there is "natural" equality understood as crude bodily equality among people. He does not perceive equality democratically as an opportunity for equal voting rights, but it is construed, in a manner characteristic of the Hellenic spirit, in achieving a purpose in the community. According to Rancière, this will be a problematic point of Plato's thought, because if we cannot say at the outset that humans are equal through the body and the nature, then we must speak about equality as a form of possibility, *as an opportunity for everyone to participate in common affairs*. This possibility is not considered sufficiently in Plato's praxis and his Republic remained only a projection posed onto the real world precisely because he did not fully bring to light the problems of the relationship between potency and reality, being and necessity, matter and form. According to Rancière, there are no two different intelligences separated by the abyss as Plato presented it in the *Republic*. The body is what connects them precisely because it is the chain of mediation and expression, and for the very reason that it can be directed by the ratio not only contributing to the community in the sense of hard work, but also in the participation in the political affairs in the polis. *Purpose is possibility* and if we immediately reduce it to performing only the work within the ready-made division of labour in which some will not be engaged in general matters in the Republic, then from the beginning, we are putting them on the lowest ontological level and we are closing the

possibility for them to participate in problems that are related to everyone.¹² Therefore, it is impossible to speak about democratic equality on the basis of Plato's political theory, since it was not developed on the basis of a real or an ideal community:

“This polemic comprises two elements: in the Republic descriptive element, a fancy picture – or fiction – of democracy as the world where everything is upside down because of the reign of equality; and, in the Laws, a list of qualifications for exerting power, where democracy is not named but appears only as the ‘choice of the god’ or the power of chance, the only power based on no qualification for ruling.”¹³

In addition to the criticism that Rancière directs against Plato's work, one must emphasize the importance of placing poetics and praxis in relation to the body, because it seems that the phenomenon of the body is very important for both of these paradigms. The abovementioned division of labour is related to the “reconfiguration of the realm of the sensible”¹⁴ to which Rancière refers, which is going to be discussed later on. At this point, it is sufficient to underline what is already evident from Plato's philosophy: the relation between body and soul is not unambiguously defined. Aristotle will disentangle many of Plato's problems. For Aristotle, speaking about matter and form is only possible if we reconsider their relationship. Neither can *Materia prima* exist without form, nor can we speak about clear form without matter.¹⁵ A proficient politician and artist should know what kind of material they have at their disposal partly because it dictates the framework of possibility for certain ideas to be realised. This is why Aristotle, unlike Plato who criticized the arts, glorified artists as those who are able to utilize the materials that they have at

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In *Republic*, Plato shows that the body has a very important role in the job of the guards who need to defend the polis from the foreign influence. They need to exercise the body and the soul equally because that is the only way that the harmony can exist in a State. Plat. *Rep.* 410c. He is also showing later in book X that the *phenomenon* or a body image is the first step of mediation in the process of reaching ideas. – *Ibid.*, 601b.

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For example, in his dialogue *Phaedo* in many myths, such as the myth of *Er*, Plato argues for the place of the soul in its ontological and cosmological order. Cf. Richard Dacre Archer-Hind, *The Phaedo of Plato*, Macmillan, London 1894, p. 31.

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Plato's dialogue *Phaedo* and the discussion of the *immortality of the soul*, which can exist independently from the body, is the best example that supports this aspiration. Cf. Thomas Kjeller Johansen, “The Separation of the Soul from Body in Plato's *Phaedo*”, *Philosophical Inquiry* 41 (2017) 2–3, pp. 17–28, doi: <https://doi.org/10.5840/philo inquiry2017412/312>.

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Plato especially underlines this thesis in book III of his *Republic*.

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Plato starts his book the *Republic* by questioning what justice is and showing that the *correct distribution of work* should be a requirement for justice. Cf. Plat. *Rep.* 433e.

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Especially in books I and II of his *Republic*.

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Cf. Žak Ransijer [Jacques Rancière], *Metoda jednakosti. Politika i poetika*, Multimedijski centar, Edicija Jugoslavija, Zagreb – Belgrade 2014, p. 5.

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Jacques Rancière, “A Few Remarks on the Method of Jacques Rancière”, *Parallax* 15 (2009) 3, pp. 114–123, here p. 119, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534640902982983>.

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Ž. Ransijer [J. Rancière], *Metoda jednakosti*, p. 5.

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Perhaps Aristotle's *Physics* is the work in which this division is most obviously represented. Cf. Sean Kelsey, “Hylomorphism in Aristotle's *Physics*”, *Ancient Philosophy* 30 (2010) 1, pp. 107–124, doi: <https://doi.org/10.5840/ancientphil20103017>.

their disposal masterfully, craftily handling to the possibility that a story can capture. Poets are even more important than historiographers because unlike historiographers, who only expose the already existing conjuncture of reality, poets can talk about ideas and about possible realities:

“It is, moreover, evident from what has been said, that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen, what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose [...]. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular.”¹⁶

Although Aristotle managed to place in the focus of his reconsiderations the notion of possibility, showing that the idea is always somehow formed in relation to the body in both the domain of praxis and of poetics,¹⁷ in the end, the bond between these two disciplines has not been completely resolved. According to his analyses, what these two disciplines have in common is the questioning of the phenomena that are changeable by nature. This issue opens the question of how these two disciplines are related to the *first philosophy*. Aristotle’s thought made progress in analysing the places of particular disciplines on the ontological scale because he assigned to poetics a certain kind of autonomy over politics. Aristotle had shown that it has a different kind of *purposefulness*.¹⁸ Realizing that the ground of human actions is the ground of *constant change*, even in a rigid consuetudinary Hellenic world, Aristotle finds a place for dialectic not anymore in an ideal world reserved only for some, like Plato, but in the topics of the real political world.¹⁹

