

Phenomenological dimensions of bodily self-consciousness

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1. Introduction

This chapter concerns the multidimensionality of self-consciousness. Starting from the distinction between the self-as-subject and the self-as-object, I intend to argue that each act of consciousness is adequately characterized by two modes of givenness, the intentional mode of givenness by which the subject is conscious of intentional objects and the subjective mode of givenness by which the subject is conscious of intentional objects as experienced by himself. The latter corresponds to the consciousness of the self-as-subject and will be the focus of the present analysis. In particular, I intend to clarify in which ways the self-as-subject is consciously experienced, and will do so by investigating the co-constitution of the subjective and intentional modes of givenness of consciousness: how is subjectivity both constitutive of and constituted by intentionality? I will tackle this general question by considering how the bodily self is constituted as being a bodily-subject-in-the-world.

2. Self-as-subject and self-as-object

2.1. Intentionality and subjectivity

When investigating self-consciousness, a crucial point concerns the distinction between the self-as-subject and the self-as-object (Zahavi 2005; Legrand 2006, 2007b, 2007c). In the present account, the *self-as-object* corresponds to the intentional object of my experience, e.g. to the one I evaluate (e.g. as being nice), remember (e.g. as being healthy), perceive (e.g. as being tall). The *self-as-subject* corresponds to the subject of the experience, e.g. the evaluating, remembering or perceiving subject. This subject can experience either himself or things in the world, i.e. the intentional object of this subject's experience can be either the *self-as-object* (e.g. the perceived self-image) or not. For example, when looking in a mirror, a subject perceives the appearance of his face by taking the latter as an intentional object (of visual perception). While looking at the frame surrounding the mirror, he remains a perceiving self-as-subject but perceives a thing in the world (the frame).

This distinction between self-as-subject and self-as-object is not ontological but phenomenological; it primarily concerns how self-consciousness is structured: each intentional act of consciousness can be adequately described as having two poles, a subjective pole and an objective pole, and the subject can be conscious of either of these two poles, thereby being conscious of himself either as-subject or as-object. To phrase it differently, each act of consciousness is adequately characterized by two modes of givenness, the *intentional* mode of givenness by which the subject is conscious of intentional objects and the *subjective* mode of givenness by which the subject is conscious of intentional objects as experienced by himself. The former corresponds to consciousness of the self-as-object when the intentional object is oneself and the latter corresponds to consciousness of the self-as-subject.

Importantly, intentionality and subjectivity are two non-dissociable aspects of experience: acts of consciousness “are self-aware because in the very event of presenting an x they

are present to themselves. In grasping the object, the act returns to itself” (Welton 2004, p.6). In this view, “we can no longer treat self-awareness in isolation, as if being-self-conscious were not being-self-consciously-experiencing-x” (Ibid.). In a representationalist view, a comparable idea has been phrased in the following way: “in any given experience there must always be a mode of presentation that cannot, in that experience, be made into an object of awareness. In any experience, there must always be a component of that experience of which we cannot be aware” (Rowlands, 2008, p. 293). I agree with the first of these sentences which argues for the “non-eliminability” of what I call here the self-as-subject; however, I disagree with the second of these sentences and intend to clarify in which ways the self-as-subject is consciously experienced.

2.2. Transitivity and intransitivity

To better understand the distinction between the self-as-subject and the self-as-object, it is relevant to differentiate transitive and non-transitive forms of consciousness (see also Legrand, 2009). Consciousness of the self-as-object is a form of transitive self-consciousness while consciousness of the self-as-subject is a form of intransitive self-consciousness. A *transitive* verb is one that takes a direct object (e.g. to dream about something); it expresses an action undertaken by a subject towards an object. By contrast, an *intransitive* verb is one that cannot take a direct object (e.g. to sleep). Sometimes transitivity is silent. For example, any time I state the seemingly intransitive "I read", I silently imply the transitive "I read something". Distinguishing tacit transitivity (transitive verbs with implied objects) from intransitivity is usually fairly easy: it is enough to check whether or not it makes sense to ask the "what" question. When the "what" is not specified but could be specified, it makes sense to ask about it, and the verb is implicitly transitive, e.g. "I dreamed... *What* did you dream about?". When there is no "what", no object albeit unspecified, the verb is intransitive, e.g. "I sleep": it does not make sense to ask "*what* did you sleep?".

These basic grammatical rules are relevant here because they help clarifying the difference between consciousness of the self-as-subject and consciousness of the self-as-object. "Being conscious" is ambitransitive: it can be used either transitively or intransitively. Transitively, one refers to state-consciousness saying e.g. "I am conscious of being sad today", "He is conscious of his mistake". One can also refer to creature-consciousness saying "I am conscious", by opposition with situations where one is not conscious. This is a case of tacit transitivity, since it does make sense to ask "*what* are you conscious of". Now, one may be tempted (but it would be a mistake) to end the story here, and to assume that consciousness is either explicitly transitive or tacitly transitive. Indeed, any time I report "I am conscious", I silently report the transitive consciousness "I am conscious of something". This is just another way to say that consciousness is intentional, i.e. constitutively directed at something. However, and this is the crucial point, stating that consciousness is transitively intentional, even stating that consciousness is necessarily transitively intentional does not allow one to state that consciousness is *only* transitively intentional.

All there is to consciousness is not its intentional, transitive mode of givenness. In addition to explicit and implicit transitive states, the *intransitive* mode of givenness of consciousness is irreducible to transitive states and must be considered for its own sake. What I named above consciousness of the self-as-subject corresponds to the intransitive mode of givenness of consciousness. To see what this means, let us consider the following example. Imagine you are perceiving a picture as subtly blurry. You then realize that you forgot to put your glasses on and that in fact the picture is not blurry, only your perception is. At the beginning, you take the picture as object of your experience and experience it as blurry. In the end, you experience your *experience* of the picture as blurry. Importantly for the point at stake here, what remains present from the beginning to the end of this scenario is the intransitive consciousness of yourself-as-subject: you experience the picture as experienced by *you*, and you experience your experience of the picture

(e.g. your blurry perception) as experienced by *you*. Considering 'only' the two intentional *objects* of consciousness (e.g. the picture and your visual perception taken as objects of consciousness) would leave aside the distinction between two modes of givenness of consciousness itself, i.e. the transitive mode of givenness of consciousness when an experience is itself taken as an object of consciousness (e.g. I experience my vision of the picture as being blurry) and the intransitive mode of givenness of consciousness (e.g. I experience the picture as experienced *by me*). In the former (transitive) case, it makes sense to detail *what* I experience when I experience my experience; for example I experience blurriness. In the latter (intransitive) case, this "*what*" question cannot be appropriately asked about my involvement as experiencing subject.

