Towards A Phenomenology of Dyslexia

By

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Table of Contents

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Declaration

This thesis is solely the work of Matthew John Irvine Philpott, and has not been submitted for any other degree at another university.

A similar version of the 'Case Study' has already appeared in:
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Abstract

In this thesis I apply Merleau-Ponty's brand of existential phenomenology to the developmental language disorder 'dyslexia'. Developmental dyslexia is marked by an unexpected failure to acquire written language skills, in particularly reading, spelling and aspects of writing, and has primarily been studied by experimental cognitive psychology, physiology, and more recently, the neurosciences. The current explanatory paradigm holds the view that symptoms of dyslexia are caused by *deficits* in phonological skills, in particularly verbal memory and phoneme awareness. As a means of facilitating previous research, I take a phenomenological approach to the pre-reflective, lived experience of dyslexia by studying the peculiar style of intentional relationships that are developed by dyslexics in linguistic situations. This approach adopts a non-causal, descriptive methodology which attends to the manner in which dyslexics not only have a disrupted experience of the written word, but also a meaningful relationship with language. Using the notion of the 'lived body', I propose that dyslexics are marked by a loosening of body intentionality in linguistic situations, and this is further interpreted as an incohesive sedimentation of skills. I apply these general findings to the topics of spatiality, expression and temporality, and conclude that dyslexics exhibit a *different style of being-in-the-world.* This *difference* in style is characterised as an interaction between the propensity to foreclose the transitional and differential structures of perceptual experience, and moreover, the possibility of sustaining a provisional relationship with language through the development of compensatory strategies, the latter of these observations prompting a new line of future qualitative research.

Chapter One

The Possibility of a Phenomenology of Dyslexia

The aim of this thesis is to illustrate how a descriptive phenomenology can begin to elucidate the *experiential level* of what is commonly referred to as 'dyslexia', a developmental disorder that is marked by an unexpected failure to acquire written language skills, in particularly reading, spelling and the quality and speed of written work. The notion of an experiential level is one which lies in advance of any scientific or objectively-based approaches taken to dyslexia, and yet a phenomenological account should not be simply understood as an autobiographical, first-person perspective report. As such, a phenomenological investigation of dyslexia offers something quite new to the current field of research. A wide variety of disciplines have contributed to dyslexia research, the most important of which will be referenced and described in detail later in this chapter. These approaches include: the neurosciences, including Positron Emission Tomography (PET) and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI); physiology and perceptual studies, which focus on both the visual and auditory systems; first-hand autobiographical accounts of dyslexia from dyslexics and their families; education, including the remediation and screening of dyslexic children; and to a smaller extent, sociology. However, by far the largest area of research has come in the form of experimental cognitive psychology, and through individual and group testing, an array of clinical and experimental approaches have made valuable contributions to the grouping and understanding of manifold symptoms displayed in different forms of dyslexia. Furthermore, of the disciplines mentioned thus far, it is this approach that will feature most heavily

during this thesis, for not only does cognitive psychology provide the current paradigm for explanations of dyslexia, but it may stand to gain the most from a phenomenological account of dyslexia. Although these approaches have proved essential in opening up our understanding of dyslexia, the role of a *philosophically driven* phenomenology of dyslexia, focusing on the pre-reflective, lived experience of the dyslexic subject has not been explored. This thesis thus serves as an introduction to this line of research.

From the brief overview just given it is evident that, due to the nature of disciplines involved in dyslexia research, the *prevailing* methodology has been *scientific* (whether these disciplines are understood as a natural or social science), and therefore such research is generally underpinned by notions of causality, determinism, and objectivity. Although highly useful autobiographical accounts have provided a discursive means of gaining a better understanding of the symptoms and general experience of dyslexia, what the above disciplines do not consider is the worth of a rigorous, descriptive-based account of dyslexia which aims to interpret the manner in which those affected by dyslexia experience language, i.e. the manner in which language is *meaningful* to them. As such, the account I am attempting to provide is less interested in *explaining why* certain symptoms of dyslexia occur, i.e. a causal account, and more interested in describing *how* dyslexics experience difficulties during reading and writing, difficulties which can be grouped together and accounted for by scientific disciplines, but which can also be interpreted on a broader 'existential' level. It is important to note that such an exposition would not be *opposed* to, or invalidate the findings of, a scientific inquiry, for although they may be concerned with a similar topic, a phenomenological investigation has quite

different objectives at stake and takes a quite different methodological approach to a scientific account. Although a phenomenological approach may be critical of some of the presuppositions used in the methodology of the sciences, most notably psychology, I am in no way trying to provide a 'truer' or 'more complete' account of dyslexia, rather, one which would work with, and be complementary to established research.

Merleau-Ponty's brand of phenomenology, set out most explicitly in *Phenomenology of Perception* and originally published in 1945[1], is particularly apposite in this respect. Demonstrating the value of some of his philosophical themes and conclusions through the re-interpretation of case studies of individuals with a range of psychological disorders, Merleau-Ponty attempts to access the pre-objective, pre-reflective, existential level of our 'being'. Through a detailed critique of both empiricist and intellectualist approaches to perception, Merleau-Ponty prescribes a return to the 'life world', and such a return sees the examination of the perpetual unfolding of the intimate relationship *between* a world and ourselves. This unfolding is understood as the self-effacing, *intentional* level of existence which is built up through the reciprocity between the subject (understood as a *bodily* subjectivity), and that which it is immersed in - the world (understood as both physical *and* cultural). Because this level of existence is precisely *pre*-reflective it escapes a determinate conceptualisation, and thus we normally have only an everyday, indirect awareness of its structure. Merleau-Ponty attempts to describe this primordial trope of our existence by elucidating the meaningful *style* in which reflective 'consciousness' is grounded by a corporeal subjectivity which is immersed in a practical, concrete

situation - our 'being-in-the-world'. Thus, what a phenomenological investigation of dyslexia aims to bring to the literature is a descriptive account of the *style* in which the dyslexic relates to written language, a style which may not be coherent to others, but which has an existential, lived-meaning for the dyslexic.

An introduction to developmental dyslexia, and my own case study

What is dyslexia?

This thesis is primarily an exercise in phenomenological description, and therefore has a philosophical impetus and grounding. However, it is hoped that the methodology used and the conclusions reached can be interpreted by other disciplines involved with dyslexia research in furthering their own accounts. As such, the thesis is intended for a philosophical readership, although it is hoped that the key notions and conclusions reached are accessible to a wider audience. Whilst the thesis will take for granted a certain knowledge of phenomenological literature, I do not expect that the reader will have had a great deal of exposure (if any) to the phenomenon of dyslexia. Thus, in order for the reader to gain a better purchase on the suitability of this thesis, in this section of the chapter I hope to introduce the reader to the topic of dyslexia through a brief definition as offered by previous research, and a biographical account of the problems faced by dyslexics through my

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[1] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962. Because this text will be the primary philosophical resource used in the thesis and will be referenced on a regular basis, any references to Chapters, Parts or direct quotes from the book will simply appear in brackets, e.g. – (Preface, p.xiii).

own case history and experience of dyslexia. Let us start with a recent, concrete definition of 'dyslexia' as understood by the British Dyslexia Association:

"We define dyslexia as a specific difficulty in learning, constitutional in origin, in one or more of reading, spelling and written language which may be accompanied by difficulty in number work. It is particularly related to mastering and using written language (alphabetic, numerical and musical notation) although often affecting oral language to some degree"[2]

As acknowledged in the popular understanding of dyslexia, and stated definitively in the above quote, dyslexia is *primarily* a disability which is associated with children who show an unexpected failure to acquire written language skills, in particularly reading, spelling and the quality and speed of written work[3]. Although many dyslexic children are able to compensate for such difficulties, it is often the case that problems of literacy often stretch into adulthood. Dyslexia is a *developmental* disorder, as opposed to acquired, which cannot be attributed to a lack of educational or sociocultural opportunity, low intelligence, sensory or neurological damage, or psychiatric and emotional problems, and the occurrence of such disabilities often leads to difficulties in education and activities that are dependant upon a proficient level of literacy, e.g. reading music. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that problems of literacy associated with dyslexia may also have wider consequences which can involve emotional problems, and in certain extreme cases, antisocial and/or criminal behaviour[4]. Dyslexia tends to run in families, and the relatives of

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[2] British Dyslexia Association, 1989, quoted in: Pumfrey, P & Reason, R. 1991, p. 14.
[3] Snowling, M. 1987, Chapter 1; and, Miles, T. 1993.
[4] It should be noted that under the topic of emotional problems, the problems faced by the teachers and families of dyslexic children are also taken into account. See: Biggar, S & Barr, J. 1996; and,

those affected by dyslexia often have other language problems, whilst dyslexia is more common in boys than girls[5].

As mentioned, the main area of performance that is problematic for dyslexics is that of written language skills. The most common features of dyslexic reading and spelling are: the inability to read and pronounce unfamiliar words with a tendency to guess haphazardly at their phonetic structure, and a failure to realise differences between words which are similar in spelling and sound (e.g. right/write); difficulty in keeping track of the correct place when reading such that a page of text may seem to be unstable; problems in switching from one line to the next, or moving to a new place in the text (e.g. locating and trying to skip to the next paragraph); the rotation and the reversal of symbols in a word (e.g. writing or reading a 'b' for a 'd'), or the mixing up of words within a sentence, often referred to as 'strephosymbolia'; the omission of certain letters within words, or words within sentences in reading and writing; eccentric ways of spelling regular and irregular words which follow an inconsistent pattern such that the same word may be spelled incorrectly and quite differently on different occasions; and finally, a very poor standard of handwriting[6]. Apart from the failure to acquire a proficient level of written language skills, dyslexia is also associated with a number of other categories of difficulty. These include: slow speech development, delays in motor development, visual perceptual deficits, sequencing problems (e.g. the learning of lists), problems with the use of abstract symbols and numbers, and finally, impairments in temporal and spatial awareness[7]. Although dyslexia is most commonly defined by such problems of literacy, it should

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Reid, G & Hinton, J. 1996; Pumfrey, P & Reason, R. 1991, Chapter 4; and, Alm, J & Andersson, J. 1995.

[5] Olson, R. *et al.* 1989.

[6] See: Critchley, M. 1970; and, Miles, T & Miles, E. 1990.

be noted that dyslexia can also be understood in a more *positive* manner, that is by paying attention to the non-phonological skills that dyslexics seem to flourish at. Such skills are usually of a more creative, visual-based quality, and examples of this are illustrated by the high proportion of dyslexics who succeed in areas of engineering, architecture and the visual arts[8].

Assessment and sub-types of dyslexia

Although some dyslexic traits are common to us all on an occasional basis (i.e. everybody misreads/misspells words occasionally), as mentioned above, there are a number of key distinguishing features that differentiate dyslexia from an everyday susceptibility to reading and writing errors. These features have been interpreted on a diagnostic basis by a host of educational psychologists in an attempt to develop a standardised test that can be used to assess children who exhibit traits of dyslexia. A number of normative tests have been developed and used in the field of assessment, not only in the task of identifying 'dyslexia', but also in the differentiation between developmental dyslexics and other pupils with prolonged reading difficulties[9]. Although these tests are by no means definitive, two main forms of assessment are used in the UK: The Aston Index[10], developed at The University of Aston, and which acts as more of a screening test that can be used by teachers in the early identification of children who may be at educational risk from dyslexia; and, The Bangor Dyslexia

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[7] See: Critchley, M & Critchley, E. 1978.
[8] See: Aaron, P. & Guillemard, J. 1993. 'Artists as Dyslexics', in Willows, D. *et al.* 1993; and, Davis, R. 1994.
[9] Such tests include: 'The Bangor Dyslexia Test', 'The Aston Index', 'The Boder Test of Reading-Spelling Patterns' and the 'British Ability Scales' test. A good summary of these and derivative tests is included in: Pumfrey, P. & Reason, R. 1991. Chapter 6.

Test[11], developed at Bangor University, which is generally used by an educational psychologist in their assessment of children who have shown traits of dyslexia at school. A brief description of this influential test is included below.

The Bangor Dyslexia Test, pioneered by Tim Miles, is based upon a series of diagnostic indicators that have been derived from many years work with children who had shown unexpected difficulties with various aspects of literacy and numeracy. This indication test is used in conjunction with the results of a test of general ability, the family incidence of reading and spelling problems, and a report of the individual's reading, writing and spelling problems at school. The main diagnostic indicators are as follows: awareness of left/right spatial direction, hand and eye dominance, repeating polysyllabic and rhyming words, mathematical calculations involving subtraction, the recitation of arithmetic tables, the recitation of months and digits in normal sequence and in reverse, and finally, the confusion and reversal of letters (b for d). Performance on the individual components of the test are score dyslexia positive, negative or ambiguous, according to criteria which are based on normative data and which take account of the examinee's age and general ability. The total number of dyslexia positive symptoms can then be determined and, depending on the age of the child, a critical number of positive symptoms will differentiate the dyslexic from the 'slow' or 'poor' reader. To legitimate this approach, Miles has carried out studies that have used the test in conjunction with three age groups of children which included both control subjects and children who exhibited traits of dyslexia, and found that in all age groups children who suffered

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[10] Newton, M. & Thompson, M. 1982.
[11] Miles, T. 1983.

from reading, writing and spelling difficulties at school exhibited far more dyslexia-positive symptoms than control subjects[12].

One of the continuing problems of dyslexia research, from both a clinical and educational point of view, is that the symptoms exhibited by dyslexic children vary greatly, and thus the substantiation of dyslexia as a *specific* developmental disability which is distinct from other learning and reading difficulties is not without its problems[13]. As Tim Miles asserts: "there are poor readers who are not dyslexic, and there are many who satisfy some of the other criteria for dyslexia implied by the proposed taxonomy who nevertheless can read adequately."[14] Concerning the topic of taxonomy, one of the main decisions to be taken is whether to 'lump together' a wide range of symptoms under the broad title of dyslexia, or whether to pioneer a range of sub-types of dyslexia, a 'splitting' of dyslexia into a number of different manifestations. Thus, apart from the fundamental split between acquired dyslexia[15] and developmental dyslexia, one finds in the clinical literature that dyslexia is presented as either a general disorder or a specific form of dyslexia which has its own distinguishing features.

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[12] See: Miles, T. 1993; and, Singleton, C. 1988.

[13] The controversy over 'specific learning difficulties' versus 'dyslexia' is a major debate within the clinical, educational and legislative fields of dyslexia, and for a background to this debate I advise the reader to look at: Pumfrey, P. & Reason, R. 1991, Chapter 1; Snowling, M. 1987, Chapter 1; and, Stanovich, K. 1994. For a helpful, concise article on the label of 'dyslexia' in relation to other specific learning difficulties, see: Watson, P. 1997.

[14] Miles, T. 1994, p.205.

[15] For a good summary of 'acquired dyslexia' and its sub-groups that result from an injury to the brain, see: Ellis, A. 1993, Chapter 4.

These 'sub-groups' of dyslexia[16] exhibit aspects of both the core symptoms of dyslexia detailed above *and* specific characteristics, and are widely presented as: phonological dyslexia - a very low reading age compared to chronological age, a low capacity to read *non-words* (e.g. reading GOK as 'joke'), poor word and non-word repetition, and, a poor short-term memory for sequences of words and digits[17]; 'surface dyslexia' - again, a very low reading age, a poor ability to recognise *irregular words*, but a far greater ability to read real words such that irregular words were regularised (e.g. BIND read as 'binned'), and a greater ability than phonological dyslexics at repeating words and non-words[18]; and to a lesser extent, 'deep dyslexia' - marked by a problem in reading abstract words (e.g. infinite) which cannot be visualised, a range of semantic errors when reading (e.g. reading CHAIR as 'table' and SEVEN as 'eight'), and a low capacity for reading non-words[19]. Although these sub-groups are useful in distinguishing the different characteristics exhibited by dyslexic children, and to an extent the different levels of severity, it is rare that diagnosed dyslexics fall neatly into the categories illustrated above. As Ellis suggests, it may be beneficial to treat dyslexia as a continuum between these groups (in particularly between phonological and surface dyslexia) than sticking to rigid categories[20]. Indeed, the debate between the exact distinctions that are made between these sub-groups is outside the scope of this thesis, and therefore I will work with a general definition of dyslexia which understands the disorder in the variety of its features mentioned above. In order to give the reader a first hand insight into the array of problems faced by dyslexic children, and to explain in part some of the

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[16] On the topic of sub-groups of dyslexia, see: Stanovich, K. *et al.* 1997.
[17] See: Ellis, A. 1993, Chapter 8; and, Hulme, C. & Snowling, M. 1992.
[18] See: Hanley, J. *et al.* 1991.
[19] See: Johnston, R. 1983. However, the notions of developmental deep dyslexia and its similarity with acquired deep dyslexia has come under a certain amount of criticism, and is therefore disregarded in some of the literature, for example: Snowling, M. 1987, p.82-86.

motivation for this thesis, I now turn to a case study of my own experience of dyslexia as a child.

A case study[21]

Although I have now largely overcome the majority of my childhood dyslexic problems, I feel as though I have always been, and to an extent still am, challenged by the written word. During my earliest years at infant school I can remember having particular trouble with both copying words and creative writing, i.e. actually converting my thoughts into letter and words on the page. Once I entered the higher part of infant school at the age of seven, it was clear from my teacher's reactions and reports that my work was extremely slow, even when copying directly from a printed text, and my spelling, handwriting and sentence construction was very poor. The reaction to my problems from teachers was predominantly unsympathetic, attributing my slowness to being lazy and inattentive, and I was sometimes kept in class after school had finished in order to complete the piece of work that had been set. Understandably, I quickly grew to resent some of the people who taught me, and started to build up a distinct fear of going to school in the morning. The fear I had of specific teachers, of school as an institution, as well as the alienation I felt in relation to other pupils, all compounded the uncertainty and lack of confidence I had in relation to my work, and my parents decided I should be tested for dyslexia at Bangor University, North Wales, using the Bangor Dyslexia Test as mentioned above.

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[20] Ellis, A. 1993, p.102-3.

At the age of eight I was diagnosed as exhibiting symptoms of developmental dyslexia, and I moved to a new school that had a special unit dealing with reading and writing difficulties. My problems were *greatly* reduced by the specialised learning unit and understanding atmosphere of my second school, and although I have learned to cope with written language through a combination of remediation and various self-monitoring strategies, my structuring of a piece of writing, the time it takes to complete and elementary writing/spelling and reading mistakes can still be quite problematic, especially if I am under the pressure of completing a task in a specific period of time. Indeed, to this date, I have never come close to finishing a written exam, and have often had to resort to notation in order to come near to completing a final exam question.

There is no doubt that the symptoms I suffer from are only a mild form of dyslexia, however, I believe that I am in a good position to appreciate the problems faced by those with more severe forms of dyslexia, not only in terms of the troubles dyslexics face with language and communication, but the prejudice and lack of consideration they often experience. Moreover, to the extent that some mild dyslexic symptoms are still with me, this means that I can still access the vivacity of those problems which, as a child, were far more severe. I will now illustrate my experience of these problems through a number of key examples.

The first, and most obvious facet of dyslexia I can relate to, is the basic problem of maintaining a good standard of reading and writing. This can be broken down into a

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[21] A similar version of the above case history also appears in: Philpott, M. 1998.

number of areas. Firstly, a simple miss-recognition or even lack of recognition of a word during reading or writing, such that I would either completely miss out a word from the current sentence, or would use a word that might have a rough approximation to the intended word e.g. I might read 'slit' for 'slight'. A similar problem would be the well documented phenomenon of 'strephosymbolia', the act of twisting symbols. This would, and still can, occur for me in both single words (e.g. using d for b), and whole sentences, where I have a tendency to want to use words at the start of a sentence, when grammatically, they should occur at the end of a sentence.

A second phenomenon involves problems related with maintaining the flow or sequencing of language, and these are problems which still remain with me. This phenomenon is associated with the slowness of my linguistic tasks, for although I am not necessarily distracted from my task, it is as though the momentum of my work starts to slow right down, or even stop altogether. I generally experience these disruptions in two ways. Firstly, although I can be composing/reading a sentence quite easily and lucidly, and therefore maintaining a certain momentum to my composition/reading task, quite unknown to myself, and through no force of what could be crudely termed 'inattention', I will suddenly realise that the composition/reading process has lost its vivacity, and the momentum that carried me before has completely broken down. A second related problem which I still experience involves a rushing through words, at times jumping well ahead of myself in the sequence of words which make up a sentence. This jumping ahead is not simply trying to anticipate the general direction of where the sentence is taking me, rather I am almost 'over-anticipating' what the sentence actually means, and quite

often end up losing my place in a text. Because of this tendency, the rhythm of the reading process is again affected; the jumping ahead of myself clearly frustrates the clarity and coherency of meaning experienced when I am reading smoothly. The slowness of my work clearly has its roots in the constant stopping, re-sequencing, and starting again of my tasks. Furthermore, I should note that when at school my self-awareness of the label 'dyslexia' could often exacerbate some of the problems described above by amplifying the uncertainty and indecision when using language, i.e. being overly aware that I was highly likely to face problems when reading or writing.

Although these linguistic difficulties may become a significant problem for the dyslexic, and in my childhood experience became very much a part of my everyday life, the problems I have described above did not prevent me from using written language, and participating in communal linguistic activities. Rather, the difficulties I encountered were substantial and frequent enough to delineate the different manner in which I associated with language. Moreover, this hopefully illustrates that, although on a specific linguistic level I could be viewed as 'abnormal', this class of abnormality does not fit into the standard medical model of disfunction that can be put under the heading of 'gross pathology', a point that I will come back to during later chapters in the thesis.

Previous clinical research

The different methods of research

Dyslexia has been recognised for over 100 years as an unexpected failure to gain literacy skills, and in this time has been explained in a host of different ways. The vast majority of such explanations have taken the form of a deficit account where dyslexia is defined negatively against the skills (e.g. phonological awareness) which are usually deemed necessary for tasks such as fluent reading, correct spelling, and legible reproduction of text. Initially, dyslexia was understood as a type of developmental visual-processing difficulty by figures such as Hinshelwood[22], who understood dyslexia as a type of word blindness, and Orton, who paid specific attention to the phenomenon of symbol twisting (strephosymbolia) and the dire effect this had on some children's reading capability[23]. This paradigm of dyslexia research was superseded in the late 1970's when the problems associated with dyslexia were re-interpreted, most notably by Vellutino[24], not only in terms of visual-processing deficits, but primarily in terms of the verbal processing of language.

Within the contemporary literature the most widely accepted explanation is still concerned within linguistic-cognitive deficits, and I will discuss and reference these in detail below. More specifically, the current research paradigm is dominated by deficit accounts which focus on phonological (speech) deficits which disrupt the ability for dyslexics to reflect upon the sound-structure of spoken words, and thus leads to difficulties in learning how the letters and sounds of printed words are

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[22] Hinshelwood, J. 1904.
[23] Orton, S. 1937.
[24] Vellutino, F. 1979.

related. This theory has also been given a neuro-physiological grounding through evidence from PET scanning which suggests that phonological difficulties may result from a weak connection between the anterior and posterior language areas of the left hemisphere of the brain[25].

Although I will concentrate predominantly on the current paradigm of dyslexia research outlined above in both this section and in later chapters, areas of psychology, and especially physiology, have recently begun to pay attention to possible differences and deficits in dyslexics of the sensory perceptual system, most notably low level impairments of the visual system[26]. Although this type of research into dyslexia is generally seen as subordinate to the cognitive-phonological accounts I will detail below, a growing number of wide ranging studies are now beginning to make some impact on dyslexia research in the form of explaining deficits in tasks which have no linguistic or phonological component. Such research has presented the possibility that the wide ranging features of dyslexia cannot *simply* be explained by fundamental differences in phonological processing, although it should be added that the phonological deficits of dyslexia are by no means dismissed. Thus, a number of new lines of research have been pioneered such that problems faced by dyslexics can also be associated with: visual abnormalities, such as the blurring and moving around of letter/words on a page, which can be attributed to a deficits in the magnocellular component of the visual system which is specialised for processing fast temporal information[27] (see below); motor co-ordination problems, which are classified as 'clumsiness' and have been related to aspects of dyspraxia, such as static and dynamic balance, manual dexterity, gross and fine motor control and the production

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[25] Paulesa, E *et al.* 1996.
[26] For a comprehensive review of this topic, see: Willows, D. *et al.* 1993.

of simultaneous movement[28]; and lastly, problems with complex skill learning such as organisation and planning, for example, the structuring a piece of work[29]. To elaborate on the idea of dyslexia being marked by a visual deficit, I will briefly illustrate the argument offered by John Stein and colleges, as this seems to be one of most well developed non-phonological theories, and will be returned to later in the thesis.

The theory offered by Stein and colleagues is one which is grounded in a neurophysiological approach, but which puts a greater emphasis back onto the way in which dyslexics actually experience their problems. Stein's theory is based upon a neurophysiological deficit in dyslexia, specifically, that the brain's magnocellular pathway which controls eye movements needed for reading and writing skills fails to send adequate 'stabilising information' to the visual cortex in dyslexics. Because there is a marked reduction of stabilising information - information which allows the flow and smoothness of reading/writing to persist, this results in unsteady eye movements which may lie behind dyslexic features such as, words blurring and moving around the page, a loss of position on a page, and as specified by other accounts of dyslexics with poor motor skills, poor balance and co-ordination. Thus, the emphasis here is on how the dyslexic finds it much harder to develop the *ability* to sense the most rapid changes in motion around him/her, especially in what is seen and heard. The stark conclusion drawn by a Stein and others is that the poorer the ability to detect a change in motion, the worse the reading, writing and spelling[30]. The evidence provided by Stein is an attempt to provide a more integrated account of

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[27] See: Lovegrove, W. 1994; and, Stein, J & Walsh, V. 1997.
[28] See: Fawcett, A. & Nicolson, R. 1994(b); Denkla, M. 1985; and for the possible relationship between dyslexia and symptoms of dyspraxia, see: Stephenson, L. & Fairgrieve, E. 1996.
[29] See: McLoughlin, D. *et al.* 1994.

dyslexia that does not make phonological, visual or motor deficits a fundamental explanation of dyslexia, and rather, he speculates whether temporal processing in all three of these systems may well be impaired in cases of dyslexia[31].

The 'Phonological Deficit Hypothesis'

Since the late 1970's much research has concentrated on the cognitive deficits that underpin the problems faced by dyslexics, more specifically, the language-based, phonological skills which are required to use the written word proficiently and which are either absent or diminished for dyslexics[32]. A number of key verbal processing deficits that underpin dyslexia have been attended to by the literature, and these include: short-term and long-term memory deficits, verbal repetition, sequencing, naming difficulties, and of the specifically phonological skills that are diminished, the detection of rhyme and a child's overall phonological awareness. The basic premise of the phonological deficit hypothesis is that dyslexic children have difficulty in reflecting on the sound structure of spoken words, often referred to as phonological representations or codes, and such phonological problems make it difficult to learn how the letters and sounds of printed words are related. Because of this difficulty dyslexic children are either marked by a delay in the acquisition of

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[30] See: Stein, J. & Walsh, V. 1997; Stein, J. 1994; and, Stein, J. 1993.

[31] Stein, J. & Walsh, V. 1997.

[32] There is a huge amount of literature on the subject of cognitive and connected phonological deficits that underpin dyslexia, and a good review of the literature is provided in: Rack, P. 1994. A number of influential accounts include: Snowling, M. 1987; Snowling, M. 1995; Brady, S. 1986; and, Vellutino, F. & Scanlon, D. 1987. For a good review of the wider cognitive aspects of word recognition that are found to be inadequate in dyslexia, see: Pumfrey, P. & Reason, R. 1991. Chapter 5. And finally, for a more critical account of this hypothesis, see: Johnston, R. 1996.

reading skills[33], or more often, an atypical development of phonological reading and spelling strategies[34].

As with the majority of explanatory accounts used in developmental psychopathology which are based upon the recognition of underlying, core deficits, the phonological deficit account can be challenged on a number of fronts. A phonological deficit account of dyslexia must be able to recognise a *particular* rather than general deficit if it is to be relevant to dyslexia as a specific disability; it must determine whether the problems faced by dyslexics are a cause or consequence of the recognised deficit; and finally, whether the recognition of a particular underlying deficit can be reconciled with the individual variations of dyslexics and the sub-groups of dyslexia[35]. Because of the large number of accounts and the differences that exist between them, both subtle and sometimes significant, I will restrict myself to an account of the phonological deficit hypothesis which has been pioneered by Margaret Snowling and colleagues, which has, certainly within the UK, held a prominent position in dyslexia research since the mid-1980's. Furthermore, this account is consequential in that it will be the template for much of the interaction between the traditional approaches taken to dyslexia research and my own phenomenological account in the following chapters of the thesis.

Snowling places a great deal of emphasis on the role of phonological deficits in her explanation of dyslexic problems, and although she is not as reductive as some

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[33] Stanovich, K. 1997.
[34] Rack, J. *et al.* 1992.
[35] Whether certain phonological deficit accounts actually meet these challenges is well outside the scope and aim of this thesis, but for a good review of the literature concerning challenges facing the phonological deficit hypothesis, see: Rack, J. 1994; and, Frith, U. 1997.

authors[36], it is clear that the delay and/or deficit of phonological skills is *fundamental* to the phenomenon of dyslexia. Furthermore, this stance will have consequences for the way in which dyslexia is conceptualised (i.e. as a unitary or sub-grouped disability), and the relevance of other, non-phonological approaches that have been taken to dyslexia research. Through an extensive amount of experimental research, Snowling and colleagues have come to the conclusion that dyslexic children are poor at forming reliable phonological representations that are needed when learning to read. More specifically, because reliable phonological representations are not formed, this disrupts the intricate links which usually form between phonological and orthographic representations and which allow the child to read new words without access to *conscious rules*[37]. Thus, Snowling points out that dyslexics not only have problems in their *conscious* awareness of phonological information, but more importantly, in their *automatic* recall of phonological representations, and this claim is founded upon evidence that the language difficulties of dyslexics extend to speech perception, speech production, verbal short-term memory and object naming skills[38].

Snowling and colleagues recently tested 71 children from families with a genetic risk of dyslexia, compared with 37 children from control families in which there was no history of unexpected reading problems[39]. All children were tested around the time of their fourth birthday, and assessed on an array of language tasks which tested: expressive language, vocabulary development, phonological processing and pre-literacy skills which included letter knowledge. The findings in this experiment were that the children at risk of dyslexia differed from control children in vocabulary

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[36] In particularly: Stanovich, K. 1988.
[37] Hulme, C & Snowling, M. 1992.
[38] Snowling, M. 1995.
[39] Reported in: Snowling, M. & Nation, K. 1997.

development, phonological awareness and letter knowledge. Perhaps most importantly it was found that the at-risk children had specific difficulty in repeating both non-words and novel phonological forms with unusual patterns of stress, a finding which strongly suggests that these children were delayed in their phonological development.

The argument Snowling makes on this evidence is explicitly *developmental* - because children at risk of dyslexia appear to have difficulties with the *creation* of phonological representations before they begin to read, there is a high chance that they will start to learn to read with poorly specified phonological representations, and this in turn will mean that these children will attempt to read with the disadvantage of being unable to establish concrete relations between orthographic and phonological representations[40]. This relationship between phonological and orthographic representations is vital in learning how to 'decode' the sound structure of a written word, a skill that is needed in order to both read and spell a word, and which can be explained further by problems of verbal encoding and phonemic awareness (see below).

In another study carried out by Snowling involving the cognitive skills of university students with self-reported dyslexic difficulties, when compared with control students of a similar age and educational standard, the dyslexic readers not only had persisting difficulties with basic reading and spelling processes, but more specifically had deficits on a range of tests of phonological processing skills and phonological awareness. Thus, even at an age where such difficulties should have become masked,

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[40] Snowling, M. & Nation, K. 1997, p.156.

Snowling and colleagues argue tentatively that such problems could well result from poorly specified phonological representations at an early age[41].

The specific difficulties exhibited by dyslexics through a delay in their phonological development are elaborated upon further in both the above and other studies carried out by Snowling. Perhaps the main difficulty faced by dyslexic children is their poor standard of 'verbal encoding', i.e. the representation and storage of words, and this problem is usually one of delay rather than pure deficit. Because, it is claimed, information is normally held in short-term memory in the form of a phonological code, dyslexics are compromised in both their short-term and long-term memory recall of words due to their poor level of verbal encoding. Moreover, their performance will be affected most markedly in situations where the use of phonological codes is obligatory, such as the tasks of learning to read and spell. This has lead both Snowling and other advocates of the phonological deficit hypothesis to speculate that dyslexics rely more (although not exclusively) on a visual, orthographic style of encoding as a compensatory strategy for the delay in phonological development[42]. A related area of difficulty exhibited by dyslexics concerns their reduced phonemic awareness, a skill which greatly facilitates reading and spelling tasks. Phonemic awareness, also referred to as phoneme segmentation, is the awareness of words as sequences of discrete phonemes for example, splitting PEN into its individual phonemes p-e-n, and dyslexic children show difficulties not only in the segmentation of phonemes, but in counting, substituting and deleting individual phonemes. The consequences of this difficulty are primarily in the acquisition of new vocabulary, and Snowling attributes this difficulty to both a

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[41] Snowling, M. *et al.* 1997.
[42] See: Snowling, M. 1987, p.18-26; Olson, R. *et al.* 1984; and, Rack, J. 1985.

problem of speech perception (i.e. the identification and discrimination of auditory cues) *and* phonological memory coding[43]. Snowling concludes that, although dyslexics are able to acquire reading skills despite poor phonological awareness skills, a deficiency or delay in these skills makes reading acquisition more difficult for them[44].

On a final note, Snowling's position regarding the phonological deficit hypothesis is consequential in two ways. Firstly, Snowling maintains that the phonological difficulties displayed by dyslexic children are *fundamental* to the wide variety of reading and writing problems, whether dyslexia is conceptualised as a unitary disability or under the headings of different sub-groups. Thus, if we go back to the distinction made earlier in this Chapter between phonological dyslexia (poor non-word reading) and surface dyslexia (poor irregular word reading), Snowling's position is significant in that the differences between the two sub-groups are conceived of as *differences in degree* and not in type. Snowling concludes that phonological and surface dyslexia are caused by the same difficulties, but are representative of different levels of *severity*, 'phonological dyslexics' having more difficulty in creating and accessing phonological representations of speech than surface dyslexics. Thus, in Snowling's own words: "there need be no paradox between unitary theories of dyslexia and theories that posit sub-types of dyslexia."[45] Furthermore, although other non-phonological accounts, such as those that pay attention to possible visual deficits associated with surface dyslexia, are acknowledged, it is clear that in Snowling's opinion they are of secondary or

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[43] Although problems of speech perception and production are usually associated with the phonological deficit hypothesis, it is also argued that such problems could equally derive from an underlying *motor* problem. See: Everatt, J. *et al.* 1999.

[44] See: Snowling. M. 1987. Chapter 2; and, Rack. J. *et al.* 1992.

negligible importance when compared to the phonological deficits that are the primary cause of dyslexia[46].

How can phenomenology contribute to dyslexia research?

The contribution of philosophy towards research into developmental dyslexia has so far been negligible, although certain approaches to symptoms associated with acquired dyslexia, such as 'blindsight', have been explored by more language-based 'analytic' philosophy[47]. To my knowledge, there have been no prior studies into developmental dyslexia that have been conducted along the lines of a *phenomenological investigation*, that is, a series of phenomenological descriptions that are grounded in *philosophy*. I stress this last point because of a tendency within disciplines involved with research into psychopathology, such as psychology and neurophysiology, to refer to first-hand experiential accounts as *phenomenological accounts*. Although first-person accounts are invaluable to the understanding of developmental and acquired disorders, indeed many highly revealing autobiographical reports concerning the experience of dyslexia have made contributions to more experimental research[48], such accounts cannot be said to be 'phenomenological' in the philosophical sense of the word. From a philosophical perspective, autobiographical accounts cannot be understood as 'phenomenological'

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[45] Snowling, M. & Nation, K. 1997, p.160; and also see: Snowling, M. *et al.* 1994.
[46] Although Snowling is clearly an advocate of phonological deficits being an underlying cause of dyslexic symptoms, she can sometimes be more forgiving towards visual deficit accounts (see: Snowling, M. 1997), whilst in some studies they are almost dismissed out of hand as they are seen to be derived from studies into acquired dyslexia (see: Snowling, M. & Nation, K. 1997.).
[47] Tye, M. 1993.

as they are grounded in the 'realist' presuppositions that are representative of the 'natural attitude', i.e. personal knowledge and beliefs, scientific and other epistemological theories, assumptions concerning cause and objectivity, and assumptions about the priority of certain aspects of experience over others[49].

Although a first-person autobiographical account and a phenomenological account are both concerned with how one experiences a certain event or phenomenon, the difference between the two concerns the use of a phenomenological *epoché* or 'reduction'. This is a type of philosophical methodology pioneered by Husserl which suspends judgement or 'brackets off' the presuppositions characterised by the natural attitude[50], most notably 'realist' judgements concerning the *existence* of the phenomenon under investigation, and the existence of an external world. Husserl's use of the *epoché* is a means to return to 'the things themselves', i.e. the pure, indubitable and universal phenomena given in consciousness, and is part of a philosophical project which privileges the role of a *transcendental subject*. Merleau-Ponty's brand of phenomenology is also interested in the rich description of phenomena, i.e. how phenomena reveal themselves. However, instead of trying describing the *essential* structures of phenomena, Merleau-Ponty is more interested in the manner in which phenomena are *meaningful* for us, a form of investigation which asks questions of a situated, corporeal form of subjectivity, that is, the way in which our experience of phenomena results from our bodily engagement with the world. This said, Merleau-Ponty still maintains an interest in the idea of an epoché, for although he has no intention of performing a phenomenological reduction in order to reveal the fundamental structures of transcendental consciousness, he is still

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[48] See: Hampshire, S. 1981; and, Faludy, T. & Faludy A, 1996.
[49] Ashworth, P. 1996.

very much interested in stripping his phenomenological descriptions of any presuppositions, most notable those characterised by 'objective thought'. Merleau-Ponty is quite explicit about his debt to Husserl in the 'Preface' to *Phenomenology of Perception*, where he endorses the idea of a *suitable* form of reduction that avoids the presuppositions of 'objective thought':

> "Sensationalism 'reduces' the world by noting that after all we never experience anything but states of ourselves. Transcendental idealism too 'reduces' the world since, in so far as it guarantees the world, it does so by regarding it as thought or consciousness of the world, and as the mere correlative of our knowledge, with the result that it becomes immanent in consciousness and the aseity of things is thereby done away with. The eidetic reduction is, on the other hand, the determination to bring the world to light as it is before any falling back on ourselves has occurred, it is the ambition to make reflection emulate the unreflective life of consciousness. I aim at and perceive a world." (p. xv-xvi)

From the above quote it is clear that through his version of a reduction Merleau-Ponty wishes to set aside the presuppositions that arise from disciplines concerned with describing an objective reality, i.e. those disciplines which conduct themselves as a type of science, whether they be a natural or social science (e.g. somatic medicine, neurophysiology, cognitive psychology, or even sociology). *Phenomenology of Perception* therefore serves as both a criticism of, and departure from, objective and scientific methodology in its study of phenomena. The central problem Merleau-Ponty has with the above disciplines is that they

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[50] See: Husserl, E. 1977. First Meditation, Section 7-9.

purport to the existence of a determinate, objective world, an assertion which is grounded in principles of cause and effect, and justified by normative data. The point here is not that disciplines such as cognitive psychology or neurophysiology are *necessarily wrong* in their explanations of behaviour, for even if investigative disciplines are underpinned by an objective methodology, they have clearly made huge contributions to the diagnosis, screening and treatment/remediation of illnesses, disabilities and psychological disorders. However, if one is to scrutinise disciplines grounded upon objective thought on a *conceptual, philosophical* level as opposed to their pragmatic worth, what these disciplines do fail to account for is "the unreflective life of consciousness" (see above quote), what Merleau-Ponty refers to as *lived experience*. Thus, the type of reduction that Merleau-Ponty aims to achieve is one which strips away the presuppositions and prejudices held by 'schools' of objective thought, most notably empiricist and intellectualist schools, as a means to begin to describe the pre-scientific, pre-objective, bodily-situated structures of the *'life-world' – the world of 'existential' or 'lived' meanings*.

As opposed to empiricist disciplines that try to study the structures of the natural world, and opposed to cognitive, intellectualist disciplines that try to study the structures of the conscious world, Merleau-Ponty develops a 'middle path' between the more worthy attributes of these approaches. This middle path respects both the contribution of a subject, albeit understood as a situated, engaged bodily subjectivity, *and* the contribution of a world, a notion which should not be understood as simply a 'natural' or 'cultural' domain, but excludes neither of these characteristics. I will discuss both Merleau-Ponty's criticisms of empiricism and intellectualism and his ideas concerning the 'body-subject' and the 'world' in

greater detail in Chapters Two and Three respectively. However, the main point to grasp here is that, in order to start describing the manner in which existential meanings reveal themselves, one cannot think of the body-subject without it being engaged with a world, or having a worldly perspective without being anchored by a body, i.e. they are mutually inclusive, reciprocal structures. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

"The sensor and the sensible do not stand in relation to each other as two mutually external terms, and sensation is not an invasion of the sensor by the sensible...The sensible gives back to me what I lent to it, but this is only what I took from it in the first place." (p.214)

This reciprocal relationship *between* the world and the body is fundamental to Merleau-Ponty's description of phenomena, for the perception of a piece of music does not exist in a physical, external world, nor does it exist as a state of consciousness – the piece of music exists as something which is *meaningful*, and as such, is part of the experiential 'life-world'. Hence, in his description of phenomena Merleau-Ponty is inquiring into the intimate, lived relationship between the body and world, what he refers to as our 'being-in-the-world' (*être-au-mode*, also referred to as 'being-towards-the-world'), and this relationship should be understood as an *intentional* relationship, that is, the manner in which a certain phenomenon or group of phenomena unfold and reveal themselves as meaningful experiences in my perpetual interrogation of the life-world. What Merleau-Ponty presents in *Phenomenology of Perception* is a philosophical method of describing our lived experience of worldly phenomena afresh, and thus

what would be of interest to myself in conducting a phenomenological investigation into dyslexia would be to focus on the manner in which dyslexics have a *different*, but still *intentional*, relationship with the lived world during tasks which involve the use of the written word. The question that now remains to be answered concerns choice, that is, why use specifically Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to describe the intentional experience of dyslexia afresh?

The main reasons for turning to the work of Merleau-Ponty are, firstly, his interest in the application and presuppositions represented by schools of objective thought, but more importantly, his philosophical interest in cases of psychopathology. Throughout *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty uses real case studies from both clinical psychiatry and developmental psychology, and applies his brand of phenomenology to the way in which the patient experiences a loss of action, and in some cases a loss of *expression*. Most notably for this thesis, one of Merleau-Ponty's key interpretations includes a study of the acquired language disorder 'aphasia'. By attending to these disruptions of action or expression with his brand of existential phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty attempts to elucidate the different *intentional relationships*, as opposed to *causal relationships*, that constitute the way in which patients experience the lived world. For example, in cases of aphasia Merleau-Ponty is neither enquiring into the status of the brain lesion nor the status of relevant cognitive states as a way of *explaining* how the disorder has arisen[51]. Although the focus of such studies may be of great importance in charting the cause and possible remediation of the patient, it is Merleau-Ponty's aim to try and describe *how* the aphasic's use of

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[51] See: *Phenomenology*... 'The Body as Expression, and Speech'.

language presents itself in a way which has profoundly different lived meanings from non-aphasics, i.e. as problematic, difficult, uncertain etc.. Although these phenomenological interpretations can be understood as specific examples of applied phenomenology, for Merleau-Ponty, the main purpose of such interpretations is to illustrate (albeit in a negative way) just how the body's multitude of intentional relationships with the world become habituated through successive layers of experience. Although such intentional relationships may become 'covered over', they are by no means lost or forgotten, rather, they become part of the *general style* in which we comport ourselves towards the lived world – our particular *style of being-in-the-world.*

Aside from Merleau-Ponty's own application of phenomenology, when looking for examples of how phenomenology can be applied to cases of pathology, a similar type of phenomenology has been applied by Eugène Minkowski in his investigations into the spatio-temporal structures of psychopathological behaviour[52], whilst more recently, there has been the publication of a highly lucid phenomenology of physical illness[53], a phenomenology of psychosomatics[54], and studies which have made use of phenomenology in relation to physiological abnormalities[55], all of which use many of the themes pioneered by Merleau-Ponty. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that some of the earliest theorists of language disorders, including Goldstein[56], adopted 'figure-background structures' pioneered by gestalt psychology to look at the breakdown of linguistic 'objects'

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[52] Minkowski, E. 1933.
[53] Toombs, S. 1992.
[54] Bullington, J. 1999.
[55] Gallagher, S & Cole, J. 1995.
[56] See: Goldstein, K. 1948; and, Strauss, A. & Kephart, N. 1955.

under scrutiny, an idea that will be touched on in later chapters, and to an extent can be found in Merleau-Ponty's own work.