In *grosso modo* observation of patristic and scholastic tradition, one can conclude that the relation between poetics and the philosophy of praxis was not completely resolved. Although in this period humanity was understood as a created nature that, in God’s image, is itself able to create reality, these two disciplines were not fully developed and they were not placed in a systematic relation to each other.²⁰ This may be the consequence of the fact that body and the sensible were systematically neglected and put aside in this period, and that the primacy was given to the transcendental world of divine eternal truths. Modern philosophy, under the influence of Christianity, on the one hand, and shaped by the emerging positive science, on the other, not only failed to resolve the dualism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, but it even managed to increase the already existing gap between the soul and the body.²¹ Although modern considerations of the body and perception do not manage to resolve the complex process of mediation, their historic role can be traced by exploring the structures of subjectivity. Transcendental philosophy follows the modern approach in attempting to re-examine the structures of subjectivity, primarily in relation to setting the criteria on the body and the matter. Kant’s transcendental-subjectivist position does go further than Descartes’ insights; however, he still does not show a clear relation of mediation between the subject and the object, and, therefore, leaves space for “the thing” in itself.²² This is precisely why Husserl praises Descartes and Kant as the ancestors of his methodology: they are seen as representatives of the subjectivist discourse in the struggle for a transcendental position, which has the unique capacity to overcome objectivism and naturalism.²³ However, Kant does not examine the logic of historical world. For Kant, logic and history have no special connections. But Kant fails to answer the issue of the historical movement of philosophy by itself. Only Hegel will address these questions with his speculative method. Hegel is the first author to put poetics and the philosophy of praxis

on an equal footing again locating them on the highest range of *objective* and *absolute spirit* reflections.

Perhaps it can be said that phenomenology has its roots in Hegel's thought and that, thanks to the historical movement of the ideas that he has outlined, it can be concluded that *dialectics is only possible as phenomenology* if we are to understand it in its openness, negativity and progressiveness. Many authors from the Frankfurt School tried to expose the negative role of the dialectical process discovered in Hegel's phenomenological analyses that would show the necessity of historical openness in the phenomenological movement. Precisely this need for openness and projection of one's world is going to be elaborated by contemporary philosophy in a whole new manner that seeks to overcome the limitations of absolute idealism. In this manner, the need for openness is not necessarily bound to the question of progress, but contemporary phenomenology turns the focus on the problem of the body and perception, and for the first time consistently schematizes these concepts in their complexity. Phenomenology seems to be the only method that successfully underlines the relationship between the body and the soul, precisely because it views the *essence of things in motion*, unity in change. Husserl especially

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Aristotle, *Poetics*, transl. by Samuel Henry Butcher, Gutenberg EBook, 2006, p. 9. Available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1974/1974-h/1974-h.htm> (accessed on 31 May 2022).

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Aristotle shows that the notion of the body underlies the phenomenon of change, a possibility to act differently, but also that the politics and art have completely different mechanisms for changing: "And, if politics be an art, change must be necessary in this as in any other art." – Arist. *Pol.* 1268b23–1269a28.

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The artist gives an external purpose to the body, while the man who acts morally always defines internal intentions; the internal purpose becomes "that external" which is no longer a dead skeleton but a common object in life of the community. Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1268b23–1269a28.

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Only later will Karl Marx demonstrate the importance of dialectics not only in the praxis but also in the world of poetics, above all the world of hard labor. This is especially emphasized in his early writings in which he tried to overcome the idealistic approach to these questions. Cf. Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, David McLellan (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000.

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The two greatest representatives of this period, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, analyse the philosophy of politics in completely different ways, while the theory of art itself is

either very little or not reflected at all. It will become a theme only later in Renaissance philosophy, which revives the ancient ideal of the body. Cf. Milenko Perović, *Filozofija politike, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva*, Podgorica 2019, pp. 190–194.

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Husserl shows that almost the whole modern rationalistic philosophy led by René Descartes never managed to resolve the issue of dualism because it placed the theoretical naturalistic aim over other forms of existence. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Erste Philosophie*, Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg 1992, p. 58.

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This will be the subject of Hegel's critique of Kant, which is present in many places, especially in his phenomenology showing how the thing "in itself" becomes the object of knowledge: "With a change in knowledge, the object also becomes something different, since it essentially belonged to this knowledge. To consciousness, what thereby comes to be is that what was formerly in its eyes the *in itself* does not exist in itself, that is, that it existed *in itself* merely for consciousness." – Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, transl. A. V. Millar, Motilal Banarsidass Publisher, New Delhi 1998, pp. 81–82.

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This can be found particularly in Husserl's middle period in which he criticised naturalism and analysed the possibility for the historical approach to philosophy. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1965, p. 13.

emphasized this in his writings that examine the problem of active and passive synthesis, showing that this unity can be found in the experience itself, in unity between the living body and its correlate of mental processes.²⁴ In this way, it is remarkably similar to the dialectical method, which it often attempts to distinguish itself from.

Therefore, the potential of the phenomenological method in the interpretation of the *body* and *perception* should be examined. We will try to emphasize that in its methodological core, phenomenology examines not only the ways in which things themselves appear, but also the ways in which a *different reality is anticipated*, not necessarily on the basis of clear subjectivist forms, but also through the body notion as a potency that already dictates the framework possibility for changes. What contemporary phenomenology lacks and what Rancière tries to resolve is to show the bond between the realms of praxis and poetics, which are specifically connected to the notion of the body and the sensory, but are not also necessarily reducible to one another, and it can be connected through the *life-world* notion. This world does not exhaust itself through its already existing manifestations. The life-world is, on the one hand, a world of perception, but on the other, a world of *creativity*, a world of *opportunity*, both of which form an integral part of one complete reality. Primarily, this world seems to be the most immediate and accessible to the subjectivity, but immediately afterwards it is shown that it has yet to be reached. The path to the unique spheres of creativity goes through the *body* and *perception*, which are the simplest and “most immediate”, from the perspective of subjectivity, and at the same time the most complex, precisely because they also represent the “objective” reality.²⁵

