Harré and Merleau-Ponty: Beyond the Absent Moving Body in Embodied Social Theory[1]

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This paper addresses the absence of the *moving* body in contemporary social theory that claims to be embodied, and proposes ways of going beyond it toward a conception of *dynamic* embodiment. I do this through an examination of Harré's conception of embodiment found within the "ethogenic" standpoint that informs his 'Ways of Being' trilogy (Harré 1984, 1991, 1993).

I also examine Merleau-Ponty's conception of embodiment found within his existential phenomenology and the new ontology he proposes in *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968). Merleau-Ponty's conception of embodied consciousness, which entails the "lived body," "intercorporeity," and "flesh," is one of the major sources of the somatic turn in social theorizing during the past two decades.[2] Instead of regarding the body as an organism behaving—a deterministic entity—such embodied social theory regards the body as a phenomenal process—the perceptual experience or feeling of a subject. For example, Merleau-Ponty states

> Our bodily *experience* of movement is not a particular case of [theoretical knowledge], it provides us with a way of access of the world and the object, with a 'praktognosia', which has to be recognized as original and perhaps primary (1948: 104 cited in Harré, 1991: 109, emphasis supplied).

In making use of this thesis in an analysis of human skills, Harré refers to it as "the feeling of doing" (1991: 106-109). Clearly, in viewing the body as a phenomenal process (the received view of what phenemenology is all about), it is taken to be active, because human beings are assumed to be agents. Nevertheless, there is a failure on Harré's part to assume the *primacy* of human body movement, and thus a failure to regard movement as genuine action.

The point I wish make here is not simply that the body is more than an organism, but that the body is more than the experience and the feeling, or even the perception, of doing. There is *the doing itself—the movement*. Bodily movement is not adequately accounted for by relying upon Harré's guiding image of several people cooperating to move a piece of furniture (Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990: 12). These combined movements do not constitute a meaning-making process. They serve as a means to a practical end. In other words, the central focus of this kind of cooperative action is that of manipulating physical objects.

For an adequate account of bodily movement we must explicate further examples such as several American Indian sign-talkers communicating for long stretches of time without speech, punctuating their sign-talk periodically with uproarious laughter (see Farnell 1995), or the combined actions of celebrant, deacons, subdeacons and acolytes during a Mass (see Williams

1994), or a dance. In these instances, we have collective, cooperative actions of several people in which the body is both the means *and* the end of communicative intentions.

While human beings should never be reduced to matter in motion, we should remember that being human is more than *physical* being—human beings as "physical particulars," as Harré calls them (1991: 15-29). We are also *moving beings*—human *persons* in movement.

The primacy of human movement entails language and gesture.[3] That is, signifying movement in the gestural medium that is the mode of its semantic realization. Williams provided exactly this understanding in her semasiological concept of the "action sign" (1979: 178-207). It is the radical idea of human movement *as signifying acts* that can take us beyond the contemporary situation in which the moving body remains absent from embodied social theory. Neither Harré nor Merleau-Ponty provide us with such a conception, but I will show that their respective standpoints both call for, and internally permit, signifying acts achieved with human movement.

Merleau-Ponty and Models of Human Being

It is a commonplace belief that Merleau-Ponty's concept of "the lived- body" is a successful antidote to Cartesian mind-body dualism. The philosopher/dancer Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1981), and anthropologist/poet Michael Jackson (1989: 1-16, 119-136), both used the concept of the lived body for precisely that purpose.

In an earlier analysis of their efforts (Varela 1995) I argued that this approach has not properly challenged the problem of Cartesianism. Even if it *were* the case that Merleau-Ponty's notion of the lived-body transcends Cartesianism, the crucial point is that mind-body dualism *is not* the deep issue. The problematical issue is the concept of modern individualism presupposed by the Cartesian perspective which entails the *loss of the concept of person*. As a symptom of that loss, Cartesianism can be understood as a rhetoric of individualism. Consequently, it has an elective affinity with a "human nature model"[4] of human being.

This point brings to the fore a strategy to locate Merleau-Ponty's work within the Geertzian framework of "the way we think now" (Geertz 1983). I will do this by locating Merleau-Ponty's perspective with reference to the paradigm conflict between the "human nature" and the "being human" models of human being. My theme is that Merleau-Ponty had renounced the "human nature model" (especially its individualist assumption), and was closing in on (but unable fully to reach), the "being human model"[5] with its assumption of sociality. This observation specifies my thesis that Merleau-Ponty's conception of embodiment is sensitizing but not definitive, and that the status of his philosophical perspective is transitional and not final.