The aim of this thesis is therefore to study a number of key areas in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy that are critical in his discussion of how we come to experience the lived world as meaningful, i.e. the way in which phenomena reveal themselves as a certain *style*. Although I cannot possibly cover all the themes that are relevant to *Phenomenology of Perception*, I hope to select those which seem particularly apposite in disclosing some of the principal differences in the dyslexic's intentional relationships with language. Furthermore, the themes I have picked are representative of the subject matter that will concern the following chapters. These will progress as follows: Chapter Two - Merleau-Ponty's methodology and his notion of a reduction; Chapter Three - the role of the lived body and operative intentionality in our perception of the world; Chapter Four - the body's orientation of space and perception of space, including the topics of depth and movement; Chapter Five - the idea of expression understood as a linguistic gesture, our capacity for intersubjective communication, and the dyslexic's peculiar relationship with language; and, Chapter Six - the fundamental ground of temporality and its break with traditional conceptions of memory. These themes will be applied to some of the features of dyslexia that have been set out earlier in this chapter, and against the backdrop of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology I will begin to describe the manner in which, when faced with situations which require the use of the written word - in particularly the tasks of reading, spelling and copying written work - *dyslexics have a different style of being-in-the-world*.

Hence, the emphasis of this thesis is philosophical, in both its methodology *and* in its appraisal of dyslexia. It is my intention to provide a group of descriptions that acknowledge dyslexia as a phenomenon which *is* profoundly debilitating for those who suffer from its problems associated with literacy. However, by taking a phenomenological approach to these problems the emphasis of my interpretation will be on *difference*, i.e. instead of understanding dyslexia as a form of deficit or lack (whether this be a cognitive, neurological, physiological) I will stress the way in which dyslexics can be understood as having *profoundly different* intentional relationships with written language, relationships which are marked by the *peculiar style of dyslexia*. Thus, as I will show in detail during the next chapter, because I am taking a quite different sort of methodology to dyslexia than traditional research, i.e. experiential as opposed to objective, I am in no way challenging the explanations, observations and overall value of previous approaches taken to dyslexia – far from it. What I hope to provide in this thesis is the *philosophical groundwork* to allow, firstly, those working in experimental fields of dyslexia research to expand and redefine some of the basic notions that are used without being called into philosophical question, such as perception, objects, subjects, spatial awareness, expression, meaning and time in relation to memory, and secondly, to provide myself with a theoretical foundation to use in future research concerning the interpretation of first-hand accounts through the application of phenomenological theory.

Chapter Two

The Application of Merleau-Ponty's Implicit Method - An Intentional Approach to Dyslexia

The primary concern of this chapter is that of methodology. This is of paramount importance for the type of project I am conducting, as any application of a philosophical discourse to a context that has traditionally been dealt with by empirical-based disciplines will have to be commensurable *to an extent* with both paradigms. The task of finding a methodology that would suit *all* the needs of both the philosopher/phenomenologist and the scientist/psychologist is near enough impossible, yet some sort of productive translation is essential if my project is to be deemed a viable one. The role of finding some sort of communion between phenomenological description and dyslexic symptomatology is harder than the phenomenologist may at first think, for as I will demonstrate in this chapter, there is no 'natural' phenomenological framework with which to address the problems of dyslexia. As such, this chapter may be regarded as a type of problem solving exercise within which a number of somewhat 'un-phenomenological' resources will be utilised in order to establish a suitable methodology.

As I am predominantly using Merleau-Ponty's brand of phenomenology to disclose the dyslexic's unique manner of being-in-the-world, the main content of this chapter is an account of Merleau-Ponty's own methodology, its relationship

with the notion of 'disorder' studied in psychopathology, and the limits of this framework in relation to my own project. The puzzle that has to be solved concerns the notion of disorder, more specifically, the manner in which Merleau-Ponty has utilised disorder in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, and the way in which I want to work his framework *back onto* a specific case of empirical-linguistic disorder. This raises a number of immediate and long-term problems which need to be addressed in this chapter.

Firstly, a number of preparatory issues concerning 'disorder' must be attended to. The most obvious question to be posed, and yet one of the hardest to answer is, how are we to understand the notion of 'disorder'? During this chapter I will focus on the definition of disorder offered by the medical model, and furthermore, how phenomenology could offer a different approach to the emphasis of such a classification. Of major importance for both these topics is to understand the way in which, for both the psychologist and the phenomenologist, *there is some type of disruption to be studied in cases of disorder.*

The second part of this chapter is an attempt to resolve the problematics concerning the application of phenomenology to dyslexia. Merleau-Ponty's relationship with both somatic and psychopathology is one that moves from a description of the abnormal in an attempt to articulate the *general intentional* structures of 'normal' being-in-the-world. *Phenomenology of Perception*'s relationship with psychopathology is not without its problems, problems that I hope to bring out in this and later chapters. Although many of the existential structures described by Merleau-Ponty will be used during this project, what must

be made explicit in this chapter is *the manner* in which they are being used, for it is Merleau-Ponty's belief that many of these structures are seriously compromised in pathological cases. If a phenomenology of dyslexia were to *simply* use the existential structures provided by Merleau-Ponty and explain how these structures differed in case studies of dyslexics provided by psychologists, then a suitable phenomenological investigation would not actually be taking place. The reasons for saying this will become clearer below, but my basic point is that in order to carry out a worthwhile phenomenological investigation into a disability or disorder such as dyslexia, one cannot *only* begin to describe the manner in which dyslexia is a breakdown of *normal* linguistic activity, but of greater value would be to try and describe the manner in which the dyslexic does maintain a relationship with language, i.e. by taking an *intentional* approach to the manner in which dyslexics experience language *in general*, not just as a breakdown.

As mentioned above, the notion of disorder is in one way or another marked by a disruption of intentionality, and hence the primary task of the second part of this chapter will be a mapping-out of how an 'intentional stance' can be taken towards dyslexia. What will be of importance in the long-term development of this thesis will be to focus on the intentional relationship dyslexics have with the world when reading and writing activities are seemingly uninterrupted, and this will be focussed on explicitly in Chapter Five. Therefore, in order to help establish this type of intentional-based methodology and to help describe some of the problems defining disorder and dysfunction, I will supplement Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological texts by turning to the notion of an 'intentional stance'

provided by Daniel Dennett[57], and furthermore, the use of this idea in relation to psychopathology in the recent work of Derek Bolton and Jonathan Hill[58].

The chapter will run as follows: Firstly, I will present Merleau-Ponty's critique of objective thought as a means to introduce the reader to the idea of an intimate dialogue taking place *between* the body and world, a dialogue which is constitutive of our everyday *meanings*. Furthermore, this critique of objective thought will also shed light on Merleau-Ponty's close relationship with examples of psychopathological disorders and experimental psychology. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's connection with psychology in *Phenomenology of Perception* is somewhat ambiguous, for although he uses many case-studies from clinical psychology, in particularly gestalt approaches taken towards mental disorders, he is equally critical of psychology's methodology. This will next lead me to a discussion of how both the medical model and phenomenology conceive of disorder, and how dyslexia may or may not fit into these notions. The final section of the chapter will introduce the idea of intentionality being disrupted in dyslexia, and will go on to highlight the limits of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in connection with psychological disorder. To conclude with, I will try and map-out how an intentional framework may be used when describing dyslexia via the work of Bolton and Hill. By the end of the chapter, I hope to have articulated a methodology in line with Merleau-Ponty's brand of phenomenology that will attend to the problem of trying to describe a variant of psychological disorder that has an *apparent* disruption of intentionality.

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[57] See: Dennett, D. 1981; and, Dennett, D. 1987.
[58] See: Bolton, D. & Hill, J. 1996.

Merleau-Ponty's criticisms of objective thought

To give an account of Merleau-Ponty's methodology *in brief* is not without its problems, for although there is a method that operates in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, such a method is by no means explicit. Much of this implicit method is derived from the substantial criticisms of 'empiricist' and 'intellectualist' approaches taken to perceptual experience that are presented in the 'Introduction' to *Phenomenology..*, and therefore Merleau-Ponty's method is not defined first and then employed, rather, his phenomenological technique is disclosed in practice and movement. It could be argued that any type of phenomenological investigation is always incomplete. Thus, what the phenomenologist is faced with is a type of philosophy that is *emerging* from, and immanent to, the enquiry itself. It is for this reason that Merleau-Ponty may resist stating exactly what his methodology is, only that his descriptions are an attempt to return to the 'life world' of intentional relationships. What is key to this movement is a rethinking of reflection, more specifically what is to be reflected upon. As Merleau-Ponty puts it in the final chapter of the 'Introduction' - 'The Phenomenal Field':

"The core of philosophy is no longer an autonomous transcendental subjectivity, to be found everywhere and nowhere: it lies in the perpetual beginning of reflection, at the point where an individual life begins to reflect on itself. Reflection is truly reflection only if it is carried outside of itself, only if it knows itself as reflection-on-an-unrefelected-experience, and consequently as a change in [the] structure of our existence." (p.62).

Merleau-Ponty is attempting to find a method that will disclose a 'reflection-on-an-unreflected-experience' via his critiques of empiricism and intellectualism. As can be seen in the above quote and preceding paragraph, although Merleau-Ponty is primarily critiquing transcendental idealism (under which term he is susceptible of including the views of Husserl), he does make a return to the empirical aspect of existence, and it is important to understand how the author is, in part, sympathetic to both these schools of thought.

One of Merleau-Ponty's main aims is to rid his philosophy of traditional metaphysical prejudices, primarily the 'either/or' doctrine of Cartesian dualism. If dualism is not dissolved, the attempt to reflect on the unreflected aspects of experience - the life world - will not be possible. As Merleau-Ponty states in the 'Preface' to the *Phenomenology*.. : "Probably the chief gain from phenomenology is to have united extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism in its notion of the world. The phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect.." (p.xix-xx). Dualism's inability to account for everyday lived experience, the 'intersection' mentioned in the above quote, is due to attributing specific properties to specific substances. Both empiricism and intellectualism represent a certain brand of 'substance ontology', and privilege either the material/object (empiricism), or the act of categorial interpretation/subjectivism (intellectualism). Within the Introduction there is not only a critique of highly rigid scientific models, such as mechanistic physiology, but a critique of psychological models that rely upon causation and association, and furthermore, intellectualist-transcendental models. The overriding problem Merleau-Ponty has with these models is that they try to

reduce either the world or the subject to an objectifiable or measurable entity. The lived world is one of unreflected and lived experience which we may catch the *style* of, but never fully capture or comprehend, and hence the principal criticism of these substance ontologies is that they are proponents of objective thought. Brief criticisms of each model are (respectively): physiology is unable to account for the lack of correspondence between a stimulus and a phenomenon; psychology is attacked for reducing impressions and sensations to a non-meaningful entity, and relying upon the idea of a metaphorical 'associative force'; and intellectualism is attacked for privileging a constituting transcendental subject, and conflating notions of judgement and perception[59].

Although Merleau-Ponty is fundamentally critical of these approaches, he does wish to interlace useful elements from both empiricist and intellectualist methods of analysis for his own project. However, taking the lead from Gestalt psychology, the aspects of empiricism and intellectualism Merleau-Ponty wishes to preserve are significantly modified in his brand of phenomenology. With regard to intellectualism, the author is sympathetic to the active role of the human subject in perception, although the formulation of this subjectivity as a transcendental, non-material consciousness is clearly rejected in place of the body-subject. Similarly, intentionality is also favoured by Merleau-Ponty, although the non-

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[59] Merleau-Ponty's critique of these schools of philosophy, and the need to critique them, is dealt with in great detail during the 'Introduction' to the *Phenomenology*., and when addressing cases of abnormal perception/intentionality in 'Part One' of the book concerning the body (Ch.1 - Physiology; Ch.2 - Classic Psychology; and, Ch.3 - Intellectualism). I use the term 'schools of thought' not through choice, for Merleau-Ponty is fairly unspecific about exactly who's philosophy he is criticising. Although he does give *some* idea of who he may regard as fitting into certain schools by giving references in footnotes, the tendency for the author to homogenise specific philosophies under a thematic title is great. For example both Kantian *and* Cartesian, and sometimes even Husserl's views concerning subjectivity are placed under the title ' intellectualism'. Although Merleau-Ponty is understandably more interested in themes rather than

material and deliberative conceptions of this theme are also abandoned. The empiricist school of thought is of benefit to the author due to its emphasis on the distinctive contribution made by all the senses during perception, and the significance of bodily organisation in illustrating human action. This greater respect for the body's role in perception is what previous phenomenologists had repressed, and although empiricism treats the body as a mechanical object, Merleau-Ponty is able to synthesise these aspects of each discipline into a phenomenology that articulates a dialogue *between body and world*. Thus, the *reciprocal* and *mutually inclusive* relationship between 'body-subject' and 'world' lies at the heart of Merleau-Ponty's whole enterprise, but it is vital for the reader to understand how these two poles are derived, i.e. through the lengthy critiques presented in the 'Introduction'. Although Merleau-Ponty's direct criticisms of empiricism and intellectualism now move away from prominence in *Phenomenology*.. their influence will permeate the rest of the text in the form of a starting point to Merleau-Ponty's own phenomenological based assertions. Furthermore, such criticisms will feature again in this chapter when discussing different conceptions of psychiatric and psychological disorder, and moreover, existential phenomenology's reaction to such models.

The interactionism or dialogue between the body and the world which is constitutive of phenomena both produces and envelops formal categories, and this is what Merleau-Ponty wants to access in his study of the life world, a field of existence which is marked by ambiguity. The *dialogue* between the body subject and the world can be understood as the unreflected or preconscious aspect of

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authors, this general approach may weaken the legitimacy of his critiques of empiricism and intellectualism to his phenomenological approach.

existence that we only have a vague awareness of. Before moving onto how the phenomenologist is to elucidate this fundamental dialogue, I must make clear how Merleau-Ponty conceives of the 'worldly' structure of existence, and why his strategy is not simply introspective psychology. I have already remarked on the importance of a greater material emphasis in turning away from transcendental idealism, in that aspects of empiricism highlight the importance of various fields of meaning that are connected with our sensory capabilities - visual, audible etc.. In reaction to a realist point of view, subjectivism claims that these fields of meaning are an interior representation of certain stimuli. However, even if this were the case, in experiential terms, one is still left with the everyday attitude that an orange *is* juicy or that the singer's voice *is* shrill. This everyday attitude is one which Merleau-Ponty is interested in studying from a philosophical distance, for although mistaken, such an attitude does understand perceptual fields as *having a meaning*, meanings that go to make up the phenomenological 'world'. These meanings are clearly not immutable or universal, and are only produced in relation to the engagement with the body-subject. However, the more subjective side of this equation does not choose the meanings it encounters in perception, rather they are discovered within the dialogue: "the only pre-existent Logos is the world itself" (p.xx).

In this way Merleau-Ponty transcends traditional articulations of objective thought. The phenomenological life world is not a place that simply 'contains' objects in-themselves, moreover, neither is there a type of (transcendental) subject that merely constitutes objects in the world. Although the body-subject does not belong to the world along with other objects, neither is the body-subject the

originating source of objects or prior to their very being. What has to be thematised is the *relationship between* body and world, for the world cannot be conceived without a bodily subject, and the body without a world. As Merleau-Ponty writes in the introduction to Part Two of the *Phenomenology*.. : "Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system" (p.203). One must note that by taking a more pragmatic, material approach to phenomenological description, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is underpinned by the 'I can' of practical engagement, rather than the 'I think' of reflective contemplation.

I must make one last point concerning Merleau-Ponty's initial steps toward a methodology by defending the author against accusations of introspective psychology. Merleau-Ponty description of the body-world dialogue is clearly not a case where an objective world is presupposed, and a realm of psychic facts inexplicably correspond to physical facts (i.e. they are non-communicable). Rather, by rejecting the notion of impressions constructing our 'mental life', there is a subsequent dissolution of the internal-external dichotomy, and instead of having to infer the inexplicable link between 'inner mental life' and 'outer behaviour', situations are understood as meaningful. The act of reflective introspection is of consequence for Merleau-Ponty, but of greater importance is the ground of such introspection, that is, the manner in which mine and others style of being-in-the-world can be understood as immediately meaningful. Merleau-Ponty's return to the life world of lived experience is thus also the

opening onto the realm of *inter*subjectivity, and to return to the above quote from 'The Preface':

"The phenomenological world is...[where] my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's intersect and engage each other like gears. It is this inseparable from subjectivity and intersubjectivity, which find their unity when I either take up my past experiences in those of the present, or other people's in my own. For the first time the philosopher's thinking is sufficiently conscious not to anticipate itself and endow its own results with reified form in the world, the philosopher tries to conceive the world, others and himself and their interrelations." (p.xx)

Disengagement as 'reduction', and its relation to psychological disorder

Through Merleau-Ponty's substantial critiques of empiricism and intellectualism, he has begun to articulate a level of existence that we are only aware of as a general style. The pre-conscious, unreflected level of existential meaning is constituted by the body-world dialogue touched on in the previous section, and such meanings are marked by their generality and hence are indeterminate and ambiguous. To go back to the previous example of sensory fields in my perception of the world, my understanding of the orange being juicy is made possible because of a gearing of my body with the world in a certain situation, i.e.

eating the orange, and it is through this body-world relationship that such a meaning will disclose itself. This gearing of the body towards the world is still very much a part of pre-conscious existence, and it must be differentiated from a simple reflex reaction. A gearing or opening of the body towards the world can be equated with a process of interrogation. In the case of a simple reflex reaction, a response is given by the body to an attribute 'in the world'. However, we must remember that what the body is involved with is *a dialogue*. A response to a certain stimulus is merely a reaction from the body that is learned, and although this is also a pre-conscious response, it is also mechanistic. The interrogation of the world by the body-subject means that the body is not restricted to learned responses, rather, it is able to question the world in order to understand a situation. It will be asked how this capability of questioning is possible in the body-world dialogue, and it is now that we are introduced to the notion of bodily-intentionality. Although we will encounter intentionality in relation to a breakdown of action at the end of this chapter, I will quickly outline the basic connection of intentionality to the body-world dialogue.

The role of intentionality will be dealt with at length in Chapter Three, but I feel that it is important to introduce the specific way in which Merleau-Ponty conceives of an 'operative' bodily intentionality in order to grasp the status of a body-world dialogue. The notion of intentionality that is characterised as a directedness towards something and which involves a deliberate act of consciousness is what is being overhauled by the notion of an operative, pre-*thetic* idea of intentionality, as this former stratum of intentionality is at the level of the 'I think', and not the 'I can'. When I start to eat an orange, I do not get the feeling

that the orange is juicy because I have started to think about, indeed 'judge', whether the orange corresponds to a list of criteria. Rather, on Merleau-Ponty's terms, the orange may feel juicy and smell fresh because the body has geared itself towards the world - i.e. the body, and not reflective thought, has started to *question* the world. We may interrogate or intend the orange on a conscious level - for example I may decide to count how many segment the orange has - but this level of intentionality will always be derived from the more fundamental level of bodily-intentionality. It is for this reason that originary intentionality can be understood as that which sustains the organic interactionism at the heart of the body-world dialogue - it is our fundamental link with the world

Thus far in the analysis, Merleau-Ponty has provided us with highly useful descriptions concerning the preconscious level of existence, a level that comes before any categorial or scientific schematism. Scientific disciplines are based upon determinacy, and in philosophical terms are a reality-in-themselves. Furthermore, the indeterminate/ ambiguous level of unreflected experience envelopes scientifically constituted experience, as it both produces *and* extracts from categorial reflection. However, although Merleau-Ponty has provided an insightful account of a more original level of meaningful experience, it is one thing to account for its existence and its importance, and another to actually access this world. What is called for is a method that will allow the phenomenologist to reflect upon the body-world dialogue, without this reflection 'capturing' or 'violating' the unreflected level of existence. Even the most dogged philosophy of reflection will not be able to access the phenomenal field by meditation alone, for as Merleau-Ponty states in the chapter on 'Sense

Experience': "Between my sensation and myself there stands always the thickness of some *primal acquisition* which prevents my experience from being clear of itself." (p.216). Thus, if a Cartesian style reflection is inappropriate, and the use of induction is clearly unsuitable due to its reliance upon cause and effect, how is Merleau-Ponty to catch a non-distorted glimpse of the phenomenal field? The answer lies in disengagement, and Merleau-Ponty's conception of the phenomenological reduction:

"It is because we are through and through compounded of relationships with the world that for us the only way to become aware of the fact is to suspend the resultant activity, to refuse it our complicity...or yet again to put it 'out of play'." (p.xiii)

The emergent character of meaning via the body-world dialogue cannot *usually* be perceived, and to carry on a little further from the above quote, because the origination of meaning is usually "taken for granted" it generally "go[es] unnoticed" (p.xiii). Instead of investigating the dialogue itself, philosophy, and especially science, has been happy enough to concentrate on the result of the dialogue. However, occasionally it is the case that the dialogue between body and world becomes de-synchronised, and in these rare occasions the presence of the normally obscured dialogue is made explicit. In these cases of abnormal dialogue, or as Remy Kwant puts it 'abnormal dialectics'[60], there is a disruption to one side

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[60] Kwant, R. 1963, p. 37. Although I have few objections to Kwant's extremely lucid commentary on the *Phenomenology of Perception*, I have preferred to steer away from Hegelian terminology during this chapter. Although Merleau-Ponty is utilising a type of dialectic method in the body-world dialogue, and he employs the notion of synthesis in the text, the issue of Hegel's influence is a mute point in *Phenomenology*... Moreover, as Martin Dillon points out at great length, the type of dialectical method Merleau-Ponty is employing is critical of Hegelian and Sartrerian 'negative

of the process, and hence the fluidity and normality of ones existence is upset[61]. Within the *Phenomenology*.. Merleau-Ponty uses a great many cases of disturbed body-world dialogue in order to gain an insight into this usually obscured phenomenon. These cases usually take the form of mental illness or brain injury, or sometimes consist of psychological or physiological experiments (e.g. the inversion of vision experiment - p.244-45). Hence, although the primary concern for the phenomenologist is to describe how the body-world dialogue is operating *normally* - i.e. how body-intentionality is in-tact with the world - to begin to understand how this operation is working in specific situations, Merleau-Ponty often looks first to the *abnormal*. In these cases, the floundering attempts of the body to re-synchronise with the world elucidate how the dialogue process is initiated in the first place.

In order to articulate Merleau-Ponty's dependency upon such breakdowns, and emphasise the *Phenomenology of Perception*'s close relationship with psychiatry and psychology, disciplines which are underpinned by objective thought, I now want to describe how the author actually resorts to a plethora of case studies from psychology and psychiatry[62]. Throughout *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty uses real medical case studies, most of which are taken from

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dialectics', and is akin to a self-mediation that develops the meaning of a situation without its character. See: Dillon, M. 1988, p.208-223.

[61] Although a breakdown of the body-world dialogue could be due to a severe change on either side of the equation, Merleau-Ponty concentrates almost entirely on the disturbed body-subject. The reader is thus left to ponder exactly what would a breakdown in the 'world' would consist of . I think Merleau-Ponty would be more interested in changes akin to a paradigm shift, such as a situation where a liquid that normally freezes at zero degrees, now continues to solidify at ten degrees under 'normal' circumstances. The affinities with Heidegger in *Being and Time* are many, and although this is part of another discussion, one may look to examples such as the breakdown of processes involving equipment, e.g. hammering (Div.1:3 especially sect. 15 and 16), and even the more profound state of disclosedness encountered during the mood of 'Angst' (Div.1:6 especially sect. 40). See: Heidegger, M. 1962.

[62] These cases of various pathological traits appear in countless places throughout *Phenomenology of perception*, although they are more prevelant in Parts One and Two of the book.

experimental psychology, and applies his brand of phenomenology to the particular loss of action, or even expression, in the patient. The supposedly 'abnormal' plays a key role in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception because of its ability to illuminate what lies at the centre of that phenomenology, the role of the body-subject in dialogue with the world.

The case of the injured war victim, Schneider, serves as a concrete illustration of the way in which the usually smooth dialogue between body and world can become modified to the extent that ones practical engagement with the world is impaired. Schneider suffers from a brain lesion in the occipital region of the brain, caused by a shell fragment. However, Merleau-Ponty believes that Schneider's difficulties, as well as pathological behaviour in general, should not be *understood* in a causal manner as a determined effect of the lesion. In the causal theory of behaviour, which as we have seen Merleau-Ponty rejects, a disturbance in a certain brain sector which serves as a 'receiving station' for particular stimuli-messages ought to impair the reception of those stimuli and their respective responses. Merleau-Ponty's story of events is that these cerebral lesions do not eliminate particular contents of experience, but rather ways of organising or structuring them. In cases such as Schneider's the intentional relationship that is required of a specific situation, often referred to by Merleau-Ponty as an 'intentional arc', has the tendency to slacken and hence the body loses its spontaneous, anticipatory ability to inhabit linguistic, sexual, spatial (etc..) situations. As such, if one is to look at the problems of sexuality faced by Schneider[63], these difficulties highlight his different manner of being-in-the-world

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[63] See: Merleau-Ponty, 1962. 'The Body In Its Sexual Being', especially, p.154-158.

in comparison to those who are capable of initiating and sustaining sexual relationships. Thus, from a phenomenological perspective, these problems underline a difference in intentional relationships with a sexual world rather than a particular malfunctioning that is *caused* by a lesion in the brain. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

"What has disappeared for the patient is the power to project before him a sexual world, of putting himself into an erotic situation or, once the situation is outlined, of maintaining it or completing it up to the point of satisfaction...If the tactile stimuli themselves have lost their sexual significance, it is that they have ceased, so to speak, to speak to his body" (p. 156)

This manner of approaching cases of 'disorder' has great consequences for this chapter, and the thesis as a whole. Firstly, by criticising the approaches taken by objective schools of thought to cases of normal, but more often, pathological behaviour, this presents the reader of *Phenomenology of Perception* with a chance to understand the importance of an intentional relationship between the body and world. Thus, Merleau-Ponty has developed a type of reduction that will open up the lived world for further investigation. In this way, we now have a grasp of Merleau-Ponty's implicit methodology, and I can now go on to establish to what extent this is suitable for a phenomenology of dyslexia. Furthermore, through the above discussion of the Schneider case, I hope to have shown how Merleau-Ponty offers a quite different account of psychological disorder than that offered by clinical psychology and psychiatry. To understand just how Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is different to standard notions of psychological disorder, I will

now turn to the classification of disorder, and why dyslexia disrupts these traditional classifications.

The classification of disorder, its limits, and alternatives

We have seen in the previous section that Merleau-Ponty uses many cases of abnormal perception and behaviour. The reader can interpret these examples used in *Phenomenology*.. as an attempt to grasp the dialogue between body and world in order to understand how normal meaning making emerges. Although this is the author's primary objective, by addressing these abnormal cases with his form of existential analysis, Merleau-Ponty has provided the reader with an alternative or complementary way of understanding cases of disorder. In this section I want to discuss the concept of disorder: how this term has been traditionally used, how dyslexia does not fit comfortably with such a concept, and how Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology can offer a different perspective on disorder. Although this section may seem to move away from the general direction of the previous discussion, it is vital to tackle the notion of disorder if the final section of this chapter is to make sense. I will begin by looking at a classic case taken from psychiatric classification. Although dyslexia is clearly not a psychiatric disorder, the following analysis of a 'medical' model is a classic example of objective thought underpinning a classificatory discipline.

One author who has, over time, reconfigured his model in a number of ways to keep psychiatry a purely medical issue is Kendell. To give the reader a direct account of how the notion of disorder is formed, I now wish to look quite closely at his 'bench-mark' essay of 1975, "The Concept of Disease and its Implications for Psychiatry"[64]. This essay can be viewed as a response to the attack from areas of sociology and psychology[65] by somebody who clearly valorises the traditional medical model. Kendell begins his paper by discounting the notion derived from somatic medicine that a *direct* link exists between a brain lesion and the constitution of a psychological disorder. However, from a more critical point of view, problems creep into his account when he introduces the troublesome area of evaluation by discussing the topic of statistical norms and deviations, more specifically the idea of biological disadvantage. After introducing the idea of a person deviating- *excess or defect*- from a statistical norm, Kendell states *his* presumed standards for biological disadvantage:

"Scadding avoided elaborating on what he meant by 'biological disadvantage'. Presumably, though, it must embrace increased mortality and reduced fertility. Whether it should embrace other impairments as well is less obvious, and the consequences need considering carefully before deciding...Provided that it can be established that a biological disadvantage is involved, their status as diseases is secured. "[66]

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[64] Kendell, R. 1975.
[65] For two seminal critiques of the medical model used in psychopathology, see: Szasz, T. 1960; and, Laing, R. 1967.
[66] Kendell, R. 1975, p.310.

Kendell seems to want to simultaneously uphold two positions in the need to maintain a "sharpness of meaning", as he wishes to exclude some diseases (psoriasis) from qualifying as an illness (Indeed, Kendell often conflates the separate notions of disease and illness). This is because, although they are regarded as diseases, certain anomalous diseases cannot count as such under the conditions of biological disadvantage. Not only does this highlight the rigidity of Kendell's use of biological disadvantage, and the statistical model in general, but when turning to psychological problems, this attitude reveals some worrying traits. Thus, following from this, Kendell goes on to highlight the deviance from the norm in cases of schizophrenia and manic-depressive illnesses in the two vital areas of fertility and life expectancy. With this hypothesis deployed, Kendell is able to claim that because the criteria for biological disadvantage are met by schizophrenia and manic-depression they are: "for that reason..justifiably regarded as illnesses", and furthermore:

"The same may eventually prove to be true of some neurotic states and some types of personality disorder, but at present the evidence is not strong enough to justify firm conclusions in these areas."[67]

Therefore, Kendell has not only constructed a set of criteria for biological disadvantage that are tailored to classifying certain traits of psychological problems as an illness, but, from the evidence of the above quote, would seem to want to fit a good majority of psychological problems under the banner of illness.

What lies at the centre of this exegesis of disorder is the problematical idea that

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[67] Kendell. 1975. P. 312.

Kendell's concept of illness - including psychological disturbance - is always derived from physical criteria, the main problem here being that he cannot escape from some notion of tangibility and objectivity when confronting mental illness, whether this object be one of flesh and bones or statistical data. Because of this implicit trait, psychological disorders are underpinned by the idea of a loss of *action*. Instead of understanding psychological disorders as a qualitative *difference*, the mapping of a physical loss of action (physiology and somatic pathology) onto psychological disorders (psychopathology) renders such cases as *disfunctional* (read as *non*-function). In philosophical terms, the medical model is still underpinned by the 18th Century notion of a purely mentalistic, unified, and conscious concept of the self that we have encountered in the first section of this chapter.

Before turning to criticisms of the medical model that stem from Merleau-Ponty's existential understanding of psychological 'disorder', I must first make one point clear. In criticising the medical model, I am *not* questioning the worth of medical research and practice in the area of mental health, as this would clearly deny the great improvements made in treating mental health patients during the 20th Century[68]. Rather than criticise that invaluable contribution of medicine to psychiatric care I think it is important to open up the methodological presuppositions that are being made by the medical/scientific model. This is primarily in order to help modify or supplement traditional perspectives, most clearly in the case of turning to the patients experience of illness or disability. As we have seen in the previous section, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is less

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[68] See: Freeman, H. & Berrios, G. 1996.

interested in causes (e.g. a lack of serotonin production which causes depressive states), and more with the way in which the body-subject *relates* to the world. A person's continuing state of depression may be caused because of a low production of serotonin, but this is not the *problem* for the depressive. Rather, their *experience* of the problem is a lowered ability to relate to the world and other people in a positive and spontaneous fashion.

The consequences of this view of understanding 'mental illness' are that there is no immutable datum of nature, human or otherwise, that determines us to be such and such. There is no fixed essence of humanity which is somehow not attained in abnormal cases. Or, to put it in different terms, there is a vital difference between normality and normalcy. We all, the supposedly normal and the supposedly abnormal, live at the intersection between nature and culture, as we live them in different ways, or as Merleau-Ponty puts it: "there are several ways for the body to be a body, several ways for consciousness to be consciousness"(p.124). Since abnormal cases have a coherence and intelligibility all of their own - i.e. they can be understood- the difference between living the world normally and abnormally cannot be that between sense and non-sense or order and disorder. It is not a contrast between a fulfilment of meaning on the one hand, as opposed to the absence of intelligibility on the other. What the phenomenologist would be interested in is trying to understand how a particular person *is* relating to a world.

This is an incredibly important point to understand in relation to the final section of this chapter. For example: whether a person finds little trouble in relation to reading and writing skills, and is thus considered proficient in this area, or

whether a person finds reading and writing activities a major difficulty, and is considered dyslexic, both of these people *will have a relationship* with a linguistic world. Although both the dyslexic and non-dyslexic will have a radically different manner of being-in-the-world in linguistic situations, both will be involved in practical meaning-making situations. As Merleau-Ponty indicates in one of his later works, *The Prose of the World*:

"Whatever one thinks of the relationship of the patient to the healthy person, it indeed must be that, in its normal exercise, speech is of such a nature that our sick variations are and remain possible. It must be that it has at its centre something which makes it susceptible to these alienation's. By my language and by my body, I am accommodated to the other." [69]

Turning specifically now to how dyslexia relates to the medical model, I will make an initial point before turning to some remarks made by Snowling. When considering the problems faced by dyslexics that were discussed in Chapter One, for example poor levels of reading, spelling, writing, co-ordination and numeracy, such problems *can* be (and often are) seen as a type of disfunction, especially if the dyslexia is chronic and never attended to. In this way, chronic dyslexia does have *some* affinities with the medical model's notion of dysfunction as *non*-functioning, as the dyslexic may have a very limited relationship with written language. Although dyslexia is now generally regarded as a developmental disorder, indeed Snowling is quick to point out that as recently as 1970 there have been calls for dyslexia to be the responsibility of medicine, the most widely

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[69] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1974, p.26.

quoted definition of dyslexia is still that of the World Federation of Neurology[70]. But as we have seen in Chapter One, there are many varied symptoms that seem to characterise dyslexia, whilst different sub-types of dyslexia (phonological, surface and deep dyslexia) have been accepted by some and rejected by others as specific forms of difficulty. This prompts Snowling into stating:

"Thus, to put the medical view of dyslexia into practice is difficult. Clinicians are hard-pressed to decide whether a particular constellation of difficulties is atypical given an individual's age, intellectual ability and reading level; and certainly, reading and spelling behaviours...cannot be counted as diagnostic. Taken in isolation these are a reflection of the level of literacy a child has attained and they say nothing about the cause of the problem."[71]

Snowling is not *altogether* dismissive of the medical model, and she highlights Miles' attempt to make an objective approach within this framework in the form of the Bangor Dyslexia Test. Although the Test has had a huge impact on diagnosing dyslexia in the UK, Snowling is quick to point out alternatives to a diagnosis of dyslexia, predominantly the 'Educational Viewpoint'. Thus, what we can conclude from the above is that the idea of dyslexia is fairly provocative. We have seen that dyslexia presents the medical model with difficulties when trying to attain an objectively based diagnosis of the entity in question, although there is good evidence from cognitive psychology[72] and neurobiology[73] to suggest that a grouping of these symptoms reflect more than a low level of literacy skills.

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[70] Snowling, M. 1987, Chapter 1.
[71] Snowling, M. 1987, p.3.
[72] See: Snowling, M. 1987; and, Hulme, C & Snowling, M. 1997.
[73] See: Frith, U. 1997; and, Stein, J. & Walsh,V. 1997.

Snowling herself offers a plausible cognitive-based account of the cases of dyslexia, although as we have already seen with the methodology that underpins Kendell's medical model, the emphasis of Snowling is also on a *lack* of phonological skills which lead to dyslexic dysfunction.

During this section I have tried to articulate a number of points. Firstly I have tried to show the standard way in which 'disorder' is understood by the medical model, and what philosophical presuppositions underpin this approach. Furthermore, when looking at the phenomenon of dyslexia, we have seen that the implicit model at work in diagnosis is also the medical model. Not only do Merleau-Ponty's same criticisms apply to this approach, but there is much debate concerning whether dyslexia is capable of being diagnosed by the medical model, and even whether the symptoms associated with dyslexia are elements of a specific entity. What I have hoped to have shown is the suitability, if not urgency, for a phenomenological description of the dyslexic's experience. What I am interested in as a phenomenologist is the dyslexics style of being-in-the-world in a linguistic situation, and in the final section I want to map-out a method by which Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology *could* disclose the meaning-making process of the dyslexic in relation to written language.

Taking an 'intentional stance' to dyslexia

The previous sections of this chapter have attempted to elucidate three main points: firstly, how Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of pre-conscious experience

contains an implicit method, one which is located in the disengagement of the body-subjects' dialogue with the world (Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological reduction); secondly, that the reduction Merleau-Ponty relies upon uses cases of psychological disorder as an exemplar, and hence offers an alternative way of understanding mental disorders; and finally, that dyslexia is not altogether suited to the (philosophically suspect) diagnostic process adopted by the medical model. From these main points, I can conclude that a phenomenological investigation into the unreflected experience of dyslexics, in specific situations (reading, writing, spatial and temporal awareness etc..), is of great value to the existing literature in this field. What I must now show in this final section is how to apply Merleau-Ponty's method, a method which is attempting to disclose *normal* body-world dialogue, to a developmental disorder such as dyslexia.

The main problem for a phenomenology of dyslexia, using Merleau-Ponty's methodology, is the theme that has run throughout this chapter - abnormality. What must be understood when reading the *Phenomenology of Perception* is that, first and foremost, the phenomenology being offered is *not* a phenomenology of abnormality. Hence, as I tried to argue in the introduction to this chapter, one cannot simply take Merleau-Ponty's existential accounts of psychological disorder (predominantly the Schneider case), and 'map them' onto existing examples of dyslexic symptoms found in psychological literature. If one were to simply take specific examples of the Schneider case , and from these examples derive that *similar* problems were happening in the case of the dyslexic, an actual phenomenology of dyslexia would not be taking place. For example it would be methodologically suspect to move from the problems Schneider has with abstract

movements, such as pointing to a specified object (p. 103-7), to making the claim that Schneider's inability to experience his body as a power of action in this situation is similar to what dyslexics experience when they are consistently stuck with a piece of text - i.e. they too cannot make the transitional from concrete to abstract. There may well be *some* genuineness to this similarity, but this would not constitute a phenomenological description as demonstrated by Merleau-Ponty[74]. Moreover, when looking at the Schneider case, the activities or situations were only problematic for the patient in that he had *little relation* at all to this mode of interaction with the world, whilst in the case of dyslexia there is a definite interaction *of a kind*, although this interaction may not be entirely smooth. In the later case, the dyslexic person is engaged in a reading or writing process, although the accuracy of this process may not be of a similar standard to non-dyslexics.

What would seem central to this theme is a lack, or modification, of intentionality. One must realise that there is a double articulation of abnormality at stake in the text: Merleau-Ponty is extracting *from* the abnormal, whilst I am trying to apply his descriptions *to* abnormality. To overcome this methodological difficulty, there is an impetus to look at the way in which - during linguistic situations - the dyslexic *does* have an intentional relationship with the world. Although dyslexia is a type of abnormality, there is a specific kind of meaning-making at stake, and thus to try and articulate this manner of being-in-the-world one must take an *intentional stance to dyslexia.*

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[74] Criticisms of this particular type of manoeuvre have been aimed at myself in a commentray reponding to an article I have written on phenomenology and dyslexia (See: Widdershoven, G. 1998.). Although I do not agree with all of Widdershoven's highly pertinent comments, I owe a

To try and map-out the way in which an intentional stance can be taken to dyslexia, I will now turn to the work of Bolton and Hill in their book *Mind, Meaning and Mental Disorder*[75]. Bolton and Hill's main concerns are with philosophical psychopathology and the philosophy of mind, and their approach attempts to show that reason-based accounts of action can be subsumed within an account which takes intentionality to be a special kind of cause. Much of what the authors base their account on is derived from Dennett's theory of the intentional stance[76]. Although Bolton and Hill expand greatly on Dennett's own approach by applying it to cases of psychological disorder, the two sets of authors have a *psychological* understanding of intentionality. This initially presents a problem to this thesis, as the type of intentionality the above authors are all concerned with is characterised in terms of the 'directedness' of mental-states which are 'about-something' i.e. they are on the level of the 'I think' rather than Merleau-Ponty's 'I can'. Furthermore, Bolton and Hill are of the opinion that : "intentionality characterises not only states of mind, but, more generally, the information-carrying states in functional, biological systems"[77]. This is clearly a different paradigm to the one in which Merleau-Ponty is working, and although this is by no means a terminal problem, I will have to attend to these differences in the next chapter where the role of intentionality will be discussed in detail. However, philosophical differences apart, what I am interested in now is how Bolton and Hill adopt Dennett's intentional approach in order to understand how

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great deal to his criticisms and suggestions, and it is in response to these that I have had to scrutinise the methodology of this thesis in the form of this chapter.

[75] Bolton, D. & Hill, J. 1996

[76] See: Dennett, D. 1987; and, Dennett, D. 1981.

[77] Bolton, D. & Hill, J. 1996, p.19.

psychological disorders are still marked by intentional states - i.e. an account of their different meaning making processes.

Working with the text *Brainstorms* in mind, Dennett proposes that three stances can be used in the prediction of behaviour: the physical stance, the design stance, and the intentional stance. The manner in which Dennett describes each 'stance' is in relation to artificial intelligence, taking a chess playing computer as an example. The prediction of behaviour can be derived from the physical stance via knowledge of the physical constitution of the computer (its 'hardware') and of the physical laws governing the subjects operation (i.e. the natural sciences). Prediction can also be based on knowledge of the computer's design (its programme or software), which has no dependency upon the physical constitution of the machine. These particular 'stances' can, in principle, be used for prediction, yet remain ineffective at higher levels of artificial intelligence. Prediction of human behaviour from the physical stance would require at least knowledge of brain processes in advance of current neuroscience, whilst explanation from the design stance would have to come from significant progress in cognitive science. The final 'stance' has no reliance upon knowledge of the computer's hardware or software, and instead is involved with predicting that the computer will make the most 'rational' decision when making a move in a game of chess. This, according to Dennett, is an intentional stance, and it attributes the computer with certain sets of 'beliefs' and 'desires', in effect, certain intentional states. The moves made by the computer are regulated by these intentional states, carrying information about the progress of the game, and most importantly about goals.

The above theory may seem to open up more debate than is desirable considering the phenomenological themes in this chapter, however, intra-philosophical debates must be bracketed-off for the moment, and the structure of Dennett's account must be attended to. Dennett's imperative to take an intentional stance in order to predict high level functioning is, to a certain extent, in keeping with certain aspects of folk psychology, and what is initially interesting for this essay is the connection between the dissolving of dualism via folk psychological explanations, and the similar aims we have seen in relation to phenomenology. Of even greater interest is the basic premise that elucidation of the intentional stance reinforces one of the main points of this chapter, that explanation in terms of intentional meaning making is paramount in understanding our being-in-the-world.

The above assumptions back-up a number of issues raised previously in this chapter, predominantly, the type of investigation I am involved with is suited to taking an intentional stance. However, Bolton and Hill are quick to point out that Dennett's notion of taking an intentional stance is not in keeping with explanations of abnormal behaviour[78], indeed, this theory of intentionality would not seem to be able to address the double articulation of abnormality we have already seen in the previous section. In addressing abnormality, Dennett's intentional stance would equate abnormality with a *lack* of intentionality, similar to the Schneider case we have already encountered. Bolton and Hill also highlight that this lack of intentionality is also characterised by a lack of *action* in accordance with the specific goals involved in this situation. In cases of severe

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[78] Bolton, D. & Hill, J. 1996. Chapter 7.

psychiatric disorder, such as states of Catatonia, there may be little or no intentionality involved in the patients manner of being, and thus, instead of a style of being-in-the-world the patient would be radically disengaged with the world. Furthermore, the lack of action can be attributed to the lack of a goal or situation for the patient. However, even in less severe cases of psychological disorder, and certainly in the case of dyslexia, there *is* a style of being-in-the-world, and although this style may be different to the rest of a community in certain situations (e.g. reading) there are most definitely intentional processes at stake and hence a goal to be achieved in the situation.