Body, Image, and Perception

One of the problems of Kant’s transcendental philosophy was, among other things, that his concept of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) is reduced to categories, reason, and the field of necessity. Time is understood successively and the phenomenon of the body also remains in its naturalistic assumption. One consequence of Kant research is that the human being is seen as divided, as an amphibious being belonging to two worlds. It is at the same time a natural body subordinated to material laws and a being of freedom. In everyday examples, this aporia can be resolved, but in a terminological way in which Kant understood the representative and mediating role of consciousness on the basis of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) gave the author a lot of trouble. That is one of the reasons why Husserl will avoid the theory of imagination in the way Kant understood it, and he will use the term fantasy (*Phantasie*). Separating the imaginary power of perception from imagination in the fields of aesthetic and praxis, Husserl shows that we approach the notion of the body in different ways depending on the way of apprehending the object. At the beginning, it is important to point out that for Husserl, there is no completely immediate involvement of the body. At the level of perceptual consciousness (*Gegenwärtigung*), the object is given to us as a *presented* segment of the body. Based on the temporal structure, we constitute its wholeness. At the level of imagination, in the context of re-presentation (*Vergegenwärtigung*), such as memory and imagination (fields of aesthetics and praxis), the body is given to us only as a *figment*, the segment of what is not present here and now, but what already has been or what only should be possible. In a similar

way, Husserl shows that the body is always given to the subject in mediation; however, for Husserl, unlike for Hegel, this mediation is not resolved through the categories of absolute ideas.

Husserl never directly criticized Hegel. He was much more concerned with Kant's transcendental philosophy. Nevertheless, German idealism, especially in its late phase led by Hegel, managed to deal adequately with the problem of the relationship between *subject* and *object* for the first time in the history of philosophy demonstrating the paradox of the fact that the subjectivity is at the same time the subject and the object of knowledge.²⁶ It is precisely this paradox that puts an idea into movement – a dialectic that drives the wheel of history forward. In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel showed that in the body itself, in the *sensory certainty*, there is already a difference between the direct and indirect grasping of the object.²⁷ This implicates Hegel's other analyses that show that there is no moment of knowledge in movement that is completely immediate and that we cannot grasp the body by separating it from the rest of subjectivity. Representations or images that the body projects are just fragments that need to be shaped, but still, as such, they are already a product of the unbreakable bond between subjectivity and the world. From a rational perspective, subjectivity may seem to deal with raw material because the most certain thing seems to be the connection of consciousness with the physical reality, but the result of the process of mediation opens the ratio to a mode of mediation that is reflexive.²⁸ This means that objects are always given to the subjectivity as already mediated representations, to which only later subjectivity gives significance. In a similar way, Husserl shows that the body is always given to the subject in mediation, only for Husserl, unlike for Hegel, that mediation is not resolved through the categories of absolute ideas. For Husserl, mediation remains open depending on whether it is given in a perceptual apprehension or in a process of imagination.

Contemporary phenomenology only partially takes into account the results and insights of the idealistic phenomenology. Husserl's critique of objectivism is also based on the criticism of the rational consciousness understood only in its "factual character", which retains the belief in the immediate certainty of the object. The idea is that the possibility for an exceptional reflexive attitude must be able to derive the *epoché*, the methodological step that helps subjectivity to separate itself from the world and to question common sense belief in the uncertainty of the object.²⁹ However, the problem lies not only in

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Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis. Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, transl. by Anthony J. Steinbock, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht – Boston – London 2001, p. 265.

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Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, transl. by Oliver Davis, Routledge, London – New York 2004, p. 39.

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Although Hegel tried to outline, through the dialectical method, the dynamic relationship between the subject and the object, it can perhaps be argued that Kant already had a manner of taking subjectivity as an object of

knowledge and that this resulted in his transcendental method.

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Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 86.

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Hegel emphasizes this in particular in the chapter "The truth of self-certainty". Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 154–164.

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Husserl shows this first through *epoché* *we must lose the world, in order to gain it back in universal self-reflection*. – Edmund Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, Martinus Nijhoff, Hague 1963, p. 39.

showing the way in which objects present themselves for subjectivity, but also in the question of what is to be done after the natural attitude is already placed in parentheses.³⁰ The golden rule of the phenomenological method requires “moving from the phenomenon to the things”, which means that the existentiality of the object is only conditionally questioned. When the subject tries to reconsider ways of self-perceiving reality, it becomes evident that there is always a “gap” between itself and reality. There is already a significant realisation that there is no pure zero point from which the research can begin. Therefore, Husserl’s project of establishing philosophy as pure science must be reconsidered:

“Between the self which analyses perception and the self which perceives, there is always a distance. But in the concrete act of reflection, I abolish this distance, I prove by that very token that I am capable of knowing what I was perceiving, I control in practice the discontinuity of the two selves, and it would seem that, in the last resort, the significance of the cogito lies not in revealing a universal constituting force or in reducing perception to intellection, but in establishing the fact of reflection which both pierces and sustains the opacity of perception.”³¹

Merleau-Ponty’s work becomes relevant for the present discussion due to his emphasis on the significance of memory and imagination in perception. The inability to fully comprehend the body comes directly from the fact that the subjectivity approaches the “external world” with some preconceptions about it. From this point, paradoxically, it is shown that the body is the most immediate, although it cannot be grasped as such since the ratio in its reflexive process seeks for the notion, for the clear clarity, which cannot be offered from body point of view. Although the phenomenon of the body as the object manifests itself most clearly in perceptive consciousness, this is only a segment of the wholeness of the object. Merleau-Ponty underlines that Husserl’s analysis of memory and imagination needs to be extended to the *field of perception* in order to understand all body processes. Therefore, when Merleau-Ponty talks about reflection, he does not investigate it under conditions of clear idealistic subjectivity. Instead, he shows its requirements for operating with what is already given as an experience, or in Husserl’s terms, what is given as sediment significance, which in the reflexive process reveals itself as “inwardness” and, afterwards, in the new hexality, refers to reality again.³²