The "human nature model" bases its construal of human being on the assumption of *individualism*. In the abstract terms of part-whole relations, the whole is regarded as a fiction and only the part is conceived of as genuinely real and originally a separate entity. The basic model of human nature then is

something like this: the nature of human being is biological, it is lived psychologically, and is therefore social and may be experienced as such.

In contrast, the "being human model" is based on the assumption that the primacy of human being is *social*. The whole is conceived of as genuinely real and the part is regarded as originally a differentiation. This model of being human holds that human being is cultural, it is lived socially, and is therefore psychological and may be experienced as such. Culture is assumed to be a general and complex biological disposition that requires historically situated social constructional work to become a specifically lived culture.

Freudian theory and other varieties of the psychological-individualist tradition are old exemplars of the human nature model. The new Cartesianism of cognitive science and biological anthropology provide some contemporary exemplars. Their common theme is expressed well by Noel Boas, a biological anthropologist who states, "an understanding of early culture provides clues as to the brain that produced that culture"(1993: 211).

Marx, Durkheim and other theorists of the sociological-collectivist tradition are reasonable (but ultimately inadequate) representatives of the being human model. The promise of Marx's vision (that man's essence is social relational and not located in an abstracted individual) was never realized. Nor was Durkheim's parallel pro-Kantian promise to translate the sociology of the group into a social psychology of social association. However, Simmell's shift from a Kantian subject-*object* paradigm to a subject-*subject* paradigm, provided a firm centering of both collectivist and individualist conceptions in a social psychology of human symbolic social interaction (Helle 1985 and O'Neill 1973).

From Simmell's shift emerged the Cooley-Mead tradition, bringing this paradigm to its full theoretical articulation of *the social nature of mind and self* (Helle 1985: 15-19). Cooley took the social nature of the individual as given, having arrived independently at Mead's insight. His focal concern was the individuality of the social individual. Although Mead's orientation was essentially the reverse of Cooley's, there was a subtle suggestion that it is as the individual engages in the social act of discovery that individuality crystallizes (Varela 1992: chapter 7) Since Cooley and Mead rooted the origin of social life in human imagination and intelligence, they were advancing a thesis of social constructionism.

Mead, in particular, initiated, but did not complete, a linguistic turn in his pragmatist social psychology (Hanson 1986). Unfortunately, during the last decade or so, there have been behavioristic and determinist readings of Meadian theory in American sociology[6] and so it has been left to Harré, under the inspiration of Mead and in response to the explicit directives in the work of Vygotsky and Wittgenstein, to complete the linguistic turn (Harré 1986d, 1987).

In *Personal Being*, for example, Harré presents the primary structure of human reality-making activities as a thesis of conversational realism, with the correlative proposition that the *person* is prior to embodiment (1984: 64-65, 69;

1990: 360-362 and Shotter 1993: 459). Although Harré acknowledges Mead's theory of self as the theoretical point of departure for *Personal Being,* in articulating the thesis of conversational realism he does not acknowledge in any way either Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology or the new ontology of the flesh (1984: 256). Harré approves of Secord's warning that ethogenics is today "radically different from any form of phenomenology" (1990: 349). Phenomenological accounts would therefore be secondary constructions of the primary structure:

> Our hermeneutics is a system of interpretive practices for a public world, and we see the subjectivity of individuals as a detached and partially fenced-off abstraction from that world. . . . This insight is not at all close to the conception of subjectivity of Husserl (Harré, 1990: 349 and 1984: 115-119).

Mead's pragmatic social psychology is thus unequivocally one of the origins of the being human model. In contrast to Harré, however, Merleau-Ponty's enterprise is ambiguously located, as seen in the following two characterizations of his work: 1. Hamyln interprets it as "solipsism with a body" (1987: 328), whereas 2. Grene finds Merleau-Ponty to be the "first writer in the [existentialist] tradition to found the historical being of man in communal [and communicational] existence"(1976: 102-103).

Harré only gives serious attention to the "lived-body" and to "flesh," in his later book *Physical Being,* but this attention is outside the context of an appropriate model of human being for the behavioral sciences (1991: 106-109 and 94-96). This is unfortunate, for Merleau-Ponty's perspective is relevant to the issue of an appropriate model of human being, and particularly relevant to the problem of the absence of bodily movement from Harré's thesis of conversational realism. In fact, the problem is a paradox: ethogenics permits the idea of the primacy of movement, and explicitly calls for it, yet never provides for its conceptual inclusion. Ironically, while Williams's concept of the action sign is grounded in Harré's view that the person is a causally empowered agent, her view of personal agency has not led Harré to the concept of the action sign (Varela 1993).

Merleau-Ponty's relevance to this paradox within ethogenics can be found in a special reading of the new ontology of the "flesh." In my judgement, there is a deep connection between the new ontology and ethogenics. It is found in Harré's causal powers theory and its relationship to Merleau-Ponty's attempts to reach an adequate formulation of flesh. "Flesh" is referred to as a primordial pregnancy that grounds all natural phenomena (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 208).