Instead of leaving the intentional stance in the realm of explaining 'normal' behaviour, in Chapter 8 of *Mind, Meaning, and Mental Disorder*, Bolton and Hill suggest a heterogenous approach to varying degrees of psychological disorder. I will concentrate on the account they give of 'compensatory mechanisms' and 'coping skills'[79]. Bolton and Hill suggest that from previous experience, specific situations will be given a certain *representation*. For example, when I find myself in a field with a bull I would generally judge the situation as 'potentially dangerous', and the immediate goal would be to avoid the danger. The reason for this representation of the situation may be due to my parents telling me of the dangers of this situation, or previously witnessing the power/danger of a bull first-hand. Through the adoption of a certain representation I am thus able to act in an appropriate manner - i.e. in the case of a bull I would run. Now let us apply this idea to my experience of dyslexia.

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[79] See: Bolton, D. & Hill, J. 1996, p.284, 341 and 343-7.

Before the age of 13, the age when I suffered most from reading and writing problems, I clearly had (to use Dennett's vocabulary) a poor *representation* of linguistic situations, and hence, although there was some engagement with the situation, the lack of a clear goal meant that I was unable to act in an appropriate way in regard to printed language. In this way there is a breakdown of intentionality for myself as a dyslexic. The activity of reading has broken down for me because I have no clear understanding of what this situation represents to me, i.e. it is somewhat lacking in meaningfulness, and hence there is a dislocation of the reading process. However, and this is the critical point, this is not a process that is permanently dislocated - I am not in a continual state of stasis in relation to printed language. Hence, although the meaningfulness of the situation may become vague and the activity stops, there must be a type of coping mechanism that allows me to move out of static situation. Bolton and Hill suggest that in situations where intentionality is *consistently* dislocated, the individual learns to cope with these difficulties by resorting to compensatory strategies. These strategies allows the individual to employ different representations to a situation in an attempt to recommence an intentional relationship with the world. Because the individual has lost an intentional bond with the world, action will have also stopped, and only once a different representation of the situation is adopted will there be any chance of recommencing action. The idea of becoming aware of a breakdown of linguistic meaning and the impetus to adopt a new *attitude* towards the requirements of a situation will be discussed through different themes in the following chapters, whilst the use Merleau-Ponty makes of compensatory strategies, or as he puts it 'replacement functions'[80], and the possibility of

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[80] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1973, 'The Pathology of Language'.

dyslexics adopting compensatory strategies will be attended to in detail in Chapter Five.

A large part of the problem I have faced in this chapter is finding a way to account for intentionality in cases of psychological disorder. In the case of Merleau-Ponty, we have seen that he is able to articulate the incipience of different styles of intentional relationships via his descriptions of the body-world dialogue breaking down. What I am wanting to find is a way of using his phenomenology to look at the abnormal features of language acquisition associated with dyslexia. We have seen that dyslexia is a type of psychological disorder, although it cannot be equated with a complete loss of intentionality or action. What I have tried to show with recourse to Bolton and Hill is a type of methodology that wants to take an intentional stance to meaning making, and yet can be applied to psychological disorders. What has been ascertained via this recourse is that, what is most pressing for this phenomenological enquiry into dyslexia is a focus on how the dyslexic can partially overcome linguistic difficulties and have a *different style of intentional relationship with written language*. Instead of looking at how Merleau-Ponty describes psychological disorders in an existential manner and applying these ideas to dyslexia, I have to move away from the territory of dislocation, and describe how intentionality *is working* for dyslexics when engaged in with a linguistic situation.

Chapter Three

The idea of the lived body and its implication for dyslexia and phenomenology

The crux of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is the fundamental role of the body in perception. The emphasis that is put on body and flesh by Merleau-Ponty is both pragmatic and historical; the valorisation of the body is as much a reaction to the Cartesian starting point taken by Husserl in his brand of phenomenology, as it is an anchor for his situation-based philosophy, a philosophy of practical immersion in the world. Again we see that the level of human experience that is of consequence for Merleau-Ponty is the 'I can' and not purely the 'I think'. In this chapter I want to make explicit some of the themes that were only touched on in the previous chapter when mapping out both Merleau-Ponty's and my own methodology.

In the previous chapter I have tried to map out the manner in which an implicit, yet highly revealing methodology is at work in *Phenomenology of Perception*. We have taken note that Merleau-Ponty is interested in the pre-reflective level of experience that he situates in the (mostly) seamless dialogue between body and world. The manner in which the phenomenologist is able to catch a brief glimpse of this dialogue is via its very breakdown, and thus explicit cases of such a breakdown (i.e. psycho/pathological conditions) are used by Merleau-Ponty in order to shed light on the various manners in which we are inexorably linked with the world. This has provided my phenomenological investigation into dyslexia

with something of a problem: how does one apply a phenomenological method that rests upon empirical cases of psychological or physiological breakdown to a type of linguistic disability that is also characteristic of a type of breakdown or dislocation?[81] The way into answering this is to fall back on one of Phenomenology's main tenets: the meaningfulness of experience. This is clearly not to say that all experience *is* meaningful, indeed the look of a word or sentence on a page may be completely baffling for a dyslexic person even if they have come across it time and time before. What is at stake for this investigation is not only what modes of experience are primarily *dys*located for a dyslexic person, but how they are able to go onto make meaning out of a linguistic situation that is of a more inter-subjective nature, indeed how the dyslexic is able to *re*locate themselves. This chapter will start to reveal just how Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology may be applied to cases of dyslexia via a concrete exposition of the body as our opening onto the world.

In the previous chapter on methodology, I have introduced the notion of a dialogue existing between the body and the world. In an attempt to try and rid his philosophy of lingering dualisms, Merleau-Ponty has closed the gap between the two sides of this relationship: to think of the body one has to think of it belonging

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[81] This also raises questions over the validity and possibility of applying Merleau-Ponty's type of phenomenology to empirical cases. If one were to follow Husserl's method of 'bracketing-off' the intentional object under scrutiny, the empirical existence of the object would be regarded as superfluous to the investigation. However, Merleau-Ponty's method makes use of no such specific reduction, only an all encompassing reduction which is primarily based upon examples of body-world breakdown provided by the empirical sciences. This places Merelau-Ponty's philosophy in an ambiguous relationship with the empirical sciences. On one hand *Phenomenology of Perception* and especially his latter work, *Eye and Mind* (Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (b)) and *The Visible and The Invisible* (Merleau-Ponty, M. 1968), are very much pioneering a philosophy that is trying to break away from objective based disciplines such as mechanistic physiology and behaviourism. His criticism can at times be extremely harsh, and yet Merleau-Ponty does little, if anything, in the way of legitimising his own use of empirical examples. To go much further into this discussion would mean bringing up topics concerning the aim of phenomenology as a discipline, its history.

to a world, and to think of a world, one has to think of it via a certain perspective – the body. In the language of *The Visible and the Invisible*, this relationship is 'chiasmatic' or 'reversible'. Similarly, one cannot conceive of the body as existing alongside the constitutive mind or cogito. As the notion of a dialogue has shown, there is always a stratum of experience that one is not aware of when involved in a practical situation, a stratum that envelopes any type of intended act which is supportive of experience in general. Hence, there is not only a dynamic and complementary structure that includes the conscious and the pre-conscious, but the status of the body is raised to that of originary. Although the principal aim of this thesis is to describe the problems faced by the dyslexic in terms of sense perception, what must be remembered is that a theory of sense perception presupposes a theory of sensuousness, which is itself an implicit theory of the body. Indeed, for Merleau-Ponty this is exactly the case, for a theory of the body must be exhibited *before* a fully articulated theory of sense perception can be developed. This point will become clearer when describing how an object maintains its unity in light of different perspectives. Thus, what has to be articulated in much greater detail in this chapter is the operation of the pre-conscious stratum of the body which is home to the synergistic and implicatory power of our senses, and which will go under the name of the 'body schema'.

As will be explained in the first section of the chapter, one must be quick to point out the important difference between the notions of 'body schema' and 'body image', a discussion that will also shed light on the manner in which Merleau-Ponty conceives of intentionality working in his phenomenology. This discussion

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and its constraints, none of which can be dealt with at length here. For a wider discussion of thes issues I advise the reader to look at: Kockelmans, J, 1985.

will revolve around the inevitable anonymity of the body's role in perception, and will be supplemented by some concrete examples of just how the body schema is at work in our everyday experience. To supplement this discussion, I will then describe the manner in which the body comports itself towards learning and maintaining new skills (habits), and this theme will be discussed at length in relation to dyslexia. Once we have a greater purchase on the pre-conscious body schema, the manner in which the body has a chiasmatic relationship with the world will hopefully become apparent. Through this dynamic interaction we will start to see how a certain unity of the world can be maintained despite an environment of difference. Furthermore, it will become apparent how such a unity is dependent upon a general synthesis grounded in the body, and not an intentional synthesis at a conscious level. This last topic will have significant bearing on dyslexia, whilst it will signpost the development of phenomenological themes in my later chapters concerning spatiality, language and temporality.

The anonymous existence of the body schema

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of embodiment is undoubtedly a complex issue, one which is not helped by the somewhat critical and convoluted style of *Phenomenology of Perception*. However, one of the easiest ways into his treatment of the body is through the much-misunderstood notion of the body *image*. Immediately I may have placed the reader in an awkward position, for although Colin Smith's English translation of *Phenomenology of Perception* uses

the term body image, I wish to point out that this is a highly misleading and value-laden term when used in the light of Merleau-Ponty's overall strategy. What Merleau-Ponty is most interested in when describing the body's anchoring role in perception is the pre-conscious, habitual level of the body that is in anonymous dialogue with the world. What must be understood is that, taking its traditional connotations into account, this is *not* the level of the body image. Indeed, a number of articles by Shaun Gallagher[82] have teased out the subtle and not so subtle differences between the two terms: body schema and body image.

In Merleau-Ponty's original *Phénoménologie de la perception*, the author starts 'Part 1, Section 3' with a reference to Henry Head's notion of a postural model (p.98; French, p. 114[83]), an idea which is clearly in the realm of the pre-conscious: something which is an anterior prerequisite for perception. The phrase Merleau-Ponty attributes to this is "*schema corporel*", however, in the English translation we find the phrase "body image". In defence of the English translator, Merleau-Ponty does little to point out the specific differences between the terms body image and body schema. Even though I will deal with these notions in quite different ways, it is Merleau-Ponty's view that there is a continuous development between them and thus should be taken as elements of the same system. Although this may seem like splitting terminological hairs, once the philosophical implications of each term are made explicit, one will hopefully understand why 'image' and 'schema' have to be approached quite differently.

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[82] See: Gallagher, S. 1996; and, Gallagher, S. & Cole, J. 1998.
[83] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1945.

In Shaun Gallagher's excellent exposition of the fundamental difference between body image and schema[84], the author introduces a term that I now wish to incorporate into my own vocabulary during the thesis, the term being 'prenoetic'. In previous chapters I have generally used the term 'pre-conscious', and yet this is precisely too general. The term prenoetic is clearly a modification of Husserlian terminology: the *noetic act* performed by the transcendental ego. Although Merleau-Ponty himself is not prone to employing the term prenoetic, it does indicate to the reader the type of territory Merleau-Ponty wishes to investigate, that is: what is happening prior to any goal orientated or 'intended' act in order for it to proceed in the first place? The answer is of course the anonymous anchoring role of the body, yet how are we to conceive of this body? In his paper Gallagher is quick to point out the ease in which body image and schema have been used interchangeably or conflated by psychologists during the 20th century. Gallagher locates three key differences between these notions:

Intentionality: The body image has an intentional status, this being either a conscious representation of the body, or a set of beliefs about the body. Therefore, we only come into contact with the body image when the body is thematised; e.g. the ageing bachelor perceives himself as being 'unattractive' to the opposite sex because he has thematised his baldness. The body schema on the other hand, has a type of 'pre-intentional' operation that envelops intentional and conscious awareness and plays an active, ever persisting role in monitoring and organising posture and movement; e.g. one is able to walk quite easily even whilst holding a demanding conversation.

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[84] Gallagher, S. 1996.

Mineness: The body image is experienced as an owned body, something that specifically belongs to a certain person. Conversely, the body schema operates at a subpersonal, anonymous level, and I have no direct awareness of some of the changes in posture my body schema is making; e.g. I may consciously decide to turn (my body) left on the pavement, the role of the body image, yet I make no decision in attuning certain groups of muscles to such an activity whilst I continue walking.

Parts and Wholes: Because the human cannot have a complete pictorial grasp of itself at any one time, the body image involves a specific, and hence only partial representation; e.g. the image of ourselves is usually that of our front, as this is the reflective surface which we have the most contact with. In contrast, the body schema functions holistically, involving a global adjustment of body parts, and therefore the individual sensory organs of the body act synergistically to form a system; e.g. although I am having a drink, I have to remain partially upright so as not to choke, which in turn involves my back muscles constricting, which decreases the tension in by quadriceps etc..etc..

Many of the differences that separate the body schema from the body image on a conceptual level will be discussed in greater detail below. However, so as not to fall back into a type of dualism, it must be emphasised that when expressed at a lived or existential level the body schema and image are very much two elements of a dynamic system – this system being the lived-body. In the case of eyestrain for example, the body begins to make 'automatic' postural and motor adjustments

prior to me becoming aware of an impending headache. Absorbed in the act of editing my latest work I am not explicitly conscious of my body's minute adjustments, which may include squinting or moving closer to the VDU screen. My body performs these functions, coping with the demands made on it in this particular situation, without my reflective, intentional awareness. Such prenoetic adjustments will determine intentional content, and hence the body image, in important ways. In the case of eyestrain, body-schema adjustments may motivate me to deliberately (intentionally) fix on the room's environment or the screen itself as slowing the editing process down: the lighting is too dim; the colour of the screen is too garish; or the length of the document is too long to edit in one session. Postural adjustments may allow me to continue working by keeping my attention away from my thematised body, and hence keep the thematisation of my body image - the eyestrain - to a minimum. In the end, however, the inadequacy of such adjustments may force me to become painfully aware of my bodily discomfort and realise that I have developed a nauseating headache.

Although we can now understand the body image and body schema as complementary elements in a dynamic system, the privileged element in Merleau-Ponty's theory of embodiment is clearly the body schema, i.e. the self-effacing stratum of the body. In language reminiscent of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty describes this anonymous, anchoring role of the body as one part of the "double horizon of external and bodily space" (p.101). However, this does little service to the original description of the body *Phenomenology of Perception* is offering. Take for example the visual aspect of inspecting my swollen knee[85]. When under

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[85] I say 'the visual aspect' because, as I will point out in greater detail below, the perceptual act is never *simply* one of vision, or touch or taste etc.. as the body's sensory capacity is a system of

scrutiny, my knee is the part of my body that is thematised, and hence my knee is a figure that stands out against a double horizon. However, there is clearly a distinct phenomenological difference between the two elements of this horizonal structure, for although the perpetual field that my knee stands out from is in the background, one is still more or less aware of the receding strata. If one now attends to the bodily horizon, I find that my sensory organs are quite unapparent in the perceptual act, indeed my eyes only become 'visible' when they are reflected upon, and hence thematised as part of the body image. Again we come across the self-effacing phenomenon of the body, and by way of drawing attention to this feature I will draw upon Drew Leder's use of the Husserlian expression: *nullpoint*[86]. The idea of the body being a nullpoint can be taken two ways: if the body is viewed as the centre of a Cartesian style geometric system (i.e. as body image) it must be considered to be point zero; furthermore, precisely as the centre point from which the perceptual field radiates, the perceptual organs remain an absence or nullity in the midst of the perceived. With this in mind, we now can fully understand Merleau-Ponty's assertion that although two hands touching each other can intertwine, they can never fully coincide. Although both my hands have the potential to question an object as to its tactility, when one hand touches another, one hand will have to be thematised as an object, and hence lose its status as an anonymous, questioning agent. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

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implications or equivilances – e.g. the juicy 'taste' of the orange also implicates the tactile feeling of ripeness in an orange.

[86] See: Leder, D. 1990, p.13-15. Leder's use of the Husserlian idea of *nullpoint* (*Nullpunkt*) is relatively similar to Husserl's own use in the second book of *Ideas* – i.e. the body is an ever-present 'here' to the surrounding 'theres' all around - although Husserl is criticised for his failure to completely breakaway from treating the body as an object that exists only in an intentional capacity. See: Husserl, E. 1989.

"When I press my two hands together, it is not a matter of two sensations felt together as one perceives two objects placed side by side, but of an ambiguous set-up in which both hands can alternate the rôles of 'touching' and being 'touched'...The body catches itself from the outside engaged in a cognitive process; it tries to touch itself while being touched, and initiates 'a kind of reflection' [Husserl – Cartesian Meditations] which is sufficient to distinguish it from objects, of which I can indeed say that they 'touch' my body, but only when it is inert, and therefore without ever catching it unawares in its exploratory function" (p.93)

We can thus formulate a general principle: in as far as I perceive through an organ, it necessarily recedes from the perceptual field it discloses. I do not feel the nerve endings in my hand, nor hear my ear, but perceive with and through such organs. From this key principle, one can deduce another important characteristic of embodiment, one that is concerned with the tacit constitution of the sensory organs, and discloses the interrelationship between perception and motility.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Merleau-Ponty is keen on pioneering a phenomenology that is free from the metaphysical misapprehensions found within the schools he refers to as 'empiricism' and 'intellectualism', although, at the same time he is clearly enamoured with some of their basic features. The type of tacit knowledge offered by the senses is a prime example of Merleau-Ponty's empiricist persuasions. Take for example our orange again: when I go to bite into one of the segments from my orange, my body is geared towards the act of manipulating the segment in the course of eating. During this act I experience the multiple

sensations of texture, taste, aroma etc.. These sensations may be, perhaps naively, attributed to the orange segment itself, yet they are only made possible by my sensory organs. There are two important points here.

Firstly, Merleau-Ponty's notion of perception is inextricably tied to the body's interaction with the world and hence movement. The classical distinction between perception and movement, as with the distinction between intelligence and ability, is highly artificial, separating in reflection what is united in lived experience. Hence, although perception cannot be understood as a singular act, it does involve a type of motor activity or 'motility'. For example, I have to move eye muscles in order to focus or change my perspective. Although I may be performing a goal-directed activity – I decide to focus more closely on the multiple colours of a painting – the perceptual act will contain varying muscular movements, which I will have little or no awareness of at all. Moreover, the objects, which come to be thematised within my perceptual field, are permeated with a type of implicit motility. When I talk of an object being 'there', perhaps near or far from my body, this is only possible because my body affords[87] me the possibility of moving through space (a point which is related directly to dyslexia and is dealt with in detail during the next chapter). This is also the case on a more qualitative level. Although the sight of food can often be experienced as pleasurable and enticing, if I have already eaten too much, the plate of food may no longer be alluring, indeed it may seem repulsive.

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[87] The notion that characteristics of the world afford or permit the body a certain activity is introduced by J.J. Gibson. See: Gibson, J. 1986.

Because perception is fused with motility, the sensory world always invites our body to make an active response – to make the perceptual act meaningful. It is this 'shared logic' within the lived-body and the world that generates an attitude or meaningfulness towards a specific situation. Moreover, these meanings are both enabling and constraining in that the lived-body is able to react to an attitude in light of its current project. For example: the glass is too far to reach (a constraining element); I will have to get out of my chair (the enabling element). Although Merleau-Ponty is keen to articulate a *shared* logic, what is most striking about this relationship considering he is pioneering a type of phenomenology, is that he is keen to emphasise the importance of the phenomenological object, and thus my actions are motivated in response to an outer-directed concern. For example, when I go to take a mouthful of food from a plate I have to be consciously aware of the food as a thematised object, yet the fork as an extension of my body needs little if any of my attention[88]. When studying this active element of perception it is plain to see that one is no more aware of the activity at hand than before. Although one could thematise the manner in which I walk, and hence pay attention to my body image, only a small aspect of this self-presencing can be glimpsed. Moreover, when I thematise, and hence reflect on an activity that is usually part of my body's tacit engagement with the world, it is often very hard for this activity to carry on in a smooth and successful manner – the stumbling block in manual activities such as trying to take a 'perfect' free kick in football is reflecting too much on the act itself. The existence I lead through my body is one of an engagement with practical situations, and we now have a far better understanding of why:

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[88] There is of course a major resonance here of Heidegger's compound expression 'ready-to-hand' (*zuhanden*) and his famous example of hammering in *Being and Time* (Div.1, Ch.2 and 3). Heidegger, as with Merleau-Ponty, conceives of our (Dasein's) being-in-the-world as a type of

"Consciousness is in the first place not a matter of 'I think that' but of 'I can' " (p.137)

This brings us on to a related second point regarding perception and the senses. Following Merleau-Ponty's disclosure of the body-schema's absent peculiarity, it is the case that I only come to know what my senses are capable of when I actually put them to use, that is, through experience. It is this strange lack of transparency and self-evidence that is idiosyncratic of our body, which means that I can only begin to realise the power of my sensory organs by attending to something that is other from them, e.g. the ingestion of my orange segment. What we find through our investigation of the world and its objects is indeed ourselves. Although our body "is our general medium for having a world" (p.146) we are still very much *of* the world. This leads to a very interesting conclusion concerning our sensory organs. Although over time our senses *seem* to us to have a type of innate quality, this fixed view of sensorial capability is only arrived at because the type of interaction one has with the world is marked by a certain typicality; e.g. as long as I am on similar terrain, my next step should be as secure as the last. However, this does mean that to conceive of the sensory organs as having a fixed capability is merely a presumptive conclusion, and if we are to draw out Merleau-Ponty's argument to its logical extent, one would have to treat the senses, and indeed the lived-body in general, as a mutable structure:

"Although our body does not impose definite instincts upon us from birth..it does at least give to our life the form of generality, and develops our personal acts into

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pragmatic concernfulness, which he later makes visible as care in Chapter 6. (Heidegger, M. 1962.)

stable dispositional tendencies. In this sense our nature is not long-established custom, since custom presupposes the form of passivity derived from nature." (p.146)

Although there is a distinctive style in which the lived-body conducts itself, because we are open to ever-new situations there is always scope in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy for a transgression of cultural and material boundaries. This point is investigated further in the following section, where I attend to the body's acquisition of skills and habits. Along with the above descriptions concerning the self-effacing constitution of the lived-body, further qualifications regarding the practical nature of the lived-body will shape the way in which we understand Merleau-Ponty's relationship with intentionality.

The acquisition of skills and its relevance to dyslexia

From the previous section we have learned that the body can be conceived of as an intentional object, the body image, whilst the stratum of the body that underpins our meaningfulness in relation to the world is the body schema. Perception, a capability which is indebted to motility, is substantiated by the tacit role played by the body schema, in particularly the sensory organs, and therefore the ground of such a perceptual act is marked by a certain absence or disappearance[89]. The final

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[89] One of the most interesting features of Drew Leder's book *The Absent Body* (see above reference) is the task the author undertakes in trying to articulate a phenomenology of the inner, visceral activity of the body (Chapter 2). As with the surface disappearance of the 'ecstatic' body,

point I made in the last section underscores Merleau-Ponty's belief that the lived body, in particularly the sensory organs, is a dynamic entity, one that is quite capable of transformations via its relationship with the world. Furthermore, in view of the body's capability of acquiring new skills and embodying them as habits, the idea of bodily flux and transformation becomes quite concrete; if it were not for the body's malleable vitality we would never be able to 'learn' skills such as climbing stairs, or incorporate supplementary organs into our body schema, such as a pen used to inscribe the world. A phenomenological anatomy cannot then be thought of as fixed over time, or even confined by the physical boundaries of the flesh. It must take account of the body as living process.

Let us first see how the body (schema) is a malleable structure. The example Merleau-Ponty uses to illustrate the new application of a habit concerns the playing of a musical instrument. He cites the study of an organist (p.145) who needs only an hours practice to be able to perform successfully his musical arrangement on an unfamiliar organ. In response to the empiricists' claim that the organist has learned a new set of conditional responses to this unfamiliar instrument, there is not nearly enough time for this to be the case, whilst in response to the intellectualist assertion that the organist has draw up a new 'mental map' Merleau-Ponty claims:

Leder highlights that although the 'recessive' body is characterised by a type of depth disappearance, this still offers the phenomenologist the possibility of extracting a certain meaningfulness from these activities which is non-biological. The authors descriptions are often quite revelatory, whilst one highly pertinent point is that through a phenomenology of the recessive body the reader comes to see how the strict dichotomy of an internal and external body starts dissolve due to the chiasmatic relationship between viscerility and visibility - "an identity-in-difference".

"He [the organist] sits on the seat, works on the pedals, pulls out the stops, gets the measure of the instrument with his body, incorporates within himself the relevant directions and dimensions, settles into the organ as one settles into a house, he does not learn objective spatial positions for stop and pedal, nor does he commit them to memory." (p.145)

We can thus understand why it is the body that is able to modify habitual skills and not some representational capacity of intentionality, whilst such skills are again characterised by their withdrawal. However, the question must be asked: how do we come to acquire such skills to begin with, and does this not require an activity which is of the intentional order? This last question is challenging for Merleau-Ponty. Is it not the case that when I am trying to acquire a new skill such as learning how to perform a high jump, I mentally – hence intentionally - break down the activity into its sequential elements, and then try and apply this representational formula to my already acquired skills such as running and jumping? Merleau-Ponty's reply would be, to an extent 'yes', but on a fundamental level 'no'.

As Merleau-Ponty's example of learning a new type of dance shows (p.142-3), there is undoubtedly an intended thinking through of the dance steps, which will require a certain amount of imagery with respect to our own body i.e. the body image. Yet no matter how carefully this new body image is structured, by virtue of the fact that we are trying to learn a new motor act, it has to be the *body schema itself* that grasps the relationship between already acquired habits and attempted new movements. For such a project to be concretely initiated: "it must first have

had, as it were, the stamp of movement set upon it. As has often been said, it is the body which 'catches' and 'comprehends' movement." (p.142). Once I have engaged my body schema with the thematised movement of the body image, a circuit between reflection and motility guides the body through the various stages of skill acquisition from novice to expert. It is only when I no longer have to reflect on the activity that skill acquisition recedes into habit. Skills are not learned through a Cartesian 'natural light of reason'; rather, habits and skills are learned through a natural tendency to practice.

Whilst habits become sedimented into my tacit body schema, as a result of an ongoing environmental pattern some habits may have the tendency to become automatic, for example the manner in which I greet somebody. In more extreme examples, such as the drilled soldier, the time-tabled prisoner, or even somebody suffering from eating disorders, automatic habits may become more than just a mere idiosyncrasy, and turn into a character trait[90]. It is here that the 'I can' is crystallised into an 'I do', and the body is imbued with a certain *style*. Furthermore, the notion that the body-schema becomes encrusted with a style can be extended to the cultural world, in that my particular style is transferred onto the milieu around me – my clothes, furniture, books etc.. There is hence a certain paradox of identity between my body schema and my milieu, for although the style of my body schema permeates my cultural flesh, it is these cultural belongings that

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[90] Although Merleau-Ponty's project is quite different from that of Foucault's (indeed Foucault may be seen to conduct the flip-side or outside of Merleau-Ponty's project) there are themes such as the above that intersect between both authors. Common themes but with a different emphasis oscillate in and out of Foucault's texts, especially *Discipline and Punish*, where the shaping of the body is dealt with at length, whilst the idea of reversibility is framed in terms of the 'panoptic' power structure of the prison (See Part 3 of: Foucault, M. 1977). An excellent essay on the drilling/shaping of the male body is provided by Klaus Theweleit (Theweleit, K. 1998.), whilst essays on eating disorders, and dieting in relation to the female body bring out the dangers of

disclose who I am, to myself, but especially for others. We will see how much the motif of *alterity* is central to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ontology when I attend to the mutualy inclusive themes of language and inter-subjectivity.

Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of skill acquisition and habit formation attempt to transcend previous empiricist and intellectualist explanations by emphasising the importance of the implicit body schema in these activities. The two central ideas Merleau-Ponty is keen on refuting are the empiricist assertion of a conditioned response to sense-data via induction, and the intellectualist assertion of the primacy of 'mental maps/representations'. Of these two approaches, Merleau-Ponty is perhaps more interested in the intellectualist account, for although he would vehemently deny the *primacy* of a representationalist model, he does concede that there is a need to reflect upon the body image during the acquisition of new skills. This goes the same for the modification of skills, even when such skills are well established and enveloped into our body schema. However, the thrust of Merleau-Ponty's argument is that, in order for any type of learning process to take place, a *founding* movement of the body is required, and as such, should be regarded as primary. Now, considering that the majority of recent research into developmental dyslexia has come from the cognitivist school of psychology, and therefore regards a representationalist model as primary for the acquisition of reading, writing and spelling skills, Merleau-Ponty's descriptions may offer us some interesting alternatives. Although these initial conclusions will be on a very general level (it would after all be hard to articulate at a specific level when regarding the body schema), these assumptions will become fleshed out in

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training the body to slim, exercise or starve itself. See (respectively): Cash, T. and Brown, T. 1987; and, Bordo, S. 1998.

the next 'case study' chapter on spatiality, and especially when we consider the body's relationship with expression.

Firstly, I will recap the main points of discussion concerning cognitive research into developmental dyslexia. In Snowling's highly influential account (see Chapter One), the author highlights what she regards as the main phonological deficits found in developmental dyslexics - verbal coding deficits and delays (verbal memory and phoneme segmentation) that are fundamental to dyslexia. Snowling examines how groups of 'dyslexic' children have specific problems with verbal memory, verbal labelling and other aspects of auditory processing, problems which are a result of "not having the phonological skills required to learn to read at the *critical* time"[91]. Snowling's asserts that, because of a lack of phonological skills that are usually acquired during the pre-schooling stage, this brings about failure to progress to the alphabetic phase of literacy development; i.e. they are unable to tackle unfamiliar words in their reading and their spelling is dysphonetic.

If the psychological terminology is stripped away from the above assertions and they are related to the type of descriptive language we have been dealing with previously in this chapter, I think the above argument can be split into two main points. Snowling is keen to characterise dyslexia as a fundamental group of deficits. These deficits are responsible for difficulties that occur in the decoding skills needed to convert orthographic codes (representations) into verbal meanings, but these phonological meanings are still conceived of as *determinate representations*. As such, these skills are marked specifically by a need to reflect –

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[91] Snowling, M. 1987, p.148.

to represent to my consciousness a type of image or code that allows a specific project to gain momentum; e.g. typing out this sentence. Specific areas of cognition needed for reading/writing/spelling would fit into Merleau-Ponty's system at the level of body-image, and as long as such areas of specific representation are not treated as primary, and rather thought of as continuously developing with the body schema, such an account is in keeping with our investigation of skill acquisition (or non acquisition in the case of the dyslexic). However, on further inspection, this may not actually be the case, for Snowling seems to want to treat everything at the level at the level of representation. Either Snowling wants to treat representation and reflection as primary, and thus considers the role of the body schema to be of little consequence (which may indeed be the case), or she has quite simply neglected the vital and initiating role the body proper plays in skill acquisition. Although I can only make some initial and general points at this stage, Merleau-Ponty's description of the lived-body's capacity to acquire skills highlights a number of the constraints and difficulties of the cognitive approach, and I can now make two initial conclusions.

Firstly, and on a more general level, it would seem that the cognitive approach is constrained by its need to keep its explanations at the level of representation. It seems as though Snowling is aware that there *may* be something more originary than a simple lack of phonological skills, and that this may have something to do with an active and founding role played by the body, but this would be to go outside the remit of cognitive psychology. Indeed, this point is emphasised in some recent brain scanning research carried out by Snowling and colleagues[92]. In

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[92] Abdulla, S. 1998.

this research Snowling argues that, via the use of PET scanning, she found that dyslexic people showed significantly less activity in the left hemisphere than in control subjects. The least active region in dyslexics was the 'insular', an area that "could be the site of the phonological representations that experts have long recognised as critical to reading development."[93] This strikes me as a little odd. If we are to treat Merleau-Ponty's notion of the lived body as an all inclusive system, i.e. the body schema also includes the activity of the brain (as Leder is keen to point out[94]), then Snowling's research would seem to be a move away from the exclusive sphere of cognition, and may be able to compensate for the lack of a founding role of the body. However, the insular region of the brain is described as the site of "phonological representations". Clearly this is a speculative claim on behalf of Snowling, but it is clear that even when dealing with the material aspect of the body (and the brain surely must be part of our body *proper*), the need to make assumptions at a representational level is paramount. Whether such 'representations' spinning around in the insular are metaphorical or not, this exemplifies the rigidity of the cognitivist model, and hence through my interpretation of Merleau-Ponty I am calling for an inter-disciplinary and more holistic approach to be taken towards dyslexia.

My second conclusion is more assertive than critical, although it must remain quite general for the time being. The explanations offered by the cognitive model are highly informative in their own way, but they lack a material and bodily grounding. Using Merleau-Ponty's descriptions, I can make the general assumption that the dyslexic person may have problems acquiring phonological

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[93] Abdulla, S. 1998, p.1189.
[94] See: Leder, D. 1990. Chapter 4.

skills due to an 'unsteady' body schema in the context of communication. If we turn back to the differences between the body image and body schema, one of the main characteristics of the body schema was its cohesiveness – a synergistic system that is to be conceived of as a whole, rather than the singular perspective of the body image. It may well be that in the case of the dyslexic, their body schema may not be as cohesive as that of the non-dyslexic, and hence the fluidity and sureness of such an activity may well be impaired.

This assertion would of course have to be contextual, for although the body schema is a type of general background for the lived-body, there are clearly specific features (muscles/neurones/metabolism etc..) that come to the fore during a certain situation. When trying to acquire new skills there is a general 'type' of schema that is steadily developed which is suitable for such a situation, and the more the schema is developed the less one has to reflect on the specific activity at hand (i.e. it becomes habit). However, in the case of reading, writing and spelling this would not seem to be the case for the dyslexic. If we are to take the cognitive account into consideration, the reason why the dyslexic cannot access the alphabetic phase of single letter and whole word manipulation is because there has been a problem in acquiring phonological skills. In terms more close to Merleau-Ponty, the problem of not being able to acquire phonological skills is a problem to do with the body schema and its founding role in skill acquisition. It will therefore be asked: why does the dyslexic have specific problems forming an appropriate body schema with regard to phonological skills? This question is really meant for physiologist and possibly child psychologists, but we have already been given clues concerning speech-sound perception and production. Whether

Merleau-Ponty can shed any more light on this specific subject remains to be seen, as we will return to this topic in Chapter Five. However, what I can speculate on further is how a dyslexics 'unsteady' body schema can be characterised.

The problem would seem to be the inability, or impaired ability, for dyslexics to sediment or habituate a type of schema that is suitable for phonological skills. This assertion opens up two main possibilities. The first is that the body schema 'in general', that is our background of bodily habits and postures – the body proper, is simply not suitable for the acquisition of phonological skills. The reasons for this are varied. From a physiological perspective, it may well be that my sensory organs, specifically the ears and eyes, are unsuitable for the processing of signifiers and their meanings. However, much research on this has primarily been conducted in relation to acquired dyslexia, and its application to developmental dyslexia has been unfounded. More likely, is that there is a neuro-physiological difference in the dyslexic brain, as we have already seen with both Snowling's research. However, in contrast to Snowling's view that such an area of the brain is the site of 'phonological representations', I would assert that it may be this part of the brain that *allows us* to develop a configuration of the body schema that is adept at acquiring phonological skills, *not* where such skills are stored and retrieved from. Whether such an area of the brain is responsible for the initiation of an appropriate body schema may or may not be the case, but what I hope to have illustrated here is that without addressing such issues the cognitive model 'jumps the gun' somewhat by ignoring the bodily schematic basis upon which representations rest.

The second way in which fragmented sedimentation could be understood is via a close study of acquisition itself. In Merleau-Ponty's example of learning a new dance step we have seen that such a manoeuvre entails a hermeneutic movement between the body image and the body schema, i.e. between reflection and concrete movement. If we look at this on the level of phonemes and their attached speech sounds, there would seem to be a problem for the dyslexic to bodily comprehend the movement between reflection and concrete movement, and hence an appropriate body schema is never properly developed. What would seem to be at stake is a problem of *sedimentation*, for the conversion of a phoneme into its speech sound (or vice-versa) is never made fully concrete for the dyslexic. The problem faced by the dyslexic is that the hermeneutic movement between reflection and concrete activity, a movement that would normally bring with it a greater understanding of a situation, is fragmented, and hence only an unsteady or superficial body schema will form. Whereas the connection between a phoneme and its speech sound will become a habit and hence anonymous for a non-dyslexic, the terrible problem faced by a dyslexic person is the continual *presence* of uncertainty regarding phonetic skills. The need to continuously and deliberately initiate the basic hermeneutic movement that sediments a phoneme and it sound means that the dyslexic is continually having to reflect back and check on what should be automatic. If one thinks of an acquired skill such as driving a car, deliberate reflection on changing gear may actually impair the activity, i.e. the 'natural' flow and rhythm of the activity is altered. Now think of this in relation to the dyslexic maintaining a superficial rhythm in relation to reading, only to be continually disrupted by the need to re-initiate the bond between phoneme and

speech sound, and it will hopefully be understood that such a problem is not only debilitating but one that is incredibly frustrating.

A final consideration regarding skill and habit. In the previous phenomenological descriptions there are three phases involving skills: acquisition (founded by the body schema), habituation (the 'I can'), and crystallisation (the 'I do'). If one looks at these stages in relation to dyslexia, both the 'I can' and 'I do' stage are affected by a poor (or non) acquisition of phonological skills, whilst the way in which the two stages are affected brings out some interesting points. Taken in the context of communication, the 'I can' stage for the dyslexic should be viewed as the 'I cannot' or 'I can *only just*'. These labels are clearly negative in what they connote, and as such mark the breakdown of meaning or dis-ability of the dyslexic. As discussed in the last chapter, we can only gain so much from these disabling features of dyslexia, and a phenomenology proper must address how the dyslexic is able to cope with such situations and make communication a meaningful phenomenon. However, now let us look more closely at the 'I do'. Even in the case of dyslexia, the 'I do' in relation to communication does not simply revert to an 'I do not', for the dyslexic does very much have a relationship with language. What we find in the case of a dyslexic is an 'I do - but in a different style'. The dyslexic clearly has certain coping mechanisms that try and make up for the unsteady body schema that has developed in relation to phonetic skills, and therefore dyslexics do have the capacity to make linguistic situations meaningful. My above conclusions concerning an unsteady body schema is more in line with the 'I can only just', and are therefore only a partial phenomenology. However, what I hope to show is that when the notion of an unsteady body image is fleshed

out with reference to spatiality, language and temporality, not only will we be able to get a better purchase on how dyslexia can be characterised in a non-cognitive (or pre-cognitive) manner, but we will also start to understand how such dis-abilities can be overcome and recognised as meaning-making situations. In this way, we will move from the partial phenomenology we have been dealing with above and try to articulate a phenomenology proper. The first example of this is in the next chapter, and will describe the move from spatial dys-location to spatial re-location.

Implications for phenomenology and the disruption of language

The above phenomenological descriptions concerning skill acquisition, habit and the pliable vitality of the body are on one level informative, and yet on another, they have very real philosophical consequences, most of all for the Husserlian notion of intentionality. I have thus far illustrated how the body schema, which encompasses both the ecstatic body of worldly perception and the recessive body of visceral and proprioceptive (muscular) perception, and the concretisation of the body schema in the form of habits, are all marked by the their very disappearance. Moreover, with Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of the lived-body there is another type of absence: an absence of explicit thought or belief on behalf of a 'conscious' subject. As he puts it in *Phenomenology of Perception*:

"Our bodily experience of movement is not a particular case of knowledge: it provides us with a way of access to the world and the object, with a 'praktognosia', which has to be recognised as original and perhaps as primary. My body has its world, or understands its world, without having to make use of my 'symbolic' or 'objectifying function" (p.140-1)

The above quote makes two points quite clear. Firstly, the body is *irreducible* or original, in that our practical knowledge cannot be investigated any further by reference to more basic concepts such as cognitive abilities. Because of this, the body is also the foundation for such forms of knowledge, and is thus *primary*. Although representation is clearly one of our basic skills, it is always subservient to the lived-body's practical knowledge. Dreyfus makes an excellent point in this respect[95]: although practical knowledge must have logical conditions of satisfaction, that is, whether or not the activity involved in my wider project is maintaining a certain regularity, there need be no representation of a goal, i.e. mentalistic intentional content. In an experiment conducted by Dreyfus, a master class chess player was able to conduct and win a high ranking game of chess simply by responding to the patterns on a chess board, while his attention was absorbed in complex mathematical procedure. Experimental or not, the point Dreyfus underlines is that strategic and purposeful action that is fitting of the games logical requirements, i.e. winning the game, is all possible without having a plan or goal 'in mind'. In this way, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body is a movement away from the Husserlian project of transcendental phenomenology which attempts to bring to light the fundamental structures of transcendental

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[95] See: Dreyfus, H. 1996.

consciousness. However, Merleau-Ponty's move away from the *objectives* of Husserl's project, more specifically their differing notions of intentionality, should not be understood as a clear break from his predecessor, for as he puts it in the 'Preface' to *Phenomenology of Perception*:

"This is why Husserl distinguishes between intentionality of act...and operative intentionality...Through this *broadened* notion of intentionality, phenomenological 'comprehension' is distinguished from traditional 'intellection', which is confined to 'true and immutable natures', and so phenomenology can become a phenomenology of origins" (p. xviii – my emphasis)

Although Husserl recognised the existence of an "operating or latent intentionality"[96] which is apparent in our desires and evaluations, this notion is still understood as being subservient to the synthetic power of constitution that is enabled by a transcendental consciousness. Thus, instead of simply overturning Husserl's project, what Merleau-Ponty attempts in his own phenomenology is an *extension* of certain themes by trying to think through the unthought elements of Husserl's project, most notably the idea of an operative intentionality. Furthermore, far from a wholesale rejection of an intentionality of act, it is clear from my previous study of the body image and acquisition of skills that even this form of intentionality still plays a certain role in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, albeit sequential to the body-schema. The question we are now faced with is how

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[96] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964(a), p.165. Indeed, the reader is strongly advised to consult Merleau-Ponty's essay entitled 'The Philosopher and His Shadow' for an in depth discussion of his relationship with, and extension of, Husserl's project, in particular the notions of reduction and intentionality discussed in Ideas II.

Merleau-Ponty himself conceives of an 'operative intentionality', and why such a notion is critical to his phenomenology of the body.

The part intentionality plays in *Phenomenology of Perception* is far from transparent. In Chapter Two, I introduced Merleau-Ponty's notion of the 'intentional arc', a device that persists through and around the body schema, binding together the lived body, and ultimately giving meaning to the differential structures that make up our political, cultural and ethical worlds[97]. I also mentioned that considering the pivotal role the intentional arc is given by Merleau-Ponty, the term is rarely mentioned and little explained. I now hope to clarify the role and characteristics of the intentional arc, and further, understand why Merleau-Ponty gives such short shrift to such an important issue.

The word 'intentionality' is used explicitly by Merleau-Ponty in both the English and the French editions of *Phenomenology of Perception*. Although Merleau-Ponty does refer to a type of 'motility', this is primarily used when relating to the spatial aspect of body intentionality, and thus the terms most often used are 'primary intentionality', or more often, the Husserlian notion of an 'operative intentionality'. These definitions clearly liken Merleau-Ponty's notion of intentionality with the concrete motility of practical engagement with the world, and thus Merleau-Ponty is clearly marking the difference between a form of intentionality that is understood as an intentional act of consciousness that

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[97] See: Dreyfus, H. 1996. Dreyfus' article presents the the function of an 'intentional arc' in a crisp and (perhaps too) simple fashion. However, the real purpose of the article is a defence of the somewhat abstract idea of an intentional arc via current research into neural nets and parrallel processing. The conclusion that skill aquisition can be simulated by neural networks, but such nets will not be able to aquire *our skills* until they are grounded in a body like our seems to be quite convincing.

correlates with an intentional object, and secondly, a novel form of operative intentionality that is established by the body. This is a critical distinction owing to Merleau-Ponty's wider thesis that the existential meanings which structure our experience are grounded in the *pre-conscious* engagement of the body with the world, and thus at the fundamental level of bodily engagement, there is nothing deliberately aimed at or directed towards by consciousness.