Notice that these considerations lead to an interesting change in the frame of investigation of self-consciousness. The most common question asked when investigating self-consciousness is "who": who are you conscious of, yourself or not? Here, the framework is different and involves checking whether the "what" question can be asked meaningfully. If yes, then the transitive consciousness at stake may be a form of self-consciousness or not, and asking the "who" question becomes relevant only then. Conversely, if the "what" question cannot be asked meaningfully, then the form of consciousness involved is intransitive and the "who" question is just as irrelevant as the "what" question. What needs to be emphasized is that here "the question of self-awareness is not primarily a question of a specific what, but of a unique how. It does not concern the specific content of an experience, but its unique mode of givenness" (Zahavi, 2005, p. 204).

The investigation of the self-as-subject is paved with a number of difficulties. One is to keep clear the distinction between consciousness of the self-as-object and consciousness of the self-as-subject. The discussion of this issue in terms of transitive and intransitive forms of consciousness meant to clarify this point. It allows considering that consciousness is (transitively) intentional but not only: it is also irreducibly (intransitively) subjective. This distinction, however,

opens up other difficulties. In the remaining of the present investigation, I will take the distinction between the subjective and intentional modes of givenness as a disquieting starting point rather than as a satisfactory achievement. Indeed, differentiation is not separation and once subjectivity and intentionality are differentiated from each other, the difficulty is to show how they constitute a single experience. The co-constitution of subjectivity and intentionality thus needs to be clarified. In particular, *how is the subjective aspect of consciousness, i.e. the intransitive consciousness of oneself-as-subject both constitutive of and constituted by intentionality?* In the following, I will tackle this issue by considering more specifically *bodily* self-consciousness. Before starting, this focus on the body needs justification.

3. The self and the body

3.1. Constitutive embeddedness

The subject is constitutively bodily. To see why, let us first consider what the self is supposed to be in order for intentional consciousness to be possible. A traditional way to phrase this issue is to ask: "what is the ground of intentional consciousness or what does found subjective experience?", and to answer: "the self". This view comes at a high price as it involves (1) the idea that the appearance of the world is grounded on a foundation that is exterior to the world itself, i.e. the idea that consciousness of the world needs to be constituted from the outside of the world, as no *constituted* phenomenon could possibly be constitutive of phenomenality; and (2) the notion of a "foundational self" that would ground its subjective experience of the world. It is only by being its own foundation that the self can *constitute* consciousness of the world rather than being *constituted* in the world.

This "foundationalist" view of the self, in an idealist vein, privileges the constitutive role of the experiencing subject, to the detriment of the transcendence of the experienced object.

The realist counter-reaction conversely preserves the transcendence of the experienced object to the detriment of the constitutive role of the experiencing subject (Barbaras, 2008a, p. 80). Either way, these two antagonist positions fail to account for the *inseparability* of the constituting self and the constituted intentional object (Zahavi, 2003, p. 106; Zahavi, 2005, p. 124).

To adequately consider such inseparability, "selfhood has to be conceived outside of (or "beyond") the ground-grounded relation" (Mensch, 2001, p. 13). In particular, what needs to be understood is that the self needs to be *in* the world for this world to appear (Barbaras, 2008a, p. 14-5): "the apparition of the world is the counterpart of the immersion of the subject" (Ibid. p.79). The world can appear only for a subject who is embedded in the very world which is experienced (Barbaras, 2008a, p. 91): "the constitution of the world implies a mundanization of the constituting subject" (Zahavi, 2009, p. 260). This view points to the "the necessity of [the subject's] concrete and contingent existence in the midst of the world" (Sartre, 1943/1956, p. 359) and straightforwardly contradicts the foundationalist idea of "the fundamental detachability of the entire natural world from the domain of consciousness" (Husserl, 1913/1952, *Id I*, p. 87). Rather, the constituting subject belongs to the world. Nonetheless, it remains that the subject is unlike any thing in the world (Barbaras, 2008a, p. 41). The task is thus to understand the specificity of the belongingness to the world of this constitutive subjectivity, i.e. to understand the "paradox of human subjectivity": "being a subject for the world and at the same time being an object in the world" (Husserl, 1934-7/1970, *Krisis*, §53).

3.2. Constitutive embodiment

For the self to belong to the world, there is no other way than being corporeal. Not only being an experiencing subject, but more specifically being an experiencing *body* is necessary for there to be an experienced world at all. Moreover, one appears to oneself as belonging to the world: "my being-

in-the-world, by the sole fact that it *realizes* a world, causes itself to be indicated to itself as a being-in-the-midst-of-the-world by the world which it realizes” (Sartre, 1943/1956, 318). My body as it is for me “is therefore in no way a contingent addition to my soul; on the contrary it is a permanent structure of my being and a permanent condition of possibility for my consciousness as consciousness *of* the world” (Ibid., 328).

Accordingly, we must provide a characterization of the body which allows the full-fledged consideration of the "paradox of human subjectivity": on the one hand, the body is lived subjectively as "one's own" while this bodily self-consciousness is not reduced to inner experiences but lived as the bodily belonging to the world of the subject, among other worldly things; on the other hand, the body that belongs to the world cannot be reduced to any other worldly thing but must encompass a lived subjectivity, including the ability to experience worldly things (Barbaras, 2008a, p. 38).