We will see that Merleau-Ponty provides excellent reasons for choosing causal powers as the best candidate for the formulation for which he was searching. With a causal powers reading of the new ontology, we can reconsider Merleau-Ponty's philosophy with added appreciation. It permits us to abandon the notion of flesh (but not embodiment) with the understanding that there are only two realities that provide a plausible basis for a workable model of human being—physiology and "conversation" (i.e. all kinds of semiotic practices, see page 81).

Furthermore, that the former can only *ground* the latter, thus it can never explain it. With "flesh" out of the way and conversational realism in place, Merleau-Ponty comes close to achieving a version of the "being human model." What Merleau-Ponty did *not* achieve, however, was Mead's insight that *mind* is social conduct and thus that the exercise of self-mobilization (personal agency), is social interactional and not individualistic.[7]

The significant insight provided by causal powers theory—that the body (or substance) is a *conception*, not a primordial preconceptual entity, together with Warner's development of that insight (that an organism becomes a body as the individual becomes a person), allows us to abandon the notion of the lived-body (Harré and Madden 1975:173 and Warner 1990: 138-141). We can thus *re*conceptualize the body in terms of an idea of embodied person that preserves both the significance of being a body *and* the significance of being intentional.

The 'being' in both cases is identical, but it is the being of a *person*, not the being of a bodily intention. After all, bodies don't intend—people do; and minds don't intend, only people do. People are personal agents, and while *enabled* by their natural being, they are *empowered* by their social being to engage in the conversational practices of their local culture. What is missing from Merleau-Ponty's philosophical perspective is *the person*. This brings us back to the Cartesian problem of the loss of person. A clarification of that problem will lead us directly to its obscured continuation in Merleau-Ponty's work.

Cartesianism and the Loss of the Person

Cartesianism contains two kinds of error with regard to the loss of the person. One of them is the notorious *mis*reading of the quite proper *inwardness* of mental life as the fantasy of interiority—the "theater of the mind" picture (Toulmin 1979). This provides the foundational inside/outside dualism; a non-material world comprised of an inner mind substance versus an outside world of material substances—including other people.

The complement of this is mind/body dualism, the separation of the interior mind of the individual from his/her own material body. The "theater of the mind" metaphor generates a root absurdity: the individual speaks what his or her mind is thinking. This separation of language and mind implicitly privileges the individual to the exclusion of the crucial notion of person. The focus becomes the *mind* (not language) and the individual as the *subject*, not the *person as a social being*.

In part, this is so because Cartesianism functioned as an intellectual formulation of modern individualism, a new ideology that sought to legitimate the absolute nature of an individual in matters of authorship and knowledge. Historically, the rise of Western modernity involved a move away from the centrality of the collective with its resort to mysterious authority in matters of knowledge (i.e. God, faith, revelation). The transference of such authoritative matters from the collective to the individual (subject) entailed a new require-

ment—the strategic control of the "other" (object). The individual human being was now identified as the location of epistemological authority, defined in terms of "mind" and the "individual," rather than "language" and the "person." It is my contention that this institutionalization of modern individualism was a political declaration of the hegemony of the self-against-other in social action.

The second error implicated in mind-body dualism is an equally pernicious mistake, but one far less emphasized; namely, that of confusing the *body* with the "organism." The human organism is an *a*social, complex, biological entity. The human body is a social, complex, cultural entity. The disconnection of mind from language, and the conflation of body with organism, has led some scholars to transform the "mind" into a mentalized organism. As a result, the body becomes either some kind of deterministic system, or, an indeterministic, mysterious *logos*. Freud gave us one version of the former: the structural unconscious (superego, ego, id) is a semantico-lingual biological engine. Levi-Stauss gave us a complementary version, stressing logical categories as against the Freudian stress on affective categories (Rossi 1974: 19). Merleau-Ponty's lived-body is a version of the latter. Note Sheets-Johnstone's use of the lived body as a perfect example:

> that fundamental creativity founded upon the bodily logos, that is, upon a mindful body, a thinking body, a body which opens up into movement, a body, which, in improvisational dance, breaks forth continuously into dance and into *this* dance, a body which moment by moment fulfills a kinetic destiny and invests the world with meaning (Sheets-Johnstone 1981: 406).

Together these Cartesian errors establish the loss of the person and institutionalize a root irrationality: an individual speaking his mind (inwardness of a person) has been lost to the individual speaking *for* his mind (interiority of a subject). The absolute priority and centrality of epistemological authority in this transference to an individualized location, not only requires this separation from the other, but also requires the conversion of the other into an object.