It is both my view, and that of Leder's, that to use the term 'intentionality' in a simple fashion and without qualification is somewhat misrepresentative of Merleau-Ponty's project, as it brings too much transcendental baggage to such a central feature of his phenomenology. The danger of such a simple characterisation is to still present Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as a philosophy of representation which privileges a traditional characterisation of subjectivity, an accusation that could be directed towards certain post-structuralist criticisms of Merleau-Ponty, most notably criticisms made by Deleuze in his book concerning Foucault[98]. Thus, the term Leder applies to Merleau-Ponty's form of basic intentionality is the Greek expression – *ecstasis*, and our pre-reflective relationship with the world is anchored by the '*ecstatic body*'[99]. This phrase captures the idea of the body having a determinate stance and yet constantly projecting away from itself, that is, standing (*stasis*) out (*ek*), and is clearly indebted to Heidegger's use of the expression in relation to temporality[100].

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[98] Deleuze, G. 1988, especially 'Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)'.
[99] See: Leder, D. 1991. Chapters 1 & 2 especially. However, it should be noted that the way this term is translated and presented in *Phenomenology...* is '*ek-stase*' (see the chapter - 'Temporality').
[100] See: Heidegger. M. 1962. Division II.

In Merleau-Ponty's project of indirect ontology initiated in *The Visible and Invisible*, one of his aims is to devise a new vocabulary that avoids some of the presuppositions and metaphysical trappings that are a part of the language used in his phenomenological descriptions in *Phenomenology...*, a vocabulary which he believes is still grounded in the dualism constitutive of a 'philosophy of consciousness', e.g. the object/consciousness distinction[101]. Thus, one of the tasks in his later writing is to find a way of expressing the notion of, and role played by an 'operative intentionality' without resorting to traditional vocabulary (i.e. 'intentionality'). Although one can possibly locate the role of bodily intentionality within the broad term 'flesh', more specifically the divergence, folding, spread or 'écart' of the flesh[102], Merleau-Ponty is more specific in a working note concerning intentionality in relation to ontology, where he refers to: a "spatialising-temporalising vortex"[103]. This characterisation is certainly an apt one, for as Merleau-Ponty demonstrates even at the time of *Phenomenology...*, the body's latent intentionality not only infuses a situation with a certain meaningfulness, but this meaning (*sens*) should also be considered as a form of spatial directedness and presence to the world[104]. Thus, taking a lead from Merleau-Ponty's own revision of his philosophical vocabulary, any attempt to

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[101] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1968, p. 130, 157-8, 183 and 200. In an afterward to his book *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*, Madison locates Merleau-Ponty's problems with language as stemming from an unpayable debt to Husserl, and the desire to develop a phenomenology which was still faithful to the tradition. Madison makes a highly pertinent point when he says that, even in the late Merleau-Ponty, and quite unlike Heidegger: "it is in starting from consciousness, subjectivity, Husserl, and the tradition that Merleau-Ponty pursues his inquiry. That is to say that Merleau-Ponty never wanted simply to abandon Husserl; he wanted to overcome transcendental philosophy, but, so to speak, *from the inside*." (Madison, G. 1981, p. 288).

[102] See: Merleau-Ponty, M. 1968. 'The Intertwining –The Chiasm'.

[103] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1968, p.244.

[104] I will discuss this theme in greater detail in Chapter Four of the thesis. See: Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962. 'The Spatiality of Ones Own Body and Motility', and 'Space' (esp. p.265). Furthermore, in his chapter on 'Temporality' in *Phenomenology...* Merelau-Ponty shows that the template or model for the operative intentionality of the body is grounded in the *ek-static* nature of temporality.

express the foundational role played by 'operative intentionality' should be done so in a way that tries to avoid connotations of consciousness, directedness and representation. Indeed, by taking the previous Working Note from *The Visible and the Invisible* into account, I propose that in an attempt to gain a greater purchase on the term 'operative intentionality', and furthermore to avoid some of the transcendental connotations it might convey, it may well be helpful to refer to the body's 'dynamic synchronicity', and I will refer to this expression in the following Chapters of the thesis. In explanation of the term dynamic synchronicity, I have chosen the word 'dynamic' because of the body's continuous movement and engagement with the world, and 'synchronicity', because of the body's anonymous inception of a spatiality and temporality, and the coexistent and implicatory constitution of a unified body schema and a unified object.

This last theme concerning a concrete, reciprocal relationship between the lived body and worldly objects highlights the way in which Merleau-Ponty has attempted to think through the unthought elements of Husserl's notion of intentionality, as this pre-reflective, practical relationship cannot be understood in the form of intentional structures which belong to a transcendental consciousness. If one takes *Cartesian Meditations* as an indicator of Husserl, he argues that the sameness of an object through its varying perspectives and temporal sequences is only possible via the 'intentional effect' produced by the synthesis of consciousness. The production of an enduring object is only possible through the synthetic intentionality of consciousness, and thus it is an enquiry into the transcendental ego's capacity for synthetic constitution that Husserl is most interested in. As Husserl puts it:

"Synthesis, however, does not occur just in every particular conscious process, nor does it connect one particular conscious process with another only occasionally. On the contrary...the whole of conscious life is unified synthetically"[105]

However, the notion of synthetically producing intentional objects is clearly at odds with Merleau-Ponty's investigation of lived experience, and although there may be such 'syntheses' to be discovered, these are merely products of Husserl's brand of mentalistic analysis. In reply to this, Merleau-Ponty states:

"I start from a unified experience and from there acquire, in a secondary way, consciousness of a unifying activity when taking up an analytical attitude...I am [therefore] obliged to suppose an act of synthesis...My act of perception, in its unsophisticated form, does not itself bring about this synthesis; it takes advantage of work already done, of a general synthesis constituted once and for all, and this is what I mean when I say that I perceive with my body or my senses, since my body and my senses are precisely that familiarity with the world born of habit, that implicit or sedimentary body of knowledge." (p.238)

The phrase 'sedimentary body of knowledge' is a key one, and should disclose more information regarding the 'intentional arc'. What Merleau-Ponty seems to be saying is that, because the body is of a type that allows us to pick up habits, we always already have a congealed substratum of bodily experience (the sedimented body of knowledge) which implicitly lends itself to our situatedness and infuses it

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[105] Husser, E. 1977, p.42.

with a certain logic. It is because of this logic, or "autocthonous/basic organisation" (p.234, footnote 1), that our experience is rendered as unified. The body's sedimentation of habits into a type of implicit knowledge is, like the habits themselves, something that frustrates specification because of its very disappearance and hence opaqueness. In language that owes something to Heidegger, our very Being cannot be described as being something. However, what Merleau-Ponty can articulate is the style in which such implicit knowledge is conveyed, and moreover, the ground of such knowledge. Our practical knowledge infuses our situation in a manner which is akin to an implicit arc, and although Merleau-Ponty uses the expression 'intentional arc', there is precious little that is conscious or intentional about it. The ground of such sedimented knowledge is the general synthesis that Merleau-Ponty considers more fundamental than the synthesis induced by consciousness. Such a general synthesis is nothing other than the fact that we negotiate the world first and foremost via our body, more specifically our body schema.

The above description is a type of hermeneutic movement which both starts and ends with the body schema. The problem faced by Merleau-Ponty (and the reader for that matter) is trying to get a grip on something which is paramount in giving our experience a unity and meaningfulness, and yet by its very nature is subject to erasure. The manifestation and ground of such knowledge are the two sides of a similar phenomenon. The way in which our sedimentary knowledge is absent and yet 'charged' gives us a certain amount of purchase on this phenomenon, but it is the grounding of such knowledge, the way in which the body and its senses are

unified as a synergic system, that really illuminates how we experience the world as something unified.

There is one more factor that highlights Merleau-Ponty's divergence from Husserlian intentionality, something Zaner is quick to point out[106]. The problem is that of distance, thickness or more specifically, depth. Merleau-Ponty asserts that if consciousness were the constituting agent of our world, there would be no distance or discrepancy between world and consciousness, indeed:

"intentionality would carry us to the heart of the object, and simultaneously the percept would lose the thickness conferred by the present, and consciousness would not be lost and become bogged down in it" (p.238).

However, as I have shown with the characterisation of our body *image* at the start of this chapter, although we *can* reflect on worldly objects and thus have a conscious relationship with them, such objects can never be grasped in their entirety. Just as an image of our body can never be made present all at once, neither can any other object of the world.

The hermeneutic intertwining of the body schema and the body image is such that, although an object is thematised through reflection, the world continually presents itself to the body schema as a sort of badly formulated question, a confused problem with which the body schema is able to communicate with. To take the example of a glass, 'the' glass of a certain reflection can never be completely

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[106] See Zaner, R. 1971, p.177-78.

revealed by such an act, for if it were, there could be no immanence to my perception – the object would not be of my world, but of a transcendental world. Because of the body-schema's intimate dialogue with the world, we are able to sustain a certain grip over an object, and yet this grip will always be fluctuating or ambiguous as the object will always retain its own unimpeachable depth. This may not come as a surprise, for just as the worldly object is an ambiguous phenomenon, so is the correlative body-schema, a phenomenon that is also characterised by anonymity and generality. Thus perception is truly something that is fluctuating and ambiguous: at its most basic level perception is not an 'act', it is a movement that takes place in an atmosphere of generality. I take an interest in an object only because it offers itself up to me as something to be questioned, thereby standing out against its background. However, in as far as my dynamic synchronicity is something that remains anonymous, an investigation of such an object can only be one of general interrogation. I may be able to reveal more of a phenomenon's characteristics through such an investigation and thus get a better grip over an object, yet such an investigation is a movement, and because of this there is always the density of something originally acquired which prevents my experience from being clear to itself. The world is experienced as something unified only because we exist on an ambiguous and general level, and this generality can be attributed to the correlative depth of our body and world.

Earlier I drew attention to the connotative problems attached to what Merleau-Ponty expresses as 'operative intentionality', and in an attempt to diffuse such problems I used the expression 'dynamic synchronicity'. We have seen just how there is a correlative relationship between the generality of our body and the

world, but if there is something familiar that seems to be lying in the background of such a correlation, it is the *chronos* of such a synchronicity. That our body is constitutive of a temporal order allows for a certain *elan*, a fluidity of our body schema and a subsequent unity of our perceived world. This topic is clearly central to the issues both Merleau-Ponty and I are dealing with, and a full discussion of the influence and problematics of temporality will be presented in a later chapter.

One final point. When discussing the purposivness of dynamic synchronicity (operative intentionality), I asked what motivated such skilful action without a resorting to a represented purpose or goal. The long deferred answer to this is a phrase I used in relation to perception: gaining a maximum grip on a situation. Going back to my early example of eyestrain, the way in which I avoid the onset of such a problem is primarily down to my body schema's unreflective capacity to find an 'optimum' distance from the screen. In the case of picking up a fork, I want to maintain a maximum grip over the instrument in order to succeed in my task, i.e. eating. In the chapter on 'Space' from *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty tells us:

"My body is geared into the world when my perception presents me with a spectacle as varied and as clearly articulated as possible...This maximum sharpness of perception and action points clearly to a perceptual *ground*, a basis of my life, a general setting in which my body can co-exist with the world." (p.250)

The basis of the next chapter is the dyslexic's dyslocation and consequent re-location of spatiality, and therefore the above issues concerning maximum grip.

spatiality and space will be looked at in detail. However, with a lead taken from Dreyfus[107], we can make one initial conclusion: the notion of 'maximum grip' suggests that the motivating power behind skilful action is in fact a tendency for the body to try and reduce a sense of disequilibrium. Of course between birth and death equilibrium can never be achieved, and hence we are continually *moving* – a movement away from disequilibrium. Nevertheless, 'maximum grip' must not be taken too literally, for certain situations require a light or subtle touch. What is experienced as equilibrium and disequilibrium is contextual, and relies upon the skills we have built up to negotiate specific situations.

This chapter has tried to chart the need for a phenomenology of the body prior to any phenomenology of the world as perceived. The phenomenon that underpins all others is the anonymous level of the body proper – the body schema. It is because the body schema and its organs operate as a synergic system that we exhibit a 'dynamic synchronicity' which allows us to pick up skills and habits. Our body schema envelops such anonymous habits, and the congealment of these skills contributes to a sedimentary body of knowledge that infuses our world with a unity and meaning. Such a movement is hermeneutic, *not* causal, and there is a metaphysical privileging of the body over a constituting transcendental ego. Although intentionality does play a part in such a hermeneutic movement, the most fundamental aspect is the anonymous and general characteristic of the body schema.

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[107] See: Deyfus, H. 1996. Section 2.

Chapter Four

Spatiality, depth and dys/re-location

This chapter is primarily interested in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological descriptions of spatial orientation, space perception and lived-space. These descriptions are mostly taken from *Phenomenology of Perception*, and can be seen as having a dual concern. Merleau-Ponty is initially interested in how it is possible for the body to orient itself *within* space, that is, how we actually come to have a spatial level. This question will lead us back to some of the topics discussed in the previous chapter. These will include the role of body-schema, sedimentation and dynamic synchronicity (my reworked name for the notion of body-intentionality), whilst it will expand upon topics that have only been previously touched upon, primarily the bearing of motion on dynamic synchronicity. This initial dimension of spatiality questioned by Merleau-Ponty is therefore more concerned with how our experience of space is grounded. This ground, perhaps unsurprisingly, is situated as a trope of the body-schema, our pre-noetic openness to, and connection with the world. Although this will primarily act as a refinement of the previous chapter's descriptions of the lived-body (i.e. reciprocal relationship of body schema/image), what it will provide is the initial staging of a context in which some of my initial descriptions of dyslexia can be thematised.

The second and perhaps more urgent area of concern for Merleau-Ponty is the question of how space actually reveals itself. This question is more relevant to the final section of the previous chapter where I discussed the structuring of

perception and the capability of experiencing a unified 'object' in a *milieu* of difference. As such, I hope to elaborate on some of the fairly key themes and notions related to perception that may have seemed a little vague in the previous chapter (indeed even in Merleau-Ponty's text itself): intentional arc, maximum grip, and disequilibrium. What will hopefully become apparent is the intimate relationship between space and perception, and furthermore, the difficulty of thematising such notions. It is this difficulty that lies at the heart of this chapter, Merleau-Ponty's examination of spatiality and space, and arguably his examination of 'the thing and the natural world' in general.

At its most basic, Merleau-Ponty is (as usual) challenging the empiricist and intellectualist conceptions of space, i.e. space is neither an object, nor is it a synthesising act of the pure subject. The way in which he thematises this problem is through an interrogation of 'depth'. This investigation holds the key to much of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of space as it reveals his ideas concerning size, distance and position, and, I believe, is the central notion that bridges the philosophy of *Phenomenology of Perception* and his later writings, namely *Eye and Mind*[108] and *The Visible and the Invisible*. From this investigation I will progress to an exploration of movement, a phenomenon which is intrinsic to perception, and which will bring me back to some of the previous discussion concerning dynamic synchronicity and motion (motility). This will be a further development in contextualising some of my previous descriptions of dyslexia and the body-schema, which will be facilitated by Drew Leder's notion of dys-appearance. From this position I will chart how the dyslexic is not merely

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[108] For the English translation of the essay 'Eye and Mind', see: Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (b). For an excellent introduction to the topic of space and depth, see: Steinbock, A. 1997.

involved in situations of dys-location, but a reciprocal relationship of dyslocation and relocation. This is imperative for the type of experiential phenomenological description that I discussed in Chapter Two, and will reveal a different manner in which dyslexia can be interpreted (i.e. the difference between using phenomenological description to explain why such a pathological phenomenon has arisen [comparative phenomenology], and using phenomenology to describe how a phenomenon reveals or unfolds itself [experiential phenomenology] [109]).

One final point concerning the role of this chapter and its relation to Merleau-Ponty's own project. Although the main text I am using in this thesis is clearly *Phenomenology of Perception*, two things I am aware of are: i) that I am not simply following the chronology of the text itself; and ii) that it is impossible to introduce all of the key notions and themes (implicit or explicit) that go to make up the text. Of course, as Derrida has shown us time and again[110], the text will always be greater than the sum of its parts, thus escaping a definitive reading, and therefore a pragmatic decision has to be made on my behalf concerning which themes and notions from Merleau-Ponty's own project are going to be of most use for my experiential description of dyslexia. The reason why I say this is in way of a disclaimer, in that this chapter marks a distinct move from Part One of *Phenomenology of Perception* - 'The Body'- to Part Two of the text – 'The World as Perceived', and therefore passes over any discussion of the key chapter 'The Body as Expression and Speech' from Part One. As mentioned above, I want to avoid *simply* following the chronology of *Phenomenology of Perception*, and I do not feel it necessary to have introduced the field of language before moving onto

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[109] See also: Philpott, M. 1999.
[110] See: Derrida, J. 1978.

some of the arguments presented in Part Two of Merleau-Ponty's text. The primary purpose of this chapter is to thematise my initial conclusions via an inquiry into space, and therefore the topic of language, clearly a (if not *the*) central issue for dyslexia, will be given individual treatment following this chapter, and again later in the thesis. Furthermore, I cannot possibly re-present all of Merleau-Ponty's study of perception provided in Part Two of the text, and by focusing on the chapter entitled 'Space' (and to a lesser extent the earlier chapter 'The Spatiality of Ones own Body and Motility') I am not denying the possible contributions to be made by the accompanying chapters in Part Two, but believe that the 'Space' chapter is most pertinent to a phenomenology of dyslexia. As Merleau-Ponty reminds us in *Eye and Mind*: "...there is no one master key to the visible, and color alone is no closer to being such a key then space is."[111]

The body's orientation of space

Of the numerous areas of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology one could turn to after the previous chapter's elaboration of the lived-body's role in perception, it may not seem immediately obvious why I should turn to the topic of space. As a long standing category of philosophical investigation it may seem a suitable area within which I could contextualise my immediate remarks concerning the troublesome body-schema of the dyslexic, indeed as we will see, this is an area that has already been pioneered by previous psychological research into dyslexia.

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[111] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (b), p.181.

The reasons for the importance of the investigations into the topics of space and depth for both my and Merleau-Ponty's projects will become clear during the chapter, but as an initial clue to why I have chosen to investigate these issues I will again briefly turn to the French edition of *Phenomenology of Perception*.

The question is one of meaning. In the previous two chapters I have discussed how Merleau-Ponty's anti-dualistic philosophy accredits situations with meaning. In this way neither the body-subject nor the world can be said to 'posses' meaning, rather, it is the intimate dialogue between the lived-body and the world that generates a meaningfulness to situations. As I discussed in the previous chapter on the lived-body, our experience is always structured into a relationship of significant figure against the double horizon of a receding background to the figure, *and* the background of our body schema:

"As far as spatiality is concerned, and this alone interests us at the moment, one's own body is the third term, always tacitly understood, in the figure-background structure, and every figure stands out against the double horizon of external and bodily space. One must therefore reject as an abstraction any analysis of bodily space which takes account only of figures and points, since these can neither be conceived nor be without horizons." (p.101)

Thus, within such a relationship there exists a meaningful phenomenon - something makes sense. Interestingly, as the English translator of *Phenomenology of Perception* points out (p.253), in the original French Merleau-Ponty uses the intentionally ambiguous expression *sens* in his text. Not only does *sens* connote

the idea of a situation 'making sense', i.e. something is meaningful or significant, but it also connotes a sense of direction or way. Thus, for Merleau-Ponty there is more than an implicit relationship between meaning and direction/orientation. Although this may not seem explicit in experience, spatial orientation is a fundamental aspect of all meaningful perception. This will become more concrete during my next investigation into the body's orientation of space – its spatial level. However, at this moment all I want to show is that this initial link between meaning and space is relevant to my initial descriptions of dyslexia, as they have been predominantly concerned with the breakdown of linguistic meaning.

What is of initial interest to Merleau-Ponty's investigation of space, an investigation introduced in his discussion of the lived-body and spatiality in Part One of the text, is how the body is able to take the world's bearings, that is, how an object can appear to be the 'right' way up, inverted, behind in front etc...indeed, what these very words actually mean to us. However, we are immediately faced by a problem that may, in principle, seem familiar. Just as meaning is generated within the intimate dialogue between body and world, and is thus always prior to any reflection, we cannot step beyond spatial orientation in order to understand how it unfolds. As Merleau-Ponty puts it himself in the chapter 'Space':

"The primordial level [of space] is on the horizon of all our perceptions, but it is a horizon which cannot in principle ever be reached and thematised in our express perception...[each] setting itself is spatially particularised only for a previously

given level. Thus each of the whole succession of our experiences, including the first, passes on an already acquired spatiality" (p.253).

The notion of a primordial spatial level, a 'level of all levels', may evoke themes from the previous chapter, primarily the body-schema's anonymous and general existence, and indeed such descriptions are immanent to the investigation of space. On principle, just as the outward-sensory and inward-visceral network of the body proper cannot be thematised in its totality, the primordial spatial level 'on the horizon of all our perceptions' can never be reached *qua* the level of all levels. As the first level, it cannot be spatially particularised, because it cannot be referred to a preceding anchoring setting 'anywhere' to be expressly perceived. The primordial spatial level is always already there, but it is in no particular place. Consequently, although it envelops all our observations, or is at least presupposed in every perception, it cannot be expressly perceived or grasped. Again we are faced by the paradox of perception: we cannot fully grasp the features that structure our perception, in this case a primordial spatial level, because as soon we focus on such a feature we abstract from, or freeze, its very being. Again Merleau-Ponty turns to examples of abnormal perception, in this case, experiments on the disintegration of spatial levels.

As a first example he chooses Stratton's experiment by which the images, through special glasses, appear unreversed on the retina (p.243-44). According to this experiment, someone who is made to wear such glasses first experiences the environment as upside down. A symptom of this inversion is that objects seem to lose there usual meaning, e.g. tools seem to lack the ease with which they can be

manipulated. On the second day of the experiment, the environment no longer appears to be inverted, but the person senses that his/her own *body* is upside down. Between the third and the seventh day the body gradually begins to occupy a 'normal' position again. What is highly relevant to this stage of the experiment, and our own investigation, is that the body begins to revert to a normal position more quickly if the person involved is active, i.e. *mobile, within the environment.* This reversion could not happen, notes Merleau-Ponty, if the person is completely motionless, for:

"the body still presents itself against the background of the former space, and, as far as the unseen parts of the body are concerned, right and left preserve their former localisation to the end of the experiment" (p.245).

During the process of the experiment as a whole, external objects gradually begin to look 'real' again, and the goals of actions which were at first harder to achieve now fail to cause problems. At the end of the experiment, when the glasses are removed, objects are no longer inverted, but do again appear 'peculiar' for some time, whereas motor reactions remain reversed for some time: the person reaches out his/her right hand when it should be the left hand.

Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of this experiment is not only revealing for an investigation of spatial orientation, but is also informative of the inter-relation between lived-body, its movement and spatiality. As is usual for Merleau-Ponty, his own reading of the experiment is against the backdrop of intellectualist and empiricist interpretations. Briefly: intellectualism, because it conceives of a purely

mentalistic constituting subject, should be able to explain the subject's actual experience of inversion, thus, since the subject knows it is wearing correctional glasses, the subject should make allowances for this when constituting its visual field; in the case of empiricism, because space is a property of the 'real' external world, the empiricist is at a loss to explain the fact that objects gradually right themselves even though the subject continuously wears the correctional glasses (p. 245-8). As Monika Langer highlights[112], space is neither an empirical relationship which is passively registered by the retina, nor an intellectual outcome which is constructed by a non-spatial, transcendental ego. The experiment reveals that the *content* of experience is not orientated in itself, for the subject would be able to alter such a state. However, if spatial positions such as 'up' and 'down', 'left' and 'right' are therefore conceived as simply relative, then to what are they relative, and how is it that one ever comes to have the experience of such positions with a feeling of assurance? What is, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, the "absolute within the sphere of the relative, a space which does not skate over appearances" (p.248), which enables the subject of Stratton's experiment to characterise his own body and his environment as either upright or inverted?

It is far from easy to present Merleau-Ponty's answer to these questions in a truly coherent manner, for not only does he move through a number of auxiliary experiments thereby constantly deferring his answer, but his previous investigations from Part One of *Phenomenology of Perception* bear heavily upon any such answer[113]. One initial conception of an answer to the riddle of

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[112] See: Langer, M. 1989, p.82.

[113] See the chapter on 'Space' in *Phenomenology...*, especially p.243-267, where Merleau-Ponty uses a number of experiments by Wertheimer, Nagel and Koffka and a number by Stratton to articulate the breakdown and consequent re-alignment of the perceptual/spatial world. Also see the

orientation is offered by Kockelmans. Kockelmans seems to take Merleau-Ponty's lead that "the possession of a body implies the ability to change levels and to 'understand' space, just as the possession of a voice implies the ability to change key" (p.251), and tells us that, what is of importance for the orientation of our environment is not my body as it actually is now, as a thing in objective space (i.e. the body image), but my virtual body as a system of possible activities (i.e. the body schema), the 'phenomenal place' of which is fixed by its situations and its tasks – "My body is there where there is something to be done" [114]. The emphasis, perhaps unsurprisingly, is therefore on the body-schema and, most importantly, its movement within the world. This will be returned to with explicit reference to dyslexia in the later half of the chapter.

An upside down world is a novel, unusual perceptual experience, and yet one which only remains novel for a certain period of time. That we can eventually find our bearings in such a world so that even it can be 'set right' and eventually inhabited or 'lived in' is Merleau-Ponty's major finding in the orientation experiments. Although the disorientated subjects are clearly not returned to the primordial novelty of early childhood thereby encountering the onset of worldly perception, Stratton's experiment does disrupt elements from the network of learned directions and bearings that have been built upon successive beds of sedimented experience since birth, e.g. the entrance to the cellar is regarded 'low'

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earlier chapter 'The Spatiality of one's own body and motility', where the Schneider case introduces a number of issues concerning position and direction, predominantly: the 'intentional' capacity of the subject to locate abstract objects in the world (referred to as pointing), at which Schneider cannot succeed; and, the *pre-noetic* capability of Schneider's lived-body to complete a task such as using a fork to feed oneself (referred to as grasping).

[114] See: Kockelmans, J. 1970, p. 286. This text seems to be regarded by other commentators on Merleau-Ponty as a seminal secondary text on the subject on Space, although surprisingly it is almost entirely concerned with *Phenomenology of Perception* rather than Merleau-Ponty's later work concerning depth and flesh.

because I have learned to bend down 'lower' than my level of my head in order to enter. Put another way, Stratton's experiment reveals the inner dynamics and coming-into-being of certain *habits*. Thus, a direct link between this and the last chapter should now be apparent: as much as the body-schema is crucial for the adoption of skills and habits, such habits are not merely accompanied by, but *infused* with meaningfulness by way of a certain spatiality. This observation may not seem so revelatory considering my discussion of skills in the previous chapter, and I am in no way accrediting such an observation to just Merleau-Ponty. As Straus, among others, has argued[115] perception itself requires movement, indeed that which is perceived is always infused by *at least an implicit presence of movement*. The spatial level of objects in my environment, the pen 'right here' or the forest 'way over there', is only possible for an embodied being with the capacity to move and negotiate his/her spatial environment. As Merleau-Ponty states:

"To invert an object is to deprive it of its significance. Its being as an object is, therefore, not a being-for-the-thinking subject, but a being-for-the-gaze which meets at a certain angle, and otherwise fails to recognise it. This is why each object has its 'top' and its 'bottom' which indicate, for a given level, its 'natural position, the one which it 'should' occupy...[T]his gaze takes a grip upon things only in so far as they have a general direction; and this general direction in space is not a contingent characteristic of the object, it is the means whereby I recognise it and am conscious of it as an object." (p.253)

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[115] Straus, E. 1963, p. 233-36.

We may ask: in what way does a person in an inverted visual field not 'live' in it, cannot get involved in it, cannot easily move about or manipulate objects in it? Indeed, in what way do we sense there is something unusual about our perception? The two principal and implicatory answers offered by Merleau-Ponty and broached in the above quote are concerned with 'maximum' grip and spatial meaningfulness. Firstly, as I have already described in Chapter Three, perception is continuous process of interrogation, a process that is guided by the fluctuating grip - or as Casey putts it 'tensional arc'[116] - over a field of vision (although this equally applies for other sensory fields, e.g. touch). Because the subject of the above experiment is suddenly introduced to a persisting inverted field, the body's grip over the field is that much slacker than a 'usual' upright field. Because of this slackening of tension that would usually hold the body and its field together in pre-noetic dialogue, the field will seem confusing and hard to live in. What is provoked by this confusion is a new gestalt of possibilities, i.e. further interrogation and hence *movement* of the body. What is revealed in a slackening of grip - the body's tensional arc – is that perception is permeated by (amongst other attributes) a spatiality and a meaningfulness which are reciprocal, reversible even, in that they implicate each other. This brings me back to the point I made at the start of this section in relation to the ambiguous meaning of the French word '*sens*', for one reason why an inverted visual field seems 'unreal' or peculiar is because inverted objects are deprived of both their 'full' significance *and* their direction. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, they have lost the power of 'the gaze' (p.278-80). Whilst 'the' spatial level is utterly dependent upon the network of the lived-

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[116] See: Casey, E.1993, p.55-56.

body, meaningful perception rests upon a certain spatial dimension, a dimension which is reached by an appeal to a level of all levels.

Let us take stock for a moment. Through his use of inversion experiments and continuing from his discussion of spatiality and motility in Part One of *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty's basic finding is that 'the' spatial level is only a certain form of possession of the world by the lived-body; 'it' is no specific 'thing' in particular, rather the spatial level appears as a certain spatial style or attitude, i.e. the culmination of previous spatial engagements which act as the backdrop for current and future spatial orientation. As we will see more clearly in the next section of this chapter, and especially in relation to Merleau-Ponty's mature ontology, spatiality is a meaningful phenomenon, whilst meaning should also be considered a spatial phenomenon, i.e. there is a certain 'depth' to meaning, or in Merleau-Ponty's later language, they are 'reversible'. The notion of depth will be expanded upon in the next section, but one can immediately see that perceptual meaning has very little to do with a logical sense of meaning, and only partially to do with a quantitative sense of meaning. The notion of a spatial level brings this out quite clearly. An orange may be characterised as 'quite near', thus bringing out more of a positional, and thus *quantitative* awareness of how I find the orange meaningful, an awareness which can be subjected to a process of measurement, e.g. the metrification of the distance between my 'body' and the object. However, what must not be lost in the technological urge to measure, is that the orange's spatial position also implies that it is simultaneously 'within my reach' – the orange is part of my immediate sphere of possible action. Now, depending on my current metabolic and digestive state (let us say that I am

hungry), the orange may seem quite 'temping' or 'desirable', and thus the quantitative/positional awareness of the orange is simultaneously a qualitative awareness; the meaningfulness of the orange is profoundly *plurivocal* in that I am aware of it in a whole host of different ways, whilst another person may be aware of the orange in a completely different way.

Whilst the perception of a certain phenomenon within our environment is structured by a figure-background relationship, which in turn will have a certain spatial level, such a phenomenon will always have a qualitative, deeper, thicker layer of meaning for the person who engages in that situation. It is this aspect of Merleau-Ponty's interrogation of space, i.e. the occurrence of a presumptive quantitative *and moreover* qualitative relationship with space, that marks it out from previous conceptions of directionality and positionality. Furthermore, the notion of space as a qualitatively meaningful nexus is something almost completely ignored by previous research into dyslexia. With this in mind, I will now try and see how these initial investigations into spatiality bear on my descriptions of dyslexia and the body-schema from the previous chapter.

Depth, lived-space and equilibrium

In the first part of this chapter I have presented Merleau-Ponty's initial descriptions concerning how a spatial level always lies in a processional fashion to the body's 'current' spatial position and sense of direction. In this way,

Merleau-Ponty provides an introductory theoretical underpinning that describes how the body generally (not always) finds itself with situational *sense*; i.e. a direction/position that is intrinsically meaningful. Because spatial location is inherently meaningful, such situational *sense* cannot be regarded as permanent or fixed as the situation will offer up a greater or lesser possibility of interrogation for the body, i.e. the unfamiliar space will prompt further interrogation and hence movement by the body, in an attempt to maximise the body's grip and clarity of a situation. Thus, what Merleau-Ponty has shown the reader is that the body's sense of spatial direction and position is granted not only by immediately preceding spatial direction/positions, but of greater consequences, by the spatial orientation and meaningfulness sedimented into the body in *all* previous spatial direction/positions. What I hope to present in this second part of the chapter is how these initial descriptions can be related to the dys-location peculiar to dyslexia, and on a more philosophical level, the way in which Merleau-Ponty extends his notion of 'the' level of all spatial levels with his phenomenology of depth.

It is debatable whether Merleau-Ponty offers a fully coherent phenomenological account of depth in *Phenomenology of Perception*, and questions may still be asked of his various discussions about depth between the late 1950's and the posthumous publication of *The Visible and the Invisible*[117]. During the Chapter 'Space' in *Phenomenology*... depth is treated as a specific topic in the second

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[117] The question of depth is one which, perhaps more than any other, permeates the main text of *The Visible and the Invisible*, although explicit mention of the topic is rare as it subsumed under the guise of notions such as 'chiasm' and 'reversibility'. Merleau-Ponty is more explicit in the 'Working Notes', see especially note from November 1959 (p.219). Also of great interest for the development of depth as a central notion are the essays *Eye and Mind*, and *The Philosopher and his Shadow*, the latter in: Merleau-Ponty, 1964 (a).

quarter of the chapter (p.254-67), whilst the topic is articulated implicitly in the second half by describing the phenomena of movement (p.267-77) and the somewhat obscure topic of 'lived space' (p.280-94). That Merleau-Ponty offers a wide range of accounts in and after *Phenomenology...* is in no way a serious criticism, for as we shall see, because of its very character depth cannot be fully described – it is always in excess of a final explanation or characterisation. As such I will look at a number of characterisations Merleau-Ponty gives of depth from *Phenomenology...* to his later period, whilst I will also consider Gibson's views on 'occlusion' and depth.

If Merleau-Ponty's project is considered as a phenomenology of lived-experience, in my opinion, his descriptions of how depth is intrinsic to perception are amongst his most revealing and intuitive as they are so close to what I (and others) actually experience. Although Merleau-Ponty offers some good examples of how depth is actually experienced, the previously mentioned article by Steinbock seems to sum up the 'originality' of depth extremely well. As he puts it:

"As I open the door to my study all the objects in the room – the desk, the typewriter, the chair in the corner, the plant, the bookshelves – take on a significance and thus a spatial configuration unique to the situation. The drapes are drawn insulating me in a quiet, contemplative ambience. The keys of my typewriter rush towards me and tilt vertically anticipating my intention to type; objects in the room turn in to face me – some even boldly challenge my intention. The floor, which according to a carpenter's level is flat, dips in the middle and then slopes up near the window to embrace the wall; the wall on my left wraps

around the large bookshelf; the plant in the distance is brought closer; the chair to my right faces me frontally as if to tug on other objects while vying for my attention, leaning in, pulling me toward it" [118]

The ambience of the room, the offering up of objects as tools to be used and the way the room dips and curves with scant regard for orders of metrification – these are some of the ways in which a phenomenology of depth is bringing an account of perception back into the phenomenal world of lived experience, whilst evading both the transcendental and 'natural' attitudes. In *Phenomenology...* Merleau-Ponty's rejuvenation of depth is introduced, as usual, via criticism. Initially, the philosophical tradition to fall victim is predominantly Empiricism in the form of Berkeley, a position which is akin to the oversight made by the geometer and his/her level. The mistake of the empiricist is to have treated depth as an invisible entity that only exists in relation to height and breadth, that is, as a juxtaposition of simultaneous geometric points. Because this juxtaposition of points forms one single dimension the viewer of this situation will only be able to 'see' depth if it is conceived of as breadth seen from the side i.e. breadth in profile. One initial criticism of this account is that space here is being treated as strictly *isotropic*, and may be considered as a characteristic of the natural attitude – e.g. it is self-evident to both myself and a man I meet in the street that the tower block on the horizon is a 'long way away' from us both. Furthermore, if this attitude is maintained then depth cannot be accounted for as an actual entity for to do so would entail the God-like omnipresence of abandoning one's point of view and inspecting space from every simultaneous position. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "For God, who is

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[118] Steinbock, A. 1997, p.338.

everywhere, breadth is immediately equivalent to depth. Intellectualism and empiricism do not give us any account of human experience of the world; they tell us what God might think about it." (p.255). What such an attitude takes with it is the impulse to think of depth as a dimension which only exists as a relation *between* objects or points. What this position ignores is the perspective, the "indissoluble link", tension and grip that exists amid the body and the world:

"More directly than any other dimensions of space, depth forces us to reject the preconceived notion of the world and rediscover the primordial experience from which it springs: it is, so to speak, the most 'existential' of all dimensions...it cannot either be extracted from, or even put into that perspective by consciousness...By rediscovering the vision of depth, that is to say, of a depth which is not yet objectified and made up of mutually external points, we shall once more outrun the traditional alternatives and elucidate the relation between subject and object." (p.256).

Merleau-Ponty's criticisms of depth conceived as a construct *within* isotropic space have shown us how depth must be rediscovered as a lived phenomenon, whilst the previous example from Steinbock has started to articulate how this lived experience manifests itself. Thus, how is such an approach to depth to be considered as philosophically significant? Probably the most interesting assertion made by Merleau-Ponty is that depth must be considered as *the* primary or 'primordial' level rather than a derived third level. Edward Casey offers a useful three point synopsis of how this claim can be understood[119]. Firstly depth is not

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[119] See: Casey, E. 1991, p.10. In this article, Casey provides an excellent commentary on how James, Gibson and Merleau-Ponty all contribute to a re-valorising of depth.

constructed or derived but concretely given. Second, depth is less of a dimension and more a dense medium in which body-subject and world are both immersed. As such, depth is more than just an invisible mediator, it is a visible and tangible phenomenon which has a genuine quantitative *and* qualitative thickness. Thirdly, primordial depth is that which subtends objectified metricised depth, existing as an aura or 'voluminosity' (p.266) which, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, allows for it to be: "a pre-objective standard of distances and sizes." (p.267). To articulate these points in more detail I shall now describe how Merleau-Ponty attends to the themes of, firstly, size constancy and, secondly, the unity within multiplicity of perception.

The natural attitude is once again bracketed-off by Merleau-Ponty in his account of size constancy, as this perspective emphasises the 'apparent' size of an object in varying positions rather than the way in which the object is actually experienced. The criticism is again one which applies to measurement in that a ball being thrown toward me neither starts small nor gets bigger as I try to catch it. Instead of the ball's apparent size, what is of consequence here is the clarity, hold and grip I have of the ball in relation to distance; i.e. there exists a certain maximisation of grip I have of the ball at a certain distance – too far or too close and the grip or 'tensional arc' will slacken. Thus, in the case of reading from or writing on a page, when I am in contact with the same words over differing distances from the page it is not the words' size that changes but the grip that exists between the triad of page, body and distance. Indeed, through this account Merleau-Ponty is putting not only an emphasis on the primacy of depth, but that over and against the other dimensions "concerned with the relationship of things

amongst themselves...depth immediately reveals the link between the subject and space." (p.264). Furthermore, in that a 'firm' or 'steady' tensional arc can be sustained whilst reading, one must remember from the first part of this chapter that such an arc is the basis for a *meaningful* situation. This capacity to maintain a firm tensional arc may be thwarted in cases such as short or long sightedness and may call for instrumental assistance in the form of glasses, and although dyslexia is not necessarily a problem of the eyes incapacity to focus at a certain distance, there certainly is a problem in terms of a loss of meaning in a linguistic situation, i.e. a slackening of the tensional arc. I shall return to this point at the end of this section.

The next way in which the rejuvenation of depth is thematised by Merleau-Ponty is via an account of how a cube maintains its unity, owing something of a debt (at least in choice of example) to Husserl's famous analysis of the die in *Cartesian Meditations*[120]. The approach taken to how an object maintains its unity through disparity is similar to that of an objects' size and its distance from the body, however at this stage in the account of depth the theme of spatio-*temporality* is explicitly introduced. Merleau-Ponty's basic point is that, as with the capacity of the two eyes to provide monocular perception, so primordial depth allows for the six faces and twelve lines of the cube in their varying appearances to co-exist as the same cube. The key to understanding this is what Gibson calls the 'occlusionary' power of depth, or as Merleau-Ponty states:

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[120] See Husserl, E. 1977. Sections 17-19 of the Second Meditation.

"This being *simultaneously present* in experiences which are nevertheless mutually exclusive, this *implication of one in the other*, this contradiction into one perceptual act of a whole possible process, constitute the originality of depth. It is the dimension in which things or elements *envelop* each other, whereas breadth and height are the dimensions in which they are juxtaposed." (p.264-265 – my emphasis)

The key expressions I have emphasised here are crucial in understanding the way in which Merleau-Ponty is offering his positive account of depth. The faces of the cube do seem to exclude each other in different phases of perception *yet* remain simultaneously present or 'co-existent' via depth's capacity to implicate or fold the cube's faces into one another. With juxtaposition we find a power that works to exclude by setting apart objects "at separate points on a planiform grid of homogenous space... whereas envelopment acts to conjoin." [121] This 'natural' envelopment that depth allows for is exemplified by ambiguous drawings such as the duck/rabbit or those of Escher, for it is depth's power to envelop that allows for the duck *or* rabbit to appear by eclipsing each other *whilst co-existing*. Thus, going back to Steinbock's description of a room which dips in the middle and curves in the corners with varying patches of shade and light, although the objects in the room are intermeshed with each other, there exists a certain tension between them as they eclipse and de-eclipse each other by establishing varying levels of significance with by body (e.g. useful, far away, high up, juicy). This tension among objects must always be thought of in relation to my body, and has the paradoxical characteristic of 'surface depth', or as J.J. Gibson calls it 'occluding

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[121] See: Casey, E. 1991, p.11.

edges', i.e. the ability for perceived surfaces to extend behind and bend under one another etc..[122] What Merleau-Ponty has rejuvenated in his account of depth is the *ambiguous*, that tension which exists among presence *and* absence, visibility *and* invisibility, sameness *and* otherness – an 'identity-in-difference'.

As I have tried to indicate in the summing-up of the preceding paragraph, characterisations of depth such as its voluminosity, ambiguity, and thickness stretch from *Phenomenology of Perception* to Merleau-Ponty's work around the time of *The Visible and the Invisible*. Indeed, one of the most lucid accounts he offers of depth is in a quote from *Eye and Mind*. We see here that the notion of a primordial depth cannot be fully captured or exhausted, and thus the urgency of his return to such a key notion in the late 1950's and early 1960's:

"...three centuries after Descartes, depth is still new, and it insists on being sought, not "once in a lifetime" but all through life. It cannot be merely a question of an unmysterious interval, as seen from an airplane, between these trees nearby and those farther away...The enigma consists in the fact that I see things, each one in its place, precisely because they eclipse one another, and that they are rivals before my sight precisely because each one is in its own place. Their exteriority is known in their envelopment and their mutual dependence in their autonomy...Depth thus understood is...the experience of the reversibility of dimensions, of a global "locality" - everything in the same place at the same time...a voluminosity we express in a word when we say that a thing is *there*."[123]

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[122] See: Gibson, J. 1986, p.189-202. It is remarkable just how close Gibson's theory of visual perception is to Merleau-Ponty's more global account of perception, and yet there is no mention of Merleau-Ponty anywhere in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.
[123] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964, p.180.

I will look more directly at the role depth has to play in Merleau-Ponty's explicit ontology of the flesh in later chapters concerning temporality and the intersubjectivity of language. To close this section I want to look at Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of 'lived' space for not only do they seem to act as a bridge between phenomenology and ontology, but also include a helpful point concerning pathology via Minkowski's revealing descriptions of schizophrenic space[124]. The account of lived-space comes at the end of the chapter on 'Space' in *Phenomenology...* and includes such varying descriptions of anthropological spaces as 'the spatiality of night', 'sexual space', 'mythical space', and as mentioned, 'schizophrenic space'. Although acting as a type of metaphysical underpinning to the previous sections, the purpose of this final section of the chapter on 'Space' is slightly unclear, a facet which may be due to the inherently mysterious, excessive and ambiguous anthropological spaces Merleau-Ponty is dealing with. This said, the way in which I read this section is that Merleau-Ponty wants to underscore the genuinely tangible and immanent nature of primordial depth (referred to in this section of *Phenomenology...* as 'pure' depth), characteristics which underpin the capability of the body's formation and coherent deformation of meaningful perception.