Here, dialectics as phenomenology is understood through the movement of a concrete, individual body, and as such, it never begins its journey from a zero point. Instead, its reflection has already been burdened with the previous experiences that formed it. Some authors, such as Merleau-Ponty, who seek to transcend the limitations of Husserl’s subjectivist position, must then show the unity between the subjectivity and the world, which is not self-evident from a world that is inverted for the observer in the phenomenological attitude. Therefore, the path to be taken in proving the unity of the subjectivity and the life-world should go through the understanding of the phenomenon of perception through its dynamism that constantly reveals the already established dynamic schemes of subjectivity, and it should be presented not only in its multiplicity, but also in its wholeness, a unity of diversity. The overcoming of the natural attitude can be taken by phenomenological *epoché* only if afterward this process is not followed by a reduction of consciousness to some particular contents. Owing to freedom, one can move from beyond the habitual, spontaneous course of reality, but only if one is aware of one’s habitual chain of activities that needs to be overcome.³³

Consciousness must understand itself through its own unity with the world.³⁴ Through its relation to the world, in the complexity of its perceptiveness, the body can realize how its own perception differs from the animalistic one. The human body does not fully succumb to external forces. It has a certain kind of distance from the world and from its own decisions. It can resist doing something based on its own knowledge of the world, based on the trust in one's own perceptiveness and memory.³⁵ One can resist the external forces precisely due to the possibility of self-projecting in them and due to considering its own possibilities. The retreating of consciousness into itself must, therefore, be understood only conditionally, as a kind of reflexivity that goes one step further to uncover new possible ways of relating to the world. Therefore, perception must be understood as a constant "submersion into the world", as a bond between the subjectivity and world, a bond to which it is condemned and from which it cannot escape.³⁶ From the analytic point of view, we can speak about perception as if it is some absolute mode in which subjectivity operates. But on the other hand, if we take into consideration a particular historical subjectivity, it becomes clear that perception has always been related to the field of life precisely because of the bond between subjectivity and the life-world, which is mediated through the world of intersubjectivity. Perceptivity is a way of self-understanding in the context of intersubjective relations; therefore, it cannot be understood from the position of "pure science", but only in its own complexity and stratification.

The complexity of perception comes from the fact that it operates with individual representations mediated through images of individual things in motion, but at the same time, perception is characterised by the general fact that it is co-present with everything at the level of the common life. It was difficult for Husserl to try to restore the validity of the world through the *intersubjective construction*, bearing in mind that monadology of isolated subjectivity cannot be a valid ground to establish Being or even the world. Therefore, intersubjective comprehension of images and significance-relations must be

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Martin Heidegger, in particular, will try to elaborate on this question, showing how problematic it is to disregard the certainty of the object. A phenomenon is at the same time the one that reveals to subjectivity the truth about the "objective world", but also what is hidden, what merely indicates the horizon. In examining the fundamentals of the phenomenological method, Heidegger seeks to show that even when we are examining the "invisible", we examine what is already "in the world", what is given to the subject as co-present, even when the mere question of truth about the unity of that object is open. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen 2006, pp. 27–34.

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Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, transl. by Colin Smith, Taylor & Francis e-Library, Routledge, London 2005, p. 38.

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Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaft und transzendente Phänomenologie*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston – London 1993, p. 70.

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Cf. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 406.

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Cf. *ibid.*, p. 51.

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Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Incarnate Subject*, transl. by Paul B. Michel, Humanity Books, New York 2001, p. 87.

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Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, transl. by Alphonso Lingis, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1986, p. 23.

the way for constituting the world.³⁷ However, when we speak about the individual body perception, we always indicate that in addition to the common horizon of the life-world, which overlaps with particular universals, there is also an individual horizon in which each individual perception is immersed. What contemporary phenomenology elaborates correctly is the way that individual perception constitutes itself, which cannot be understood as “clear subjective thinking”, but it also includes the body in motion affected by the outside world.³⁸

The unity of the subjectivity and the world is not to be understood as a clear, classical *immanence*. According to classical correspondence theory, it seems as if the subjectivity is the one that produces images on the world basis and that these images only represent copies of the reality. The unity of the subjectivity and the world is not to be understood *psychologically* or *objectively*. On the contrary, by abstaining from judgment of the foundation of the world, the subject places itself in unknown *oneness with the world*, to which the subject assigns significance only through its own imagination. Images only indicate the horizon, but they cannot dictate what the truth is. The truth is constituted in reversing the subjective attitude toward images and toward language:

“The difference resides essentially in a general attitude. What one ordinarily calls thought is a consciousness that affirms this or that quality of its object but without realizing it on it. The image, on the other hand, is consciousness that aims at producing its object: it is therefore constituted by a certain way of judging and feeling of which we do not become conscious as such but which we apprehend on the intentional object as this or that of its qualities. This can be expressed in a word: the function of the image is symbolic.”³⁹

The symbolic relation to the complexity of images is a field of possibilities for subjectivity that needs to give significance to this disordered experience. Therefore, subjectivity can relate to the specific phenomenon through various schemes depending on which significance it wants to insert into mediating images.⁴⁰ This significance is burdened with the experiences that subjectivity already carries, and in addition to the theoretical meaning, it also has the instinctive drive, showing that the relation between subjectivity and the world is built not only from the perspective of a clear thinker but from the perspective of the active subject who, according to the experience they have already gained, constitutes their attitude in the world and directs their action.