I propose that these were some of the new phenomenological details that fulfill the prescription of the hegemony of "self" against "other" in the developing cultural logic of modern individualism. In addition, this cultural logic stresses the prime importance of a rational certainty and impersonal objectivity with which to legitimate the authority of individualism.

Cartesianism and the Ethogenic Theory of Person and Self

The three doctrines of the ethogenic standpoint permit us to side-step the Cartesian error of supposing "that every substantive must refer to a substance [which] Wittgenstein spent the second half of his life trying to eradicate" (Harré, 1983: 69 and 1993: 4). In particular, this social psychological doctrine stresses that the fundamental (primary and secondary) structure of being human is persons, selves and their conversations, which provide for the practices of interpersonal and self commentary.

While the person is a real entity indexed by first person devices of ordinary language, the self, though a fiction, is a real resource. The self functions as a productive resource in the construction of personal identity: an identity that constitutes an authorial centering which organizes thinking, acting, and memory (Harré, 1983: 69 and Varela 1994).

The Cartesian error of treating the substantive "mind" as a mental *substance* is articulated in ethogenic theory as the error of *ontologizing the self* (Harré 1984: 95-102 and Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990: 115-122). Being a human being is a matter of becoming a person by acquiring a sense of self. That process

> occurs in a social milieu in which [human beings] are already treated as persons by others of their [local] culture. [A] public-social theory of person then serves as a model for the private-individual theory of self (Harré 1993: 4).

Descartes himself participated in forging a new theory of person (rationally certain and impersonally objective) for a new kind of self—one that is radically independent and transcending. However, the belief in the reality of a mental substance was part of the rhetoric of the theory of individualism, not the discovery of that reality.

Causal Powers Theory

I now want to remind readers that Harré's ethogenic standpoint is metaphysically informed by the logic of causal powers theory. It is precisely this theory that 1. offers the idea that physiology and conversation are the only realities of human being, and 2. promotes the principle that physiology can *ground* conversation but can never explain it. The next insight is that any behavioral science theory positing some causal realm apart from conversation that can explain conversation, is a theory that violates the logic of causal powers and hence is implausible (Harré 1986a: 210-217; 1990: 343-345 and Shotter, 1993: 459-482). Here, we see a summary of causal powers theory in four principles:[8]

1. Correlation is *not* causation: the former is the *association* of variables.
2. Causation is the *production* of consequences.
3. Power is the potential to act upon; liability is the potential to be acted upon.
4. Nature is the *distribution* and *stratification* of various natural kinds of powerful particulars.

The meaning of "natural kinds" is defined by a concept of structural integrity. This can be illustrated by noting three fallacies that lead to a violation of this integrity:

1. The fallacy of *actualism*: as a *power* causation is not to be identified with any one of its occurrences; as a *force* it is instantiated but not exhausted by such occurrences. To think otherwise is to commit the fallacy of *actualism*.

2. The fallacy of *bifurcation*: causation is the power *of* a particular not a particular *and* its power. Two variants of the latter are to be avoided: a. the

externalization of power in the power-and-particular schema (Durkheimian), and b. the internalization of power in the power-and-particular schema (Freudian).

3. The fallacy of *activation*: since bifurcation is a fallacy, it is thus a fallacy to treat a bifurcated power as the *activation* of a particular.

The fallacies of bifurcation and activation jointly block the resort to any form of pseudo-explanatory transcendentalist device such as a collective unconscious (e.g., the sociological varieties of Marx, Durkheim, and Levi-Strauss) or an individual unconscious (e.g., the psychological varieties of Freud, cognitive science, and Lacan).

The fallacies derive from a failure to understand the general principle that *causation is the activity of forceful particulars at work*. The violation of this principle involves detaching a power from its structural base (the power-and-particular schema) which, in turn, creates an activating, reified, free-floating, and empty abstraction. Certain behavioral science theories are implausible because they commit this violation when positing a causal realm apart from conversation.

The significance of this conception of causation for ethogenic theory is clearly expressed in the following formulation of conversational realism:

> The conversational world, like the physical world, evolves under the influence of real powers and forces, dispositional properties of the utterances that are the real substrate of all interchanges (Mülhäusler and Harré 1990: 24).

Causal powers theory requires a change in our conception of substance or body, one that is rooted in changing scientific models of matter.