With 'dark' space (this latter term is from Minkowski), what is being suggested is a medium rather than dimension which, distinct from a clear space exemplified by the tension characteristic of a here-there structure, is a more intimate, fleshy, direction*less* and pathological space that underpins the very *heterogeneity* of

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[124] Minkowski, E. 1970. See especially Chapter 7 on psychopathology and lived-space.

primordial depth. What I take Merleau-Ponty to be saying is that the anthropological spaces he investigates are *exemplars*[125] of the way in which lived or dark space outstrips and exceeds any form of reflection or objectification because, by its very nature, it is infinitely fluctuating - beyond the ego - and "belongs much more to becoming than to being"[126]. With clear space a tension exits in the fold between the 'here-there' perception which allows for distancing and reflection, whilst in the case of dark space there is a pre-reflective one-ness of the body with such a space – there is no tension and no distance. What Merleau-Ponty infers from this description is that, what actualy protects the 'sane' person from delusion is: "not his critical powers, but the structure of his space: objects remain before him, keeping their distance" (p.291).

In the examples of schizophrenic space provided by Minkowski, patients suffering from hallucinations and paranoid delusions seem to be confined to pathological bouts of living in a 'dark' space that lacks distance, reflection and distinction. Manifestations of such problems, for example the man who experiences a paint brush outside his window entering his head (p. 290), reveal a collapsing of the tension between body and world, resulting in the overwhelming proximity of the object, e.g. the paint brush. What is lost for the patient is the power to reflect and distance himself from the perceptual field, resulting in the whole array of objects

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[125] I say exemplars, for as Merleau-Ponty points out (p.287, especially footnote 4), the "description of human space could be developed indefinitely.", whilst going on to state that dance and aesthetic perception could be used to strengthen his argument.

[126] Minkowski, E. 1970, p.5. The notion of a dark space of pure heterogeneity, that is, non-geometrical space, has certain affinities with Bergson's anterior notion of *duration*. Furthermore, the resemblance between Merleau-Ponty and Minkowski's 'dark space' and Deleuze and Guattari's 'smooth space' (as opposed to 'striated' metricised space - See '1440: The Smooth and the Striated' in *A Thousand Plateaux*) is quite apparent in terms of their structure, albeit that smooth space operates at more of a strategic and political level (See: Bergson, H. 1991; and, Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 1987.)

within the field becoming significant. As Merleau-Ponty shows in this key quote concerning the two major spatial levels of perception:

"Clear space, that *impartial* space in which all objects are *equally important* and enjoy the same right to existence is not only surrounded, but also thoroughly permeated by another spatiality thrown into relief by morbid deviation from the normal...This second [dark] space which cuts across visible space is the one which is ceaselessly composed by our *own way of projecting the world*, and the schizophrenic's trouble consists simply in the fact that the permanent project becomes dissociated from the objective world as the latter is presented to perception, and withdraws, so to speak, within itself. The schizophrenic no longer inhabits the common property world, but a private world, and no longer gets as far as geographical space: he dwells in the 'landscape space', and the landscape itself, once cut off from the common property world, is considerably impoverished" (p.287 – my emphasis)

The above quote offers a good summary of the argument being offered at the end of the 'Space' chapter, and is a useful model to work with in relation to dyslexia. What both Minkowski and Merleau-Ponty seem to be suggesting is that in cases of 'normal' perception one of the main factors that contributes to a declaration of 'normality' is the relatively stable interplay and balance between the two levels of dark and clear space. What is constitutive of 'normal' perception is a certain degree of objectivity, which is needed in order to distance oneself and reflect upon a situation, whilst perception must also maintain a certain degree of strictly personal interest in the situation - "a 'lived' distance binds me to things which

count and exist for me, and links them to each other. This distance measures the 'scope' of my life at every moment." (p.286). This raises two specific points.

Firstly, the levels of clear and dark space, which to an extent can be considered the subjective-pathological and the objective-normative poles of perception, would seem to have to achieve a type of equilibrium in order for somebody to live within the "common property world", i.e. a common set of cultural meanings attached to specific situations. We have already come across the idea of maintaining a certain equilibrium when describing the hold or grip of the tensional arc at the level of clear space, yet the achievement and continuation of such a 'maximum grip' has remained somewhat vague. As the first few lines of the above quote indicate, it would seem to be the case that there is an immense amount of 'behind the scenes' work being done by the interaction of clear and dark space that directly feeds into the grip one has over a situation. Thus, in the case of lived-space, it is as though two levels of pre-reflective dialogue are taking place: at a micro level (a level of expression), achievement of the tensional arc is made possible via a dialogue between body and the world, whilst at a macro level, the dialogue between body and world is made possible via a primordial dialogue between dark and lived space. Although the *meaningfulness* of a situation is produced or expressed within the tensional arc of a body-world dialogue, it is the more primordial *ontological* fold of dark and clear space that actually allows for the tensional arc.

This brings me to my second point concerning the characteristics of the equilibrium between clear and dark space. Such an equilibrium must be of a

general nature, in that it will fluctuate from person to person owing to their "own way of projecting the world" that will have built up through the sedimentation of habits and their own geographical facticity. In this way, the role of an equilibrium between dark and clear space can be related to the way that we are attuned to different spaces. For example: I find no particular problem in negotiating the streets, shops, road signs and general layout of the city, whilst I would have extremely limited ability when negotiating the terrain of the desert of jungle. The question that could be raised at this point is: how is such an equilibrium be conceived of, or indeed measured? However, such questioning would be misguided, as this form of spatial 'attunement' cannot be quantified or measured owing to it working at a pre-reflective level. Indeed, if there is to be a standard for spatial attunement, it is a question of pragmatics[127]; i.e. to be 'attuned' 'balanced' or in a state of 'equilibrium' is to be pragmatically engaged with the present situation – my body *can* negotiate a route from train station to university. Although Merleau-Ponty is hardly explicit on this point, the way in which he articulates such pragmatic engagement is through a certain flexibility, or, as he terms it, 'play':

"Sometimes between myself and the events there is a certain amount of play (*Spielraum*), which ensures that my freedom is preserved while the events do not cease to concern me. Sometimes, on the other hand, the lived distance is both too small and too great: the majority of the events cease to count for me, while the

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[127] Although I want to draw attention to the inherently pragmatic standard of spatial attunement, Cataldi makes an interesting case for an emotional level of spatial attunement between dark and clear space (p.52-52), whilst her general thesis is to draws attention to the affective level of `depth` as a general notion in the work of Merleau-Ponty of Gibson. See: Cataldi, S. 1993.

nearest ones obsess me. They enshroud me like the night and rob me of my individuality and freedom." (p.286)

Under Merleau-Ponty's terms, those who might be said to posses 'normal' perception have the bodily capacity for a certain playfulness and balance in specific situations, and rather than possessing a universal form of attunement that all others share, the way in which some-body's spatial-attunement articulates itself is as a certain *style*. Thus, if we go back to the first quote of this section, those who share in a 'common property world' are marked-out by sharing a *similar style* in specific situations, e.g. when greeting a good friend at my doorstep I step towards him, reaching to shake his hand with a smile on my face.

The notion of the dyslexic's bodily style and expression will be the main topic of the next chapter, although I will emphasise its importance in the final section of this chapter. For now, what is of concern is how dyslexia can be related to Merleau-Ponty's account of spatial attunement. Chronic cases of psychopathology seem to be accounted for in the second half of the above quote, marked by a lived-distance which is either too small or too great. Note that even in cases of hallucination and paranoid delusion Merleau-Ponty is keen to show that lived-distance is never completely absent, there still *is* a lived-distance present for the patient albeit one which is un-attuned – in a state of disequilibrium. Now in the case of dyslexia we have already seen when attending to the theme of 'apparent size' that in a textual linguistic situation (as opposed to spoken), there is a slackening of the tensional arc between body and world and hence a peculiar deprivation of meaning for the dyslexic. Thus, when this phenomenon is

investigated at the level of lived-space, it would seem that spatial-attunement for the dyslexic suffers a *persistent* susceptibility for a decrease in the aforementioned 'play' – "which ensures that my freedom is preserved while the events do not cease to concern me" (p.286).

I am in no way suggesting here that the dyslexic be aligned with cases of chronic psychopathology, as the distortions of lived-distance will not be of the same magnitude and will only be related to linguistic situations. However, there clearly must be a pathological trait to dyslexia if it is to be legitimated as a specific developmental phenomenon, and what seems to be at stake in dyslexia is a peculiar tendency for lived-distance to become *too far* for the dyslexic. Contrary to most of the psychopathological cases illustrated by Minkowski and Merleau-Ponty, instead of becoming exclusively involved in a singular object (e.g. the paint brush) and thus suffering from a type of 'nearness' dis*position*, the dyslexic is susceptible to a insufficiency of involvement with the text for it be meaningful. If one goes back to the above model, the objects (letters, words, syntax) of the text *diminish in their concern for me*, they become undifferentiated so that - "all objects are equally important" (p. 287). Because the objects of the text diminish in their impact on me, there is a resulting de-attunement and disequilibrium which consists in my freedom outweighing the impact of the objects in the text. This de-attunement common to dyslexia I will refer to as a 'dys-location'. What is common to cases of chronic psychopathology *and* dyslexia is a reduction in their power to interrogate. Instead of the case of a schizophrenic patient becoming overpowered by a single location and losing his/her freedom, dyslexia seems to be marked by a loss or loosening of location. This tendency is characteristic of an

overpowering freedom which results in the dyslexic failing to settle upon a fixed meaning which is representative of the previously mentioned 'common property world'. I interpret this as such: the dyslexic has a style of engaging with the linguistic world that suffers from a lack of fixity, and the inter-subjective correlate of such a style is such that the dyslexic falls outside of the rules of speech-sounds, spelling, grammar and syntax encompassed by a 'common property world'.

Although these assertions are on a general level, what I have tried to articulate here is the way in which the lived-space of the dyslexic has the tendency to slip into a disequilibrium of dark (pathological) and clear (normative) space, in that clear space becomes undifferentiated. Because of this there is a loosening of the dyslexics grip over a linguistic situation, and the meaningfulness of the text becomes acutely diminished for the dyslexic. What remains for me to show in the final section of this chapter is how these assertions relate to movement, and why this theme seems to impinge specifically on the pathology peculiar to dyslexia.

Movement, dyslexia and dyslocation

To conclude this chapter I will try and thematise some of the conclusions reached in the previous section by firstly looking at the theme of movement, and secondly seeing how this applies to the phenomenological experience of dyslexia and previous empirical research. Finally, through these consideration I will be able to

describe how there is not only a level of dys-location in dyslexia, but a reciprocal level of re-location.

In the previous section we have seen how Merleau-Ponty offers a positive conception of depth in the guise of primordial depth, a voluminous medium that subtends the unity of objects and relations of distance (the here-there structure) through its occlusionary envelopment. What is implicit in Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of approximate size, distance and the unity of an object is fully realised in his description of movement: the indivisibility of time and space, and the role of the body. Owing something of a debt to both Straus and Bergson[128], the importance of temporality in relation to depth's power of envelopment, its very thickness, is briefly introduced as an introduction to Merleau-Ponty's account of lived distance and movement. In one remarkable paragraph he states:

"...co-existence, which in fact defines space, is not alien to time, but is the fact of two phenomena belonging to the same temporal wave. As for the relationship of the perceived object to my perception, it does not unite them in space and outside time: they are *contemporary*. The 'order of co-existents' is inseparable from the 'order of sequences', or rather time is not only the consciousness of a sequence. Perception provides me with a 'field of presence' in the broad sense, extending in two dimensions: the here-there dimension and the past-present-future dimension. The second elucidates the first." (p. 265)

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[128] The debt to Strauss is made explicit by Merleau-Ponty (p.265, Footnote 1), whilst Bergson's famous example of the dissolving sugar cube from *Matter and Memory* is used on pages 263-4.

A number of points need to be emphasised here. Firstly, not only does depth include a voluminosity and thickness in relation to sensory perception, but this also entails a past-present-future thickness of time. Moreover, what is of immense *philosophical* importance is Merleau-Ponty's final statement above, that time is the dimension that elucidates the dimension of sensory perception. What Merleau-Ponty seems to be articulating is another example of intuitive phenomenological description, whilst adding a temporal dimension to the idea of a tensional arc. If one is to work within the attitude of atomistic space and time, the time and position of the body-subject pole of perception (here) must be thought separately from the object pole (there), i.e. there is a theoretical separation of here from there; light cannot hit the object and the body simultaneously. However, what is being stripped away from such an attitude is what one experiences in a field of perceptual spatio-temporal presence. Because of the depth's durational thickness it is possible to see a pen over there *at the same time* because there exists a tensional arc between body and object in the same living present – i.e. a field of presence. Thus, the fold of body and world is temporal as well as spatial.

With his notion of depth as that which contemporaneously unites and separates, Merleau-Ponty has shown that, phenomenologicaly, one can co-exist with an object within the same 'temporal wave'. However, by introducing a temporal dimension to the thickness of depth one is confronted by the paradox of co-existence: although I am of the same temporal wave as the object, there is also a re*cognition* - a reflective awareness - that I am have not completely coincided with the object. Thus on the here-there dyad, my body (here) has a certain hold over the object (there) and yet because I am aware that the object (there) is not my

body (here) the situation is always open to further interrogation. Therefore, the tensional arc that holds together my body and the object is always subject to change under the duress of the future, and rather than the body's capacity to re-gear itself with the world portraying an isolated *tensional* arc, what is at stake is the *intentional*. In the previous chapter I tried to compensate for some of the philosophical trappings which are conveyed by the term 'operative intentionality' by suggesting the new expression 'dynamic synchronicity'. Although I am not claiming that notions of an 'operative intentionality' and a 'intentional arc' are interchangeable, the dynamic synchronicity of the body clearly provides the ground for such an 'arc', and my new expression hopefully underscores the open-ended, ever-changing character of perception interrogation, that is to say – our perception of space is not static, but *dynamic and moving*.

Although Merleau-Ponty's investigation of movement is eager to take issue with (although not entirely refute) the understanding of movement offered by the logician and psychologist, what I take from this investigation is the way in which he tries to animate the somewhat static descriptions he has previously given concerning our perception of space. What is being questioned in this section is how a *moving* object is able to maintain its unity whilst appearing to be in motion, and the manner in which Merleau-Ponty attends to such a question may now seem familiar. Instead of conceiving the problem of movement as something which is solely concerned with how a moving object can still be the same object despite different positions, what is at stake is a phenomenon which one is aware of *before* it is thematised and hence known in its different aspects. It is only when a 'moving' object is thematised as changing specific points and positions *in* space

that one is faced with the problem of the logician or psychologist, that is: "the identical object in motion and...the relativity of movement, which means that it destroys the movement" (p.275). Clearly of interest to a phenomenological description of movement is the pre-objective being of a non-thematised mobile object, defined primarily in terms of 'behaviour' and not static properties:

"If we want to take the phenomenon of movement seriously, we shall need to conceive a world which is not made up only of things, but which has in it also pure transitions. The something in transit which we have recognised as necessary to the constitution of a change is to be defined only in terms of the particular manner of its 'passing'...It is not I who recognise, in each of the points and instants passed through, the same bird defined by explicit characteristics, it is the bird in flight which constitutes the unity of its movement, which changes its place, it is this flurry of plumage still here, which is already there in a kind of ubiquity, like the comet with its tail." (p.275)

The thesis offered by Merleau-Ponty is that our knowledge of movement is always of a moving thing without having any explicit awareness of the different objective positions the moving object takes on a specific course. As with the study of a cubes' unity through its different parts, the fluidity of movement, understood as the 'behaviour' of a moving object, is made possible through the implicatory co-existence of the object in motion. The mistake made when studying movement is to conceive of a juxtaposition of changing points and positions of the object in motion, when phenomenologicaly the body is able to maintain a *hold* over the object because it is "*present* to the same perceiving subject and enveloped in the

same temporal wave" (p.275). Thus, it is the temporal aspect of depth's spatio-temporal density that allows for the continuity of a moving object, furthermore, such a temporal wave can only exist itself in its mutual implication of the past and future. The temporality of space is truly characterised by its thickness.

How does this investigation of movement impinge upon what has previously been said of dyslexia and space? Furthermore, although we have identified movement as a moving objects mode of 'passing', its pre-objective 'behaviour', how is the body a part of this living present? Indeed, how does the body's dynamic synchronicity 'stutter' in the case of the dyslexic? Such questions, and the vocabulary contained within, are for the most part alien to the psychologists paradigm, and within the context of cognitive driven dyslexia research this is the case *a fortiori*. As I have tried to impress in previous chapters, I am not going up against explanations (i.e. phonological difficulties) offered by cognitive psychology, because the type of narrative I am offering here is *descriptive-interpretative* rather that *explanatory*. Whereas the psychologist aims to locate and examine the cognitive deficits *causing* dyslexia, the phenomenological investigation is one which wants to describe how the phenomenon of dyslexia is manifest at an experiential level, and how this relates to the horizon of 'meaning' for the dyslexic. Although the experiential-descriptive aims of my project are quite distinct from a causal story, I am quite happy - as is Merleau-Ponty himself - to use explanations offered by the psychologist as a point of departure, and believe it is quite legitimate to give equal weight to conflicting narratives. The reason why I may be going over some old ground here is that, rather than the cognitive-phonological model I looked at in the previous chapter, I am at this

point more interested in some of the leads offered by new work being pioneered by, amongst others, John Stein which pays attention to the role of movement in visual perception[129].

As mentioned in Chapter One, apart from early research dating from the 50's and 60's[130], it is only until recently that research on the possibility of a visual deficit involved in the problems of developmental dyslexia has started to gain interest. The possibility of visual factors being at least *part* of the cause of dyslexia have been discredited by those wishing to develop the phonological deficit model, and thus very little attention has been paid to perception and dyslexia even as an *explanatory* story. The cognitive-phonological model may concede that there *seems* to be a disruption of perception in dyslexia, i.e. the dyslexic may *experience* it as such, but such a disruption is only the *result of* underlying cognitive non-performance. Secondly, even when perceptual difficulties have been discussed as a either direct cause or as a result of cognitive factors, the issue of spatial direction and space perception has received minimal treatment. Now, considering the way in which this chapter has studied spatial orientation, spatial perception, and the ontological significance of spatiality in the form of primordial depth, if reading and writing are taken as *meaningful* activities, moreover activities that are inherently laden with a sense of *direction*, then the contexts of space perception and depth are not simply factors connected to or impinging on perception, but are part of the *fundamental* basis for perception. For Merleau-

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[129] See: Stein, J. & Walsh, V. 1997; Stein, J. (ed.) 1991; and, Stein, J. *et al.* 1988. For recent evidence in support of Stein and colleagues work, see: Everatt, J., Bradshaw, M. & Hibbard, P. 1999; and, Slaghuis, W. & Ryan, J. 1999.

[130] See: Spache, G. 1969. This is an interesting collection that includes themes taken from Gestalt psychology such as the figure-background structuring of perception, and utilises authors such as

Ponty, *to be embodied is to be situated* in an environment, to be orientated and to have a position and direction - it is to perceive as a body through all its senses. What is phenomenologicaly co-originary with perception is meaning, and a necessary trope of meaning is its 'hold' on the world – a sense of direction.

One study that puts a greater emphasis on both visual perception *and* spatial direction and adds an empirical dimension to Merleau-Ponty's arguments in relation to dyslexia is by Waites.[131] Although the study is clearly not phenomenological in Merleau-Ponty's sense of the term, indeed Waites is keen on themes such as 'sensations' and the 'external world', there is an emphasis on the importance of pre-reflective bodily awareness and directionality as a requisite for movement such as reading and writing. The argument offered is fairly uncomplicated: the authors postulated that if children have difficulty manipulating and repeating a symbol of direction, the most basic of which they take to be an arrow or pointer, this may indicate the presence of additional problems in manipulating language symbols, specifically the alphabet. From this basis, the authors studied the capacity to write the alphabet of 198 children with specific developmental dyslexia. They found that not only are dyslexic children much slower than the "normal population" (their phrase) in acquiring the ability in their early school years, but at age ten, almost 40 percent of the dyslexic children were still making errors compared to only 15 percent of control subjects. What is of special significance is that almost the same percentage of fourteen year old dyslexics were making exactly the same mistakes, and the authors conclude that dyslexic children still unable to write the alphabet correctly by the age of ten have

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Goldstein, whilst use of the Gestalt figure has been used again very recently to highlight the difficulty of dyslexics seeing rows of figures. See: Lewis, J. and Frick, R. 1999.

a *primary difficulty in manipulating abstract language symbols in space.* Although the study makes no further claims than this, from the perspective of Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of space perception and space, it is exactly once such preliminary conclusions have been made by the psychologist that one has to look to the experiential level of dyslexia; i.e. how does the dyslexic experience the alphabetical symbol relating to him/her in a specific situation, that is, a spatial situation. Thus, instead of studying the degree to which the dyslexic child *differs* from a norm when trying to write the alphabet, why not study the different *style* in which the dyslexic has a hold and grip over symbolic objects at the pre-reflective level, the manner in which such symbols offer themselves up or retract from the body as an object for further or lesser interrogation, indeed, the experience a dyslexic has of linguistic space being endowed with a certain meaning. But what of reading and writing? These are activities underpinned by their need to flow, to be in motion. If one is to engage pragmatically with textual language through reading and writing then what is at stake is not static, individual symbols, but a process which is moving. This seems to impinge heavily upon dyslexia.

The story offered by Stein and colleagues is a causal-explanatory story, but one which puts a greater emphasis back onto dyslexic experience. Stein's theory is based upon a neurophysiological deficit in dyslexia, specifically, that the brain's magno-cellular pathway which controls eye movements needed for reading and writing skills fails to send adequate 'stabilising information' to the visual cortex in dyslexics. Because there is a marked reduction of stabilising information, information which allows the flow and smoothness of reading/writing to persist,

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[131] Waites, L. 1980.

this results in unsteady eye movements which may lie behind dyslexic phenomena such as, words blurring and moving around the page, a loss of position on a page, and (more controversially) poor balance and co-ordination. Thus, although Stein is working on a neurophysiological level, the emphasis here is on how the dyslexic finds it much harder to develop the 'common' *ability* (i.e. the sedimented skill or habit) to sense the most rapid changes in *motion* around him/her, especially in what is seen and heard. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the poorer the ability to detect a change in motion, the worse the reading, writing and spelling.

The first use that can be made of phenomenological description that relates to the above has already been at work in the preceding section of this chapter in relation to unity and lived space, that is, a type of genetic account of dyslexia that I have characterised as 'comparative phenomenology' in Chapter Two of the thesis. This type of account is not necessarily describing the lived-experience of dyslexia, rather it is utilising some of the key notions Merleau-Ponty has refined through his descriptions of space perception and understanding the manner in which dyslexics deviate from such notions.

In the first two sections of the chapter the underlying assumption is that to be spatially orientated and to perceive an object is to have a meaning, a significance which is grounded in the body's dialogue with the world. In the preceding section I have already made two substantive assumptions regarding dyslexia in the context of space. Firstly, symptoms such as blurring or moving words, the inability to recognise words, and the passing over single words or sometimes

whole lines of text, can be interpreted as a peculiar slackening of the tensional arc or fold that brings an object and body together in the form of a co-existence and presence. Secondly, when looking at the notion of lived space, it would seem that such a slackening of the tensional arc is characterised by a deprivation of 'lived distance'. It is my assumption that the dyslexic suffers from a deprivation of lived distance, i.e. the affordance of 'play' created by a chiasm of pathological, dark space and normative, clear space. This transpires due to a certain disequilibrium in favour of clear space (" [an] impartial space in which all objects are equally important" p.287) which is *experienced by the dyslexic as word(s) offering up a general and vague meaning* rather than an individual specific significance. To this extent, descriptive phenomenology is interpreting *what* is happening at a pre-objective level for the dyslexic (a slackening of tension), and furthermore, *why* this phenomenon is occurring (a disequilibrium of pathological and normative space). However, what is most important for a more positive phenomenology of dyslexia (i.e. *how* reading and writing is experienced by the dyslexic[132]), is the impartiality of dyslexic space; or from a reversed perspective, the lack of individual-pathological involvement the dyslexic brings to the text.

Now this conclusion seems to bring us back to what both Merleau-Ponty has said about movement and what Stein and others have said about dyslexia and motion. I start from the above conclusion that, more than those in the same linguistic community, the dyslexic experiences the written word as a space which is predominantly an impartial space, one which only embraces a vague and indistinct level of meaning. This can be directly applied to the role of dynamic

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[132] Philpott, M. 1999.

synchronicity and motility, for the type of dys-location experienced by the dyslexic is indicative of a faltering or stuttering of dynamic synchronicity; that is, the body-world dyad cannot establish a smooth and pragmatic dialogue. This faltering arises because dyslexic space is more normative/impartial than pathological/personal, and thus *because of the overpowering freedom of dyslexic space the text falls short of offering itself up for further (and thus futural) interrogation.*

Fundamentally, dyslexic space does not lend itself to smooth, accomplished movement which is elucidated by the sequential thickness of a past-present-future temporal wave. It is not simply isolated words themselves that fail to offer themselves freely, but their position, the context of words, their spelling and grammar, and the background of the page. What is at stake here is the aforementioned *behaviour* or *pure transition* of the reading and writing process as a whole, the "mode of its passing" (p. 275) which is organised by the pre-objective dialogue between body and world (text). Thus, the dyslexic's experience of space *is* meaningful, but inasmuch as the mode of its passing is far from smooth, this singles out the dyslexic from the rest of his/her linguistic community. The different *style* of dyslexic space is representative of the dyslexic's different manner of being-in-the-world, and it is through the key themes of *expression* and *temporality* that the dyslexic's being-in-the-world will be elucidated in the final chapters of the thesis.

I think the above descriptions beg one more specific question, a question that sees a return to a more explanatory account and a specific concurrence with Stein and

company's theory concerning motion and dyslexia: if dyslexic space is experienced as more impartial and less personal than the majority of people, what is it that is stopping the dyslexic from getting personally involved with the text? The answer to this question relates back to Chapter Three's account of skills and habits, and will draw again on Drew Leder's work.

In Chapter Three I discussed the acquisition of skills such as reading and writing (I will focus on reading here), and the consequent sedimentation of skills into habits by recourse to the reciprocal levels of the lived-body – the body schema and body image. Once a major skill such as reading becomes automatic (i.e. pre-reflective) it transcends the level of simple habit (I can) and becomes an ability that *disappears* into the background of my existence (I do). As such, major habits like reading form the way in which I sustain a dynamic synchronicity between body and world, that is, they form the background to which I find situations meaningful. As Merleau-Ponty himself says of vision:

"What I lack when my eye moves passively, is not the objective representation of its shift in the orbit, which in any case is not given to me, but the exact gearing of my gaze to objects, without which they are incapable of fixity, or indeed of genuine movement...If we can ever speak of movement without an object in motion, it is pre-eminently in the case of our own body. The movement of my eye towards the thing upon which it is about to focus is not the displacement of an object in relation to another object, but progress towards reality." (p.279)

The acquisition *and* consequent mastery of skills such as reading is thus dependent upon the lived-body, and as I put it in Chapter Three, the ability to read and write for the dyslexic is not characterised by the 'I do', but the 'I do – but in a different *style*'. What seems to have happened in the case of dyslexia is that the body schema is unsuited to the task of habituating the skills of reading and writing to the level shared by its surrounding linguistic community, a case of 'I can *only just*'. As we have seen in the above descriptions of dyslexia and movement, the consequence of this is to leave the dyslexic with an impairment in his/her dynamic synchronicity in a linguistic context. At this point much rests upon the assertion that the dyslexic has an unsuitable body schema in order to become proficient at reading and writing, and if one is to push this argument any further and ask what lies behind this apparent 'unsuitability' then a physiological based explanatory account is called for.

In the context of space perception and movement, it would seem that Stein and others offer a strong empirical correlate for the above phenomenological descriptions. What these authors attribute as the primary cause of dyslexia is the diminished performance of the magnocellular pathway in the brain. This results in the dyslexic being slow to sense very rapid changes in the linguistic environment, and it is because of this that the dyslexic is unable to develop a satisfactory body schema which can fully habituate the skills of reading and writing. Stein's model seems to offer itself as an excellent explanation of why there is a disruption of the body schema and thus dynamic synchronicity in dyslexia, whilst my task as a phenomenologist is to elucidate how such phenomena are experienced by the

dyslexic. The above descriptions will have hopefully gone some way towards doing this.

This brings me to my final point concerning the experience of dyslexic space and the nature of this dys-location. On numerous occasions I have underlined the absence or recession of sensory organs in their interaction with the world, a phenomenon referred to by Drew Leder as 'focal' disappearance. However, Leder also creates the term 'dys-appearance' which draws attention to the breakdown of an activity, and I think this is helpful in accounting for the way in which the dyslexic *can* sustain a relationship with the written word. Leder's argument is fairly intuitive: the somatic and sensory levels of the body which disappear in the form of the body schema are sometimes *thematised*, and as such reveal themselves in moments of error, pain, illness or novelty. As Leder puts it:

"The body most comes into view at such times of disruption, presenting itself as a problem to be solved, whether on the plane of ordinary experience or philosophical reflection"[133]

In the context of language this seems to happen all too frequently for the dyslexic; the unsuitability of the corporeal schema results in its very thematisation and hence a lapse of dynamic synchronicity. Apart from drawing attention to the crucial, yet absent role of the body schema, the notion of dys-appearance also underscores the way in which dynamic synchronicity only lapses rather than breaking down completely. This is important because, as I have been trying to

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[133] Leder, D. 1990, p.132.

stress in all my arguments, the dyslexic *does* find language meaningful, albeit in a different style when compared to those in the same linguistic community. Thus, although the spatiality of the dyslexic can be characterised as a type of *dys-location*, such a phenomenon is necessarily accompanied by a *re-location*; in Merleau-Ponty's later language, these are 'reversible' phenomena. The dyslexic is prone to experiencing reading and writing as confused. In phenomenological terms, this experience of confusion is the realisation (reflection) that there is a slackening of the gazes pre-reflective grip over an object. Although such a lapse of dynamic synchronicity is disruptive to the flow of reading/writing, the body schema is immediately at the service of adapting itself to the puzzle at hand; it is re-locating itself in order to carry out the internal pragmatics of the activity. Quoting from *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty says:

"For when an illusion dissipates, when an appearance suddenly breaks up, it is always for the profit of a new appearance which takes up again for its own account the ontological function of the first…The dis-illusion is the loss of one evidence only because it is the acquisition of *another evidence*…What I can conclude from these disillusions or deceptions, therefore, is that perhaps "reality" does not belong definitively to any particular perception, that in this sense it lies *always further on*" (p. 40-41)

What I have tried to show in this chapter is that spatial orientation and the perception of space not only bring with them an inherent meaning, but the ontological ground for such meaning is to be located in Merleau-Ponty's revitalisation of depth. Depth is that which grants the visibility and accompanying

invisibility of the world, allowing for the coherent style of objects at rest or in motion. As such, depth is not merely spatial, but as the above quote again suggests, the depth of the world is *spatio-temporal*. These key notions have been applied to the way a dyslexic person experiences space, and the main conclusion reached is that dyslexic space, certainly in relation to the written word, is more of an impartial than personal space thus hindering the way in which the dyslexic relates to reading and writing. Although the dyslexic suffers from a type of dys-location in the form of a stuttering dynamic synchronicity, this is not entirely representative of a *loss* of meaning, but a peculiarly unsmooth relation to space-language-meaning which is enabled by a concurrent re-location. I will now turn to the theme of expression to gain a better understanding of how the notion of style is directly tied to language and the body.

Chapter Five

The Incoherent Deformation of Language in Dyslexia

If Merleau-Ponty's primary interest in *Phenomenology of Perception* can be located in the foundational activity of perception and the concurrent role of the body, during the period after his *opus magnum* until his turn towards the overtly ontological themes broached in *The Visible and the Invisible*, the author became more interested with the theme of language. As I will try to show with this chapter, this growing interest in a phenomenology of language is in no way a specific break with his stance in the *Phenomenology*... for the grounding role of perception is still critical. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's concern with language is quite evident as he devotes a whole chapter at the end of 'Part One' of the book to the description of gesture, speech and expression – 'The Body as Expression, and Speech' – a text that will be examined in detail during the first part of this chapter. However, what is apparent in his writing on language after 1949 is a specific calling into question of the genesis of *meaning*, a questioning which, although it is still founded on the intimate relationship of body-world perception, is thematised in the context of language. Reiterating a phrase previously used in my chapter on habit and the body, Merleau-Ponty states in a key essay 'On the Phenomenology of Language': "Organized signs have their immanent meaning, which does not arise from the 'I think' but from the 'I am able to'" [134].

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[134] See: 'On the Phenomenology of Language' p.88, in: Merleau-Ponty, M 1964(a). As is indicated in the text, this paper was originally presented in 1951 at the first *Colloque international de phénoménologie*, Brussels.

Now it is this capacity to work within and create from organised signs and their immanent meanings that would seem to evade the dyslexic, perhaps not in totality, but in a persistent fashion that hinders fluent communication. The central problem for the dyslexic would seem to be that, more often than most, when encountering the written expression meanings are precisely *not* immanent. This may come as no surprise after the conclusions of the last chapter for, by following Merleau-Ponty's lead, I have shown that the dyslexic's (and non-dyslexic's) relation to the written word is inherently a spatial-situated relation which is characteristic of the world-body dynamic of perception. What is of specific importance for a phenomenological study of dyslexia is that the spatial-situatedness of reading and writing is a form of directedness which is necessarily intertwined with *meaning*. In that there is a loss of immanent meaning for dyslexics with language I came to the conclusion that this was manifest in the form of a peculiar dys-location; that is, a realisation that the dynamic synchronicity between world and body has become de-synchronised which is accompanied by a reciprocal attempt at re-location. Because this is a repetitive activity for the dyslexic, the phenomenon of dyslocation becomes incorporated into the pre-reflective body schema, it becomes habit – the style of dyslexia. Therefore, the status of the relationship between organised signs and immanent meaning has become paramount for this thesis. What is at stake in this chapter is the elucidation of not only how the dyslexic is 'deficient' in possessing immanent meanings, but more importantly, how the dyslexic *is* able to express him/herself – the expressive style of dyslexia. What I intend to substantiate is that dyslexia should not be viewed simply as a susceptibility to a breakdown in perception, language and meaning, but such

phenomena are intrinsically tied to the dyslexic's style of expression – the way dyslexics find the world and *word* meaningful.

Phenomenology and expression - speech and gesture

"What we have said earlier about the 'representation of movement' must be repeated concerning the verbal image: I do not need to visualize external space and my own body in order to move one in the other. In the same way I do not need to visualize the word in order to know and pronounce it. It is enough that I posses its articulatory and acoustic style as one of the modulations, as one of the possible uses of my body…the word has a certain location in my linguistic world, and is part of my equipment." (*Phenomenology*... p.180)

In previous chapters I have tried to emphasise the philosophical importance of the self effacing stratum of the lived body - the body schema - understood as a pre-reflective level of the body that engenders our situatedness with a meaningfulness and style. What is of primary interest for this chapter is that the status and genesis of 'meaning' is exemplified in Merleau-Ponty's investigation of language (especially his writing between 1949-53), and such an investigation necessitates an engagement with the theme of presence, and moreover a re-engagement with the theme of depth.

In the context of spatiality, the dynamic synchronicity that develops between the body schema and environment allows the body to navigate its current terrain without having to bring abstract meanings such as left, up, nearer etc.. to reflective attention. Thus, in the course of action, spatial locations are pre-reflectively 'given' as a result of the body's previous directional experience and sedimentation of '*sens*' (direction/meaning). In that there is a sedimentation of meanings, there is a certain hiddeness and depth to our spatial direction. Furthermore, this depth is also apparent in our perception of space, most notably in our experience of objects in our perceptual horizon being simultaneously present: "depth...is the dimension in which things or elements envelop each other" (p.264-5). If there is a tension or ambiguity here between the depth involved in the sedimentation of spatial directedness and the enveloping depth associated with our perception of space, it is precisely because depth is not simply a spatial notion but one which is underscored by *temporality*, an attribute which is constitutive of the tension that exists between the presence and absence of objects in our perceptual field. This should come as no surprise in light of the previous chapter, for although temporality was not dealt with at any great length, it was established that the enveloping power of depth in perception allows for a co-existence of disparate elements – a coherency of meaning that is granted and subtended by a coherency of spatio-temporality: "As for the relationship of the perceived object to my perception, it does not unite them in space and outside time: they are *contemporary*" (p.265). Now, in that language - both its spoken and written form - is a power of expressive meaning *par excellence*, in what way does language have a relationship with presence and meaning, and furthermore, how

will an investigation of language disclose the underlying coherency of temporality and perception?

"...the word, far from being the mere sign of objects and meanings, inhabits things and is the vehicle of meanings. Thus speech, in the speaker, does not translate ready-made thought, but accomplishes it. A *fortiori* must it be recognised that the listener receives thought from speech itself." (p.178)

As indicated in the above quote, and in keeping with Merleau-Ponty's thesis that the 'mind' cannot be characterised as separate from the body, one of his central propositions concerning language is that 'thought' taken as mental representation does not exist prior to speech. Indeed, it is language that helps to establish thought. Although language and thought can be reflected upon as abstract concepts, it is Merleau-Ponty's view that to think of something, and thus to know something, is to be able to express it in words. Kwant offers a helpful empirical guide concerning this thesis, observing that as long as our verbal or written expression remains vague our capacity to relate our thought to others - and sometimes to ourselves - also remains vague[135]. For example, it is often the case that our ideas concerning a certain topic may become far clearer and more effectual when such ideas are openly expressed, either verbally or as text.

Although we have already encountered the phenomenon of the body being engaged with pre-reflective meaning in the context of spatial direction, it is

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[135] See: Kwant, R . 1963, p.51. Although Kwant makes a good point here, he does seem to suggest that a lack of ability to express a subject matter is a direct reflection of a persons lack of understanding of this subject matter. Considering the context of my project is developmental

perhaps less obvious just how meaning and expression are intimately tied together, especially when we are considering expression as the spoken or written word. Nevertheless, if one looks to other forms of expression such as painting or sculpture (which Merleau-Ponty does to a far greater extent in his later writings[136]) or even to music (as Merleau-Ponty does quite often in his chapter on language in *Phenomenology*...), the meaning of a painting or sequence of music cannot be separated from the mode of expression such as the aggregate of brush strokes or the use of harmony and counterpoint. This co-existence of meaning and expression holds for language just as it does for the painting or piece of dance and is perhaps *the* central point that Merleau-Ponty is making in the chapter 'The Body as Expression, and Speech'. If language is to be taken seriously as a topic for phenomenology to study, the inclination to separate expression from meaning must be overcome in order to describe the 'existential meaning' (p.182) beneath the conceptual meaning of words:

"Thought is no 'internal' thing, and does not exist independently of the world and of words...The new sense-giving intention knows itself only by donning already available meanings, the outcome of previous acts of expression. The available meanings suddenly link up in accordance with an unknown law, and once and for all a fresh cultural entity has taken on an existence. Thought and expression, then, are simultaneously constituted, when our cultural store is put at the service of this unknown law, as our body suddenly lends itself to some new gesture in the formation of habit. The spoken word is a genuine gesture, and it contains its

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language disorders. I am far from happy with this assertion in that dyslexics may have a very good understanding of a topic, and yet may have major difficulties expressing their ideas in writing.

[136] See especially: *Indirect Language and the Vioces of Silence* (Merleau-Ponty, M. 1974) and, *Eye and Mind* (Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (b)).

meaning in the same way as the gesture contains its. This is what makes communication possible" (p.183)

Although some of the above quote will need further explanation during this section, one point that is initially quite clear is that there is no prior and interior world of meaning, in the form of ideas and thoughts, which in turn needs to find an external form in the guise of symbols or vocal sounds. Rather, as Merleau-Ponty puts it in his refutation of the approaches taken to language taken by intellectualism and empiricism: "*the word has a meaning*" (p.177). I will come back to the important point Merleau-Ponty makes in the above quote that concerns the interpretation of the spoken word as a 'genuine gesture'. For now, I want to give weight to the claim that meaning and expression are to be thought of as different sides of the same coin, for as indicated at the beginning of this section what is also at stake here is a certain temporality - an immanence of meaning in language: "Behaviour creates meanings which are transcendent in relation to the anatomical apparatus, and yet immanent to the behaviour as such" (p.189).

In terms of presence, the abstract notions of meaning and expression are co-existent or co-present; there is no logical or temporal delay, a type of 'following-on' of the expression from the meaning. This is not to say that this form of co-existent presence is a totalising form of presence, a direct window onto the objective truth of an expression and its necessary meaning, for the total meaning (if one can speak of such a thing) of a 'fact' or 'experience' can never be fully rendered. Rather, the co-existent presence of language is a part of a wider 'field of presence' which is not only a co-presence of particular meaning and expression,

but a presence which is enveloped by the sedimentation of previous linguistic expressions and which searches out ahead of itself in the anticipation of future expression. Furthermore, as we will see in the unfolding of this section, such a co-presence is also the presence of the other – the interlocutor of communication. In his essay 'On the Phenomenology of Language', Merleau-Ponty states:

"...our present becomes the *truth of* all the other knowing events. It is like a wedge we drive into the present, a milestone bearing witness that in this moment something has taken place which being was always waiting for or 'intending to say' [*voulait dire*]...At this moment something has been founded in signification; an experience has been transformed into its meaning, has become truth. Truth is another name for sedimentation, which is itself the presence of all presents in our own."[137]

This is the depth of language, an ambiguity that we have already encountered in terms of the lived body and the perception of space, and a depth that will underscore Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of language as a *style* rather than an objectively-based system of signs. Before moving onto Merleau-Ponty's notion of language as a style, and furthermore the way in which style is *instituted* in language, I first need to articulate the difference between what Merleau-Ponty calls the 'spoken word' and the 'speaking word', and secondly, to clarify what Merleau-Ponty means when he equates the activity of speech with the gesture.

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[137] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (a), p.96.

Many commentators concentrate quite heavily on the difference and yet reciprocal dependence of the terms 'spoken word' and 'speaking word' when introducing Merleau-Ponty's notion of language in *Phenomenology...*, however, although such terms prove useful in conceptualising the chapter on expression and speech, it is interesting that Merleau-Ponty himself only uses these terms in the last few pages of the chapter, almost as though he is wary of providing a simple definition of the complex and overlapping facets of language in the body of the chapter. Again we can look towards the theme of depth to illustrate the reason why Merleau-Ponty would want to draw a distinction between the everyday chatter of the spoken word, and the speaking word which is more representative of an original, silent and creative form of language. We have already seen in the previous chapter that the perception of an object in space is always enveloped by other objects in our visual field, whilst this particular visual field is itself enveloped by the sedimentation of our previous experience and possible future experience. In this very same way, although there would seem to be a one to one reference between an expression (spoken or written) and the meaning it supposedly refers to, this common possession of meanings is nothing more than an acquired meaning which has been passed on over time across a certain cultural group. This is the status of the spoken word, and it is this phenomenon of language that gives rise to the misapprehension that expressions are merely a container for an interior and prior 'meaning'. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, the spoken word: "enjoys available significations as one might enjoy an acquired fortune." (p.197) As with the perceptual depth that envelops space, there is also a depth that envelops the spoken word, and it is the more original and creative

phenomenon of the speaking word that Merleau-Ponty is interested in retrieving. Talking specifically about the role of a speaking word, Merleau-Ponty states:

" [the speaking word] is the one in which the significant intention is at the stage of coming into being. Here existence is polarized into a certain 'significance' [*sens*] which cannot be defined in terms of any natural object. It is somewhere at a point beyond being that it aims to catch up with itself again, and that is why it creates speech as an empirical support for its own not-being. Speech is the surplus of our existence over natural being. But the act of expression constitutes a linguistic world and cultural world, and allows that to fall back into being which was striving to outstrip it. Hence the spoken word..." (p.197)

Because of the complicated subject matter Merleau-Ponty is trying to deal with (i.e. using language to express the different levels and effects of language) the above quote may seem a little ambiguous. Although he talks of speech (spoken word) being an 'empirical support' for the significance of existence (speaking word) one must not take this as a philosophy that falls back into the view that expression and meaning are separate entities. Rather one must treat the spoken word and speaking word as we did the reciprocal layers of the lived-body: as a complimentary system. Indeed, this parallel is an important one, for as Merleau-Ponty shows, it is language conceived as a 'genuine gesture' that mediates between the spoken and speaking word. The spoken word is very much akin to the status of the body image, it is the visible aspect of our 'languagely being' that is displayed as a type of cultural commodity, whilst the speaking word is akin to the invisible, self-effacing role of the body schema, a more primordial level of speech

that is constitutive of the pre-reflective, existential meaning of language. Earlier in his chapter Merleau-Ponty argues that although words are often understood as arbitrary conventions, if one were to radically reflect on a *logos* of language that is characteristic of a more 'silent order': "It would then be found that the words, vowels and phonemes are so many ways of 'singing the world', and that their function is to represent things not...by reason of an objective resemblance, but because they extract, and literally express, their emotional essence" (p.187). Therefore, it is through the reciprocal relationship of the spoken word and the speaking word that we are able to grasp the observation Merleau-Ponty makes in a previously encountered quote, that: "available meanings suddenly link up in accordance with an unknown law, and once and for all a fresh cultural entity has taken on an existence" (see above quote, p.183). But what then of this unknown law, what of language as gesture; in what way is Merleau-Ponty's early interrogation of language an investigation into style?