Praxis as a Field of Possibilities

Aristotle was the first to show that every action is a rational desire, a relation between insights and urges.⁴¹ Contemporary phenomenology has revealed the importance of precisely this personal instinctive aspect by showing how psychological consciousness in action approaches the world through its own instinctive experience. This implies that the field of possibility is no longer understood just as a field of different theoretical analyses of reality, but also as possibility for the subject to direct their actions differently. As Hegel demonstrated, this is one of the reasons why a state with purely rational laws cannot exist.⁴² The world of praxis is a world of different possibilities which cannot be fully controlled even through absolute normativity and sanction. Certainly, there is controversy over the question about the relation between consciousness and action. The question is whether the change of consciousness and some of its own ideology (“the worldview”) can change the action or that movement is all there is, so one needs to change action in order to change the

way that consciousness counteracts itself.⁴³ The option is to try to think about consciousness in its movement in order to answer the question what is “the right action”.

The analysis reveals that subjectivity, although most often immersed in everyday life, seeks criteria for its own action in the decision-making process. Yet, the field in which the purposes of the world are to be set is the field of imagination, possibilities and change. Thus, the subjectivity in its relation to history no longer has the task to present the absolute truth about reality. Historical epochs remain open to different interpretations precisely because the present moment is an *open field of possibilities*.⁴⁴ By comparing the dialectical and the phenomenological method, one can find their similarity in relation to the analyses of the present moment. Hegel has already shown that dialectic must stay open to movement that does not seek the substance of the object in dead, schematic forms. In a similar way, phenomenology examines the modifications of objects in comparison to their modes of appearance.

In the introduction, it was emphasized that the ancient Greeks, both Plato and Aristotle, tried to think about praxis as a field of possibilities. To determine a purpose means to determine something “as if” it is already true, to go towards something “as if” it was already solved by choosing the means to achieve one’s goals. There is no path from “inequality to equality”, but equality can only be achieved if individual acts “as if everyone were already equal”. This

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Cf. E. Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, p. 156.

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This phenomenology surely puts Hegel’s notion of reflection into question. German idealism understands reflection as the highest form of consciousness that abolishes all differences from sensible to rational level, finding its unity in absolute ideas. On the other side, contemporary phenomenology questions the possibility of resolving all contradictions in reflective act. Contradictions must exist because they put movement into practice and they can be resolved only conditionally. This dismissal was not done in absolute ideas that are ontologically primary, but only through the bond between a concrete body and the world, through its need to express itself in that same world. This does not mean that truth has a relative character, but that we can speak about it only bearing in mind what has been given in life-world of perception.

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Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary. A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, transl. by Jonathan Mark Webber, Routledge, London – New York 2004, p. 97.

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Thus, Sartre shows that an ideological attitude towards a particular phenomenon is nothing but a horizon that is constituted and fixed in the movement of the subject, which seeks to set its own significance as the absolute truth.

“This image would therefore be given as a schematic representation of the content of the idea ‘proletariat’, as a means to make an inventory of that content. In other words, the image would still be a sign.” – Ibid., p. 105.

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Cf. Arist. *NE*. 1107a9–1107a27.

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Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, transl. by Hugh Barr Nisbet, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991, p. 33.

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Already in Hegel’s time, various controversies arose around his idea about the rational basis of reality. There was a dispute between the so-called “young” and “old” Hegelians, where the former believed that everything should be criticized, while the latter considered it as an absolute conception of reality, for both of which Marx will claim to be religious views. Cf. Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *The German ideology*, vol. 1–2, *Marxists.org*. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/> (accessed: 31 May 2022).

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Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectics*, transl. by Joseph Bien, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1973, p. 24.

is the thesis that Rancière will follow.⁴⁵ This does not require the achievement of a democratic society, but requires the need for being open towards change. From a contemporary perspective, we are talking about an existence that is limited by time, which, for that reason, must economically organize its own life and work. For a single existence, however, the field of possibilities is not the field of infinite possibilities. This is the way that the subject approaches the world through the mediation process, both in theoretical and in practical terms.

Rancière shows the complex relationship between subjectivity and the world through the notion of *world of sensible*. According to him, poetics and the philosophy of praxis should be equal disciplines among which there is no relation of subordination.⁴⁶ This is due to the fact that both of them relate to the “world of sensible” in a specific way. The role of subjectivity is not just to find out as much as possible about the reality but to repeatedly recreate its own relation towards it. Subjectivity can outline its own regulations formed in the process of negating the already existing forms in the world.⁴⁷ Therefore, poetics as a discipline must be considered through the relation to the history of philosophy because it exists only in its specific dynamical relation with the world of praxis.⁴⁸ Similarly, when Rancière speaks about the “reconfiguration of everyday life”,⁴⁹ he is referring to the temporality of the subject, which is one of the main reasons for alienation. But if it becomes a necessary condition in the community formation, then the whole logic of the praxis is erased and left to the spontaneity of the dialectical discourse. Plato shows that the realm of ideas is reserved only to some, while those who are in direct contact with the material world only deal with the image, with the *phenomenon*.⁵⁰ According to Rancière, this is precisely the problematic aspect of his philosophy. Clearly, no one can approach ideas indirectly but only through hard work and a range of mediations. However, the premise is that some will never be able to move from the image to the truth so its purpose is reduced to the infinite multiplication of falsehoods, the reproduction of the image and the reproduction of the sensible. Rancière wants to achieve the exact opposite of that. He wants to show that true equality can only be achieved if this “immediate world of sensible” is reconfigured and if people are willing to leave behind their already established patterns of living.⁵¹