In a commonsense materialist version, *substance* consists of an individual entity (substratum) *and* its complex of (empirical) qualities such as bulk, figure, and motion. The rejection of a traditional substance-quality model by the phenomenalist alternative was devastating. It meant that the idea of *substance as a substratum* independent of its qualities was replaced with another error, a substanceless and free-floating set of qualities. In both the substance-quality and the substanceless-quality models, causality disappears. In the former, cause is an occult phenomenon because it is identified with a substratum mysteriously independent of its qualities. In the latter, it becomes obvious that without substance there can be no ground for the embodiment of causality (Harré and Madden, 1975: 165-175). Harré's comment concerning this predicament is succinct:

> Of course, "substance" was not an empirical concept, but that did not require one to reject the basis of the scientific account of nature as rooted in real things responsible for appearances. It required a better conception of what individual things must be (Harré and Madden 1975: 173).

The "better conception" refers to a dynamical theory of matter in which various forms of matter are not derived *"from* matters as machines, that is, as mere tools of external moving forces, but *from moving forces* of attraction and

repulsion originally belonging to these matters" (Harré and Madden 1975: 170, emphasis supplied).

Note carefully that this dynamical theory conceives of matter as *immaterial* substances responsible for appearances. Thus we have matter as "fields of potential" constituted by "centers of mutual influence." The field of potential locates powers for effecting influence at centers defined as real and nonmaterial things (Harré and Madden 1975: 161, 175-183). This is a "substance-powers" or "individual-powers" conception of causal particulars.

The Problem of the Lived Body

In presupposing the phenomenal model of matter, the Humean tradition in the natural sciences has fostered the principle that the ideas of substance, causation, and agency are internally disconnected and incompatible with each other. Accordingly, there could be no genuine conception of person as a human agent, that is, the person as a real entity—a substance—from which the exercise of agency is a real event (a causal force). Harré's variety of scientific realism presents an alternative understanding: substance, causation, and agency, together, *are* conceptually congruent under the auspices of a dynamical model (Harré and Madden 1975: 165-175). The ethogenic standpoint thus provides a conception of person as a substance capable of causally empowered agency, that is, of person-generated utterances which are the real substrate of all conversations.

Although for Merleau Ponty "the subject is his body," this "lived" or subjective-body presumes a substance-less set of free-floating qualities that do not entail a conception of a real causal entity (Merleau-Ponty 1964b: 72). It constitutively lacks a genuine conception of person, and, without the dynamic-structural basis of substantiality that a conception of person provides, it represents an ambiguous location of agency.

Merleau-Ponty's subjective-body rejects the Cartesian trick of privileging the mind as agentic to the exclusion of the body, but without a concept of person, the body itself is ambiguously granted agency. To be sure, Merleau-Ponty suggested that mind and body are both centered in, and mediated by, the subject's being-in-the-world, but this does not resolve the ambiguity (1964b: 72). His resort to a metaphysics of the flesh transforms the ambiguity concerning agency into a mystification.

What is crucial here is that two issues are in danger of being conflated: 1. the nature of the relationship between agency and the body, and 2. the theoretical status of being-in-the-world and its relationship to person and agency. Merleau-Ponty considers that "bodily-intentionality" accounts for agency *and* the body. The agency of the body is claimed as an "ultimate fact," that is, a fact of which he only knows *that* it is so and not *how* it is so (Russow 1988: 41-42). Reversing the center of privilege in Cartesian dualism from mind to body is ultimately rooted in a tacit acceptance of the conceptual incompatibility of causation, substance and agency presumed by the Human tradition.

If mind is a ghost in the machinery of the body (moving or not), the body is the only reality left for the location of agency. If the body as machine (the

objective body), is rejected as such because of its deterministic status, then the body as "lived," the subjective-body, must be accepted as the only remaining alternative to determinism. Somehow, as a Jamesian act of faith, the body is not viewed as deterministic as long as it is "lived," therefore, it is assumed that the subjective body must be the only proper location for agency.

The difficulty with this notion resides in the fact that the agency of the lived body (its intentionality) is *a*causal because Merleau-Ponty tacitly associates causation with determinism (1964c: 96). This means that the intentionality of the body cannot be genuinely agentic. That is, the "force" of bodily intention is as ghostly as the "force" of the Cartesian mind!

Clearly then, the lived-body as an anti-Cartesian basis for a conception of the embodied actor simply doesn't work. The status of intentionality, mental or bodily, remains problematic because the actuality of the body cannot establish the reality of intentionality. As long as the agentic status of intentionality is implicitly taken to be *a*causal, neither the facticity of the body (the objective body) nor the experientiality of the body (the subjective body) can provide intentionality with the status of reality.

The *reality* of the agency of intentionality *must* entail the power of causation, and that power belongs to a person, *not* to an intention. Merleau-Ponty's belief in an agency of intentions apart from persons engaged in intentional conversational practices signifies its roots in the problematic power *and* particular schema (Harré 1984: 115-119).

Flesh: Mystification or Causal Powers?