Describing the body in a way that does justice to this "paradox" is not easy and is threatened by a vicious circularity: how can the body be constitutive of the appearance of objects in the world when it is itself an object in the world (Zahavi, 2003, p. 101)? Phenomenologists' considerations of the body often focus on the distinction between the physical body considered in its objectivity (*Körper*) and the body lived in its subjectivity (*Leib*). However, merely underlining that the latter is irreducible to the former does not help here, notably because this opens up a "body-body" problem (Hanna and Thompson, 2003), i.e. the problem of understanding how the "our lived body is a performance of our living body, something our body enacts in living" (Thompson, 2007, p. 237). Here, we find ourselves back to our initial problem: on the basis of the distinction between the subjective and intentional modes of givenness of consciousness, we concluded that we needed to understand their co-constitution, i.e. to understand the self as being constitutively a subject-in-

the-world. Given that, as just argued, the self is bodily, we now need to consider how the body itself is experienced as a bodily-subject-in-the-world.

3.3. The subjective body

Maine de Biran is often considered as one of the first "philosophers of the *body*". He argues that the self is not a "pure abstract concept". He adds that the experience of self resides neither in desire, need, malaise nor in any general capacity to *sense*. Rather, it is constituted in one's individual power to *act* (1852/1952, p. 208-242). Given this accentuation of action over and against sensation, it might be more relevant to qualify Maine de Biran as a philosopher of *agency*: The feeling of our very existence, the origin of "me" coincides with the feeling of "active force" (Ibid., p. 207). Maine de Biran describes the experience of voluntary effort as composed of two elements: (i) the feeling of the force which produces the movement and (ii) the sensory effect of muscular contraction. The sensory effect is common to both voluntary movement and passive, automatic, compulsory movements (like heart beat). The force, by contrast, is specific of voluntary movements, and for that reason, it is specific of my movements felt as *my own*, felt as being under *my* control (Ibid., p. 147). This feeling of force is not received in any way, but is self-generated, and as such, it is the origin of self-consciousness (Ibid., p. 173). By contrast, sensations are founded on material organization from which I am foreign, and can thus be reduced to matter (Ibid., p. 174). Maine de Biran thus argues that the sense of self is constituted as a sense of being a subject of effort (Ibid., p. 234-5), by our effortful movement determined willfully. Open your eyes in the dark, prick up your ears in silence, contract your muscles in rest: suspend all impression from the outside, and you'll get a "pure personal element" (p. 243). By contrast, maintain sensations but suppress all self-generated action, and the person would then be only "virtual" (p. 243).

On the basis of his reading of Maine de Biran, Michel Henry (1965) developed a philosophy and phenomenology of the body and defined a “subjective body”. He argues that the fact that a subject has a body is not merely a contingent fact (Ibid., p. 2) and defends this view by defining the very nature of the body as subjective: “In fact, our body is originally neither a biological body, nor a living body, nor a human body, it belongs to a radically different ontological region which is the one of absolute subjectivity” (Ibid., p. 11). This ontology defines the “real body, and not only the idea of the body” as a “subjective being” (Ibid., p. 78). In this sense, Henry, following Maine de Biran, intends to “undermine materialism in its very foundation” (Ibid., p. 15). Indeed, this view requires a “rigorous dissociation” between, on the one hand, the subjective body felt as one’s own (as oneself) and, on the other hand, the body characterized as a muscular mass (Ibid., p. 90).

This quick description of Henry's position should suffice to underline the contrast between two ways to acknowledge the subjectivity of the body. One view would follow Henry's ontological dissociation between the biological and subjective body. Since this view deprives the “subjective body” from its materiality, i.e. since it dissociates the living and the lived body, subjectivity can be considered as bodily only in a metaphorical sense (Barbaras, 2008a, p. 9). In fact, in a radical inversion, Henry defines the body as what is traditionally opposed to it, that is, immanent subjectivity (Ibid, p. 35). But Henry himself underlined the opposition between his view and another one which he attributes to Merleau-Ponty: in the second edition of his *Philosophie et Phénoménologie du Corps* (1987), Henry warns that "the content of this first work does not owe anything to contemporary research from Merleau-Ponty, which I ignored at this time. It differs from it totally. If the body is subjective, its nature depends on the one of subjectivity. On this point my conceptions are radically opposed to those of German and French phenomenology... today, I didn't change anything in the text. It is on this essential basis that my later research has developed". In

sharp contrast with Henry, Merleau-Ponty rejects the dissociation between the lived and the living body while acknowledging their differentiation. Following this line of thought, the bodily self is not reducible to "pure auto-affection but rather contains a relation to exteriority" (Barbaras 2008b, p. 7-8). It is with this latter idea that the present investigation concurs, in the attempt to characterize the self-as-subject as non-metaphorically bodily.

3.4. The bodily template of the world

In Husserl's phenomenology, the body contributes to the constitution of perceptual appearances via kinesthesia (from the Ancient Greek *κίνησις*, to put in motion and *αἴσθησις*, sensation), i.e. the experience of one's bodily movements. Kinesthesia is conceived by Husserl as the condition of possibility for the constitution of an object as one, across the variation of its apparitions. This position is grounded on the view that an appearing object never appears all at once: it always transcends its current appearance. To be experienced as such, i.e. to be experienced as one over and above the collection of its appearances, the object must be experienced from various perspectives. This variation of perspective, however, cannot in itself suffice for the constitution of the unified identity of the object. This is where kinesthesia comes into play: kinesthesia ensures the continuity of one's subjective perspective across its variations, and in turn, allows the unification of the appearances of the object, by linking the different profiles of an object to each other, thanks to their respective anchoring to the perceiving subject's kinesthesia. Kinesthesia therefore somehow prefigures the variations of appearing objects: "Perceptual intentionality is a movement that can only be effectuated by an embodied subject" (Zahavi, 1994, p. 68).