In confirmation of, and expanding upon, Merleau-Ponty's revalorization of the body, it is the pivotal role of the body that grounds Merleau-Ponty's early theory of language. The notion of " a *gestural meaning*, which is immanent in speech" (p.179) acts as an intermediate in a number of ways, and in Merleau-Ponty's later language can be understood as playing a *chiasmatic* role in his phenomenology[138]. On a conventional linguistic level, the linguistic gesture is between the notion of a natural sign with a fixed meaning and a conventional sign with an acquired meaning, for although the gesture does have a *real* meaning, this meaning is quite

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[138] See the final chapter and numerous working notes in *The Visible and the Invisible* on the topic of the chiasm and its mediating, reversible role, and Chapters Nine and Ten of Martin Dillon's commentary. (Dillon, M. 1988.)

capable of change over time and within specific cultural formations[139]. On a more linguistic-existential level, it is between the silent order of language and the conceptual schema of objectified language, i.e. between the speaking word and spoken word. Thirdly, on a existential level, the gesture operates at the intersection of (put abstractly) the physiological and conceptual, i.e. the lived body. Indeed, the gesture is *the* signifying capacity *and* mark of the lived body. For this reason, and on a final communicative or intersubjective level, the gesture operates at the intersection between *other* bodies, it mediates our capacity for communication. Thus, the gesture is not only the mark of my lived body, but the mark of *alterity*:

"The communication or comprehension of gestures comes about through the reciprocity of my intentions and the gestures of others, of my gestures and intentions discernible in the conduct of other people. It is as if the other person's intention inhabited my body and mine his. The gesture which I witness outlines an intentional object...It is through my body that I understand other people, just as it is through my body that I perceive 'things'. The meaning of a gesture thus 'understood' is not behind it, it is *intermingled* with the structure of the world outlined by the gesture, and which I take up on my own account." (p.185-6, my emphasis)

As can be seen from the above quote, the linguistic gesture has a type of intentional status. Such a status is clearly one which is part of our operative intentionality, which I have termed dynamic synchronicity, and it operates at the

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[139] For a discussion of Merleau-Ponty's position in relation to conventional and natural signs, see: Dillon, M. 1988. Chapter Ten, especially p.187-94.

pre-reflective level of our existence. The gesture is pre-theoretical as it merely *outlines* the intentional object which we come to have a greater or lesser grip over, that is, as an object of knowledge. In this way, the linguistic gesture *is* meaningful in that we are able to take up the immanent, bodily and emotional 'essence' of language in the act of expressive communication, and although such expression will always face the flattening power of cultural conceptualisation through its very reproduction, the linguistic gesture will still underpin the way in which language is *used*, i.e. the creative action involved in expressing ourselves time and again, whether through the sound of our vocal chords or the ink in our pen. Therefore the notion of the linguistic gesture lies at the centre of Merleau-Ponty's claim that expression is contemporaneous with meaning.

The key term that I have emphasised above is that gestural meaning is 'intermingled' with the structure of the world. I think this is a key phrase from Merleau-Ponty's chapter on language in *Phenomenology...* and possibly his thesis in general, for it is a concrete example of the way in which there is neither meaning bestowed on the world nor meaning induced from our worldly experience, rather there is (quite literally) a reciprocal *dialogue* between the body and the world. We have already seen this dialogue in the way the body has a certain pre-reflective dialogue with the way it negotiates spatial direction, notions of distance, movement and the perception of space in general, whilst the acquisition of skills and the way a body sediments self-effacing habits is another example of Merleau-Ponty's interest in operative body-intentionality or 'praktognosia' (p.140). However, although the linguistic gesture shares a similar status to other praktognostic phenomena, how does it reveal itself to us in

communication as specifically linguistic? Merleau-Ponty tells us that verbal gesticulation specifically aims at a relation to the other – its task, to communicate:

"...here what nature does not provide, cultural background does. Available meanings, in other words former acts of expression, establish between speaking subjects a common world, to which words being actually uttered in their novelty refer as does the gesture [non linguistic] to the perceptible world. And the meaning of speech is nothing other than the way in which it handles this linguistic world or in which it plays modulations on the keyboard of acquired meanings." (p. 186)

The particular attribute that characterises the linguistic gesture is that it operates within a specific cultural background. Thus words that are spoken or printed are linguistic gestures that have settled into a cohesive pattern limited to a specific cultural group whether this be a specific language – Japanese – or a regional idiom within a certain language. In terms of the genesis of meaning, the interdependance and co-existence of an expression and meaning are far from arbitrary, for the link between them has occurred through former acts of expression within a certain cultural setting. Dillon is quite clear on this point, and asserts that: "The claim being made is clear, and is never retracted in Merleau-Ponty's later writing: in order to be able to conceive of language as having an origin, we must conceive the sign as originally meaningful, and as deriving that meaning from its own physiognomy – *and* from its reference to the world."[140]

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[140] Dillon, M. 1988, p.189.

What Merleau-Ponty locates in the linguistic gesture is a creative opening onto the world which has a genuine meaning, and yet is based upon previous experience of linguistic gestures, gestures which are grounded in the pre-reflective action of the body. Our capacity to use language, our means of communication, therefore holds an ambiguous (in the positive sense of the word) position between the sedimentation of previous uses of language which are shared between a specific community, and our perpetual openness to the world through the operative intentionality of the body. This is the basis for the reciprocal relationship between the spoken word and the speaking word. As I will show in the next section, this reciprocal relationship is in fact an a-symmetrical relationship which will be sustained through the process of sedimentation. However at this stage, Merleau-Ponty's early account of linguistic gesture in *Phenomenology of Perception* should hopefully introduce the reader to the way expression carries with it a pre-conceptual, as he says, 'emotional essence' of existential meaning, a meaning which is dependent on the shared marks and sounds of communal expression (spoken word), but which is always infused with a silent, originary plane of language which is grounded by the body and always opens onto the plenitude of the world. As one commentator puts it: "we are the material truth of language through our body, which is a natural language. It is through our body that we can speak of the world because the world in turn speaks to us through the body."[141] Although language appears to be impoverished through its conceptualisation at the level of the spoken word, such an attitude is to deny the real *depth* and creative power of language, for as we have already seen with the perception of space, language is a power of action and is therefore inherently *ambiguous*. I will

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[141] O'Neill, J. 1970, p.62.

deal with the role and structure of sedimentation explicitly in the next section with reference to the notion of 'institution', however, I want to finish this section with a brief comment on the proximity of this ambiguity in the genesis of meaning, and how Merleau-Ponty conceives of this as a certain style.

In this first section to the chapter I hope to have established that language, or to put it more concretely expression, is inherently meaningful; 'the word has a meaning' we are told. Furthermore, language is grounded in the linguistic gesture, and thus through the perceptual openness of the body. These two points are to prove crucial in my criticisms of cognitive psychology's approach to dyslexia, for little attention is paid to the genesis and creativity of meaning in the form of a body world dialogue, indeed the body is not at issue at all, whilst expression is viewed in the inferior sense of phonemes acting as an empirical housing for pre-established meanings, i.e. expressions as mere representations. What is not accounted for is the mutability, creativity and ambiguity of language, that is language as a certain style of 'coherent deformation'. As Merleau-Ponty declares so eloquently in his essay 'On the Phenomenology of Language':

"I say that *I know an idea* when the power to organize discourses which make coherent sense around it has been established in me; and this power itself does not depend upon my alleged possession and face-to-face contemplation of it, but upon my having acquired a certain style of thinking. I say that a signification is acquired and henceforth available when I have succeeded in making it dwell in a speech apparatus it was not originally destined for... I had to throw them off center and recenter them in order to make them signify what I intended. It is just

this 'coherent deformation' (Malraux) of available significations which arranges them in a new sense and takes not only the hearers *but the speaking subject as well* through a decisive step."[142]

Although the above quote was published 6 years after *Phenomenolgy...* and the language is influenced more by Merleau-Ponty's reading of Saussurian linguistics, the point he is making is representative of the approach I have taken to language in this section. The notion of style has already been broached in the previous chapter: it refers to the bodily acquisition of habits that recede into the background of our experience, and through the process of sedimentation inform our perception of the world in the form of dynamic synchronicity. The way in which we conduct our pre-reflective dialogue with the world is a certain style of comporting ourselves – our being-in-the-world. When I see my friend approach from a far it is not concrete discrete features of his appearance that I perceive, but the style of his movement, the way he walks or waves outlined against my perceptual horizon. This also holds for language for "what I communicate with primarily is not 'representations' or thought, but a speaking subject, with a certain style of being and with the 'world' at which he directs his aim." (p.182) This use of the term style will be critical in Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'institution', as it opens up his phenomenology of language to a wider, historical based interrogation of how the individual is able to become incorporated into the symbolic systems of cultural institutions. However, at this juncture I merely want to point out that in engaging and 'understanding' the expressions of the other, I am becoming

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[142] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (a), p.91.

intermingled with their intentions - their style of being. To demonstarte this, let us take the example of familiarising oneself with the style of an author.

In starting to understand the style of an author one does indeed come to familiarise oneself with new meanings which come into existence for me through the available words in a text, but such meanings are not derived from them as a conclusion is derived from its premises. Rather, I am opened up to an original sound which provokes a 'coherent deformation' of my previous exposure to available significations and which arranges them in a new sense – the authors style. The linguistic gesture contains an immanent meaning which goes out ahead of itself, is *in excess of itself*, and therefore opens onto the plane of intersubjectivity and alterity. As Kwant states: "It is like a wave which contracts and expands to throw itself forward beyond its own confines."[143] It is the excess of the linguistic gesture that makes communication possible, the possibility of both understanding the style of others and expressing myself through language. Furthermore, at this point we are once again brought back to the idea of co-presence and the theme of temporality, for once we start to acquire an authors style in a text or group of texts, our intentions start to intermingle with one another in a co-presence, what Merleau-Ponty will refer to as an intentional transgression[144], which is structured by not only the future anticipation of the author's words, but a simultaneous recovery of these meanings which continue our understanding of such a style:

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[143] Kwant, R. 1963, p.57.

[144] Merleau-Ponty has taken this term from Husserl, most obviously from Chapter 5 of *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl, E. 1977), and he uses it as a way of expressing the reversibility of language between the speaker and the other which is thematised in terms of presence. He uses the phrase in the final sections of 'On the Phenomenology of Language' (Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (a)), and in *Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man* (Merleau-Ponty, M. 1974.).

"The way will be open for the speaking subject (and for others) to go straight to the whole. He will not need to reactivate the whole process; he will posses it eminently in its result. A personal and interpersonal tradition will have been founded. The *Nachvollzug*, freed from the cautious gropings of the *Vollzug*, contracts the steps of the process into one single view...[the significative intention] becomes 'available' in turn because in retrospect it gives us the illusion that it was contained in the already available significations , whereas by a sort of *ruse* it espoused them only in order to infuse them with a new life"[145]

Merleau-Ponty's early gestural theory of language is not only founded upon his more fundamental theory of bodily perception, but also acts as a concrete example and confirmation of his phenomenological standpoint. If there is a fundamental thesis to be taken from *Phenomenology of Perception* it is that through the intimate dialogue of the body and world, there is a primordial meaning that is given in our experience and throughout our existence. Such a meaning manifests itself in the synergic field of the senses, for instance our spatiality and sexuality, but perhaps the most concrete example of it is in our capacity to communicate - our use of the linguistic gesture. The body, our openness onto perception, is immersed in the depth of language - it lives in a world of speech sounds and markings. However, although we have seen in this section that the linguistic gesture is a type of 'natural meaning', such immanent meanings are always set against the backdrop of a certain cultural group and are capable of not only changing over time, but certain expressions having quite different meanings in

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[145] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (a), p.92.

alternative cultural formations. It is not simply the case that the linguistic gesture and our style of language is grounded in our open and ambiguous experience of the world, but expression in the form of the gesture is a concrete example of this very ambiguity, that is the human capacity: "to deviate from their pre-ordained direction, through a sort of *leakage* and through a genius for ambiguity which may serve to define man." (p.189). With this in mind, I will move onto Merleau-Ponty's writing after *Phenomenology*... where, with the help of both Husserl and Saussure, he pays specific attention to the notions of sedimentation and institution. This will hopefully give a better insight into exactly how language, albeit ambiguous, has a relatively stable and coherent style, and along with his numerous investigations into aphasia, I hope to be able to describe how the dyslexic does have a coherent relationship with language, albeit in a peculiarly frustrating yet creative style.

Foundation, mediation, sedimentation

In the preceding section I have tried to introduce Merleau-Ponty's initial consideration of language as found within *Phenomenology*... and have tried to stress the importance of understanding expression, a form of linguistic gesture, as the material necessity for significative meaning. Once this is established, one must treat the somewhat abstract notions of 'thought' and 'language' as interdependent and co-originary. I have also tried to stress the importance of the linguistic expression being the mark of *alterity* – it is always an opening onto the inter-

subjective plane of communication, for although there is clearly an original and creative power of speech in the form of the speaking word, this is only possible against the background of already acquired public language, i.e. the spoken word. The way in which the speaking word and the spoken word combine is evident in a certain *style*. Just as somebody will have a certain style with respect to walking down the street or decorating a room which is in excess of objectification, so there is a certain style to the way in which an author writes, a close friend speaks to me, or even the grammatical style of another language. The reason why I have reiterated this, is because what is at stake for this section of the chapter is to try and articulate as clearly as possible the way in which a certain style develops. It is my aim in this Chapter to try and delimit the style of dyslexia, the way in which the dyslexic *does have a typical style* in relation to language, rather than a *simply deficient style*. In order to do this I want to look more closely at the complementary notions of sedimentation and institution in the development of a style, sedimentation being a theme that I have already highlighted in previous chapters with reference to problems associated with dyslexia, and to begin this I will introduce what Martin Dillon has termed the '*Fundierung* Model of Language'[146].

To a certain extent the model that Dillon has derived from Merleau-Ponty, mostly from *Phenomenology*... and middle period texts, is a more systematic treatment of the relationship between the speaking word and the spoken word, although the model underlies "not only Merleau-Ponty's treatment of language but his accounts of time, reason and fact, reflection and the prereflective, thought and perception

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[146] See: Dillon, M. 1988, p.194-208.

etc.."[147] As such, the model opens onto some of the themes that Merleau-Ponty will pay greater attention to during his period from *Phenomenology...* up to the time of *The Visible and the Invisible*, the form of which take up a greater emphasis on inter-subjectivity and communication. The principle of the foundation model is the oscillation between the founding term and that which is founded, where: "Signification arouses speech as the world arouses my body- by a mute presence which awakens my intentions without deploying itself before them."[148]

Maintaining the thesis of the primacy of perception, it is our openness to the mute meanings of the world through perception that initiates the movement of the *Fundierung* model, and is conceived of as the *founding* term. This is the ground upon which expression, in the form of the linguistic gesture, is able to give rise to a public 'instituted' language, and thus 'speech' (language/thought) is that which has been *founded.* This is only the first movement of the *fundierung* model, and is more akin the notion of the speaking word, in that it (partially) accounts for our creation and acquisition of language. As Merleau-Ponty himself puts it: "speech puts up a new sense, if it is authentic speech, just as gesture endows the object for the first time with human significance, if it is an initiating gesture." (p.194) The second movement in the model brings previous experience of instituted language into consideration, and is perhaps more pertinent to our investigation into how a specific style is able to develop, a development which is facilitated through the role of sedimentation. This second movement is the returning of instituted language to the world, as Dillon puts it: "to structure it, organize it, and enrich it

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[147] Dillon, M. 1988, p.194.
[148] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (a), p.89.

with deposits of meaning and possibility."[149] Thus, through the model we are made aware that although perception initiates the process and allows expression to articulate the mute logic we find in the world into coherent public meanings, this founding moment is reliant upon previous 'acts' of expression which have been returned to the world – i.e. the perceptual world is always already organised and saturated with pre-established meanings.

Although the above model opens up a number of important philosophical problems concerning the interplay and prioritisation between an open and closed system of language (what Dillon terms 'extra-referentiality' and 'intra-referentiality', respectively), such problems are outside the scope of this thesis, and are dealt with in depth by Dillon[150]. However, one initial conclusion to be taken from the above which is pertinent to our investigation is that there is a certain reciprocity in the function of the body in this process, for not only is the body the medium in which expression finds its birthing in the lived arena of speech, but it is also the site in which language (and hence thought) are sedimented, and go on to feed back into the mute meanings of the perceptual world. Dillon is quick to highlight the asymmetry of this reciprocal model[151], for although the founding term is to be located in the world, and the instituted sign is derived from this term, one is only aware of the significance and meaning of the perceptual event via our previous experience of public language. Two quotes from Merleau-Ponty help to clarify this asymmetrical reciprocity, the first from

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[149] Dillon, M. 1988, p.194.
[150] Indeed the defence of Merleau-Ponty's primacy of perception in the light of what Dillon terms 'linguistic imminance and post-hermeneutic skepticism' (i.e. no form of linguistic expression existing prior to institutionalised language) is perhaps the main problematic which Dillon is working with in his book (Dillon, M. 1988).
[151] Dillon, M. 1988, p.195.

Phenomenology... and the second from his revised essay included in *Signs*. 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence':

"Neither the word nor the meaning of the word is, in fact *constituted* by consciousness. Let us make this clear. The word is certainly never reducible to one of its embodiments...The word has never been inspected, analysed, known and constituted, but caught and taken up by a power given to me along with the first experience I have of my body and its perceptual and practical fields...Here we have a meeting of the human and the non-human and, as it were, a piece of the world's behaviour, a certain version of its style, and the generality of its meaning as well as that of the vocable is not the generality of the concept, but the world as typical." (p.402-3)

"Before there can be such ready-made significations, language must first make significations exist as guideposts by establishing them at the intersection of linguistic gestures as that which, by common consent, the gestures reveal. Our analysis of thought gives us the impression that before it finds the words which express it, it is already a sort of ideal text that our sentences attempt to *translate*. But the author himself has no text to which he can compare his writing, and no language prior to language."[152]

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[152] Merlcau-Ponty, M. 1964 (a), p.42-3. This essay was published in 1960 as the first piece to appear in the collection *Signs*. It is a good indicator of Merleau-Ponty's detailed reflections on the diacritical nature of a closed system of language as proposed by structuralist thinkers (particularly Saussure), and concentrates on the parrallels between the expressive character of language and especially painting which are both grounded upon a *primordial* expression of the world. Although it may not be entirely representative of Merleau-Ponty's considerations on language that appeared in *The Visible and the Invisible*, it is in fact a re-writing of an essay entitled 'The Indirect Language' which was probably written in early 1952, and eventualy appeared as part of *The Prose*

The above quotes highlight a number of key points. The first, and most explicit argument being made, is that expressions and their meanings are not constituted, that is, *they are not objects which are the result of a deliberate act of consciousness*. This premise is critical for Merleau-Ponty in his attempt to move away from an intellectualist account of language towards an interpretation which privileges the lived or existential meaning of language, whilst such an argument also emphasises his intent to undercut a subject-object dichotomy. I will come back to this explicit theme below, for what Merleau-Ponty opposes to the notion of constitution is the wider, more socially and historically based theme of 'institution'. As suggested in the quote, what is at stake here is the pre-conceptual grasping of a style of language which, as we have seen in the previous chapters consideration of space, is akin to the way in which the lived-body is open to the *sense* and direction of the world through its operative intentionality (dynamic synchronicity). Once again we see that in the 'meeting of the human and the non-human' what is at stake is *presence*, not only the co-presence of the body and world, but also the co-presence of others.

The second quote also engages with the theme of presence by drawing attention to indirect character of language, that is, the manner in which meaning exists 'at the intersection of linguistic gestures'. Merleau-Ponty tells us that at this intersection 'significations exist as guideposts' as there is 'no language before language'. This should not be understood as a regression on Merleau-Ponty's behalf which privileges meaning prior to and over expression, but rather an attempt to draw attention to the way in which meaning is produced indirectly by a space or

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of the World. For an excellent discussion of the genesis of the essays that appear in this volume see O'Neill's introduction to *The Prose of the World* (Merleau-Ponty, M. 1974.).

'spread' which differentiates one word from another: "a *determinate gap* to be filled by words - the excess of what I intend to say over what is being said or has already been said"[153]. What Merleau-Ponty has only gestured towards during his earlier investigation into language is the manner in which a type of operative intentionality is at work within language and communication, something which he later comes to refer to as a 'significative intention'.

Out of the silence that is our perceptual openness to the world comes a type of intentional rupture which aims to fill the gap that exists between words in an attempt to discover what one is trying to say. However, such an intention must be regarded as pre-conceptual and carries with it Merleau-Ponty's hallmark of ambiguity, as it: "exhausts itself to the extent that it is fulfilled. For its aim to be realised, it must not be completely realised, and for something to be said, it must not be said absolutely."[154] The significative intention to occupy the differential spread between words is a complete refutation of a one to one correspondence between a sign and what it is signifying, for to make significations exist 'speech' needs the interaction of signs, the meanings of which only come through their ever shifting combinations and substitutions – the 'coherent deformation' of previously acquired language:

"For speech takes flight from where it rolls in the wave of speechless communication. It tears out or tears apart meanings in the undivided whole of the

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[153] Merleu-Ponty 1964, p.89.
[154] Merleu-Ponty, M. 1974, p.36. - 'Science and the Experience of Expression'.

nameable, as our gestures do in that of the perceptible. To make language a means or a code for thought is to break it."[155]

Even though we may be in a better position to understand the necessity of an intimate relationship between the 'blind' significantive intention and already acquired words, it is still not entirely clear *how* speech is established and reconfigured at the differential spread between words – in what way is language broken and deformed? There are a number of texts in which, taking a lead from Goldstein and the linguist von Humboldt, Merleau-Ponty offers a conceptualisation of the interface between a significative intention and signification in the form of an *innere Sprachform* (internal form) of language[156]. The issue at stake here is one of transcendence, the way in which speech is able to repeat already established meanings and yet at the same time create and yield more than has already been invested in it. Thus, in these texts, Merleau-Ponty is primarily reacting to the priority Saussure has given to our entrapment within linguistic immanence. Through the *innere Sprachform*, the words that are most suitable for fulfilling the significative intention offer themselves up as a type of 'recommendation', that is, a connotive, pre-conceptual approximation of words which are able to organise themselves without becoming acts of representation[157]:

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[155] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (a), p.17. Although during the late 1940's and early 50's Merleau-Ponty is interested in the problems of intersubjectivity and language left by Husserl and those initiated by structuralist thinkers such as Saussure, Heidegger would also seem to have real impact on the relationship between silence and language, albeit mentioned in only the briefest of manners in 'On the Phenomenology of Language', p. 97. (See: Heidegger, M. 1962, ¶ 34, especially H.161-2).

[156] For a discussion of the *innere Sprachform* (internal form) of language see: the résumé of his lecture course, 'The Problem of Speech' (Merleau-Ponty, M. 1970.); the section concerning 'The Pathology of Language' (p.63-77) in lectures contained in *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language* (Merleau-Ponty, M. 1973.) This theme, is also gestured at in his essay 'Science and the Experience of Expression' in *The Prose of the World* (Merleau-Ponty, M. 1974.)

[157] In an insightful paper by Paul Jacobson the author is keen to highlight the role played by the *innere Sprachform* in filling the 'connotive space' (differential spread) between words. See: Jacobson, P. 1979.

"The juncture of pure thought and of language occurs, then, in the *innere Sprachform*, which is differentiated according to the manner in which we speak or write, according to the manner in which we address ourselves to others. A layer of significations interposes itself between language (the totality of words) and thought. These significations presuppose a certain relationship with the language. It is this kind of non-explicit thought in language that constitutes *style*."[158]

We have already come across Merleau-Ponty's initial consideration of this phenomenon through his notion of an existential meaning or emotional essence of language. In these later texts, the idea of a meditating *innere Sprachform* draws the readers attention away from the representative power of language towards an understanding of language as a communicative activity which exists for both the speaker and listener as a certain style or typicality. Again we see the underlying theme of co-presence, for although expression is in part a self-improvisation, it is simultaneously an improvisation which borrows from our past experience of language, from others and from the world: "The *innere Sprachform* is a mental landscape common to all the members of a linguistic community. It is that which makes it possible for some people to coexist with others through a cultural milieu"[159] Following Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of certain pathologies of language, I will return to the notion of an *innere Sprachform* of language in the next section as it provides an effective framework in which to articulate not only the dislocations of language experienced by dyslexics, but moreover, the way in

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[158] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1973, p.76.
[159] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1973, p.77.

which dyslexic subjects have a specific style of meaningful improvisation and creativity.

In the final part of this section I want to provide an in-depth discussion of what has thus far been missing from the above account, namely, the sedimented aspect of language. As I hope to show, the way in which Merleau-Ponty conceives of sedimentation is more than a simple store of public language, but an active horizon of possible significations. Furthermore, the notion of an active horizon of sedimented meanings opens onto wider forms of social institutions (*Stiftungen*) which are grounded in the process of history. We have already come across the notion of sedimentation in Chapter's Three and Four, and I have demonstrated how sedimentation plays a crucial role in the synthesis of the lived body and thus operative intentionality, the perception of space, and, as gestured above, our capacity to acquire language and create new formulations of language. I have also made the point that Merleau-Ponty rarely addresses this phenomenon explicitly, especially in *Phenomenology...* However, there are two texts in which Merleau-Ponty is quite specific about sedimentation: 'On the Phenomenology of Language' and the résumé of his lecture course 'Institution in Personal and Public History'.[160]

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[160] See: Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (a). p.84-97; and, Merleau-Ponty, M. 1970. p.107-113. Some reference is made to sedimentation in the essays contained in *The Prose of the World*, especially 'Science and the Experience of Expression' (Merleau-Ponty, M. 1974, especially, p.38-43). It is puzzling that although key movements in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy from *Phenomenology...* up to *The Visible and the Invisible* are influenced by the reciprocal notions of sedimentation and institution Merleau-Ponty, and indeed some commentators, are relatively untroubled over the exact status and mode of operation of these notions. It is not as though this theme loses or gains any priority in the later texts, for in one of his final working notes from *The Visible and the Invisible* entitled 'History, Transcendental geology, Historical time, historical space – Philosophy' (June 1, 1960) he states the problem of finding: "the simultaneous *Urstiftung* of time and space which makes there be a historical landscape and a quasi-geographical inscription in history. Fundamental problem: the sedimentation and the reactivation" (p.259) Indeed, the problem of sedimentation and reactivation in relation to temporality will be central to my final chapter (Merleau-Ponty, M. 1968).

In my study of habits and skill acquisition in Chapter Three we have already found a precursor to the background of already acquired public language which is 'broken' into new formulations of linguistic expression. Merleau-Ponty states: "I perceive with my body or my senses, since my body and my senses are precisely that familiarity with the world born of habit, that implicit or sedimentary body of knowledge." (p.238) Thus, in one of Merleau-Ponty's more specific references to sedimentation in *Phenomenology...*, we see that, like the self-effacing nature of skills, the body's sedimentation of habits into a type of implicit knowledge is something that thwarts a determinate conceptualisation and can only be grasped in its generality or style, a phenomenon which is mirrored by the expression of meanings against the background of instituted/sedimented language. Because of this self-effacing character of expression, any serious interrogation of language necessitates a loosening of our pre-reflective intentional web in order to unearth sedimented structures of meaning. The sedimentation of previous expressions remains covered over to consciousness, not only because they become part of our own background of institutionalised language, but moreover, because expressions are the acquisition of a *cultural tradition* and are therefore the sedimentation of all presents in our own. Furthermore, the fact that sedimented language does not coincide with itself is not only down to sedimented language being the horizon of all previous presents, but also because the transcendent meanings of sedimented language go out ahead of themselves, as one commentator puts it, they have a "factor of beyondness".[161]

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[161] See: Mallin, S. 1979, p.184.

Cultural constructions differ from natural objects in that they carry a depth with them in the form of a cultural background and history: "They are never there in the same way. Each morning, after night has intervened, we must make contact with them again. They remain impalpable.."[162] This theme is taken up in earnest by Merleau-Ponty in the résumé to his 1955 lecture course 'Institution in Personal and Public History' where he advocates the notion of institution over constitution in our understanding of consciousness:

"Thus what we understand by the concept of institution are those events in experience which endow it with durable dimensions, in relation to which a whole series of other experiences will acquire meaning, will form an intelligible series or a history – or again those events which sediment in me a meaning, not just as survivals or residues, *but as the invitation to a sequel, the necessity of a future*"[163] (my emphasis)

As we have already seen in the wide ranging scope of the *Fundiering* model, sedimentation is a type of general power which is not only at work in the body's development of meaningful structures in the world, but in the development of language, of history, and ultimately of a form of transcendence which Merleau-Ponty refers to as 'truth': "Truth is another name for sedimentation, which is itself the presence of all presents in our own."[164] Although Merleau-Ponty's (re)interpretation of 'situated truth' is outside the specific interests of this Chapter, the idea of sedimentation being akin to, or productive of, truth is of interest to this specific enquiry as it opens up the more localised notion of sedimented

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[162] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1974, p.124
[163] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1970, p.108-9.

expressions onto an historical and thus temporal plane. By doing so, Merleau-Ponty emphasises truth as the recognition of *appropriate* expressions which subsist within a field of *becoming*[165], as opposed to a static, timeless conception of objective truth such as the algorithm: "Our present expressive operations, instead of driving the preceding ones away – simply succeeding and annulling them-salvage, preserve, and (insofar as they contain some truth) take them up again"[166] This is the reason why I have emphasised the end of the above quote, for it is this power of sedimentation, the power to instigate a sequel and future to my experience, which seems to be most affected in the dyslexic's style of expression. Although I will deal with this assertion in the final section of this Chapter, it is worth noting here that as my phenomenological descriptions of dyslexia are developed, the emphasis on presence understood as a past *and* futural co-existence seems to be growing with each theme I consider.

In my interpretation of the *Fundierung* model above, it may be remembered that the model is marked by a certain asymmetry. With the above study of sedimentation we may be in a better position to understand why such a paradox exists. In the creation of new expressions the significative intention is actualised against a backdrop of sedimented meanings which in turn transcends this particular gestalt of sedimented meaning. Now although on one level there *is* a transcendence, on a concurrent level this new meaning is itself solidified and thus becomes part of a re-styled gestalt of sedimented meaning, i.e. a movement of transcendence *and* a recuperation. As Dillon puts it: "It is the sedimented language of acquired usage that...creates the illusion of a transparent

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[164] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964(a), p.96.
[165] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1970, p.108.

signification: in short, sedimentation allows a transcendence of the signifier toward the signified."[167] Thus sedimented language, and indeed the wider idea of cultural institution (*Stiftungen*), is not only the ground of our acquired 'style' of language, but bestows us with the possibility of creating new expressions. As one commentator notes, sedimented meanings contained within either language or cultural institutions, "act as a pivot to organize other ideas or experiences"[168], and thus sedimented language is very much an open structure which, in its self-effacement, invites further search and interrogation or as Merleau-Ponty puts it, "an indefinite elaboration"[169]. It is in this way that although "Truth is another name for sedimentation", the truth Merleau-Ponty is describing is one which is grounded in history and temporality, and rather than being a logical or determinate truth, it is in fact closer to a certain style which is shared amongst a community. The working of the past against the present conceived of as sedimentation:

"produces a table of diverse, complex probabilities, always bound to local circumstances, weighted with a coefficient of facticity, and such that we can never say of one that it is more true than another, although we can say that one is more false, more artificial, and less open to a future in turn less rich."[170]

What we can take from this study of sedimentation and the wider notion of institution is that, as we have already seen in the case of spatiality, our ability to use already acquired language and create new formulations of language depends

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[166] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (a), p.95.
[167] Dillon, M. 1988, p.204.
[168] Jacobson, P. 1979, p.165.
[169] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1970, p.109.

upon a certain co-existence of the past in the present which also is an invitation to future interrogation. In this way, the power of sedimentation underscores a historical underpinning to our acquisition of language, whilst this co-presence of all previous presents is also grounded in our ability to communicate with the other. Rather than a mere container of previously acquired language, the gestalt of sedimented language is very much an active structure around which a certain style of language and its accompanying 'truths' are organised. Because Merleau-Ponty conceives of language as an ambiguous style which resists determinate conceptualisation, he has given back to language a certain depth, a characteristic which not only highlights the becoming of language, but the inevitability of meanings escaping our complete grasp. It is through this very characteristic of language, an invisibility within its visible style, that we come to say more than we intend in conversation or in self-dialogue, and furthermore, how communication and the acquisition of language is possible. In the final section of this Chapter I will describe how Merleau-Ponty, in both his early and middle period work, provides a good springboard with which to interpret the style of dyslexia through his discussion of aphasia and related language problems. What I intend to show is that by applying some of my previous phenomenological descriptions of dyslexia to the context of expression, specifically the notions of style, significative intention and sedimentation, not only will I be able to provide a richer interpretation the dyslexic's style in relation to language, but this style will be conceived of as a *meaningful* style which focuses on just *how* people with developmental dyslexia go about maintaining such a meaningful relationship with language.

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[170] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1970, p.112.

The Style of Dyslexic Expression

Merleau-Ponty on language Disorders

Although Merleau-Ponty's focus on language disorders is primarily utilised as a means of giving an empirical support to his own philosophy of language, he does nevertheless offer a phenomenological interpretation of a variety of disorders, and it is his application of certain phenomenological themes I have detailed above, especially that of sedimentation, that I am now interested in. There are three main texts in which, building upon previous clinical work, Merleau-Ponty gives his interpretation of a number of language disorders: 'The 'Central Sector' of Behaviour and the Problem of Localizations' from Part II of *The Structure of Behaviour*; 'The Body as Expression, and Speech' in *Phenomenology...*; and, perhaps more importantly for this Chapter, the first two chapters from *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language*, specifically the chapter entitled: 'The Pathology of Language'.[171] The main form of language disorder studied by Merleau-Ponty in the above texts is the general condition of 'aphasia' and its subsequent sub-disorders (motor aphasia, alexia, paraphasia), the definition of which he opposes to the disability of 'anarthria', the loss of power to articulate speech, interpreting 'true aphasia' as:

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[171] See (respectively): Merleau-Ponty, M. 1963; Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962; and, Merleau-Ponty, M. 1973. The reader is also advised to look closely at both the 'Forward' by Edie, J and the 'Translators Preface' by Silverman, H for background information concerning the lectures contained in *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language*. It should be noted that, as with Merleau-Ponty's uses of abnormal psychology presented in earlier chapters, his phenomenological interpretation of language disorders is built upon clinical work already conducted by psychologists, physiologists and those working within the field of linguistics, in particularly Goldstein (and Gelb), Grünbaum, and in *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language*, von Humboldt.

"inseparable from disturbances affecting intelligence – and over and above automatic language, which is in effect a third person motor phenomenon, an intentional language which is alone involved in the majority of cases of aphasia. The individuality of the 'verbal image' was, indeed, dissociated: what the patient has lost, and what the normal person possesses, is not a certain stock of words, but a certain way of using them. The same word which remains at the disposal of the patient in the context of automatic languages escapes him in that of language unrelated to a purpose…" (p.175)

This quote needs to be taken as something of a preliminary definition of aphasia, although the arguments he makes here are quite clear: aphasia is something different from disorders affecting the motor capability of speaking, and should be considered as a difference in the *intentionality* of expression. Moreover, aphasia should not be understood as a specific *deficit*, but as a difference involved with the praxis of language, its attitude and *style*. The reason why I suggest that the above quote is only a provisional definition is that, in taking his usual middle course between empiricism and intellectualism, Merleau-Ponty is keen to stress that theories of language acquisition and interpretations of language disorders cannot be understood simply as an 'operation of intelligence' or 'motor phenomenon', rather: "it is wholly motility and wholly intelligence. What establishes its inherence in the body is the fact that linguistic deficiencies cannot be reduced to a unity…" (p.194). The general claim being made here is that although the specific features of what is affected in language disorders may differ - i.e. that which is affected may be the body of the word, the material instrument of material expression, the structure of the whole experience, or (perhaps closest

to dyslexia) the immediate meaning of the word -the verbal concept (p.194-5) - these differences in linguistic experience cannot be reducible to motility or intelligence alone. In both my account of Merleau-Ponty's early theory of expression via the linguistic gesture, and his later formulation of the *Fundierung* model, what is at stake is an interpretation of linguistic meaning which is akin to a typicality or style, a meaning which is given in the transcendence of communication. Thus, in the various cases of language disorders noted by Merleau-Ponty, what is different (I would hesitate to say lost) is the relationship between the person in question and the existential meaning of language which is shared amongst a community:

"But the patient does not make the same use as the normal subject of these [linguistic] materials...It cannot be held that language in his case has become automatic; there is no sign of a decline of general intelligence, and it is still the case that words are organized through their meaning. But the meaning is, as it were, ossified...We can perceive, in contrast with this, the essence of normal language: the intention to speak can reside only in an open existence." (p.196)

Interpretations intent on reducing language disorders to motor or intellectual deficits fail to account for the lived experience of language, the existential or emotional essence that is indicative of our experience of communication, and therefore they miss the more fundamental grounding of language in the body's co-existence with the sedimented meanings that are derived from the world and others. As with the previous examples Merleau-Ponty has taken from abnormal psychology, the interpretation of language disorders also highlights a disruption of

operative intentionality. Here the dynamic synchronicity between body and world which usually engenders our experience with a certain style of meaning is disrupted, and although that which is ultimately disrupted is the general (perhaps fundamental) power of transcendence, such a disruption is manifest in being unable to apprehend and/or communicate the existential meaning of language. Hence, in cases of linguistic disorders, there is a continuation of what we have already seen in motor and perceptual difficulties encountered in previous chapters through a loosening of the body's pre-reflective openness to world, i.e. the intentional arc which usually remains in contact with the primordial world of practical, linguistic, ethical, political and aesthetic meaning. Hence, it is the disruption of the body's meaningful spontaneity (the 'I can'), already understood in Chapter Four as the directional/meaningful term *sens*, which is also affected for aphasics in the form of the spontaneous capacity of the body to wrestle new meanings from already acquired language.

Merleau-Ponty is at pains to show that such a problem cannot be understood as simply resulting from a deficiency in the 'categorial act', as such an act: "builds itself up within a certain 'attitude' (*Einstellung*). It is on this attitude, moreover, that speech is based, so there can be no question of making language rest upon pure thought" (p.192). This point is highly important for my arguments concerning the meaningful relationship dyslexics have with language as it calls into question some of the approaches adopted by experimental psychology which place priority on a purely categorial disturbance, for example a phonolgical delay or deficit[172], and points towards a more originary ground of linguistic meaning

[172] See Chapter One of this thesis.

and communication which allows for a more positive definition of certain 'disorders'. Through Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological interpretation we understand that what is *impaired* for those suffering from aphasia (and as I will argue, those suffering from dyslexia) is the stability of a body-world dialogue in a linguistic situation, whilst the concrete symptoms of such an impairment (e.g. the difficulty of using words in an abstract context) should be regarded as *differences* in the attitude and style which has built up concurrently with language usage. What the reader can infer from Merleau-Ponty is that in cases of developmental disorders (with which I would include the aphasias looked at by Merleau-Ponty and my own topic of dyslexia) the difference between the normal and the abnormal is one of a difference in style and not a deficit or lack of intelligence. To back up this claim, and to introduce the notion of a positive approach to dyslexia by way of 'compensatory strategies', I quote what I regard as a key piece of text from 'The Pathology of Language' in *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language*:

"What is of interest in Goldstein's research is that it reveals the role of a *replacement function* which, for the outside observer, masks the problem... There are subjects who no longer posses the notion of number and who, nevertheless, by a function of replacement, can give the appearance of counting...This discovery invites the psychiatrist to a much deeper examination, while before it was, above all, a question of determining the function that the patient was capable of performing and those that he could no longer perform. Now, it is a question of

investigating, even in cases where the patient succeeds, *by what path*, or *in what sense*, he succeeds."[173]

This approach adopted from Goldstein is one of the most explicit references made by Merleau-Ponty to an interpretation of abnormalities (linguistic or not) which accounts for the manner in which the subject in question does have a relationship with the world and its mute meanings, albeit it a different style or different 'path' taken to such a 'success'. This last point is critical for my interpretation of dyslexia, for irrespective of what may be the underlying *cause* of dyslexia, the underlying *experience* of dyslexia is one which is *meaningful*, that is, whether the dyslexic's current task is successful or not, in either of these cases such an experience will be meaningful *for them*. This is a point which Merleau-Ponty is only too aware of, and in arguing against pathological behaviour being understood as 'absolute otherness' he states: "Pathological behaviour also has a meaning. Sickness is self-regulating. There is an establishment of an equilibrium which is other than the normal level, but here a totally incomprehensible phenomenon is not in question"[174]

In order to make my basic argument concerning dyslexic meaning a little more explicit I think that some conceptual clarification is needed. Although I have made a similar point in previous Chapters (Chapter Two especially), it is important to grasp that when I refer to dyslexic experience as meaningful I am making a distinction between meaningful understood as: 1) a 'third person' conception of meaningful which indicates whether a situation (e.g. the correct

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[173] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1973, p.71.
[174] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1973, p.64.

spelling of a word) can be deemed meaningful by *others*, i.e. a conception of meaningful which thus depends on its accuracy in relation to inter-subjective 'rules' of behaviour; and, 2) a first person, phenomenological conception of meaningful which interprets all experience, reflexive and pre-reflective, as meaningful ("Because we are in the world, we are *condemned to meaning*", p.xix), even when an experience may contradict the previously mentioned inter-subjective rules of behaviour, e.g. the way in which a dyslexic believes a word should be spelled and finds such a spelling meaningful, albeit 'inaccurate' to others.

The distinction I am trying to draw out here is that between a reflexive notion of meaningful which adheres to a standard of accuracy, and a pre-reflective notion of meaningful which adheres to a certain style or attitude. Although these two interpretations of meaningful cannot be taken in complete isolation as they have something of a reciprocal relationship (accuracy and attitude, as with reflexive and pre-reflective are inter-dependant), there is nevertheless a distinction to be made, a distinction which is illustrated well by pathological behaviour such as that exhibited in dyslexia. If one applies an interpretation of 'meaningful' to dyslexia that is synonymous with 'accuracy', although the dyslexic may have some success in reading and writing activities, much of their linguistic behaviour will be construed as meaningless, i.e. *incomprehensible*. However, if we are to take a phenomenological attitude towards dyslexic behaviour, although the dyslexic may indeed have great trouble *comprehending* words and sentences in a text to the extent where a text presents itself as *incomprehensible*, the text is in no way meaningless for the dyslexic by virtue of the text presenting itself in a certain *style*

– incomprehensibility, disorientation and frustration in a linguistic situation are all meaningful attitudes and styles of the dyslexic's being-in-the-world. Thus a further conceptual distinction can be made: in adopting the phenomenological attitude, we see that there is a profound difference between a situation being interpreted as incomprehensible and being interpreted as meaningless. This point is absolutely critical for a positive phenomenology of dyslexia, for even though written language may be experienced as profoundly frustrating and unpredictable for the dyslexic, such frustration and awareness of unpredictability is itself constitutive of a meaningful relationship between the dyslexic and written language. Moreover, once we have established that the dyslexic's relationship with a text is meaningful, certainly on an experiential level, this provides a ground for investigating the way in which the dyslexic is able to find success in tasks which involve written language, that is, the capability of transcending a situation which is initially experienced as incomprehensible (albeit meaningful) towards an experience of comprehensibility; i.e. an investigation concerned with: "*by what path*, or *in what sense*, he succeeds". Before I move onto a more positive phenomenological interpretation of the dyslexic's style of expression, I now want to try and use Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of language to describe the manner in which the dyslexic *does* have a problematic relationship with the written word.