Rancière reveals the “central path”, which is the dialectic in motion, the *phenomenology of possibility*. What is most important along that path is precisely the “immediate” contact between subjectivity and the world because the world of sensible shows the truth and the possibility to outline a horizon. The possibility is opened only when it is *set as a tendency in intersubjective relations*. There cannot be a change of consciousness without the *reconfiguration of the sensible*, without changing the way in which consciousness is directed towards its own bodily processes. It should be shown that the historical process does not proceed to the one-way goal. Instead, there is a communal intelligence that governs this process. It depends on the original assumption about the (in)equality among all individuals. Emancipation requires us to live in several times at once.⁵² Everyday life has to be changed, because it is the main configuration in which people spend their time. We should blur the boundaries between selfhood and community in order to understand how the dialectical movement is constituted through intersubjectivity relations.⁵³ What this process first and foremost needs is one phenomenological step back which is carried out in the *epoché*. If the subject is able to put the particularity

of the world in the parentheses, it is surely able to distance itself from its own experience, its horizon and beliefs.⁵⁴ In other words, we need a reflexive consciousness (not a rational attitude towards experience, but attitude which will no longer seek to find the absolute truth in the notion of matter or an absolute idea). Instead, consciousness should think about reality in its processuality.

Body and Perception in Contemporary Poetics

By separating the field of imagination from the perceptual apprehension, Husserl managed to create a free sphere for the field of aesthetics which does not have to be immersed in perceptual presence. This is already visible in the avant-garde art, a movement which goes against the ruling values. Similarly, Rancière shows that aesthetics must have an independent regime from the ruling values. We can underline different conclusions about the relations between the philosophy of praxis and poetics by looking at the relation between the body and the soul in the contemporary world. On the one hand, critical theory, whose method is based on the necessity of dialectical unrevealing and unmasking of the truths of subjectivity, shows the importance of the emergence from the positive reality in which everything that is given is accepted as the highest truth. What turns out to be problematic in this process is that the very process of imagination shows its limits precisely in the inability to “put the truths of the world in absolute parentheses”. Therefore, in the modern technical society, subjectivity is most often limited to what has already been offered to it as the truth:

“Imagination is replaced by a mechanically relentless control mechanism which determines whether the latest image to be distributed, really represents an exact, accurate and reliable reflection of the item of reality.”⁵⁵

Subjectivity in the broadest sense does not have a unique pattern by which it functions, as showed by the Frankfurt School. The problem arises when the dialectical process loses its internal negativity, when it ceases to be reversible and directs its movements exclusively from the general to individual truths,

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Cf. Ž. Ransijer [J. Rancière], *Metoda jednakosti*, p. 6.

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Cf. *ibid.*, p. 21.

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Here, the negation must be understood as *positive negation* (*Aufhebung*). Cf. *ibid.*

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For this reason, aesthetics will be considered only as one of the specific regimes of art that is formed on the basis of a certain way that the sensible is organized. Cf. Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, transl. by Steven Corcoran, Polity Press, Cambridge 2009, p. 8.

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Ž. Ransijer [J. Rancière], *Metoda jednakosti*, p. 11.

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Cf. Plat. *Rep.* 601b.

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Cf. Ž. Ransijer [J. Rancière], *Metoda jednakosti*, p. 17.

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Cf. *ibid.*, p. 51.

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Cf. Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, transl. by Gregory Elliott, Verso, London – New York 2009, p. 19.

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Merleau-Ponty shows that this is exactly what modern “intelligence” lacks. Cf. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectics*, p. 27.

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Theodor Adorno, *The Shema of Mass Culture*, in: Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, Routledge, London – New York 1991, pp. 61–98.

in which the individuality then ceases to be the creator of the world of possibility, but only becomes the creator of one mimetic reality. The idea is that subjectivity can decide not to participate in dominant patterns, because only in the *possibility of reversibility* can dialectics show its power. Where this power will manifest itself is a totally different question. It can manifest itself in some concrete forms of common action or it can find its place in the fields of cultural industries and emphasize its uniqueness within it in this way even more. However, in this way, subjectivity is always in danger of being assimilated by the affirmative “diversity” of the contemporary culture.

Based on the notion of *possibility*, we can reveal the polarity that exists in the contemporary art world. On the one hand, we can see certain individuals’ affirmative, mimetic attitude towards reality, which is commonly referred to as *mass culture*, while, on the other, we may seek an attempt to “escape”, resist and deflect the dominant value patterns, which is the most apparent in the so-called *avant-garde*.⁵⁶ These two discourses are not separated by an abyss. They arise from the same life-world ground, which is why there is a risky possibility for critical culture to become affirmative itself, to fall into the infinite field of imitation of the “truths” of the dominant reality. The *avant-garde* is problematic precisely because its language must be different in order to reveal the false schemes of existing world. The forms and figures that artist used in the past have been depersonalized and dehumanized. Therefore, it seems that *avant-garde* represents the discontinuity with the history of art, as if there was a post-modern crack between modern and contemporary art, even philosophy. This crack is created from the desire to avoid the dialectical method which is based on the idea of progress that became problematic after the contemporary crisis and from the misunderstandings that arise around Hegel’s thesis about the end of art and history. Precisely upon the idea of negative dialectics, critical authors will seek to overcome this crack by showing that aesthetics and politics are related, that their strength can be found in the sharpness of critical thought and in the ability of the mind to go beyond the already created schemes. Precisely because it wants to distinguish itself from mass culture,⁵⁷ the *avant-garde* becomes accessible only to some and begins to be divided between “those who can understand it” and “those who cannot”.⁵⁸ Therefore, it is necessary to question whether it can manifest the critical power required to distinguish itself from mass culture.⁵⁹