On this basis, it has been argued that "every worldly experience is mediated by and made possible by our embodiment" (Zahavi, 2003, p. 98-9). It may be tempting but misleading to associate this view to another one, according to which "A sense of one's own spatial organization

can become a sense of the spatial order of things around one: the body is a template to measure things in the world... The arrangement of one's body mirrors that of the object touched; in being aware of the former one can attend to the latter" (Martin, 1992, p. 205-6). This view is however profoundly misleading if it assumes the equivalence of body-consciousness and world-consciousness. Superficially, it may seem that body and world are experienced equivalently, because touch is taken as the paradigm of bodily-consciousness and because "in touch we directly appeal to the tactile properties of our own bodies by investigating the self-same tactile properties of other bodies... the space and solidity of our bodies provides the access to the space and solidity of other bodies" (O'Shaughnessy, 1989, p. 38). By contrast with this view, and in line with the mode of givenness of the self-as-subject described above, I will further develop below (section 5) the idea that the body is experienced as-subject and as such it is experienced as a transparency through which the world appears. At this level, it is not experienced as an object which would provide a template for the experience of correlated things experienced (touched) in the world. Rather than considering that body-consciousness is the template of world-consciousness, which involves two different, successive but equivalent events of consciousness, it is important to consider how body- and world-consciousness (at this level) belong to one and a single act of consciousness, constituted by two irreducible but inseparable modes of givenness (the bodily subjectivity and the intentionality of this experience): "external perception and the perception of one's own body vary in conjunction because they are the two facets of one and the same act... every external perception is immediately synonymous with a certain perception of my body" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 237-8). Note that this "synonymy" implies that we do not first experience our body and from it infer states of the world, or the other way around: "the consciousness of the world is not based on self-consciousness: they are strictly contemporary" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 345). This view has also been defended by Husserl who considered that: "the body is not first given for us and subsequently used

to investigate the world. On the contrary, the world is given to us as bodily investigated, and the body is revealed to us in this exploration of the world” (Zahavi, 2003, p.105; see also Zahavi, 1998, p. 4, 7; 1994, p. 79). In the rest of this chapter, I will describe different forms of bodily self-consciousness in order to provide some experiential clarification of such self-world intertwining.

3.5. Words of caution

In the following sections, I will propose a number of distinctions, notably the distinction between the extension and materiality (Husserl’s terms) of the bodily self. It should be clear that the point of these distinctions is not to argue that one aspect (e.g. extension) can come along without others (e.g. materiality). The point is rather to argue that even if they factually or constitutively accompany each other, these aspects cannot be reduced to each other.

Moreover, different perceptual modalities (e.g. touch and vision) participate in their own way in different forms of bodily self-consciousness. Nonetheless, it is important to remember throughout this investigation that the relevant distinctions here concern different modes of givenness of bodily self-consciousness, not different modalities of body-related information. To put it differently, the present account is not primarily about how different modalities participate differently in the sense of being a bodily self but is rather primarily about how a given modality can be experienced in multiple ways, thereby phenomenally constituting different modes of givenness of the bodily self.

4. Four forms of bodily consciousness

If the self is bodily in a non-metaphorical sense, then bodily self-consciousness always involves the intermingling of subjective and intentional aspects (see sections 3.3 and 3.4). To clarify the multiple

forms that this intermingling can take in one's experience, I will now describe a simple example, which unfolds in four steps:

(1) I see a rose within reaching distance

(2) I reach out, my hand moves towards the rose

(3) Getting closer, I remember that roses are delicate but thorns are sharp, I thus pay attention to the movement of my hand so that I damage neither the rose nor my hand. I touch the rose, squeeze its stem and feel a sudden pain at the tip of my finger.

(4) I scrutinize the skin of my finger in the attempt to detect a hidden thorn.

This simple scenario is characterized by four different forms of bodily self-consciousness. Notice that some or all of them are paradigmatically lived in conjunction with each other but here I present them successively to better analyze their specific characteristics.

(1) When I experience the rose as being in front of me, within reaching distance, I don't take myself as an intentional object but I experience myself, specifically *as-subject*. In particular, I experience the anchoring of my perspective in my body, and the orientation of my body towards the rose (see section 5).

(2) When I experience my moving hand while attending to the rose, I take neither my hand nor my movements as intentional objects, but again I experience *myself-as-subject*. The difference with the previous moment of the scenario is that I am not only conscious of the localisation and orientation of my body towards an object of the world (the rose). Rather, I am also conscious of my body itself, for example, I experience the contraction of my muscles, the velocity of my moving hand, the touch of my skin on rose leaves, etc (see section 6).

(3) When I pay attention to my movement, I experience myself in a different way, namely, by explicitly, overtly taking myself (my moving hand) *as-object*. Nonetheless, in this case, I experience the intentional object in its *subjectivity*, namely I experience subjective control. When I touch the rose stem and experience pain, my attention is directed to my painful finger tip. I explicitly, overtly take myself *as-object* and experience this peculiar intentional object in its *subjectivity*, namely, its painfulness (see section 7).

(4) When I scrutinize my finger in the attempt to detect a hidden thorn, I take myself as an *object* of experience but this case importantly differs from the aforementioned one. Indeed, by taking my finger as an object of *scrutiny*, I do *not* specifically access it in its subjectivity. On the contrary, I experience it in its objectivity: as it is penetrable and penetrated by another object (the thorn), it deploys its belongingness to the physical realm, and I could adopt the same scrutinizing observation to find a thorn in *your* finger. In this sense, even if this is the most explicit and most commonly studied form of self-consciousness, it is also the least subjective: this mode of access is not specific to myself (see section 8).

In the rest of this paper, I will detail these four forms of bodily self-consciousness and argue that they are not reducible to each other and that each of them are bodily in a non-metaphorical sense. I will specifically exploit the descriptions of these four forms of bodily self-consciousness to shed light on what it means to be a bodily-subject-in-the-world, i.e. what it means that one's subjectivity is intentional. For this reason, I will focus on cases (1) and (2), while cases (3) and (4) won't be detailed at length here.

5. The self-as-subject as a localized and oriented volume

5.1. Orientation

Let us start with the most subtle form of self-consciousness (first step of the above scenario), for instance the experience of an element in the world as being located relative to oneself. Husserl allows the generalization of this point: "... each thing that appears has *eo ipso* an orienting relation to the Body, and this refers not only to what actually appears but to each thing that is supposed to be able to appear. If I am imagining a centaur I cannot help but imagine it as in a certain orientation and in a particular relation to my sense organs: it is "to the right" of me; it is "approaching" me or "moving away;" it is "revolving," turning toward or away from "me" – from me, i.e., from my Body, from my eye, which is directed at it" (Husserl, 1913/1952, *Id II*, p. 61-2). Given this characterization, it is also relevant to mention that the eye, the eye qua seeing, i.e. the eye-as-subject is not itself seen: "The eye does not appear visually... Naturally, one would not say that I see my eye in the mirror. For my eye, the seeing qua seeing, I do not perceive" (Husserl, *Id II*, p.155). The seeing body is thus *transparent* in the sense that one experiences the world *through* it. This notion of transparency, however, can be understood in two concurrent ways (Legrand 2005).