I have argued that the lived body is an unworkable concept in terms of a causal powers construal of personal agency. I now want to argue that, in contrast, Merleau-Ponty's later work, represented principally in *The Visible and the Invisible*, can reasonably be understood to be in agreement. His discussion of a new ontology begins with the mandate that philosophy "must recommence with everything." If we could

> rediscover within the exercise of seeing and speaking some of the living references that assign them a destiny in language, perhaps they would teach us how to form our new instruments (1968: 130).

Here, Merleau-Ponty is reaching for the idea of the primacy of language, suggesting that the lived-body has become what he calls "intercorporeity" (1968: 141, 143). Note his later comment:

> In a sense, if we were to make completely explicit the architectonics of the human body, *its ontological framework*, and how it *sees itself and hears itself* we would see that the structure of its mute world is such that all the possibilities of language are already given in it (1968: 155, emphasis supplied).

Since Merleau-Ponty *does* distinguish the organism from the body, the "ontological framework" mentioned here cannot refer either to the body itself, or even to intercorporeity itself (1962: 189). Since bodies don't intend only people do, then bodies cannot see themselves nor hear themselves

either. When Merleau-Ponty refers to "the actual body" as "an intertwining of vision and movement," and does so over against "the possible body" (the information machine) he says, "but that actual body I call mine, [is] this sentinel standing quietly at the command of my words and acts" (1968: 254). Now Merleau-Ponty has found himself in a conversational realist position, for, on pain of incoherence, the actual body, or actual intercorporeity, must be the actual linguistic performance of a person.

Madison, an eminent Merleau-Ponty scholar, makes virtually the same point in arguing that Merleau-Ponty abandoned the primacy of perception for the primacy of language. Madison sums this up with the statement "Being that can be perceived is language" (1992: 92-94). Margolis also indicates that at the end Merleau-Ponty was trying to illuminate the "subterranean source of all discovery and the legitimacy thereby of discovery that takes a discursive form" (Margolis 1992: 244). At this stage, a statement made by Merleau-Ponty in *The Phenomenology of Perception* can be seen to foreshadow this conversational turn: "There is no experience without speech, as the purely lived-through has no part in the discursive life of men" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 337 and Madison 1992: 93).

Warner's insight into the proper alignment of the concepts of organism/body and individual/person conclusively establishes the inadequacy of the concept of the body as lived individually or intersubjectively. Thus, it is not correct to say that the "subject *is* his *body*," as Merleau-Ponty has said, but rather the subject *is* the *organism*. The body is the indexical site of the person, indeed, it is a body by virtue of the individual becoming a person (Warner 1990: 138-147; Harré 1984: 248-252 and Shotter 1973: 143-147).

And yet, Merleau-Ponty did not seem unequivocally to understand that he was abandoning perception for language—nor do Madison and Margolis in their dialogue on the significance of Merleau-Ponty's work (Madison, 1992: 83-106 and Margolis 1992: 241-256). In my judgement, their failure in this regard stems from a deeper failure to recognize and deal with the impasse of the new ontology. As long as Merleau-Ponty's resort to "flesh" as a means to escape old dualistic instruments of thought is not challenged, it is not clear how we are to choose between the primacy of language and the primacy of flesh. Or, if they are somehow connected, *how* are we to understand it?

My suggestion is that the issue concerns the possible meaning of the notion of flesh and its relationship to the 'I can' of the body (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 94). This relationship can be fruitful if it is construed under the auspices of causal powers theory. The thesis is this: the 'I can' of the body *is* the display of the agency of persons in conversation, and "flesh," the principle of casual powers presupposed by that display.'

The meanings given to the notion of "flesh" are compatible with my thesis. For example, we read that "flesh" is the only source of "a preconstituted world" and as such is the "formative medium of subject and object" (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 157). He states that as

> a general manner of being, [not] starting from substances [we are] seeking to comprehend how there is a center, [that is], what does the unity [of concrete beings] consist of (*Ibid.* 145, 147).

He also asks what is the unity of a

> something [or] someone [considered to be] a node of properties . . . an internal arrangement . . . [extant] by its own efficacy . . . [and thus a] power . . . [that] is not a factual power (*Ibid.* 160-161),

but rather is a

> Pregnancy . . . a power [of] . . . fecundity . . . [that] is the form that has arrived at itself . . . the equivalent of the cause of itself (*Ibid.* 208).

Merleau-Ponty's allusion to powers of production, while unmistakable, is also confused. On the one hand, he renounces the association of powers with substance, and on the other, he affirms the powers of production. But the logic of causal powers dictates the unity of causation, substance, and agency. He needed to understand that he required the dynamical model of matter, in short, causal powers theory. That was not possible because, unfortunately, the first school of thought Merleau-Ponty dismissed in his pursuit of the new ontology was *science* (1968: 14-27).