In addition to critical theory, there are also other theories about the philosophy of art, such as the theory of José Ortega y Gasset, who was one of the first authors who reflected on *avant-garde* movements that used the phenomenological method to underline the “postmodern crack”, based on the idea of an ontological distinction between Being and beings. Like Husserl, he shows that the imagination must be separated from perception, the present body from its possibilities. If the truth of the world cannot be reached from the world itself, then it cannot be reached at all, so we all fall into a vicious circle between simulacrum and simulation of reality, in which every fragment has the right to demand to be understood as the absolute truth. Criticism is no longer needed to reveal the contradictions of contemporary society, when they certainly can already coexist as such, side by side with one another.⁶⁰ Each particular perspective of the subject is respected, even if it essentially does not show how politics participates in the process of simulation, because as soon as the simulated image “enters reality”, it ceases to represent moralizing thought and becomes consuetude. Contemporary art’s mission is to investigate the problem

of perception; and the question of perceptivity extends to an interpreter of the works of art who is drawn into the process of interpreting itself. Thus, the question of *possibility* is no longer interpreted in the classical manner, but it is also moved to an infinite circle of “simulation” of things and ideas. Works of art no longer represent the truth of their own time, but their mission becomes to expose the falsehoods of their own time through figures that are completely contrasted with reality, so it seems that they have nothing in common with it.⁶¹

The question of the movement of the point of view is fundamentally linked with question of *perceptiveness* and *perspective* in the contemporary philosophy of art. It is not our task just to recognize that there are many different relations between the subject and the dominant culture, although we have seen that critical theory polarizes them into two (*critical* and *affirmative* relation to reality). Our task is to show *why* all different relationships exist. How is it possible that so many different views on the same phenomenon are constituted on the same life-world basis? These questions may be answered on the basis of the phenomenological approach to the notion of possibility:

“Perspective is much more than a secret technique for imitating a reality given as such to all men. It is the very realization and invention of a world dominated and possessed through and within an instantaneous system, which spontaneous vision at best sketches, tries vainly to hold together all the things which clamor for its whole attention.”⁶²

Although the notion of *perspective* is a very modern term, which Leibniz develops and affirms in order to explain the possibility of “movement” in the immovable world of monads, this term takes on a whole new meaning in contemporary philosophy. Perspective is no longer understood as an objective relation between the subject and the world but as the way in which subjectivity reversibly gives signification to the object. It is about revealing the possibility for an individual to move from one *regime of sensible* to another, from one style to another.⁶³ When we try to compare critical and phenomenological theory, it seems that there is no reconciliation between these two. The

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Cf. *ibid.*, p. 74.

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Based on the idea of “life values” that are timeless, which means that they are not historically limited.

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Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-garde*, transl. by Gerald Fitzgerald, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1968, p. 91.

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This has become especially important recently; given the fact that avant-garde itself seems to be entering the vortex of popular art.

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Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*, transl. by Chris Turner, Verso, London – New York 1996, p. 73.

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There are even theories that interpret contemporary art as part of the general historical process. This process is no longer understood as progress, but as movement that wants to

escape certain ideas, whose goal is not to reach the absolute truth, but to show the increasing alienation from the real world, from “factual reality”. Ortega y Gasset’s theory is one example of this trend. He shows that the history of painting is nothing but a progressive de-realization of a reality, whose historical trajectory can be clearly traced from modern to contemporary art. Cf. José Ortega y Gasset, “Sobre el punto de vista en las artes”, *Revista de Occidente* (1924) 8, pp. 129–148.

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Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Prose of the World*, transl. by John O’Neill, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1973, p. 53.

63

Merleau-Ponty thinks this is possible precisely because we are all residents of the same perceptual world, which is not only a world of mere factual things, but a common world of “cultural heritage”. Cf. M. Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, p. 101.

first one underlines the link between politics and aesthetics by showing their methodological equality. Dialectical movement can explain their historical intertwining and development precisely because both disciplines emerge in the same *Zeitgeist*. On the other hand, although phenomenological theory wants to show the unity between the subject and the world, it seems that it only contributes to the deepening of the postmodern crack by insisting on the diversity of perspectives in collective and individual worlds. What can “unite” these opposing theories is Rancière’s theory of the *distribution of the sensible*, which essentially can be understood through the notion of a common life-world.⁶⁴ Rancière sees the connection between politics and aesthetics in the ability of re-configuration of the sensible. This is why he often emphasizes the possibility for “aesthetic revolution” that should come before the political one. Structuralism and phenomenology both demonstrate the possibility for different regimes to appear on the same sensible life ground. This possibility can be realized because the dialectical process is not linear; it is not unidirectional, as many readers of Hegel misunderstand it. The possibility of different regimes exists precisely because the dialectical *process is reversible*. It aims for a generality that, in an aesthetic sense, may not be in line with what is consensually accepted as a political truth. It may seek its criteria in some other forms, though it can never completely break its connection with politics since they both arise from the same sensible life-world and they both direct their movements bearing in mind the possibility for phenomena to appear differently.

Hegel reaffirmed the ancient teaching about the importance of the body in constituting the complete ontological theory. Speculative logic emphasized the important role of the body in a chain of mediating processes. Marx’s philosophy is built on this thesis by reversing the mysticism of the idealistic dialectics towards a materialistic position. Paradoxically, Husserl’s philosophy, which is transcendental, does not neglect sensuality like Kant’s but opens the way for the affirmation of the phenomenon of the body through the specific notion of perception and imagination. This will certainly influence the later structuralism that underlines the domain of the body through the term of the *sensible world*, which revives the relationship between the spheres of praxis and poetics in this context. Although the phenomenon of the body has been systematically neglected in the history of philosophy, this phenomenon is affirmed in philosophies that were engaged in seeking a comprehensive philosophical position that will not only include the theoretical sphere, but also the domains of praxis and poetics. A complete ontological theory is not possible without showing the essential role that corporeality plays in the dynamics of knowledge and action.

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Analysing Hegel’s aesthetics, Rancière places no emphasis on his thesis about the end of the art or the role of art in reaching the truth. Instead, he emphasizes the phenomenological method in the philosophy of art: “He tells us in sum that art is alive as long as it is outside

itself, as long as it does something different from itself, as long as it moves on a stage of visibility which is always a stage of disfiguration.” Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, transl. by Gregory Elliott, Verso, London 2007, p. 89.