5.2. Transparency

5.2.1. Transparency as invisibility and pre-noetic embodiment

In a first understanding, transparency is interpreted as invisibility. This leads to the idea that at this level, one's subjective perspective is factually anchored to one's body, while this anchoring dimension of the body is not experienced at all by the subject. According to Shaun Gallagher, this would be a pre-noetic form of embodiment which concerns "aspects of the structure of consciousness that are ... hidden, those that may be ... difficult to get at because they happen *before we know it*" (2005, 2). What matters here is thus not bodily experience. Rather, what matters is that the self and mental states are shaped "*prenoetically* by the fact that they are embodied" (Ibid.). Such

factual, non-experiential, pre-noetic embodiment is certainly a very important and interesting one, but it doesn't address the point at stake here, since the present investigation focuses on bodily self-consciousness.

5.2.2. *Transparency vs. invisibility*

A second and concurrent interpretation of transparency underlines that transparency is *not* invisibility. As Merleau-Ponty says (1945/1962, p. 345) about consciousness, we operate here at a level where the subject is neither posited nor ignored. Rather, the subject is “not concealed” from experience, which means that perceptual experience in some way announces the bodily subject, even when the body is not itself taken as a perceptual object. The important point here is that the subject is transparent as it is absent-as-object but it remains non-invisible as it is experienced specifically as subject.

5.2.3. *The elusive body*

We are operating here with a very subtle form of bodily consciousness. Indeed, the body here is not taken as an intentional object of experience, and it is not even experienced in the background of one's attentional field. This is precisely what it means to be transparent: it is not looked at, not even peripherally. However, if the anchoring body is not itself taken as an object of perception at this level, if all we get is the experience of a transparent subject, is it justified to claim that the subjective perspective is *experientially* (and not only factually) anchored to the body, or are we left with a subjective perspective which is transparently experienced but which is not experienced as *bodily*?

5.3. **Voluminosity**

Husserl characterizes the body in a way that helps clarifying the mode of givenness of the transparent subject as bodily. In particular, he distinguishes between bodies which are extended and mental states which are not extended. To avoid confusion potentially linked to the notion of extension that is used in various contexts, I will use here the notion of voluminosity: the body is voluminous in a way mental states are not. Given this characteristic, it is relevant to consider whether the transparent subject can be adequately said to be voluminous. If yes, then it is bodily in a non-metaphorical sense; if no, then it is not bodily or only metaphorically so.

Capturing the specificity of voluminosity, Husserl argues the following: “Even the ghost necessarily has its ghostly Body... the case would be thinkable (and an actual ghost would result) that a psychic being would appear and be actual while lacking a *material* Body... But this still does not imply that a Body in every sense is lacking or would be lacking... A ghost is characterized by the fact that its Body is a pure “spatial phantom” with no material properties at all... A psychic subject without a material Body is indeed thinkable, i.e. as a ghost instead of a natural animal being, but *in no way without a Body of some kind*” (1913/1952, *Id. II*, p. 100-1, my emphasis). To avoid any confusing talk about non-material bodies, instead of contrasting extension to materiality, I will rather contrast voluminosity to bodily feelings, i.e. to the localization of sensations in/on one’s skin boundary. I take Husserl’s characterization of the ghostly body as a thought-experiment illustrating the thinkable possibility to characterize the body by its voluminosity, independently of bodily feelings: the ghost would have the former but not the latter. This ‘thought-experiment’ allows characterizing the subtle form of bodily self-consciousness that I intend to describe here: one’s transparent subjectivity is experienced as bodily voluminous and this experiential dimension is irreducible to (is not necessarily mediated by) bodily feelings.

Husserl conceives of the body as characterized both by its voluminosity and by bodily feelings but argues that the body is *experienced* only thanks to bodily feelings while voluminosity

would not be experienced (see also section 6.3.2). Here, I follow Husserl's distinction between voluminosity and feelings but propose that one's voluminosity is *experienced* in its specificity. This implies that experiencing bodily feelings is not the only way to experience one's body. Rather, the bodily self experiences itself as a volume localized in space and oriented relative to things in the world. As described above, in vision, we do not see the seeing; nonetheless, we experience ourselves as the seeing subject, i.e. as anchoring the visual field. Moreover, we experience this seeing subject as a voluminous subject. This volume may not be experienced as "this specific volume", and voluminosity may not be experientially contrasted with "thinness" or "flatness". Rather, what matters at this level is that one experiences oneself as a volume *by experiencing one's location and orientation in space*: through his vision of an object in front of him, the seeing subject experiences himself as having a back and front, a right and left, a down and up. In seeing in front of you, you do experience the very fact that you do not see behind your head. In other terms, the seeing subject experiences the very fact that he has a voluminous, localized and oriented body structured in such a way that e.g. only forward looking is possible. This position contrasts with the claim that "vision offers a view of the world that is seemingly uncorrupted by the body" (Ratcliffe, 2008, p. 300). Rather, one must acknowledge the bodily presence of the invisible in the experience of the voluminosity, location and orientation of one's body: *the experienced spatiality of the world is correlational to the experienced voluminosity-location-orientation of one's body*.

5.4. Voluminosity vs. zero-point of orientation

Among the main contributions of the body to the constitution of perceptual appearances, phenomenologists classically mention the body as the necessary anchoring point of one's perspective on the world: it is the "here" from where anything is experienced: "Every perspectival appearance presupposes that the experiencing subject is himself given in space. However, since the

subject only possesses a spatial location due to its embodiment, Husserl claims that spatial objects can only appear for and be constituted by *embodied subjects*" (Zahavi, 1994, p. 65). Pace Husserl, however, the body anchoring subjective perspective would be better characterized as an *orienting volume* than as "the bearer of the zero point of orientation" (1913/1952, *Id. II*, p. 61-2).