Madison correctly understands that Merleau-Ponty's judgement is that the empiricism, objectivism, and utilitarianism of science cannot arrive at the flesh intuited to be "hidden powers...[of] vegetation" (Madison 1992: 185 and Merleau-Ponty 1968: 9). However, we recognize that there is a conflation of science with positivism here. To be precise, Merleau-Ponty's objection was justified in light of the empiricist reduction of causation to correlation (committing the fallacy of actualism). Unfortunately, Merleau-Ponty's rejection of science made it impossible for him to understand that casual powers theory was exactly what he needed. Indeed, as Harré would say, without the funny language, causation is defined quite well as "pregnancy."

An understanding of causal powers theory would have crystallized the conversational realism Merleau-Ponty had obliquely hit upon through his venture into the centrality of language and his adventure into the fecundity of flesh. It would have further revealed the dynamic of conversation, the constructional activity of symbolic social interaction.

But it was not to be possible: as Merleau-Ponty left it, "flesh" is a rich but confused sensitizing notion and not a definitive conception, and commentators and disciples present it always in "his master's voice." As such, it must be judged to be a mystification and not a promise.

Dynamic Embodiment: The Primacy of Movement and Conversational Realism

An achievement of ethogenics is a formidable challenge to (if not the defeat of) Cartesianism. The understanding that mind and self are emergent features

of conversational practices discourages either the old Cartesianism (Husserl, Freud), or the new Cartesianism (cognitive science, biological anthropology).

The point is that the deep issue of any form of Cartesianism is individualism (see page 67). In addressing the issue as a powerful version of the "being human model" (see endnote 6), ethogenics generates a central insight into the ways of human be-ing. Not only is it the case that the brain is not where the body is, but the "mind" is not where the "organism" is.

While the brain is where the organism is, the body *and* the mind are where the person is. The human *person* is always engaged with others in some kind of conversational practice—in this case, of applying mind/body predicates (Harré and Secord, 1972: 105-118). This is a practice whereby any such conversation is performatively grounded in (and conventionally, a structuring of) a suitable gestural region of the body. *Conversational practices are Williams's signifying acts,* that include both vocal (speech-acts) and nonvocal (action sign) systems (Williams, 1979, 1982, and 1991). *The* critical assumption promoting the concept of signifying action signs is *the primacy of movement.*

I will now show how this assumption is missing in Harré's standpoint, and how it can be introduced: earlier I asserted that both Merleau-Ponty and Harré permit (and call for) dynamic embodiment. Descombs's reading of Merleau-Ponty's work indicates that he was developing the suggestion that, somehow, language and gesture must be dynamically connected (1980: 73-74). Although never realized, Merleau-Ponty left fragments for that possibility. If we gather together his term "linguistic gesture" (1964a: 87-88)—his idea that "institutional gestures produce meaning" (Descombs 1980: 73)—and his principal that "no *wahrnehmen* (act of perception or awareness) perceives except on condition of being *a self of movement*" (Merleau-Ponty 1968), we have, I believe, a basis for the concept of signifying acts. Using the concept of causal powers to remove the impasse presented by the concept of flesh for a theory of embodiment, leads to the understanding that, in embracing conversational realism and the primacy of movement for language, the concept of signifying acts becomes necessary.

Being human, then, in being physical, is moving-being (Farnell 1994). Ethogenics, however, called for and then in its early development abandoned this principle. When Harré and Secord remark "If a thing . . . cannot move about then perhaps it might not be a person" (1972: 110), the principle is unmistakable. What was developed instead, however, is the theme that the fundamental structures of persons and selves within conversational practices are ontologically grounded in (but functionally independent of), human physiology (Harré 1979: 297-305).

As we have noted, Warner developed this with the idea that the organism grounds our natural powers while social life grounds our personal powers. Hence, the display of our powers belongs to the person and not to the organism. In other words, the enactment of agency is social, that is, to direct oneself to act—self-mobilization—one considers how others will act in turn to one's own act (Warner 1990: 134-138). Although of fundamental importance,

this development must be recognized as signalling the derailment of ethogenic theory *away from* its earlier principle of dynamic embodiment.

Given the ethogenic principle that conversation is prior to physiology, the corollary is that "The person is prior to embodiment"(Harré 1984: 69). Hence, embodiment is foundational for personal identity; that is, numerical identity is realized through the physically mediated achievement of a spatio-temporally continuous point of view (1984: 206-209). This leads to the assertion that, "Only by being embodied as a thing amongst things can I have a robust sense of personal being" (Harré 1991: 18). Clearly, while persons are not *just* things, they are *still* things and *not* moving things (Harré 1991: 18).