The dyslexic's relationship with meaning

Let me first recap what we have learned in previous Chapters concerning the breakdown of reading and writing tasks for dyslexics. In Chapter Three's study of

dyslexia and the lived-body I made my basic claim that will run throughout this thesis, that is: dyslexia can be interpreted as impaired ability for dyslexics to sediment or habituate a type of body schema that is suitable for reading and writing skills. This assertion opened up two main interpretations. The first is that certain attributes of our body schema, that is our pre-reflective horizon of bodily habits and postures, are simply not suitable for the acquisition of skills suited to the utilisation of the written word, an assertion which could be *explained* in physiological terms (a deficit in motor skills, or low-level performance of the sensory system, especially eye movement and aural ability), in cognitive terms (a deficit in phonological ability) or in neurological terms (for example, Stein's hypothesis of an impairment in the magnocellular pathway). A second and more phenomenological interpretation of problematic sedimentation can be given in the study of skill acquisition, i.e. there is a problematic interplay between the body schema and the body image required for the acquisition and refinement of habits that are suitable for reading and writing. The problem faced by the dyslexic is that the interplay between reflection (the body image) and concrete activity (the pre-reflective body schema) is fragmented, and hence only an unsteady or superficial body schema will develop. Whereas for a non-dyslexic the lived-body's capacity to sediment the existential meaning of words will become second nature, the terrible problem faced by a dyslexic person is a continual faltering of existential meaning, and a concurrent lack of conviction when a meaning has been decided upon.

When the above conclusions are applied to the experience of spatial perception, the type of dys-location experienced by the dyslexic is indicative of a faltering or

stuttering of dynamic synchronicity; that is, the body-world dyad cannot establish a smooth and pragmatic dialogue. This faltering arises because dyslexic space is more normative/impartial than pathological/personal, and thus such a space hesitates in offering itself up for further (and thus *futural*) interrogation. It is not simply isolated words themselves that fail to offer themselves freely, but their position, the context of words, their spelling and grammar, and the background of the page. The dyslexic's experience of space *is* meaningful, but inasmuch as its style (its 'mode of passing') is far from smooth, this singles out the dyslexic from the rest of his/her linguistic community. The question now is how such a difference in style presents itself in the acquisition and use of language?

The theme of sedimentation once again seems to hold the key to the above question, and will deepen the above descriptions of dyslexic experience. In the previous section, and in Merleau-Ponty's study of language disorders, we found that language is experienced as an attitude and style rather than a determinate system of equivalencies between the word and its meaning – language is *indirect*. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of language contains a number of key claims that are relevant to my discussion of dyslexia. Firstly, language is grounded upon the body's openness to the world, i.e. perception, and thus explanations which understand dyslexia as primarily a cognitive-language disorder, in particularly the phonological hypothesis, seem to neglect the *manner* in which phonemes and words are acquired. My point here is that, against cognitive theories and philosophical theories of linguistic immanence, the operative intentionality of our body is paramount in wrestling mute meanings from the world, whilst the body also plays a reciprocal role in returning these 'embodied' meanings to the world in

the form of instituted language. Thus, in cases such as dyslexia where there is a pathological disruption of language, language cannot be treated as a closed system of learned *representations* acquired by intellectual activity, as this neglects the role of the body (and thus perception) in the acquisition and practical use of language, i.e. communication. Furthermore, as I shall argue in Chapter Six, an interpretation of language as the storage of linguistic representations also presupposes a highly rigid (non *ek-static*) notion of memory. Merleau-Ponty's notion of a linguistic *gesture* puts a quite different emphasis on the way in which we understand a disruption of language, for just as thought cannot be divorced from the body, so language cannot be divorced from perception, and therefore the dyslexic's disruption of language must be interpreted as a wider more general phenomenon. What this phenomenological approach points towards is a different conception of language which is understood as a style rather than a representation, and moreover, an understanding of dyslexia as a general problem of operative intentionality which affects the way in which dyslexics grasp the style of others and create their own peculiar style.

A second main point to come from the preceding sections is that our experience of language is one in which meaning is always open to further elaboration, and is therefore characterised by an ambiguity and typicality rather than exactness: "The word has never been inspected, analysed, known and constituted, but caught and taken up by a power given to me along with the first experience I have of my body and its perceptual and practical fields..." (p.402-3). Merleau-Ponty explains our experience of language as a style in terms of the interaction and substitution of signs, thereby emphasising the *differential spread* between words and phonemes

constitutive of meaning, rather than a representative role of a signifier which is the necessary counterpart of a specific meaning. In *experiential* terms, what takes place when one acquires a new meaning is not the apprehension and storage of a representative image, as much of the cognitive literature would have it (whether this be oral or visual), but an acquisition of meaning which sees the fulfilment (and hence exhaustion) of a significative intention in the form of a style, an existential meaning which resides *between* words and phonemes. What this account of 'style' offers to an experiential-based investigation of dyslexia, and which traditional approaches fail to take into account, is not only a different manner of understanding the acquisition and use of language, but the pre-reflective role played by the body in the form of a significative intention and sedimented meaning. Thus, the pending question is: in what manner is the general power of operative intentionality (which includes the notions of a significative intention and sedimentation) modified for dyslexics?

I start with a general claim taken from Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of aphasia; that the dyslexic's experience of language is one which has a tendency towards meaning becoming congealed, that is, the existential meaning of written language is often dimmed or lacking. Now as I have argued elsewhere[175], in drawing a *conceptual* parallel between Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of disorders such as aphasia and my own phenomenological interpretation of dyslexia, I am not simply reducing dyslexia to the type of disturbances outlined by Merleau-Ponty, but merely using Merleau-Ponty's observations as an exemplar with which to make a general claim about the congealment of existential meaning. Indeed, even in the

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[175] See: Philpott, M. 1998. 'Response to Commentators'.

physiological and psychological literature on dyslexia there are studies suggesting a similarity in symptoms between dyslexia and other acquired and developmental disorders.[176] Running in tandem with the above claim is the assertion, already specified above in relation to the conclusions of Chapter Three, that through a phenomenological investigation we find that dyslexia is marked by a loosening of the intentional arc in the context of a linguistic situation, i.e. a de-synchronising of the dynamic synchronicity between world/word and body.

In light of the first two sections of this chapter, the way I interpret these general claims centres around a disruption of the asymmetric interplay between the sedimentation of linguistic meanings and role of a significative intention. If we give credence to the idea of communication being an *indirect* activity, then it will not suffice to argue that in cases of dyslexia there is simply a faltering or loss of a significative intention in linguistic situations. Although it might be intuitive to focus on how there is a failure of the 'instrument' which actualises suitable meanings, the realisation of a significative intention is only made possible against the background of previously sedimented meanings, and thus a wider interpretation is called for. In our attempt to understand the meanings of words and sentences (i.e. the style of the text), or in our attempt to communicate (i.e. create) through the written word, the body's capacity to go out ahead of itself in the form of a significative intention is understood as a pre-reflective attempt to find a suitable expression which will fill the differential spread within language. It is therefore evident that the congealment of existential meaning I have associated with dyslexia is a problem which, although having a detrimental effect upon the

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[176] See: Richardson, A. & Stein, J. 1993a; and, Richardson, A. & Stein, J. 1993b.

capacity for significative intentions to actualise suitable meanings, is in fact something which should be aligned more with the sedimentation and reactivation of previously acquired meanings. This in turn opens up a number of interpretations, all of which are in some way a response to the question of how we are to understand a disruption of sedimented meaning for the dyslexic.

My first hypothesis focuses on the acquisition and integration of new meanings. We have seen that the acquisition of meanings is based upon the coherent deformation of the current gestalt of previously sedimented meanings. I suggest that in cases of dyslexia (although this would not rule out a similarity with other language disorders), the dyslexic *is able* to transcend his/her current gestalt of sedimented meanings such that a new expression and its existential meaning is learned. However, the subsequent integration of this acquisition into a fresh gestalt that is capable of offering itself as a horizon for future creative usage is problematic for dyslexics. My argument would be that, as with the problems of sedimentation noted in Chapters Three and Four, what is perhaps most notable in cases of dyslexia is a susceptibility towards an *incohesive* sedimentation of existential meaning, thus resulting in an unstable horizon against which language can be utilised. It is important to note that in dyslexia there must be some formation of a reliable horizon with which to acquire and make use of language, for if it were not the case there would be no relationship to written language at all. Nevertheless, because the horizon upon which communication depends seems to be less cohesive for dyslexics, this marks a difference between that manner in which they seem to be less successful in utilising the written word; e.g. the

capacity to read words, often quite basic in structure, that have previously been acquired.

It is important to understand that the above argument concerning dyslexics having a horizon of sedimented meanings which lacks cohesiveness is not conceived as a problem of recalling words that have been stored as 'representations' in a part of a cognitive system. Instead, by taking a phenomenological approach to the above we find that by failing to fully integrate new meanings into a stable gestalt, the horizon upon which the dyslexic's linguistic world depends will always be susceptible to rising to the *foreground*, rather than acting as a constant background upon which meanings can arise through the differential spread of language. Consequently there is a problem with integrating newly acquired expressions into a sedimented gestalt which is stable[177] and thus *self-effacing*. What the dyslexic is liable towards is an unreliable background (i.e. not altogether missing) of sedimented meanings which are integral in the acquisition of new meanings and a general creative use of language. In more experiential terms, the manner in which an unreliable background can be understood is through a temporary collapse of *difference* – i.e. a foreclosing of the differential spread of language which flattens out the depth of language. An unreliable background which is prone to rising to the fore is unable to present a differential spread of language to the significative intentions of the lived body, the result of which is the deprivation of style which is common to a linguistic community. Indeed, if one is to look at the symptoms of dyslexia, a concrete example of this phenomenon is the way in which letters, words and lines of text fail to offer themselves to the

reader as static, discrete and, thus, coherent[178], the dyslexic experiencing them as blurred, moving or sometimes reversed. What the dyslexic is up against is a world in which language often refuses to *break*, to *deform*, to *differentiate* from itself, and this is manifest in the way that expressions and their meanings fail to offer themselves freely for usage, i.e. *there is a congealment of existential meaning in dyslexia.*

Considering that the above account has interpreted dyslexia as a general problem of operative intentionality that is manifest in linguistic situations rather than a specific 'language disorder', it may come as little surprise to recognise a parallel between the above account and the phenomenon of dys-location in Chapter Four. As Merleau-Ponty reminds us: "What then does language express, if it does not express thoughts? It presents or rather *is* the subject's taking up of a position in the world of his meanings." (p.193) Because operative intentionality subtends the intimate relationship between body and world which is constitutive of meaning and typicality, if there is a slackening of the body's intentional arc in dyslexia, this cannot be interpreted merely as a breakdown of linguistic expression, but is *directly* tied to the way in which dyslexics orientate themselves within, and perceive, space. In Chapter Four I have described the dyslexic as having a greater relationship with normative rather than pathological space, and I believe that this very same structural phenomenon can be seen in the dyslexic's relationship to language. In the previous Chapter I concluded that the dyslexic's relationship with

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[177] The notion of stable would have to be understood here as a normative concept, i.e. stable would have to be measured against the behavioural expectations of a similar linguistic community, e.g. reading age or spelling age.

[178] As I have documented in Chapter One, the blurring and movement of letters/words/lines of words on a page is one of the main features of dyslexia, although such a disability is generally not

space, most notably in linguistic situations, was marked by a deprivation of lived distance or 'play' (*Speilraum*) which binds the body to things which 'exist' and count for it. Such a deprivation occurs because of a disequilibrium between clear and dark space which for dyslexics comes out in favour of clear space (" [an] impartial space in which all objects are equally important" p.287). This is experienced by the dyslexic as letters, words and lines of text offering themselves in a vague, indiscriminate style rather than a manner which embodies a specific meaning. Now in the context of language, I believe that the dyslexic's relationship with normative/clear space has a direct counterpart in the way in which an unstable horizon of sedimented language can be interpreted as a foreclosing of the differential spread *between* phonemes and words. What seems to be different for dyslexics in both the contexts of space and communication is a disruption of operative intentionality which comes as a result of the dyslexic's insufficient commitment to a more personal/pathological relationship with language and space. If we interpret this in terms of the differential spread in language, it seems that the dyslexic is persistently thwarted by an experience of language which tends towards *undifferentiation*, and it is this foreclosure which, on Merleau-Ponty's terms, lies at the heart of dyslexics having difficulties with grasping the intersubjective style of language with conviction (on behalf of the dyslexic) and accuracy (on behalf of the third person).

Without wanting to resort to new vocabulary for the sake of it, I think the best way of summarising the above interpretations of the dyslexic's relationship with language, and as a precursor to a positive phenomenology of dyslexia, is to draw

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regarded as a motor-visual problem in *origin*. For a explicit discussion of this symptom, see: Garzia, R 1993, especially p. 423-7.

attention to the expression Merleau-Ponty uses in 'The Pathology of Language'[179] by saying that, more than simply having a different manner of being in the world, the dyslexic has a different *innere Sprachform* of language (see previous section for a discussion of the *innere Sprachform*). Perhaps most significant for my interpretation of dyslexia, Merleau-Ponty states:

"the *innere Sprachform*...is the reflection in language of the world view appropriate to a given culture. Each language has its own way of expressing different relationships, like space and time...The *innere Sprachform* is the totality of processes and expressions that are produced when we are at the point of expressing out thought or of understanding the thought of other people. The juncture of pure thought and of language occurs, then, in the *innere Sprachform*, which is differentiated according to the manner in which we speak or write, according to the manner in which we address ourselves to others."[180]

When comparing the above quote to my preceding interpretations of the dyslexic's relationship with operative intentionality, sedimentation and style, it would be understandable to claim that the dyslexic has a consistently different *innere Sprachform* to the rest of a linguistic community by virtue of the different relationship they have with the written word. I have already tried to give a rich interpretation of how the dyslexic experiences the disruption of a linguistic situation, but what the above quote also draws attention to is the way in which a difference in the *innere Sprachform* can also hold consequence for the way in which fundamental themes such as space and time are experienced. Thus, the

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[179] See: Merleau-Ponty, M. 1973.
[180] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1973, p.75-6.

parallels I have drawn between the breakdown of operative intentionality in the contexts of space and language are in fact more than just parallels. What we can understand through the notion of the dyslexic having a different *innere Sprachform* is that this will have some effect (depending on how severe the dyslexia is) on the way in which they relate to space and time. Furthermore, although up until now I have interpreted the different facets of the breakdown in dyslexia as co-originary, I will tentatively suggest that by following the above quote it may be justified to suggest that not only do dyslexics express and experience time and space differently from others, but such phenomena are grounded in the different *innere Sprachform* of language possessed by dyslexics. Although I wish to deal explicitly with the relationship between dyslexia, time and language in the final chapter of the thesis, a provisional remark is that a foreclosure of the differential spread in language has a direct consequence for the manner in which the existential meaning of words is *present* for dyslexics. However, what remains in the conclusion of this chapter is the realisation that although having a different *innere Sprachform* of language, the dyslexic is able to communicate through the written word, and thus I finally turn to the manner in which the dyslexic does have a style of language.

The compensatory style of dyslexia

Although I have interpreted the breakdown of language for dyslexics as a foreclosure of the differential spread of language, such a phenomenon should not be understood as a static entity which manifests itself as a mere breakdown.

Indeed, just as I have argued in Chapter Four that the phenomenon of dyslocation has a direct correlate in the form of relocation, so a foreclosure of the differential spread of language which results in a congealment of existential meaning also has a more positive correlate. I have already tried to stress at the beginning of this section that, although the dyslexic may have a relationship with language which is marked by incoherence, there is nevertheless a *meaningful* relationship, i.e. the breakdown of a linguistic situation is meaningful for the dyslexic in that it will be confusing and frustrating. On a general level, the dyslexic's experience of written language is one which thwarts a certain ease of acquisition and usage, although a relationship is still maintained. Moreover, on the specific level of how dyslexics experience a breakdown of language, the disruption of a goal-orientated activity such as reading is not only met with confusion, but the need to overcome such a disruption, a form of puzzle solving which both Jakobson and Merleau-Ponty refer to as an act of *reequilibrium*.

I have already touched on the notion of equilibrium and reequilibrium in a number of places in the thesis: the ever shifting equilibrium of the lived body in its synthesis of body schema and body image; the equilibrium between the lived-body and the world that structures our operative intentionality; the ever fluctuating tension that is constitutive of the 'maximum grip' of our perceiving body over an object in the phenomenal field; and, in the case of dyslexic space, the notion of breakdown of equilibrium (dyslocation) and the attempt at a reequilibrium (re-location). Thus, in cases of both 'normal' *and* 'pathological' behaviour, our being-in-the-world is subtended by a combination of subtle, and sometimes not so subtle (i.e. pathological, traumatic, ecstatic behaviour) shifts in

and out of a provisional equilibrium which is shaped by the specificity of our goals in a current situation. Merleau-Ponty is quite explicit about such notions when applying them to the themes of phoneme acquisition and the pathology of language in *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language*[181], and in a more general vein in *The Structure of Behaviour* where, in his discussion of vital structures, he states:

"...the preferred behaviour is the one which permits the easiest and most adapted action: for example, the most exact spatial designations, the finest sensory discriminations. Thus each organism, in the presence of a given milieu, has its optimal conditions of activity and its proper manner of realizing equilibrium; and the internal determinants of this equilibrium are not given by a plurality of vectors, but by a general attitude toward the world"[182]

Thus, the notion of equilibrium is being used as an ever fluctuating, provisional 'indicator' of optimal behaviour, which is in turn dependent upon the current situation – the milieu. The need to maintain a suitable equilibrium is therefore of the uppermost importance whether this concerns pathological or 'normal' behaviour. However, what is different in cases such as dyslexia is the extent to which, not only will there be a greater occurrence of conspicuous reequilibrium, but this activity will become habituated, i.e. it will become part of their very *style of being-in-the-world*. Merleau-Ponty draws attention to this phenomenon of pathological behaviour using Jakobson's example of the aphasiac who, whilst

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[181] See: Merleau-Ponty, M. 1973, p.25. The notion of reequilibrium also has a parallel with the role of a replacement function mentioned earlier in Merleau-Ponty's text in relation to Goldstein (see: p. 71).

[182] See: Merleau-Ponty, M. 1963, p.148.

experiencing a regular disintegration of his phonemic system, often accompanies this with a provisional reequilibrium in the form of a compensatory strategy; in this case the inability to distinguish between long and short vowels is compensated for by placing the tonic accent on the penultimate syllable[183]. Indeed, this capacity of reequilibrium is what Merleau-Ponty also refers to as a replacement function, a concept which I have already touched upon at the start of this section and which prompts the quote: "Now, it is a question of investigating, even in cases where the patient succeeds, *by what path*, or *in what sense*, he succeeds."[184]

It is precisely this point that has to be heeded if a genuine phenomenology of dyslexia is to emerge, for although I have accounted for the way in which there is a breakdown of language in the rhetoric of phenomenology, what has to be uncovered is the layer upon layer of compensatory strategies and replacement function used by dyslexics with a view to maintaining an equilibrium within linguistic situations. It is important to note that when I refer to compensatory strategies employed by dyslexics, I am making a qualitative distinction between the strategies habituated by the dyslexic at an early age in order to proceed with any relationship with the written word, and specific interventionist strategies that may be used to help diagnosed dyslexics, but which come from an external source. Although compensatory strategies and interventionist strategies may well overlap in their aims and approach, what would be of real use to a phenomenological investigation are the habits that are specifically characteristic of dyslexia. Because such strategies are precisely not made use of at the level of

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[183] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1973, p.25.
[184] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1973, p.71.

explicit consciousness, and become integrated into operative intentionality of the lived body, one has to start conceiving of such strategies as the *style of dyslexia.*

It is with considerable surprise that in my review of the literature on dyslexia there seems to be only a small amount of attention paid to the compensatory strategies employed by dyslexics, and this I believe is a reflection of the way in which dyslexia is still regarded as a disorder which is marked by *deficit*. Furthermore, this is also a major stumbling block in terms of providing a rich account of the style of dyslexia, for it is imperative that some type of empirical material, whether it be quantitative or qualitative, is available for a phenomenological interpretation. Indeed, it may be that qualitative research in the form of a phenomenological investigation into first person reports of exactly how dyslexics do maintain a relationship with language could go some way to redressing this gap in the literature. However, although there seems to be little work done in this area, leading figures such as Margaret Snowling do seem committed to the possibility that dyslexics are assisted by compensatory strategies. As she remarks: "it is likely that some dyslexics, maybe the majority, learn to read using compensatory strategies".[185] Of the reports that do exist, these can be divided into three types.

Firstly, there are what I will call the 'positive' accounts of dyslexia, which try to focus on the way in which dyslexics are more gifted in certain skills, for example, Ron Davis' account of the hidden talents of dyslexics[186]. What Davis stresses is that, like the negative aspect of dyslexia, the positive attributes are developmental,

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[185] See: Snowling, M. 1987, p.127-8. Indeed, the final chapter of Snowling's book is a good introduction to the *possibility* of compensatory strategies in dyslexics.
[186] See: Davis, R. 1994, p.94-110; and for a more theoretical account on the specifc talent of dyslexics as artists, see: Aaron, P. & Guillemard, J. 1993.

i.e. they have to grow and be created by the dyslexic, whilst the specific examples he offers of positive aspects of dyslexics are: 1) a primary thought process of non-verbal picture thinking. 2) A capacity for intuitive thinking which results from picture thinking. 3) Profound curiosity and creativity which is often interpreted as idleness or daydreaming.

A second type of report which touches on the topic of compensatory strategies is the biographical account. For example, the detailed account given by both a boy who suffers from dyslexia and his mother which highlights the way in which a child with severe dyslexia has been allowed to display his creative skills by concentrating on his *abilities* rather than using conventional methods of remedial treatment for his weaknesses[187]. The account details how instead of completely overcoming his reading and writing problems, Alexander Faludy (who eventually started an Arts degree course at the Open University at the age of 12) circumvented his problems so that it became accepted that his primary input was through his ears, and his output was, via his mouth, on to tape. Although such reports prove interesting, they are somewhat anecdotal as evidence of the type of habitual strategies that can be developed by dyslexics in order to read, write and spell, and it is perhaps the third type of account, a more clinically based experimental account, which provides the most information regarding the compensatory strategies of dyslexics.

In the first group of studies looked at, the authors set out to investigate whether dyslexics are able to process words in an automatised way, i.e. a pre-reflective

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[187] See: Faludy, T. & Faludy A. 1996.; and, Hampshire, S. 1981.

style of reading which enables words to be read in a fast, elementary, and effortless manner. This is a summary of what was concluded from the experiment:

"Our evidence is first that dyslexics, despite equal levels of *continuous* reading performance, have lower *discrete* reading performance that reading age controls. This indicates, on the one hand, that dyslexics have a deficit in the lower order, automatic processes tapped by isolated word reading. On the other hand, it suggests that they use different ways to come to the same reading level as reading controls...The possibility is raised that dyslexics use strategies to compensate for their decoding deficit when task demands allow for such strategies...Whatever the nature of the compensation process(es), the studies reported here imply that compensation is related to effortful, time-consuming processing."[188]

The authors basic hypothesis is that dyslexics have to look at the orthographic structure of words over and over again in an attempt to utilise language, a strategy which can be interpreted as a way of compensating for a phonological deficit which degrades the dyslexic capacity for an automaticity of reading. They also go onto describe the characteristics of such strategies at the specific levels of continuous reading and isolated word reading. In continuous reading, strategies are employed such as compensating high accuracy with low speed and vice versa, amending known reading errors, and overlapping different stages in reading by simultaneously processing words that are appearing next in a sentence. In isolated word reading the authors are not so explicit, pointing towards evidence of compensatory strategies being used by dyslexics in tests which are not conducted

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[188] Yap, R. & van de Leij, A. 1994, p.102-3.

under the pressure of time, the nature of such strategies being a deliberate use of orthographic processing over phonological processing.[189] Snowling has also conducted research on the influence of orthographic priming, and although only some of her conclusions seem to concur with the above study, there is a general agreement on the likelihood of such a compensatory strategy in the form of 'lexical analogies' (i.e. a visual process of lexical activation which invokes the similarity between a new word and a previously seen word).

The second group of studies concentrate on what has only been gestured at in the above – the deliberate use of context made by dyslexics in learning to read *and* to spell. Snowling is again a leading figure in this area of research, and the results of one of her most recent experiments make strong claims in favour of the dyslexic relying upon context as a compensatory strategy. The experiment consisted of testing children at three levels; dyslexics, poor comprehenders, and normal readers. Children were presented with a printed word, either in isolation or following a context, and the accuracy and speed of responses were measured. Although all the children fared better in the presence of context, the experiment had a specific finding for dyslexics:

"The findings of this experiment underline the fact that there is more to reading than decoding. To focus on the dyslexic children: in the face of deficits in decoding, they benefited from context more than younger, normal readers matched for reading age. Importantly, the benefit that accrued were not just because the availability of context allowed them to guess...Rather, the availability

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[189] See: Yap, R. & van de Leij, A. 1994, p. 100-4; and corroborative evidence for these arguments is also offered in: Fawcett, A. & Nicolson, R.1994.

of semantic and syntactical information from the sentence frame allowed the children to modify their incomplete or inaccurate pronunciation of target words to bring them in line with context. This 'self-teaching' device provides one plausible explanation for how many dyslexic children eventually attain reasonable levels of word-reading accuracy, despite persisting difficulties with phonological processing and non-word reading."[190]

The conclusion presented here and in other work by Snowling and associates is quite explicit: although dyslexics may improve their use of the usual letter-sound correspondences with age, the majority of dyslexics learn to read and spell through alternative, compensatory strategies which are predominantly visual in nature, and may continue to use such strategies throughout their lives. Thus, the compensatory strategies employed by dyslexics in the form of specific replacement functions (e.g. using analogy as a substitute for basic decoding skills) are a *pragmatic* way of maintaining a certain equilibrium in situations which require remarkably complex skills such as reading and spelling.

Although there is far less experimental work done on the topic of compensation as opposed to the deficits of dyslexics, it is this theme which I believe holds the key to the style of dyslexia. Unfortunately for this project, the lack of material concerned with the *specific nature* of replacement functions used by dyslexics, and a problem of whether widespread assertions can be made as to whether all dyslexics are marked by similar functions, means that I am only in a position to

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[190] Snowling, M. & Nation, K. 1997, p.162. For other experimental evidence that supports the specific use of context by dyslexics in learning to read and spell, see also: Frith, U. & Snowling, M. 1983; and, Pring, L. & Snowling, M. 1986.

make the most general of claims. Indeed, it is in trying to give a phenomenological characterisation of exactly how dyslexic children resort to the 'self-teaching' devices mentioned in the last quote, that qualitative research work drawing on data from interviews should be the next step in providing an account of the dyslexic style of language. Not only should this be seen as a continuation of a philosophical project, but I believe this is a crucial bridge between the raw experiential data gained from first-hand interviews conducted with dyslexic children, and the way in which, through a phenomenological characterisation, this data can then be used in future qualitative and quantitative research.

In moving from the empirical to the philosophical, I now want to make two concluding remarks. In this chapter I have argued that, following Merleau-Ponty's insights into language, dyslexia can be understood at a general level as a congealment of existenial meaning, whilst at a specific level, it can be understood as a disruption of operative intentionality in the form of an incohesive sedimentation of acquired linguistic meanings. Furthermore, I have characterised the idea of incohensive sedimentation as a foreclosure of the differential spread of language, a phenomenon which thwarts the possibility of transcendence which is a requisite of grasping the style of language shared by an inter-subjective community. However, I have also shown that in trying to learn how to read and spell, the dyslexic becomes aware of such problems when tasks such as reading, creative writing and spelling present themselves as unusually confusing and frustrating. In order to readdress the disruption of such a goal-orientated activity (what I have referred to as reequilibrium), the dyslexic employs certain

compensatory strategies which become habituated by the body, and are in fact constitutive of the dyslexics style of language.

In terms of the phenomenological framework I have presented, the compensatory strategies employed by dyslexics can be understood as an attempt to maintain a pragmatic standard of operative intentionality which is less likely to be disrupted in situations which involve the use of written language. Thus, what is happening when compensatory strategies become habituated by dyslexics is a qualitative shift in the way in which operative intentionality is regulated. Such regulation is provided by an equilibrium which is conducive to the goals of a certain situation, and which is "given by a general attitude towards the world."[191], and thus the dyslexic actually learns how to enter into linguistic situations which will not require the explicit effort of major reequilibrium. I therefore conclude that, although dyslexics seem to suffer from a general foreclosure of the differential spread of language, it is not as though such a foreclosure remains permanent. Indeed, through a combination of compensatory strategies and regular methods of learning how to use written language (i.e. the decoding rules which apply to grapheme and phoneme combinations), dyslexics develop a differential spread of language which is peculiar to the *style* in which they are able to acquire the existential meaning of language. Although dyslexics will still be susceptible to frequent lapses into a foreclosure of the differential spread of language, and thus operative intentionality in general, in general the dyslexic is able to have a relationship with the written word.

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[191] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1963, p.148.

This brings me to the final point of this Chapter, an argument which puts the emphasis back on the *capability* rather than *disability* of dyslexics. Although I have described the manner in which there is a problem for dyslexics in grasping the existential meaning of language shared by a community, the manner in which dyslexics are able to overcome such problems through compensatory strategies puts a quite different emphasis on the way in which dyslexia is experienced. What the phenomenological investigation of this chapter has revealed is that instead of dyslexia being marked by a *complete* breakdown of language, i.e. something akin to absolute incomprehensibility, *what the dyslexic actually experiences in supposed 'breakdowns of language' should in fact be interpreted as 'breakdowns in compensatory strategies'*. Thus, the style of dyslexia is a very particular acquisition of *skills* which are utilised more than others when using written language. Although these skills are employed in order to maintain a level of operative intentionality which allows the dyslexic to share and make use of the existential meanings of a community, the way in which meanings are acquired and sedimented by dyslexics will be slightly different from others. Because of this difference, the likelihood of consistently being able to grasp the specific style of written language, i.e. the instituted language of 'others', is that much lower.

In conclusion to this chapter, I argue that although dyslexics do suffer from some form of deficit (whether this be perceptual, cognitive or neurological in origin), they are able to provisionally overcome such problems by devising skills which will enable them to work with written language, and it is only when this specific style of language becomes incompatible with certain aspects of the style of a community in general (e.g. the appearance of irregularly spelled words), that

compensatory skills are diminished and dyslexic traits are unveiled. What I now wish to give an account of in the final chapter of this thesis, is the manner in which the existential meaning of language can be understood as being grounded in the phenomenon of lived-time, and through this I want to highlight the manner in which dyslexics have a different experience of temporality.

Chapter Six

Temporality

In the previous chapter I offered a phenomenological interpretation of, not only the problems faced by dyslexics in the acquisition and use of language, but the manner in which they are able to sustain a relationship with language through the development of compensatory skills and strategies. Through my use of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of language I have provided a different way of interpreting dyslexia, that is, an experiential account which illuminates the way(s) in which dyslexics have a meaningful, intentional relationship with language, i.e. *a specific style*. Although such an approach is in no way a attack upon previous *explanations* of dyslexia, there is an implicit criticism of the manner in which they have failed to account for fundamental structures that are vital to the acquisition and use of language.

The primary difference between the phenomenological approach I have taken and the models of language used by previous disciplines (notably cognitive psychology), is that I am conceiving of language as an indirect phenomenon where meaning should be understood as a certain style rather than the determinate counterpart of a specific symbol. There are three main areas which are not usually considered in this connection, the culmination of which will have a bearing on this chapter. Firstly, language is not only grounded upon perception but feeds back into our perception of the world, and thus dyslexia cannot be understood as merely a phonological deficit. Secondly, because of the intimate relationship

between perception and language, the body is vital to the acquisition and creative usage of language. Thus, not only is the notion of language being a specifically intellectual activity challenged by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological account, but furthermore, the idea of phonological and orthographic meanings being understood as a store of representations is called into question. Finally, the notion of a linguistic gesture moves our understanding of language away from the recollection of represented meanings, and towards an indirect experience of language which emphasises a differential spread of linguistic meaning in our endless interaction and substitution of signs. We shall come back to these points as this chapter unfolds, but as I suggested in the preceding chapter, not only does my interpretation offer a critique of the models of language used in the existing literature on dyslexia, but there is also an implicit critique of the way in which memory and time are understood, a criticism which can be especially levelled at the cognitive approach.

Problems of memory and the challenge of time-consciousness

The topic of memory, or more specifically a disruption of certain forms of memory, features heavily in explanations of dyslexia. As noted above, the general theory of memory used in cognitive explanations relies upon the 'storage' of a meaning conceptualised as a representation. For example: "Once a structured representation has been created, it is then linked to existing knowledge in long-

term memory, thereby expanding and adding to that knowledge."[192] Much evidence has been gathered by experimental psychology to suggest that dyslexics experience difficulties on short-term memory tasks, in particularly tasks which require verbal short-term memory[193], and that this is one facet of a broader linguistic impairment at the phonological level. The general argument offered is that, although dyslexics are able to make use of a 'phonological code' which acts as a form of stored representation, when it comes to short term memory tasks – for example reading unfamiliar words or retaining word identity and order when constructing sentences – dyslexics make far less efficient usage of these codes. Indeed, the apparent fact that dyslexics perform badly in tasks which require verbal short-term memory is something which has focussed attention on the manner in which dyslexics have to resort to some form of compensation strategy, as discussed in the previous chapter. As Snowling highlights, instead of relying mostly on a form of phonological coding, dyslexics resort to the visual or orthographic features of words as a basis for recall[194]. However, although I am in no way trying to contradict these findings, what seems to be lacking in any of the accounts given concerning deficits of the memory and capacity for recall in dyslexics is the very notion of 'memory' and hence temporality itself – the concept is simply discussed as a 'given'. Thus, in an attempt to understand what the presuppositions of 'memory' consist of, I now turn to the manner in which such presuppositions can be critiqued and surpassed by a phenomenological understanding of temporality.

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[192] Ellis, A. 1993, p.50.
[193] See: Brady, S. 1986; Brady, S. 1991; and, Torgesen, J. 1988.
[194] See: Chapter Five of this thesis – `The Style of Dyslexic Expression`, and Snowling 1987, p.24-5, and Rack, 1985, p.325-40.

In the texts I have looked at from the existing literature on dyslexia, those which have come from the field of contemporary psychology have treated memory as though it were the cognitive equivalent of a physical reality. Hence, such a notion of memory is built upon neurological processes which *store* experiences (representations) in the brain for later retrieval and usage, and as such, the activity of remembering is akin to the activation of memory traces of the past, albeit within the concrete here and now. This notion of memory is commonly referred to as the 'Storage Hypothesis'[195], and falls prey to many of the criticisms we have already seen Merleau-Ponty level at schools of intellectualism, including a notion of time which is linear and spatial. Before I turn to the manner in which such a hypothesis presupposes an abstract conception of temporality, I will briefly outline three main criticisms that can be directed at the logic of the storage model[196].

Firstly, there is a problem of infinite regression, a difficulty which is contingent upon the storage model assuming that the recognition of an object results from a match between current perception and pre-existing memory traces in the brain. The nub of the problem results from the 'match' between the current field of perception and previous memory traces, as this requires a type of comparison function which would have to employ another trope of memory which in turn would still need another memory, *ad infinitum*. A second and related problem is that of solipsism. Because the storage hypothesis is dependant upon the perception of objects being in the form of a representation, there is never any direct or immanent apprehension of what is significant within the perceptual field, i.e.

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[195] See: Block, R. 1990. 'Editors Introduction'; and for a critical study, Rosenfield, I. 1988.
[196] See: Gallagher, S. 1998. 'Introduction'; and more specifically, Arcaya, J. 1989.

perception is always conceived of at the level of categorial reflection. Thus, such a presupposition forecloses the possibility of being able to transcend ones own subjective beliefs, which not only endangers the possibility of intersubjectivity and communication, but also the likelihood of making any valid or truthful judgement that could be distinguished from a subjective presumption. The final, and perhaps most important, objection to the storage hypothesis is its impossibility of actually being in contact with 'the past'. The model assumes that memory is the storage of representations within the brain, and thus when certain perceptual stimuli are present, this electrochemical change produces the experience of pastness. In this way, the notion of experiencing the past is only possible in terms of a repetition, i.e. the past can be repeated when certain brain traces are re-stimulated. What the model fails to take into account, and what the phenomenological position will keenly undermine (especially Merleau-Ponty), is that our experience of the past should not be simply conceived of as 'repetition', and furthermore, in order to experience the past (whether this is conceived of as pure repetition or not) one must already be in continuous contact with memory in the first place, i.e. a immanent sense of past*ness*.

In effect, the storage hypothesis proposes that the past as a form of memory trace has to be pulled out of the brain, as though it occupied a place in physical space in the form of a separate entity to our perceptual experience. Thus, in the context of temporality, the storage hypothesis conceives of time as a linear and spatial phenomenon, that is, a chain of discrete moments moving from past, to present, and into the future in a serial order. In contrast with such a serial and linear model of time, the treatment of temporality by the phenomenological tradition has, in

general, taken an imminent view of time which, as we have already seen implicitly in previous chapters, treats time as an evolving structure which has a certain depth or spread, a depth which is the co-existence of the past, present, and future. Although I will once again concentrate predominantly on the writing of Merleau-Ponty in this chapter, it is within the context of temporality that Merleau-Ponty explicitly continues much of Husserl's initial work[197]. Thus, I will first give a brief synopsis of the way in which Husserl turns his attention towards temporality, a study which understands time-consciousness as the most fundamental form of consciousness.

To present Husserl's account(s) of time consciousness at any length, and furthermore to do them any justice, is far beyond the scope and purpose of this chapter, and therefore I will try and restrict my account to only some of Husserl's key themes and concepts which seem directly relevant to Merleau-Ponty's account of temporality, in particularly the notion of retention and how it differs from recollection[198]. Before I move onto Husserl's specific account of time-consciousness, it will serve well to review what Husserl had in mind when referring to an intentional relationship. Because Husserl wishes to set aside any questions concerning the metaphysical reality of a phenomenon under investigation, what Husserlian phenomenology discovers in the idea of intentionality is that all consciousness is consciousness of something, that is,

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[197] On this specific topic, see: Spicker, S. 1973. For a discussion of the way in which Merleau-Ponty sees himself as developing certain Husserlian themes, the reader should look at Merleau-Ponty's essay 'The Philosopher and His Shadow' in: Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (a).

[198] Although much of Husserl's writing can be interpreted as an investigation into time-consciousness, his most explicit accounts of the phenomenology of time exist in the collection *On The Phenomenology Of The Consciousness Of Internal Time (1893-1917)* (Husserl, E. 1991.), whilst he also makes frequent reference to time in the first volume of *Ideas* (Husserl, E. 1982.), and *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl, E. 1977.). For useful commentaries on Husserl and temporality, see: Gallagher, S. 1998; and, Miller, I. 1984.

every manner of perceiving, representing, judging, willing, anticipating etc... is directed toward something which is perceived, represented judged etc... There is a distinction being made here between what is referred to as a 'real relationship', for example, the force of the waves against the rocks, and an 'intentional relationship', for example, being conscious of a blossoming tree in the distance which appears as a ball of cherry red[199]. Thus, in my apprehension of the tree there is a relationship which is independent of the actual existence of a 'cherry red ball', and as such my lived-experience of the tree is one which consists of a relationship between an intentional act *of consciousness* and an intentional correlate *of consciousness*:

"Each *cogito*, each conscious process, we may also say, '*means*' *something or other* and bears in itself, in this manner peculiar to the *meant*, its particular *cogitatum*. Each does this, moreover, in its own fashion. The house-perception means a house – more precisely, as this individual house – and means it in the fashion peculiar to perception."[200]

Although this may seem quite different from the type of operative intentionality we have encountered in the texts of Merleau-Ponty, i.e. a form of intentionality which is primarily pre-conscious, for Husserl, the intentional object is part of our *immanent experience*, and thus it cannot be a mental phenomenon which is represented by an image in consciousness[201]. Husserl defines this intentional basis of consciousness as a relationship between the *noetic* act and its *noematic* content,

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[199] See: Husserl, E. 1982, §36.
[200] See: Husserl, E. 1977, p.33.
[201] For Merleau-Ponty's observations regarding intentionality, which includes substantial remarks concerning Husserl and this topic, see the 'Preface' to *Phenomenology of Perception*.

inasmuch as these two elements must be thought of as two sides of an inclusive intentional project. Such a project consists of the *noetic* acts of consciousness, i.e. the varying modes or manner in which an object is posited, such as imagining, doubting, and secondly, the corresponding forms of *noematic* giveness, which bestow a certain intentional, or more precisely, *meaningful* content to that which is being intended, i.e. that which is imagined or doubted *as such*[202]. Although Husserl's intentional schema provides many questions and unresolved problems, namely the relative correlation and/or independence of the *noematic* content to the *noetic* act[203], the distinction will prove vital in understanding his notion of time-consciousness and the fundamental status he attaches to this form of consciousness.

Husserl's investigation into time-consciousness can be understood of having a twofold, albeit reciprocal, concern[204]. On the one hand, Husserl is interested in the question regarding the possibility of comprehending a temporal object as such, and the manner in which a temporal object appears to consciousness. On the other hand he is also interested in following an inquiry into the nature of an 'absolute subjectivity', a trope of consciousness which constitutes all temporal appearance, whilst at the same time is self-temporalising in the form of a constituted flow of consciousness. Because these two lines of enquiry are interrelated I will inevitably touch on some of the themes that are relevant to the constituting role of an absolute consciousness, but it is the former of these lines of enquiry that I will be

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[202] See Husserl, E. 1982, §88, 90, 98.
[203] For a far more detailed introduction into the development of the basic structures of intentionality and the relative problems that it poses as a topic, see; Bernet, R., Kern, I. & Marbach, E. 1993, Ch.3.
[204] See: Bernet, R. *et al.* 1993, Ch.3; and, Gallagher, S. 1998, Ch.3 and Ch.4.

most interested in presenting below, as the questions that are raised remain more pertinant to the aims of this chapter.

To be able to perceive a temporal object such as a musical tone, the object it must be able to endure, that is, it must be able to retain its unity whilst extending over time. The question of how to reconcile the unity and thus identity of an intentional object over a stretch of time is thus pivotal to the first branch of Husserl's investigation mentioned above. Vital to the understanding of both Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's accounts of temporality is the distinction they both draw, albeit with different emphasis, between the re-presentation of previous intentional acts in the form of *recollection* (secondary memory), and the automatic holding back of the just-past experience in the form of *retention* (primary memory), a distinction which has its basis in the *actual presence* of retention:

"We characterized primary memory or retention as a comet's tail that attaches itself to the perception of the moment...[For example] After the melody has died away, we no longer have it perceived as present, but we do still have it in consciousness. It is not a present melody but one just past. Its being past is not merely something meant but a given fact, given itself and therefore 'perceived'. In opposition to this, the temporal presentation in recollection is a remembered, re-presented past but not an actually present past, not a perceived past, not a past primarily given and intuited."[205]

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[205] Husserl, E. 1991, §14 [p.36].