The characterization of bodily self-consciousness as involving the basic experience of one's body as an orienting volume presents the advantage of being both genuinely subjective and genuinely bodily. On the one hand, it is genuinely bodily because I am here conscious of an aspect which is specific of bodies: voluminosity. On the other hand, this form of bodily self-consciousness is genuinely subjective because I experience this volume as oriented subjectively by an act of consciousness. Moreover, I experience this subjective orientation without taking it as an intentional object of my experience. All together, I thus experience myself as a bodily subject at this level. Such bodily self-consciousness proceeds by a "detour" through the outer world, but there is in fact no shorter way towards oneself than one's exteriorisation in the world (Barbaras, 2008a, p. 111). In this view, the subject is bodily self-conscious not despite the fact that he is intentionally oriented towards the outer world but thanks to this intentional orientation: directing one's objectifying gaze/touch away from oneself is the very condition to be conscious of oneself specifically as being a bodily subject. Notice that given the transparency of the subject here, this form of experience is particularly elusive, but also particularly pervasive. At this level, "there is a world for me because I am not unaware of myself, and I am not concealed from myself because I have a world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 347).

5.5. Bodily self-consciousness beyond one's skin boundary

Voluminosity, location and orientation are not experienced only as modalities of bodily feelings. The important point here is that the body is experienced as located in a space that extends beyond

its boundaries, rather than being merely experienced thanks to the localization of sensations in/on its own boundaries. Here, bodily self-consciousness goes beyond the skin boundary of the body proper, as it corresponds to the experience of the world as disclosed by the body, to the “center of reference which things indicate” (Sartre, 1943/1956, p. 320). At this level, one is transitively conscious of objects in the world, and by the same token, one is intransitively conscious of one's bodily subjectivity. In this sense, experiencing one's body here amounts to experiencing the space around one's body, and in particular, the bodily orientation of this space.

This last phrasing opens up the consideration of the role of the “world” in constituting bodily self-consciousness. From the description given up to now, it appears that one is conscious of oneself as one relates to the world beyond oneself. Going one step further, one may be tempted to eradicate any asymmetry between the subject and the world he is living in. In such a view, “there can be no talk of a privileged localization of one's lived-body... The objectively appearing formation of the perceived world erects its own center for itself” (Holenstein, 1999, p. 60). The way the subject stands in front of various objects in the world is not left to “our own power” (Ibid, 81). Rather, it is due to the arrangement of things themselves. Accordingly, “the lived body of the perceiving subject behaves no differently than any perceived object, as far as its localization is concerned” (Ibid, 58). Given the present account, it is surely interesting to reinforce the consideration of the very structure of the world and objects. However, I think that there is a relevant way to acknowledge that the subject has no “dominating role” in that the world/objects are intrinsically structured, while keeping the subject as the anchoring point of his own perspective. In particular, the structure of the world/objects appears only from a subjective perspective which has to be bodily anchored and experienced as such. Moreover, the “zero-point of orientation” is in any case not the I determined by a “grasp on ourselves and our psychic abilities” criticized by Holenstein (81). Rather, according to the above argumentation, it is the voluminous-located-

oriented body anchoring one's perspective on the world extending beyond one's boundary, and this is compatible with the consideration of the objective structure of the world. Even in a view where "a complex perception gives itself polycentrically" (Ibid, 81), it must be considered that there remains an asymmetry between self and world. Indeed, "we can only perceive perspectively" (Ibid, 82): the perspective is given by and to a subject; it does not exist if there is no subject since objects do not have perspective on each other. Therefore, the consideration of the world-embeddedness of bodily self-consciousness and the implied co-foundational view of the self (see sections 3.1 and 3.2) do not require "a distinctive phenomenology that can explore "an intentionality of a wholly different type... an 'inversion' of intentionality"" (Westphal, 2007, p. 168). Rather, such view does not prevent acknowledging an asymmetry such that subject and intentional object are irreducible and irreversible (Ibid., p. 184). The specificity of the subject notably consists of its bodily anchoring of a subjective perspective.

6. The self-as-subject as the bearer of bodily feelings

What distinguishes human bodies from hypothetical ghosts is bodily feelings which the subject experiences by localizing sensations in/on his body (see step 2 of the "rose" scenario described above, section 4), i.e. the body as "a bearer of sensations" (Husserl, 1913/1952, *Id. II*, p. 161). Notice again that such bodily feelings are not constitutive of the aforementioned form of bodily self-consciousness (the self-as-subject as a localized and oriented volume).

6.1. Touching and touched : the voluptuous body

Bodily feelings like touch become relevant here. For example, I experience my touching hand when I explore an object to evaluate its texture. In this case, I do not take myself as an intentional object but I experience myself-as-subject by experiencing touch. In particular, I experience my touching

hand in a specific way which is not available for any other object, hence the characterization of this experience as a form of consciousness of the self-as-subject. This form of self-consciousness gives me a sense of the opacity of my body, over and above the transparency of its voluminosity, localization and orientation described above.

Note that the self-as-subject is not only the active touching subject, but also the receptive touched subject, for example when your skin is touched by a crawling spider, by the hand of your lover, or more prosaically by the edge of a table. What such receptive touch offers is the experience of the opacity of my subjectivity in a way that does not objectify it, i.e. in a way that fully preserves subjectivity by avoiding turning it into an intentional object. An intentional object is surely present in the experience (the spider, the hand of your lover, the table), but the self is not objectified even if it is touched.

6.2. *'Don't give me that look': touched by your gazed*

The experience of myself as the “bearer of sensations” is not restricted to the tactile modality. Indeed, I can experience myself not only as being touched, but also as being seen. Again, this experience has multiple dimensions. First, as developed by Sartre, “with the appearance of the Other’s look I experience the revelation of my being-as-object” (Sartre, 1943/1956, p. 351). But this objectivation of my body when others look at it cannot be all there is to the experience of being seen by others. As put by Merleau-Ponty: “In fact the other's gaze transforms me into an object, and mine him, only if both of us withdraw into the core of our thinking nature, if we both make ourselves into an inhuman gaze, if each of us feels his actions to be not taken up and understood, but observed as if they were an insect's. ... A dog’s gaze directed towards me causes me no embarrassment” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 420). I'll leave aside the dog’s gaze to take up on the embarrassment which I feel when others look at me. Embarrassment, or comfort, etc. are among

the sensations which are, like touch, immediately localized in/on my body, and are elicited when I am seen by others. Such experiences thus also deploy the opacity of my subjectivity by eliciting bodily feelings, and without necessarily objectifying it. This deployment of one's subjective opacity derives from the experience of sensations in/on one's body (Husserl, 1913/1952, *Id. II*) but is nonetheless basic.