What accounts for this fundamental omission? In my judgement, the key lies in the immaterialist conception of 'body' presupposed by the dynamical model of matter. My suggestion is that Harré has privileged causal powers and not causal forces in the development of ethogenics. While the body is regarded as a structure of powers, the actual forces of production have not been translated into a conception of the moving body. This is why ethogenic embodiment theory is substantively Strawsonian but only nominally Hampshirean.

Strawson's concept of embodiment highlights the physical thingness of human particularity, whereas Hampshire's embodiment highlights the physical movement of human particularity (Harré 1986c: 189-190 and Hampshire 1970[1959]: 47-49). However, this may not be an adequate indicator of Harré's omission of movement. Hampshire's preference for moving things ambiguously presumes the very Newtonian ontology Harré abandoned. In order to legitimate the premise of person-generated speech-acts, Harré chose an Aristotelian ontology, and in order to legitimate the premise of the moral and political structures of social space Harré chose an Einsteinian ontology (1984: 61-63 and Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990: 22-24). A subtle clue to Harré's omission of movement is found in his preference for Mead's pragmatist social psychology and the neglect of Mead's Darwinism. Harré has creatively developed Meadian theory in several directions but has omitted one aspect of it.

First, Harré has advanced Meadian theory strictly in accordance with its anti-positivist spirit, that is, in the direction of a linguistic turn. Mead moved toward identifying language and action and Harré identified them. Second, Harré demonstrated that the Meadian "I" is also social (Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990: 98). Third, Harré permits us to understand that taking the role of the significant and the generalized "other" is a matter of learning the conventions for the uses of the second and third person pronouns of one's local culture (1986b: 151-152). Finally, Harré has properly transformed Mead's "taking the role of the other" into "taking up a position in relation to the other," the purpose of which is to be ready to engage in situationally appropriate discursive practice(s) (Davies and Harré 1990 and Harré and Van Langenhove 1991).

However, in the shift from "role-taking" to "position-taking," Harré overlooked the gestural component of the speech-act that Mead referred to as

the "vocal gesture" (Hanson 1986: 14-41 and Reck 1964: 287). The speech-act, physically considered, is not simply behavioral motions of the mouth and tongue, but gestural movements which constitute the transubstantiation of the organs of speech into the *action* of speaking. Perhaps the deep indication that Harré's theory of embodiment is substantively Strawsonian and only nominally Hampshirean, is that, while Harré moved to an Aristotelian ontology to ground the discursive turn, Mead moved to a Darwinian ontology with which to ground his clear, albeit uncertain, turn to language in use. Mead assumed a Darwinian practical-survival grid within which human beings are taken to be agentic, problem-centered animals *constitutively engaged in movement*, that is, in the endless proliferation of gestures (Varela 1992: chapter 7).

The result of this difference is unmistakable: Harré retained the *powerful* particularity of the speech-act without the gestural movement which is a complementary component *force* of that power. This is the key argument for the thesis that Harré privileges causal *power*—not causal *force*—and therefore fails to translate that "force" into gestural movement as foundational to the generation of conversational practices.

The recovery of the ethnogenic principal that personhood is moving being resides in the completion of the linguistic turn in Meadian theory. To achieve this double closure requires the acknowledgement of the primacy of movement and gesture. Doing so leads to the deeper benefits of realizing the deeper significance in (and of) causal powers theory, i.e. the full force of the power of conversational realism is the enactment of gestural systems of both non-vocal and vocal signifying acts. With this addition, Harré can truly say that,

> By 'conversation' I mean not only speech exchanges of all kinds, but any flow of interactions brought about through the use of a public semiotic system, such as [among other things] ballroom dancing, gestures. . . . (1984: 65).

Conversational practices would then constitute signifying acts, and conversational realism would genuinely entail a principle of dynamic embodiment.

It is in this way that we can move beyond the absent moving body in embodied social theory.

Endnotes

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[1] An earlier version of this paper was published in *The Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 24(2): 167-185.

[2] See, for example, Turner 1984: 51-54; Jackson 1989: 119-136; O'Neill 1989: 1-16.

[3] I use the term "gesture" here to refer to all varieties of signifying acts made with human movement, not simply movements of the hands and arms.

[4] A "human nature model" is based first on the biology of the body, second, on psychology and third on the social nature of human beings.

[5] A "being human model" is based, first, on the social nature of humanity, second on culture, and third on biology.

[6] See, for example, Lewis 1979: 261-287 and Collins 1989: 2-32.

[7] Rosenthal and Bourgeoise 1991: 86, 99-100, 125-126 and Warner 1990: 137-138.

[8] Harré and Madden, 1975: 57; Bhaskar 1978: 229-231; Harré 1986a: 284 and Bronowski 1977.

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