Tanja Todorović

Medijacijska uloga tijela u strukturalizmu i fenomenološka tradicija

Sažetak

Fenomen tijela zanemarivan je i stavljan u najniže hijerarhijske razmjere kroz gotovo čitavu filozofsku tradiciju. To je posebno uočljivo u problemima modernoga dualizma, koji je imao metodološke teškoće prilikom pomirenja jaza između duše i tijela. Iako smješten najniže na ontološkoj ljestvici, fenomen tijela u antičkoj je filozofiji igrao značajnu ulogu, posebno u poetičkoj i praktičkoj filozofiji. Njemački idealizam koji, na čelu s Hegelom, pokušava prevladati suvremeni dualizam i usvojiti klasičnu antičku dijalektiku, ponovno potvrđuje važnu ulogu tjelesnog fenomena pokazujući njegovo posredničko mjesto kako na polju teorijskih istina, tako i na polju objektivnoga duha. Iako je suvremena filozofija napravila pomak od idealističke logike, ovaj članak naglašava da je fenomenološka metoda, čiji je osnivač Husserl, također afirmirala fenomen tijela. Razlikujući perceptivnu (*Gegenwärtigung*) i imaginacijsku (*Vergegenwärtigung*) svijest, Husserl nam omogućava pristup fenomenu tijela na različite načine, pokazujući njegovu neovisnost u polju estetike. To je utjecalo na strukturalističku tradiciju, posebno Rancièrea, koji razvija slobodno polje prakse kroz pojam senzibilnoga svijeta. Taj je pojam predstavljen na temelju medijacijske uloge tijela, čime se omogućuje polju estetike da se pojavi kao slobodan režim djelovanja.

Ključne riječi

dijalektika, fenomenologija, poetika, posredovanje, percepcija, slika, tijelo, Jacques Rancièr, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Edmund Husserl

Tanja Todorović

Mediative Rolle des Körpers im Strukturalismus und die phänomenologische Tradition

Zusammenfassung

Das Phänomen des Körpers wurde für fast die gesamte philosophische Tradition ausgeklammert oder in der Bedeutungshierarchie nach unten geschoben. Dies macht sich vornehmlich in den Problemen des modernen Dualismus bemerkbar, der sich abmühte, die Kluft zwischen Seele und Körper zu überbrücken. Obgleich an unterster Stelle auf der ontologischen Skala platziert, spielte das Phänomen des Körpers eine sehr bedeutsame Rolle in der antiken griechischen Philosophie, insbesondere in der Poetik und Praxisphilosophie. Der deutsche Idealismus, der unter der Führung von Hegel danach trachtet, den modernen Dualismus zu überwinden und die klassische antike Dialektik anzunehmen, bekräftigt erneut die wichtige Rolle des Phänomens des Körpers, indem er dessen vermittelnde Stellung, sowohl auf dem Gebiet der theoretischen Wahrheiten als auch auf dem Gebiet des objektiven Geistes offenbart. Obwohl die zeitgenössische Philosophie von der idealistischen Logik abwich, kehrt dieser Aufsatz hervor, wie die von Husserl angeführte phänomenologische Methode auch das Phänomen des Körpers affirmierte. Durch die Distinktion zwischen dem perceptiven (*Gegenwärtigung*) und dem imaginativen (*Vergegenwärtigung*) Bewusstsein ermöglicht uns Husserl eine Herangehensweise an das Phänomen des Körpers auf verschiedenen Wegen und zeigt desgleichen seine Unabhängigkeit in den Gefilden der Ästhetik. Dies nahm Einfluss auf die strukturalistische Tradition, insbesondere Rancièr, der die Idee des freien Feldes der Praxis durch die Notion des Sinnlichen ausbaut, das die vermittelnde Rolle des Körpers darstellt, und die Sphäre der Ästhetik als freies Regime erscheinen lässt.

Schlüsselwörter

Dialektik, Phänomenologie, Poetik, Vermittlung, Perzeption, Körper, Bild, Edmund Husserl, Jacques Rancièr, Maurice Merleau-Ponty

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**Le rôle médiateur du corps dans le structuralisme
et la tradition phénoménologique**

Résumé

Le phénomène du corps a été négligé et situé à un rang inférieur dans presque la totalité de la tradition philosophique. Cela est particulièrement visible parmi les problèmes du dualisme moderne, ce dernier s'efforçant à concilier le fossé entre l'esprit et le corps. Bien que placé à une position inférieure dans l'échelle ontologique, le phénomène du corps joue un rôle éminemment important dans la philosophie de la Grèce antique, particulièrement dans la poétique et la philosophie de la praxis. L'idéalisme allemand, qui, mené par Hegel, s'applique à dépasser ce dualisme et adopter la dialectique classique, réaffirme le rôle important du phénomène du corps en montrant la place médiatrice qu'il occupe, autant dans le domaine de la vérité théorique que dans celui de l'esprit objectif. Même si la philosophie contemporaine s'est éloignée de la logique idéaliste, ce travail souligne que la méthode phénoménologique, fondée par Hegel, affirme également le phénomène du corps. En distinguant la conscience perceptive (Gegenwärtigung) et la conscience imaginante (Vergegenwärtigung), Husserl nous permet d'aborder le phénomène du corps de différentes manières, en montrant également son indépendance dans le champ de l'esthétique. Cela a influencé la tradition structuraliste, et particulièrement Rancière, qui développe l'idée du champ libre de la praxis à travers la notion du sensible qui représente le rôle médiateur du corps et est conçu, dans la sphère de l'esthétique, comme un régime qui agit librement.

Mots-clés

dialectique, phénoménologie, poétique, médiation, perception, corps, image, Edmund Husserl, Jacques Rancière, Maurice Merleau-Ponty