6.3. Under my skin and beyond

6.3.1. 'Is it cold here or is it just me?': Feeling the world out there

The discussion that precedes contrasts the experience of the self-as-subject as a bodily volume localized and oriented in a space that extends beyond its own skin and the experience of the self-as-subject as the bearer of bodily feelings localized in/on one's skin boundary. This contrast, however, should not give the misleading impression that in the latter case, bodily experiences shrink the subject's experience to his skin limits. Bodily feelings should not be thought of as being "non-intentional bodily sensations, but rather crucial carriers of world-directed intentionality" (Slaby, 2008, p. 430), i.e. "feelings which are intentionally directed not just at one's body and its physiological changes, but rather at the world beyond the body" (Ibid. p. 434). Similarly, Goldie argues that "bodily feelings, including the bodily feelings involved in emotional experience, can tell you things not just about the condition of your body and the sort of emotion you are experiencing, but also about other parts of the world beyond the surface of your body (and what comes into physical contact with it)" (2002, p. 238). Furthermore, Goldie also defines "feelings towards" which are feelings directly directed towards objects in the world. Accordingly, both the transparent voluminous-located-oriented body and opaque bodily feelings relate the subject to the external

world. However, they do so in fundamentally different ways, as the next section will further develop.

6.3.2. *'Don't be so touchy': The necessity of pre-tactile bodily self-consciousness*

In philosophical considerations of the constitution of the lived body, the experience of the voluminous-located-oriented body is neglected, in favor of the experience of the body as the bearer of bodily feelings. This, however, is a mistake. It is classically thought that “the capacity for tactile-sense” [and] the capacity for body-sense, i.e. immediate body-awareness... rigorously require one another” (O’Shaughnessy, 1989, p. 40) and that “body-sense is blind in the following sense: that it is not made for accord with sight, since it is itself pre-visual and has nothing to do with sight, being so to say born in the dark” (O’Shaughnessy, 1989, p. 55). I disagree with both claims: bodily self-consciousness is primarily constituted through the experience of the structure of the (visual) perceptual field, and before the localization of (tactile) sensations on the body. This is what the preceding sections intended to describe at the experiential level. In the current section, I intend to argue that the experience of bodily feelings and their embedding material world presupposes the experience of the transparency of the voluminous-located-oriented body: “our bodily experience would by far exceed the experience of the body. In a way similar to how, in Husserl’s view, our experience of time presupposes the temporality of experience itself, the experience of our body would presuppose the corporeality of experience itself” (Waldenfels, 2004, p. 236). This consideration is fully coherent with the present proposal which emphasizes that bodily self-consciousness does not arise from a unique property of touch (or double touch, see section 7) but is pervasive in perception, even in perceptual acts which do not involve the localization of sensations on/in the body.

Following Carman's work, the issue at stake here can be framed as a debate between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. According to Husserl, "The body as such can be constituted originally *only in tactuality* and in everything localized within the sensations of touch, such as warmth, cold, pain, and the like" (1913/1952, *Id II*, p. 150). Carman underlines that on Merleau-Ponty's account, this view "amounts instead to a kind of privative modification of our prior bodily self-understanding" (1945/1962, p. 222). The body experienced through bodily feelings is "a kind of quasi-objective thing with which I identify thanks to the localization in it of my subjective sensations" (Carman, 1999, p. 222-3). However, such experience presupposes that I already experience myself as bodily in a more primary manner: the very possibility to localize sensations on *my* body presupposes a form of bodily self-consciousness which does not rely on the identification of bodily properties as mine, nor on the identification of bodily feelings as carried by me. As argued for by Shoemaker (1968), self-consciousness cannot rely only on object-identification: I do not first experience a neutral or anonymous experience, then ask the question "Whose experience is this actually?" to finally find myself as the subject of these experiences (Legrand 2007a). This holds as well for identification of one's body as one's own (Legrand, 2006): the identification of one's body as the bearer of one's bodily feelings cannot ground consciousness of the bodily subject (Legrand, 2007b). Before being, and for becoming the "bearer of sensations" (Husserl, 1913/1952, *Id II*, p. 161), the body is "our general means of having a world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 146) and it is experienced as such.

Another, complementary way to argue for this view goes as follows. To be non-metaphorically a bodily self, one needs to experience oneself as a body in a space extending beyond oneself. For that, there must be a form of bodily self-consciousness that is not restricted to the location of sensations in/on one's body. Let me unpack these claims. First, by its physicality, the body belongs to the physical world and experiencing the body thus involves experiencing its

embeddedness in the physical world: “we are aware of ourselves as bounded and limited within a world that extends beyond us” (Martin, 1992, p. 201). Moreover, anything experienced in the way one’s body is experienced is experienced as being one’s body: “anything which one feels in this way is taken to be part of one’s body” (Ibid.). It follows that, for experiencing the body as such, it is not enough to localize sensations in/on one’s body: this would prevent the experience of the physical world embedding the body, i.e. it would prevent the experience of the world-embeddedness of the physical body, which is an intrinsic feature of the body as physical without which it would make only metaphorical sense to say that one experiences oneself as a bodily subject: “one feels oneself to have a certain shape and size in a space which contains one and extends beyond one. This space, which extends beyond one’s body, cannot be a place where one feels a limb or sensation to be since then it would no longer appear to be somewhere which falls outside one’s body but would come to appear to be part of it” (Ibid., p. 202). According to Martin “the sensations can only feel to be internal to the body where one has a sense of a space extending beyond possible locations of sensations and hence beyond any such sensory field” (Ibid., 209). I’m adding that this sense of space extending beyond one’s bodily limits is itself correlative to a form of bodily self-consciousness, described above as the experience of the body as a volume located and oriented in space.

7. The subjective access to the self-as-object

We just differentiated two forms of bodily consciousness of the self-as-subject which are irreducible to each other and are both bodily in a non-metaphorical sense. An equivalent investigation must be done with consciousness of the self-as-object: is it uni- or multi-form? Because the present focus is on the self-as-subject, this issue will be addressed much more concisely. In particular, the question here is whether the subject necessarily ends experiencing its

bodily subjectivity the moment the body is taken as an intentional object of experience. Is perceiving one's body necessarily equivalent to perceiving anything in the world?

7.1. Touching myself

For Husserl, one of the reasons why touch is primordial for the constitution of the lived body is because it is extended in a way that allows double touch: my left hand can touch my right one. What matters here is “the way my Body as touched is something touching which is touched” (Husserl, 1913/1952, *Id. II*, p. 155). By contrast with this identification of the touching and touched body, Merleau-Ponty rather acknowledges that double touch gives me two irreducible experiences: the hand as touching which I experience as subject, and the hand as touched which I experience as object (1945/1962, p.105): “[in double touch] what we have is neither the perception of two objects (O’Shaughnessy) nor the perception of one object that can be attended to in two different ways (Martin). Instead, touch is the relationship between touching and touched” (Ratcliffe, 2008, p. 309). It is surely important to retain that these two experiences are not reducible to each other. However, it is also important to underline that the touched hand does not lose its subjectivity altogether (see step 3 of the “rose” scenario described above, section 4): it cannot be reduced to a set of muscles and bones. Rather, the self-touched hand “gives itself in exteriority without being developed as an object” (Barbaras 2008b, p. 7-8.): what is special in double touch is that the two hands are experienced as subjective but in different ways. The touching hand is experienced as-subject, and the touched hand is taken as-object without losing its subjectivity. In double touch, I thus experience the opening of my subjectivity to itself without the intermediary of any objectifying experience. I do not experience my touched hand by reading the world, by discovering a special object in the world. Rather, in double touch, I experience myself as a touched subject, leading to the

aforementioned opacity of subjectivity (also accessible in passive single touch) *without any detour through the external objectified world* (unlike other modalities, and unlike single touch).

7.2. Bodily reflectivity

Double touch does not only bring the experience of sensations localized in/on one's body. Single receptive touch is sufficient for that. More specifically, double touch also opens the different aspects of subjectivity to each other (by linking the touched to the touching subject). Accordingly, perceiving oneself is not reducible to perceiving an object (Legrand and Ravn, 2009). Interestingly, this form of experience of the body's subjectivity is perceptual but not reifying: the body can be experienced as subjective, while being taken as the attentional/intentional object of perception: "Although our inspection of the body implies its objectivation, it does not imply a total suspension of its subjectivity" (Zahavi, 1994, p. 72).

Such self-perception can be characterized as a form of reflective self-consciousness, if the term 'reflective' refers to a structure of experience where one accesses oneself as such. Double touch would thus provide some bodily roots to reflectivity. This latter point interestingly echoes Merleau-Ponty when he says that: "the body ... tries to touch itself while being touched, and initiates 'a kind of reflection' which is sufficient to distinguish it from objects" (1945/1962, p. 107). Following the terminology used by Varela et al. (1991, p. 27), this form of self-consciousness can also be called "embodied reflection", i.e. a form of reflection "in which body and mind have been brought together". Following the terminology used by Gallagher & Marcel (1999, p. 25), it may also be called "embedded reflection", i.e. "a first-person reflective consciousness that is embedded in a pragmatically or socially contextualized intentional attitude and the corresponding actions".

8. The analytic access to the self-as-object

It is important to underline that not every type of perceptual experience avoids reifying subjectivity (see step 4 of the “rose” scenario described above, section 4). The paradigmatic form of spontaneous perception does. However, such perception importantly differs from scrutinizing observation. The difference is not a matter of attention but of reification. Both perception and scrutiny can be attentively focused, but only scrutinizing involves a reification of the intentional object. This is the case whenever you “fix your gaze” and adopt an “analytical attitude” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 262) in order to scrutinize e.g. the wrinkles at the corner of your friend’s eyes or a scar on your finger. It is not paradigmatically the case, however, when you perceive (even attentively) your friends’ facial expression while talking to him, or the scar on your finger while trying on a new ring. The point here is that even if subjectivity can be expressed bodily, in a way that makes it accessible directly in perception, it would nonetheless be alienated by the reification involved in scrutiny.

Here it is worth noting that it is problematic that both empirical and phenomenological investigations of bodily consciousness primarily focus either on pathological movements disrupted in their adaptation to the task/environment or disrupted in their fluidity, or on very simple and rather isolated everyday movements like holding a cup or pointing to one's nose. Such investigations neglect important components which are evidently present in whole-body movements and spontaneous actions. The latter are best suited for the investigation of the perceivability of bodily subjectivity as they do not impose any scrutinizing/reifying attitude (Legrand and Ravn, 2009).

9. Summarizing conclusion

The experience of the body-as-intentional-object is an “aberrant type of appearance” (Sartre, 1943/1956, p. 357) as it does not give us “the body as its acts and perceives but only as it is acted on and perceived” (Ibid., p. 358). It is however important to recognize that this “aberrant” type of

consciousness is constitutive of the experience of oneself as being bodily in a non-metaphorical sense. Indeed, the body is constitutively opaque, thus visible, touchable, perceivable, i.e. take-able as intentional object of perceptual experience. As we saw above, there are two ways to experience one's body at this level: one way disrupts the body's subjectivity (section 8) while the other doesn't (section 7). Moreover, and more generally, intentionality is not an “aberrant” aspect of subjective experience. Quite on the contrary, the experience of oneself-as-subject involves the experience of oneself as oriented towards intentional objects from one's first-person perspective (section 5) and the experience of oneself as in contact with intentional objects through one's bodily feelings (section 6).

The present investigation intended to show that it is partly misleading to claim that our body most of the time “disappears” from one’s consciousness (Leder, 1990). Indeed, such a claim should not hide the fact that we constantly experience our body in a rich and complex manner, even if not explicitly. Moreover, *all* the forms of self-consciousness described here are bodily in a non-metaphorical manner and illustrate how subjectivity and intentionality are co-constitutive of the bodily self: the physical body can be taken as intentional object and be experienced as expressing its subjectivity (section 7), it can also be taken as intentional object and be experienced as fully belonging to the physical world in which it is embedded (section 8); the subject can be experienced specifically as-subject, while being experienced through its bodily dimensions of voluminosity-location-orientation (section 5) and opacity (section 6).

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