By introducing this qualitative distinction between retention and recollection Husserl is radically reworking the way in which our conscious awareness of a temporal object is conceived as something which is *present*. He does this by characterising the three reciprocal modes of intentionality - primordial impression (present), retention (past) and protention (future) - modes which should not be understood as deliberate and discrete acts of consciousness such as recollection, but which together allow for the apprehension of a temporal object within an originary temporal field. Husserl gives a diagrammatic representation of these three modes of temporality in a number of evolving forms, most notably in his 1905 lecture course, whilst Merleau-Ponty also makes use of such a diagram in *Phenomenology*...albeit in a more critical manner[206]. The primordial impression (also referred to as primordial sensation) conforms to the immediately given 'now moment' of the temporal object. Furthermore, such impressions of a temporal object can exist simultaneously. For example, I can experience the primordial impressions of a pen's extension, colour, distance in a manifold which is constitutive of the now-mode of the temporal object – a 'being-all-at-once'[207]. Such a manifold is made possible because of the temporal mode which corresponds to the just-past – *retention*. Each retention functions to preserve the just past moment in view of consciousness, whilst the further into the past which each earlier points slips, the more dimly they are retained. Hence, as we have seen in distinction to recollection, retentioning of the just-past moment is a direct *intuition* of the past, and as such should be understood as a strictly *intentional* as opposed to *real* performance. As Gallagher keenly points out, what the retentional performance allows for is a holding back of the just-past in the form of a semantic

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[206] See: Husserl, E. 1991, §10 [p.28], No. 31 [p.230], and No. 53 [p.365]. Also see: Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962, p. 417.

referent[208]. Thus, retention allows consciousness to carry within itself an immanent *meaning* of the past, i.e. an intentional and meaningful relationship which is independent of the natural reality of the temporal object. It is in this way that when listening to music we are not simply conscious of the individual tones that together form a melody, but one hears the whole melody itself as it flows:

"And if we hear a bit of melody, we do not hear *merely single* tones, even less moments of single tones or mathematical tone-nows, matching the *now-points* that could be abstracted in thought. We rather grasp *enduring tones* – specifically, tones combining into a *tone-formation*...And in the unitary regard continuously directed towards it, *we grasp the unity of the total perceptual appearance of this tone-formation as something absolutely given itself.* And if *the whole tone-phase is finished, retention still apprehends the just-having been of the total phase* that has there elapsed. The evidence here concerns the *just-having-been* by means of which a relation of the object to the flowing now is co-given"[209]

I will come back to the role of retention below, but first I will detail the futural mode of the lived-present – *protention*. Although both Merleau-Ponty, and especially Heidegger[210], will put a far greater emphasis on the temporal mode which corresponds to expectation, Husserl still accounts for such a phenomenon albeit in a manner which treats protention as a less significant counterpart to retention. Thus, Husserl conceives of such a mode as intending the immediately approaching, although such an anticipation of the nearly present is only done on

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[207] Husserl, E. 1991, No. 54, [p.376].
[208] Gallagher, S. 1998, p.48.
[209] Husserl, E. 1991, No. 51, [p.344].

the basis of retentional consciousness. Because protention is the futural mode of the lived-present, i.e. the trope of the present which is indeterminate, it is a form of intentionality which, unlike retention, is never fulfilled. Thus protention takes the form of an immanent projection of the past onto the nearly present which is being anticipated, and the fulfilment or unfulfilment of such protentions is given in the primordial impression. Although there is clearly a relationship between retention and protention, such a relationship is asymmetrical in favour of the fulfilled intending of the past – retention. As such, the three phases of the lived-present contribute to an enduring 'now' which has an intentional (i.e. *unreal*) temporal 'fringe' – "a living horizon of the no-longer (the just past) and the not-yet (the now approaching) in various gradations."[211]

In that there is a temporal fringe surrounding the lived-present, there is inevitably a 'now' which is just passed and a 'now' which is expected. Thus, by the very nature of the temporal field of the lived-present, it is apparent that the 'current' phase of a temporal object which is considered to be 'now' is continuously passing over into the just-now, and therefore the protention, primordial impression, and retention that characterise the 'now' are all modified into a new mode of intentionality. In passing from one 'now' phase into the next, the primordial impression is modified into a retention of this primordial impression, whilst the existing retention is modified into a retention of a retention, and so on. Thus, the lived-present is constantly changing, flowing, 'in flux', as Husserl puts it, there is a continuous 'adumbration' of the 'now'[212]. However, if the 'now' is

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[210] See Heidegger's notion of 'Being-towards-death' and 'anticipatory resoluteness' in *Being and Time*. (Heidegger, M. 1962, Div.II, Sect. 1 and 2, esp. ¶53. and 60).
[211] Bernet, R. *et al.* 1993, p.103.
[212] Husserl, E. 1991, §19, [p.47].

continually in flux, to the extent that protention, primordial impression and retention are continuously being modified, how is it that we are able to maintain the unity and identity of a temporal object, and furthermore, why is it not the case that an object should simply appear only to be simultaneously disappear, or be apprehended as a completely different object?

If we go back to the role of retention, and the distinction Husserl draws between retention and recollection, we can go some way towards answering the above questions. When a new 'now' phase of a perceived temporal object inevitably supersedes the current 'now', there is a modification of the temporal modes such that there is a modification upon modification of retention, wherein each modification of an original primordial impression becomes less and less distinct. Although the lived-present is characterised by being in flux, retention stretches back *over the whole duration* of a temporal object in a specific act of consciousness (perception, imagination etc..): "The flowing consists in the passing of each phase of the original field (thus of a linear continuum) over into a retentional modification of the same, only just past, phase. And so it continues."[213] However, whilst the retention of a perceived object stretches back further than the just past phase to include all previous retention's, there is another characteristic of retention which allows the previous (just-past) phase of the temporal object to be held back *in all its temporal modes*, and it is this characteristic of retention which allows for our experience of the lived present as a certain *unity*:

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[213] Husserl, E. 1991, Appendix VIII [p.116].

"This unity becomes constituted originally through the fact of the flow itself ; that is to say, it is the flow's proper essence not only simply to exist but to be a unity of experience and to be given in internal consciousness, in which a ray of attention can extend towards it."[214]

Thus retention can be seen to have two functions, what Husserl refers to as a *double intentionality* of retention, whereby retention not only allows for the duration of a temporal phase, but its very unity. He characterises these two forms of retentional intentionality as *logitudinal* (or *horizontal*) *intentionality*, i.e. the flow which consists of the modification upon modification of an original primordial impression and subsequent previous retention's, and *transverse intentionality*, i.e. the holding back of the temporal modes of the previous now as a certain unity and thus identity: "There is one, unique flow of consciousness in which both the unity of the tone in immanent time and the unity of the flow of consciousness itself becomes constituted at once"[215]. It is important not to conflate transversal intentionality with the representational character of recollection. Recollection is a specific *act of consciousness* which reproduces *in total* (i.e. isolates) the previous protentions, primal impressions and retentions which not only belong to a specific now, but those which belong to the whole perception of temporal object[216]; for example, the re-presentation of a melody as opposed to the direct intuition of a melody:

"The latter modification has the character of a continuous adumbration; just as the now is continuously shaded off into the past and the further past, so too the

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[214] Husserl, E. 1991, Appendix VIII [p.117].
[215] Husserl, E. 1991, §39, [p.80-83], and, Appendix VIII [p.116-119].

intuitive time-consciousness is continuously shaded off. On the other hand, we never refer to a continuous transition of perception into phantasy, of impression into reproduction. The latter is a difference between discrete things."[217]

There are a number of points to be made in conclusion to this brief outline of Husserl's investigation of time-consciousness. In the above we have seen that Husserl draws an important distinction between the character of retention (primary memory) and recollection (secondary memory). Against the storage hypothesis of memory which we have encountered at the beginning of this section, Husserl has shown that although the recollection of certain memorial representations exist as a specific form of consciousness, the act of recollection is based *upon* a lived-present which is intended in the temporal field made up of the continuous flow of protention, primordial impression and retention. What recollection points towards is therefore a certain objective time which exists as a discrete and abstracted 'now' point, as opposed to a directly intuited time of the present. Thus, in accounts of dyslexia which characterise reading and writing difficulties as a problem related to short-term memory, even in light of Husserl's investigations, the notion of 'storing' specific temporal objects as representations (a phonological code) may be valid. However, what the double role of intentionality does suggest is that problems surrounding the recollection of such phonological codes may reside with the intentional (and hence *meaningful* rather than *real*) layer of the intuited lived-present, an argument I will flesh out with the help of Merleau-Ponty's thought on temporality.

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[216] Bernet, R. *et al*. 1993, p.105.
[217] Husserl, E. 1991, §19, [p.46-47]

The presence of 'ek-static' temporality

Although Merleau-Ponty utilises and modifies a certain amount of Husserl's account of time-consciousness in the penultimate chapter of *Phenomenology...* - 'Temporality', most notably the themes of protention and retention, he is clearly unhappy with some of the philosophical consequences of the Husserlian account, and it could be argued that such criticisms (implicit in the 'Temporality' chapter, but explicit in *The Visible and the Invisible*) are a result of Merleau-Ponty's own corporeal-based phenomenology, and Heidegger's own interpretation of temporality[218]. As one commentator puts it: "Merleau-Ponty considers Husserl's analysis as 'correct,' but it is not therefore 'true'. Husserl only lays the groundwork for an analysis of true time"[219]. In giving an exposition of the main themes in the 'Temporality' chapter, I will explain how Merleau-Ponty modifies the Husserlian themes of protention, retention and presence, and in so doing will concentrate on two main concerns he has with Husserl's account of time-consciousness, that is, the implicit seriality of time and reliance upon a passive synthesis of now-points, and furthermore, the wider problems associated with transcendental subjectivity which undermine Husserl's general approach to temporality.

Perhaps most pertinent to the concerns of this thesis is the way in which temporality has a fundamental bearing on the theme of operative intentionality,

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[218] I will come back to Heidegger's notion of 'ek-static' temporality later in the section. Within the bounds of the 'Temporality' chapter, Merleau-Ponty is clearly drawing on two of Heidegger's texts, *Being and Time* (Heidegger, M. 1962), and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Heidegger, M. 1990). For a discussion of the way in which Merleau-Ponty draws on Heidegger's account of temporality, and the manner in which these two interpretations agree and disagree, see: Camelc, A. 1975.

i.e. the originary dynamic *synchronicity* between body and world which endows our situations with meaning. In a key passage from the 'Temporality' chapter Merleau-Ponty sets out what is 'correct' about Husserl's analysis, and furthermore, the way in which it falls short of being 'true':

"In Husserl's language, beneath the 'intentionality of the act', which is the thetic consciousness of an object...we must recognise an 'operative' intentionality (*fungierende Intenionalität*) which makes the former possible...In order to have a past or a future we do not have to bring together, by means of an intellectual act, a series of *abschattungen*, for they posses a natural and primordial unity, and what is announced through them is the past or the future itself. Such is the paradox of what might be termed, with Husserl, the 'passive synthesis' of time – and of a term which is clearly not a solution, but a pointer to the problem." (p.418-9)

Because of Merleau-Ponty's commitment to an embodied perspective as opposed to the 'cosmic overview' of a transcendental consciousness, the need for an act of consciousness which would synthesise and thus unify time, even if it were to be conceived of as 'passive', is not needed if time is understood as a *spread*, a notion which we have already encountered in the context of language as a self-differentiating phenomenon. What Merleau-Ponty will further argue is that, by way of an original 'transition-synthesis' which belongs *to time* (as opposed to consciousness), time cannot be thought of as having a determinate identity constituted by consciousness, but of having a specific *style* which is in relation to the world. I will come back to these themes below, but in order to gain a better

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[219] Spicker, S. 1973, p.246.

understanding of Merleau-Ponty's position, we need to see how the above serves as a critique of Husserl's implicit seriality of time.

Although Husserl, indeed the phenomenological tradition in general, may be unfamiliar with such vocabulary, there is in Husserl's investigation of time-consciousness a conception of time which is representative of what McTaggart refers to as the experience of an A-series and B-series of time[220]. The A-series is conceived of as involving the constant change or flow of time, whereby an event starts in the remote future, moves into the present and becomes more and more removed when slipping into the past. Opposed to an experience of time as pure change, the B-series is conceived of as time being ordered in a static fashion, i.e. there is a permanent ordering to events, such that in an isolated week Monday inevitably comes before Thursday. When applying these definitions to Husserl, we can see that his philosophy of time undoubtedly fits the A-series in that the flux of time-consciousness is defined by a change from protention to primordial impression to retention. However, to a certain extent Husserl's account also lends itself to a notion of seriality which fits the B-series of permanent order. This is certainly Gallagher's position[221], as he points out that the process of retention, most notably the operation of transversal intentionality, also maintains a certain temporal ordering among the phases of the flux, whereby each phase slips further into a past which can never become present again except in the form of re-presentation. Although Husserl's account of time is characterised by flux, the nature of this flux is quite orderly as a specific just-past retention is inescapably

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[220] See McTaggart's seminal article, 'The unreality of time' (Mctaggart,J. 1908.). For an introduction to the problems accounted provoked by the notion of A and B-series, see: Turetzky, P. 1998.

[221] Gallagher, S. 1998, p.87-8.

more recent than a retention of a retention, and thus time presents itself as unwavering, predictable and *unambiguous*. For Merleau-Ponty, the notion of a B-series is inconsequential to a corporeal-based account of primordial temporality, but although he detects a problem of identity of Husserl's account, he is not so quick to lay accusations of seriality. In a working note from *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty challenges the assertion that temporality is necessarily an ordered seriality, as certain past experiences (he still refers to them as retentions) and the phenomenon of forgetting are two concrete examples which contradict such a smooth, determinate theory of predictability. He writes:

"there are retentions that are not forgotten, even remote ones. There are fragments 'perceived' just now, that disappear...Husserl's diagram is dependent on the convention that one can represent the series of nows by points on a line. To be sure, Husserl at this point adds the whole recasting of the retentions... and it is in this that he does not conceive of time as serial and as a succession of punctual events. But even complicated in this fashion, the representation of the phenomenon of flow is faulty. Not inasmuch as it is spatial. For in fact space does not comprise *points*, *lines*, any more than time does. Understand that the *Gestalt* is already transcendence: it makes me understand that a line is a vector, that a point is a center of forces - - There are neither absolute lines nor points nor colors in the things."[222]

As is the case with much of *The Visible and the Invisible* (including the Working Notes), Merleau-Ponty's style of writing is far more critical than assertive, and

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[222] Merelau-Ponty, M. 1968, p.195.

within the above working note he only gestures towards the way in which temporality could be thought beyond (or perhaps beneath) seriality, an experience of time as a differentiating spread - "a *separation* (*écart*), a *relief* ." - which should be considered as the fundamental ground of perceptual *meaning*[223]. It is clear that Husserl has moved on from a simplistic seriality associated with the folk psychology of measured or 'clock time', yet the flux of time he refers to is characterised by Merleau-Ponty as "a heaping up of the past and a tremor of the future…a multiplicity of linked phenomena" which is represented as "an instantaneous cross-section of time…" (p.419), and constituted by the synthesising activity of a transcendental consciousness. What Merleau-Ponty is objecting to in the main quote above, and what is implicit in the 'Temporality' chapter, is that the 'now' cannot be thought of something in-itself. The present is not ordered in the manner of Husserl's diagram, for we do not always experience time as an anticipated seriality, rather our experience of time is far less predictable and more creative than Husserl gives credit for[224].

Opposed to notions of temporality which treat time as an objective in-itself or a subjective for-itself, Merleau-Ponty envisages a network of corporeal intentionalities which are connected with our experiential *field of presence* – a reciprocal presence to the world and to the self. Thus, Merleau-Ponty's notion of presence, and of time in general, is contingent upon our taking up of a situation, a bodily perspective that interacts with the world in the creation of meanings: "Time exists for me only because I am situated in it, that is, because I become aware of

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[223] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1968, p.197.

[224] For a comprehensive discussion of the way in which both Merleau-Ponty and modern science offer a variety of examples which contradict the apparent seriality of Husserl's account, see: Gallagher, S. 1998, Ch. 6.

myself as already committed to it" (p.423). I have mentioned above that time, as with language, is characterised by Merleau-Ponty as a 'spread', i.e. a single, stretchable and self-differentiating phenomenon, and it is because of this characteristic that presence should be understood as an opening onto *otherness*, or as we have encountered in previous chapters, presence understood as implicating a co-presence (e.g. the co-presence of objects in the phenomenal field, or the co-presence of spatiality and temporality). Thus, in response to Husserl's reliance upon a passive synthesis which acts as an identification of individual instants, Merleau-Ponty states:

"There is, then, not a multiplicity of linked phenomena, but one single phenomenon of running-off. Time is the one single movement appropriate to itself in all its parts, as a gesture includes all the muscular contractions necessary for its execution...It is nothing but a general flight out of the Itself, the one law governing these centrifugal movements, or again, as Heidegger says, an *ek-stase*." (p.419)

There is no need for time to have a unifying synthesis engendered by a transcendental subjectivity, for as Merleau-Ponty implies in the above quote, and as we have seen in other examples of operative intentionality from previous chapters, we have a pre-reflective grip over the dialogue between the world and our body. In the fundamental context of time this pre-reflective awareness can be understood as the field of presence outrunning itself in the direction of a future and a past: "the fresh present *is* the passage of a future to present, and of former present to past" (p.419). Instead of the present being a determinate, closed

phenomenon, the ever 'fresh present' is a general, and therefore ambiguous structure which allows us to transcend the immediate, punctual 'now' which, "amounts to saying that each present reasserts the presence of the whole past which it supplants, and anticipates that of all is to come...:there is one single time which is self-confirmatory" (p.420-1). There is not one present, then another present, nor a present with its 'temporal fringe', then another with its temporal fringe needing synthesis, but a spread "between a past which structures and sets the essential conditions of this present and a future of perpetual demands for new and present articulations of the past"[225]. Thus, the notion of presence should be understood as an indivisible project which can be viewed from the perspectives of the past, present and future, and although the field of presence is utterly dependant upon these temporal dimensions, the past: "therefore, *is* not past, nor the future future... A past and a future spring forth when I reach out towards them." (p.421). Although presence in virtue of its stretchability is therefore a *dynamic* unity, our experience of time is in no way a coincidence of the future or past with the present, rather, there is an overlapping, or as we have already seen, a co-presence of dimensions. This should come as no surprise in light of former chapters, for just as we are restricted to a perspectival relationship within an ambiguous phenomenal field, we are also restricted to a specific field of presence, albeit that the field of presence is endowed with a certain ambiguity and depth owing to its temporal horizons. But although the field of presence is itself a dynamic unity, how exactly do the past, present and future relates to presence as a network of intenionalities? Furthermore, what exactly is the relationship between time, the world, and the body?

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[225] Mallin, S. 1979, p.95.

The manner in which Merleau-Ponty conceives of a relationship between the past and the present, and the future and the present is especially important for my own arguments as it directly informs and deepens some of my conclusions in the previous chapter on language, most notably in respect of the theme of sedimentation. As such, the template for much of Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on this subject will be familiar, most notably the creative fulfilment of previous intentions within our current projects, a kind of coherent deformation of the current gestalt of the temporal spread. The crux of Merleau-Ponty's argument is the idea of presence outrunning itself as a perpetual distancing and differentiating between itself and a previous or future field of presence, whilst simultaneously maintaining a certain continuity and openness to the past and the future as a unified structure:

"There is no need for a synthesis externally binding together the *tempora* into one single time, because each one of the *tempora* was already inclusive, beyond itself, of the whole open series of other *tempora*, being in internal communication with them, and because the 'cohesion of a life' is given with its *ek-stase*. The passage of one present to the next is not a thing which I conceive, nor do I see it as an onlooker, I effect it; I am already at the impending present as my gesture is already at its goal." (p.421)

The field of presence has a lived depth and thickness in virtue of it stretching towards the horizons of the past and future, i.e. an opening onto otherness, and therefore a fresh present cannot be grasped in its entirety – it is ambiguous.

However, as we have seen with the operative intentionality of the body, if there is an 'aim' or fundamental 'project' to our practical situations, this can be characterised as the pre-reflective 'maximum grip' we strive to maintain over situations, i.e. the way in which we comport ourselves towards a situational gestalt. Thus, when looking at a 'specific' field of presence it is not as though there is a specific point 'in time' which it represents. Rather, as the above quote confirms, it is a presence which is constantly under *transition*, which in practical terms is a striving to keep a maximum grip over our situation in the face of an anticipated present (the horizon of the future) and the expectations of a former present (the horizon of the past). From the perspective of a fresh 'present' in relation to a former present, there is a certain motivation or 'indivisible thrust' (p.423) of time, and hence a fluid connection between two fields of presence which comes about through a taking up of past intentions within the present. In this way there is a certain refocusing of the past within a fresh present, as only certain intentions are selected from the ambiguity of the previous present, whilst certain others are left unfulfilled and remain in the background, and we have already seen this process in the form of the acquisition and creation of new linguistic meanings. However, because there is a certain refocusing and fulfilment of specific intentions, there is also a constant reconfiguration of my intentional gestalt, and thus there is a certain distancing, separation and differentiation of one present from another: "primordial temporality is not a juxtaposition of external events, since it is the power which holds them together while keeping apart" (p.422).

We can also view this phenomenon of a temporal spread from a more futural perspective, for although there is a fulfilling of certain previous intentions within the present, there is in this very performance an opening onto new and inexhaustible horizons of possibility, and hence a demand to fulfil certain intentions which are appropriate to our current situation. This means that one can only understand the 'present' as a provisional notion, for as soon as a fresh present comes into being it is always starting to transform into another fresh present under the expectations of past and future horizons. Again we have already come across a similar phenomenon in the guise of sedimentation. Just as new linguistic structures are enveloped into our sedimented gestalt of language and therefore go onto affect the way in which we use language, so the fresh present is immediately relegated to the status of a past, albeit a past which still affects the future.

In light of the comments made in the first section concerning the concept of a storage hypothesis and the idea of recollection understood as a deliberate re-presentation, the important point to make here is that, irrespective of whether one is focussing on the theme of time or language, the notions of 'past' and 'sedimentation' cannot be understood as inert repositories of our lived experience – both the past and sedimented language is always at work in shaping our meaningful relationship with the world. Indeed, the spread of time that is constitutive of our field of presence, in its capacity to differentiate from itself whilst remaining in contact with "the whole past which it supplants, and anticipates that of all is to come" (p.420), can be seen as having a direct parallel with the way in which we have understood the genesis of a certain style of

meaning in the context of language. This is something Merleau-Ponty is quite aware of, for it is temporality understood as presence which is fundamental to our meaningful relationship with the world, that is, our style of being-in-the-world:

"There is a temporal style of the world, and time remains the same because the past is a former future and a recent present, the present an impending past and recent future, the future a present and even a past to come; because, that is, each dimension of time is treated or aimed at *as* something other than itself and because, finally, there is at the core of time a gaze, or, as Heidegger puts it, an *Augen-blick*, *someone* through whom the word *as* can have a meaning. We are not saying that time is *for* someone...We are saying that time *is* someone" (p.422)

There are two primary inter-related themes that Merleau-Ponty is specifying in the above quote, firstly, the notion of time and subjectivity being reversible phenomena, and secondly, the creation of meaning and our capacity for communication which is subtended by temporality. Of these themes I will concentrate mainly on the former in this section, whilst I will elaborate on the latter in the final section of the chapter in relation to language and dyslexia. The basic point to be gained from the above quote regarding the reversibility of subjectivity and temporality is that for time to exist there must be a bodily relationship with the world, a provisional perspective grounded in ambiguity which nevertheless allows for the taking up of a certain situation. Thus it is neither the case that time is an external and eternal phenomenon which can exist outside of a bodily perspective, nor that the body is necessarily constitutive *of*

time. As Merleau-Ponty puts it: "I am not the creator of time any more than of my heart-beats...yet once I am born, time flows through me, whatever I do" (p.427). We have seen that the field of presence is a unified phenomenon, albeit one which is self-differentiating and thus in a state of perpetual *becoming*, i.e. it is a general phenomenon which opens onto the world and the inexhaustible horizons of the past and future. Now in that Merleau-Ponty equates time (presence) with subjectivity (existence), and *vice-versa*, there is a certain reversibility in the way that the body-subject is capable of becoming aware of itself, for as with time, the body-subject is also conceived of as a certain spread or indivisible thrust, i.e. a unified multiplicity of specific events, actions and experiences which are part of a general and unfinished project. Thus, just as for temporality there is a co-presence of ever 'fresh' presents which can never *coincide* with each other, it is also the case that we can never be *fully* aware of ourselves as a bodily subjectivity, i.e. we can never exhaust the depth of the *lived-body* (neither just body schema nor body image) in its continuous stretching from birth to death. What Merleau-Ponty suggests is that both time and subjectivity in their reciprocal relationship with each other are characterised by their 'auto-positing':

"Time is 'the affecting of self by self'; what exerts the effect is time as a thrust and a passing towards a future: what is affected is time as an unfolded series of presents: the affecting agent and affected recipient are one, because the thrust of time is nothing but the transition from one present to another. This *ek-stase*, this projection of an indivisible power into an outcome which is already present to it, is subjectivity" (p.426)

Merleau-Ponty's point is that because he has done away with a conception of subjectivity which is dependant upon the transparency of a transcendental ego, i.e. a subject which cannot maintain a concrete relationship with the world, the body-subject is not *simply* a constituting and thus affecting agent, but it is also that which is affected. As with temporality, the lived-body is in a constant state of flux which we have already characterised as ambiguity, yet there is a real awareness of itself in the form of a general and pre-reflective style. As Langer puts it, subjectivity in Merleau-Ponty's sense: "is self-affecting, rather than unchanging self-identity."[226] In its attempt to grasp a current project and thus maintain a certain grip over a situation, the body-subject is involved in some form of self-expression, and this necessity to articulate is understood as a gesture, e.g. bodily or linguistic. Nevertheless, what the body-subject cannot attain is an exhaustive articulation of its involvement in a situation, as such a form of totalised positing would always be at the mercy of the temporal horizons of the past and future. Thus, Merleau-Ponty claims, any articulation of a current project is done so at a *distance* – as with the structure of temporality, subjectivity cannot coincide with itself for if it were to do so the body-world dialogue generative of meaning would collapse: "to retain is to hold, but at a distance" (p.423). It is in this way that the body-subject gains awareness of itself in the *movement* of presence, i.e. the perpetual movement away from 'the present' towards an impending fresh present. As with the phenomenon of a temporal field of presence, it is also the case that the body-subject is always ahead of itself, yet to be fully determined, and thus Merleau-Ponty states: "the explosion or dehiscence of the present towards a future is the archetype of the *relationship of self to self*, and it traces out an interiority or

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[226] Langer, M. 1989, p.129.

ipseity." (p.426). What we find in the themes of temporality and subjectivity are two reciprocal structures which articulate the manner in which Being is inherently an opening onto otherness, and our lived experience is truly grounded in an ambiguous relationship between the body and the world.

Within the above study of presence one can see an account which stretches further than simply an investigation into our experience of time. In stating that the subject *is* temporality we start to see how subjectivity, in the form of a body-subject, is capable of remaining one with itself, albeit ever changing, from birth until death. The body-subject, in its pre-reflective relationship with the world, is ultimately a perpetual project of self-articulation, and such an articulation is very much the type of expressive existence we have encountered in the previous chapter on language. Furthermore, the cohesiveness of the body-subject and thus the cohesiveness of expression itself (i.e. language) takes place through time – subjectivity and its continuous project of self-articulation is, as Merleau-Ponty suggests above, a temporal phenomenon. What I will attempt to articulate in the final section of the chapter is the way in which language is ultimately grounded in temporality, whilst language can also be seen to affect temporality. This discussion will then go onto inform my final conclusions concerning the style of dyslexia.

The temporality of expression and dyslexia

Although the final section of this chapter will deal with the way in which Merleau-Ponty's understanding of temporality as 'presence' can be related to dyslexic experience, and furthermore how such an understanding highlights some of the conceptual limitations of the existing literature, what I am most interested in is how the above presentation of temporality can enrich my conclusions regarding the peculiar expressive style of dyslexia. To begin to do this I must first show how the reciprocal relationship between temporality and subjectivity also underscores the manner in which the expression of the lived-body is open to others, and thus temporality can be further understood as not only the ground of meaning, but intersubjectivity and instituted language. Again it is the notion of presence which holds the key to the opening of the lived-body onto intersubjectivity and communication. Returning to the final section of Merleau-Ponty's essay *On the Phenomenology of Language* which brings together the themes of intentionality, expression, intersubjectivity and temporality, the author states:

"The ultimate philosophical step is to recognize what Kant calls the 'transcendental affinity' of moments of time and temporalities...Now it is at the heart of my present that I find the meaning of those presents which preceded it, and that I find the means of understanding others' presence at the same world; and it is in the actual practise of speaking that I learn to understand."[227]

We have seen that temporality is an *ek-static* structure, and is therefore a dynamic unity which outruns itself by opening onto the horizons of our whole past and possible futures, and it is this *ek-static* organisation of time which is also the template for our understanding of subjectivity, inter-subjectivity and expression; as Mallin puts it: "*ekstase* is the 'law' of every possible type of subjective act."[228] In the previous section I have already touched on the structural affinities between the perpetual passing of the fresh present into the past, and the envelopment of creative or 'fresh' language into a sedimented form of language. The primary affinity of 'past' and 'sedimented' structures is their capacity to endure, and thus influence our future projects. This is possible because our actions, expressions and experiences in general are not simply stored as inert traces that can be re-presented, but are incorporated into the spreads of time and language as horizons which constantly feed into the way in which we maintain our pre-reflective hold over a situation. Therefore, in our experience of the fresh present, certain expectations of our past experience (and not necessarily a 'just past') are able to be continued, our situation dictating which intentions are to be fulfilled whilst others are left to fade away as in*significant*. As Merleau-Ponty shows, this continuation of the past is not simply an attribute of temporality, but very much a feature of our 'expressive operations', which:

"instead of driving the preceding ones away – simply succeeding them and annulling them – salvage, preserve, and...take them up again; and the same phenomenon is produced in respect to others' expressive operations"[229].

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[227] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (a), p.97.
[228] Mallin, S. 1979, p.103.

Thus 'presence' understood as a unified *and* self-differentiating structure is also at the heart of language, for it is in the present that we not only 'keep the promises' (i.e. interpret and carry forward the 'truth' carried by language) of our sedimented past of expressions, but we also keep the promises of others through an acquisition of a tradition in our use of instituted language. As we have seen in the previous chapter on language, the 'truths' (always understood as provisional) that are carried forward and endure in expression are accomplished not by a timeless grasp of meaning but through a historical and cultural act of sedimentation, and we can understand this phenomenon on a wider, more social level in the form of cultural institutions – *Stiftungen*. Thus, signification –whether it be a bodily gesture, the spoken word or the written text - can also be understood as a form of presence, an expressive act which, as one commentator puts it: "inhabits all time as the soundful and gestural incarnation of a presence which moves within a temporality of infinite horizons."[230]

To gain a better understanding of exactly how the *ek-static* structure of temporality is also operational within expression, and thus instituted language, I briefly turn again to the reversible relationship between temporality and subjectivity. Although we have already located the critical role of an operative intentionality that engenders our experience as meaningful in our investigations of the lived-body, spatiality and language, it is through Merleau-Ponty's account of temporality understood as an *ek-static* structure, that the fundamental level of our pre-reflective, pre-personal contact with the world is disclosed as a form of being-in-the-world which is always already ahead of itself. Thus, the fundamental

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[229] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964 (a), p.95.
[230] Gillan, G. 1970, p.23.

ground and template of our operative intentionality is a temporality which is already temporalising itself – it is self-affecting. Following this assertion, we have also seen that our bodily subjectivity can be understood as an *ek-static* structure and is therefore marked by its own non-coincidence and self-positing. Although the body subject becomes aware of itself through a self-articulation and is thus capable of finding its situation meaningful, such a self-positing will always be incomplete and thus open to further elaboration. Because the body is a project that is always already within the world, i.e. ahead of itself, such a self-articulation will always be at the mercy of future possibilities, and hence our expression and grasp of the self is necessarily incomplete: "The transcendence of the instants of time is both the ground of, and the impediment to, the rationality of my personal history" (p.347). Furthermore, because our awareness of self is constantly displaced and thus ambiguous, this has a direct consequence for the manner in which we sustain a meaningful relationship with the world through our operative intentionality. As Merleau-Ponty points out, our meaningful relationship with the world is grounded in an ambiguity which allows for "an active transcendence between the subject and the world" (p.430), and yet because such a transcendence involves a form of subjectivity which is necessarily incomplete (i.e. a bodily rather than transcendental subjectivity) the meaningfulness of our current situation can only be a perspectival one:

"We have no way of knowing what a picture or a thing is other that by looking at them, and their *significance* is revealed only if we look at them from a certain point of view, from a certain distance and in a certain *direction* [*sens*], in short only if we place, at the service of the spectacle, our collusion with the

world...[T]he meaning of a sentence is its import or intention, which once more presupposes a departure and arrival point, an aim and a point of view" (p.429-30)

The main point to be taken from the above is not only that meaning is to be understood as *sens* and thus as a certain directionality and perspectivity, but moreover, because meaning is always from a specific 'point of view' it must be treated as provisional and always open to another interpretation. In every creation of meaning that is thematised by the body–subject's self-positing, there is inevitably a sense of the tentative and the incomplete, indeed, it is always open to an-*other* perspective because we are open to a field of presence which we continually attempt to express and yet can never fully do so. Furthermore, because self-awareness is mediated through expression rather than a direct intuition of the self, there is an awareness of self which is only gained at a distance, for although there is an echo of the primordial relationship between the body and the world in our expressions, this is only done against the horizon of otherness. Not only is our self-expression the taking up of a past and a set of cultural traditions within the present, but furthermore, such a form of presence - the re-activation of sedimented meanings – is an opening onto the 'inter-world' (p.357) of the other, an other who is capable of entering into such a field of presence and creating his/her own meanings such that presence has to be understood as *co-presence*. What is disclosed in this study of presence is that in every instance of self-positing of the self, such an expression is made possible through the immanent presence of the other, an other who acts as the futural horizon of our self-expression and thus a horizon against which *sens* is directed, intended, aimed at. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

"two temporalities are not mutually exclusive as are two consciousness, because each one knows itself only by projecting itself into the present where they can interweave...my living present open[s] on to temporalities outside my living experience and acquire a social horizon, with the result that my world is expanded to the dimensions of that collective history which my existence takes up and carries forward." (p.433)

Temporality is not simply my *own* temporality, for temporality understood as an *ek-static* structure is inherently an opening onto otherness, and thus to different temporalities. What Merleau-Ponty finds in his investigation of temporality is a structuring of our experience which allows for a sense of self, but one which is only mediated by expression against the background of the other, a co-existence rather than a co-incidence of temporality which sustains a diversity rather than seriality of time. What remains in this chapter is to see how a phenomenological interpretation of temporality that emphasises the *ek-static* nature of our existence has a bearing on my previous conclusions, most notably those reached in the previous chapter regarding the congealment of existential meaning, a phenomenon which I attributed to a difference in the operative intentionality of dyslexics.

In brief, the conclusions I have reached thus far have culminated in the argument that there is a qualitative difference for dyslexics in the way in which operative intentionality engenders our world with existential meaning, and this difference is manifest most clearly in situations which are dependant upon the written word. From a phenomenological-explanatory perspective, we can attribute this dimming or stuttering of operative intentionality to a problem of integrating newly acquired meanings into the sedimented horizon of our indirect spread of language. The

problem is *manifest* at the level of interplay between a significative intention and the background of sedimented meanings, however, it is the 'unstable' temperament of the horizon of sedimented meanings which is fundamental to the problems faced by dyslexics. The notion of an unstable horizon can be interpreted as a persistent rising to the foreground of the dyslexic's sedimented meanings, and this results in a foreclosure of the differential spread of language and hence a flattening out of *difference* (e.g. the difference between phonemes, words etc..). From an intentional-positive perspective, the dyslexic is capable of employing certain compensatory strategies and replacement functions in order to maintain a relationship with the written word (e.g. making greater use of context), and hence there is a development of a specific style of dyslexic expression. Indeed, it is only when such strategies break down (e.g. reading under the pressure of time), that the symptoms associated with dyslexia reveal themselves, and therefore it is at this point that a dimming of operative intentionality, and thus problems described above, can be located. Now considering that Merleau-Ponty's account of presence is concerned with an *ek-static* understanding of temporality in which our meaningful expression and experience of the world is always against the horizons of the whole past and all possible futures, in what way does such an understanding of temporality refine my conclusions regarding incohesive sedimentation and a foreclosure of the dyslexic's differential spread of language?

In order to see how Merleau-Ponty's account of temporality can help clarify the above conclusions it will be helpful to look at an account of Goldstein's exposition of aphasia by Garth Gillan, as this pays specific attention to the relationship between language and temporality[231]. In his account of certain forms

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[231] See: Goldstein, K. 1948, and for his interpretation of this account, Gillan, G. 1970.

of aphasia, Goldstein makes a distinction between two 'attitudes' that are taken towards our experience of the world and thus the manner in which we find the world meaningful, an 'abstract' attitude and a 'concrete' attitude, both of which we have already come across in Merleau-Ponty's use of the Schneider case and other examples of psychopathology. The abstract attitude can be understood as a reflective and imaginative attitude that is able to comprehend experiences in terms of their categorial meanings, i.e. the capacity to name something and thus attribute a *symboli*c meaning to it (e.g. the 'pen' is 'red'), whilst the concrete attitude refers to the way in which meanings are restricted to the bounds of an immediate and thus *practical* situation, i.e. resorting to the concrete features of an object in order to describe it (e.g. describing a pen as a 'letter writer').

In Goldstein's analysis, some patients suffering from aphasia are recognised as being unable to live outside of their immediate situation, and thus are in some way compromised in their use of the abstract attitude. Goldstein observes that the aphasic's inability to grasp categorial meanings manifests itself as patients being unable to use a symbolic power of language to name an object, regardless of whether or not it be within their current sensory field. Subsequent symptoms include: learned words not being able to be used outside of the original context in which they were acquired; words not being able to be used in a metaphorical sense; and, communication ceasing to be spontaneous, i.e. a reaction to a situation or a conversation had to be initiated by another person[232]. In addition, the aphasic's orientation of space, such as indicating what was to the left of the patient, was also disturbed[233]. However, in Gillan's re-interpretation of Goldstein's observations, instead of referring to an abstract attitude and concrete

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[232] Goldstein, K. 1948, p.63.

attitude, he instead draws the reader's attention to the way in which such attitudes represent a variation of behaviour within temporal horizons. As he puts it:

"The contrast between 'abstract' behaviour and language and 'concrete' behaviour and language is in actuality that between behaviour and language temporalized within infinite horizons and that temporalized within the immediate temporal horizons of the present situation...For objects to be experienced as 'of a kind' they must be experienced within the flow of immanent time of *infinite* horizons and not just the horizons of the past and future outlined by the immediate, concrete situation."[234]

Gillan thus argues in his paper that in the examples of aphasic patients outlined by Goldstein, symptoms such as the loss of symbolic and metaphorical language which are initially attributed to a loss of the abstract attitude can be further understood as a restricted manner of temporalisation. Continuing Goldstein's line of inquiry, the aphasic's behaviour can be further understood as being limited to a punctual, momentary temporality which is surrounded by the horizons of an *immediate* past and future and which correspond to the practical nature of the current situation. Thus, in more phenomenological terms at least, what is perhaps fundamental to the loss of the more symbolic aspects of language for aphasics is the manner in which such modes of signification and their concurrent meanings are not able to endure over time. What is lost, or at least vastly diminished, is the aphasic's openness to a background of *infinite* horizons of the whole past and of all possible futures, and the consequence of this is that the *presence* of a meaningful (and thus expressive) experience is restricted to the *immediately*

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[233] Goldstein, K. 1948, p.267-8.
[234] Gillan, G. 1970, p.21.

present rather than being able to stretch over time as part of our *ek-static* style of being-in-the-world. What these cases of aphasia seem to represent is a manner of temporalising which is unable to maintain an *unbroken* progression of the subject's progressive fields of presence; the aphasic cannot reopen time and "recapture the situation evoked" (p.85). In light of my previous accounts of language and temporality, it would appear that the aphasic is unable to sediment the existential meanings of instituted language, meanings which would normally remain ever present to us as an immanent past, i.e. a persisting background to our linguistic world which can be called upon by our operative intentionality.

Although dyslexia may exhibit *some* of the symptoms presented in the above account of aphasia, dyslexia is clearly not debilitating in the same manner as aphasia (perhaps quantitatively as well as qualitatively), and to reduce an interpretation of dyslexia to a slackening of the abstract attitude akin to the above account of aphasia would be mistaken. Although dyslexia is a pathological phenomenon, there is no sense in which the dyslexic is permanently stuck in a specific manner of behaviour that would correspond to the 'concrete attitude', whilst it should also be pointed out that dyslexia is not marked by a loss of propositional language, metaphorical language or spontaneity. Following this assertion, there would be little point in further characterising dyslexia as a disorder which can be understood as a subject whose manner of temporalisation is restricted to the immediate present. However, in that both dyslexia and aphasia seem to be marked by a *general* impairment to the sedimentation of meanings, there must be some *temporal basis* to the way in which this phenomenon shows itself in cases of dyslexia, and thus, at the fundamental level of temporality there

is at least a structural affinity between dyslexia and aphasia which can help to refine my previous conclusions.

Our experience, and hence expression, of the world is given to us through our operative intentionality, a pre-reflective capacity of the body which is grounded upon an *ek-static* form of temporality. Thus, it would appear that the problems of 'foreclosure' which I have associated with an incohesive horizon of sedimented meanings, and which I have shown to be characteristic of dyslexia, are in some way grounded in *a different style of temporalisation.* It is clear that since the start of this chapter we have moved a long way from a notion of time and memory that corresponds to the storage hypothesis of memory, and thus if one is to maintain the cognitive argument that dyslexia can be understood as a problem connected to the poor performance of short term memory, such an argument can no longer rely upon a conception of recollection where meanings are understood as codified representations. What Merleau-Ponty's notion of an *ek-static* form of presence has shown is that, because each fresh field of presence is experienced against the infinite horizons of all our previous 'presents' and all those to come, we have the pre-reflective capacity to re-open time and thus bring to full presence the manner in which we have previously found a certain situation meaningful. By re-opening time and bringing to presence a former situation, one is bringing to presence the lived-body's previous expression of a certain situation, i.e. the immanent, existential meanings which belong to instituted language, and which always remain within our grasp as the background to our linguistic world in the form of a sedimented gestalt of language.

It is this re-opening of time and re-activation of sedimented meanings which I believe is central to the phenomenon of dyslexia. Although I have already argued that such problems can be understood as a breakdown of operative intentionality, such a breakdown can now be further interpreted as a difference of temporalisation, for it is in virtue of the *ek-static*, stretchable nature of temporality that we are able to maintain a *smooth* and *flowing* dialogue with the world. Indeed, this is why I have previously conceptualised such a smooth dialogue as 'dynamic syn*chronicity*'. I propose that what is different about the dyslexic's style of temporalisation is a propensity to briefly flatten out the *depth of time*, a depth which consists of the horizons of our whole past and all our futures to come, and thus such flattening out of time can be understood as dyslexics losing their sense of a past and an impending future.

Although there are some affinities with the interpretation of aphasia offered above, I am in no way suggesting that the dyslexic is *constantly* restricted to the past and future horizons of an immediate present as is the case with aphasia, for a flattening out of the depth of time experienced by dyslexics is only short-lived, and can furthermore by characterised by an unpredictable, erratic occurrence. Furthermore, when an awareness of past and future is dissipated in the case of dyslexia, such a flattening out of time is of a such an intensity that we can understand it as an *almost complete* deprivation of temporal horizons, and here we are faced with the philosophical paradox of a current present existing almost entirely as an autonomous entity, i.e. there is no experience and thus expression of the present. I therefore argue that the dyslexic's style of temporalisation is marked by an unpredictable and transient collapse of *difference*, where difference should

be understood as the *non-coincidence* of our fields of presence, and we have already seen a concrete example of this phenomenon in the foreclosure of the dyslexic's sedimented background of meanings. Indeed, because dyslexia is characterised by this *fundamental* collapse of difference, such a fractured style of temporalisation is necessarily intertwined with the manner in which the dyslexic subject is self-positing, the manner in which he/she relates to the other, and inevitably the way in which dyslexics relate to instituted language.

It is important to note that I am not arguing here in favour of a directly causal connection between the dyslexic's style of temporalisation and their style of expression, for the topic of temporality is merely a more fundamental way of *thematising* a set of symptoms which are prevalent in the dyslexic's use of written language. Merleau-Ponty has shown us that temporality and subjectivity are co-originary, and therefore a collapse of difference that is characteristic of the dyslexic's style of expression should be given the same priority as a collapse of difference which is characteristic of the dyslexic's style of temporalisation. Although *ek-static* temporality is the template for our ambiguous, stylistic experience of the world, such that our sense of subjectivity, openness to the other and use of language is grounded in an *ek-static* style of co-presence, it would be a mistake to claim that symptoms of dyslexia can be *attributed* to a certain style of temporalisation. Thus, in my final characterisation of dyslexia I wish to show how there is an intertwining of my conclusions from previous chapters, and the initial conclusions given above.

In Merleau-Ponty's account of temporality we find that our field of presence is characterised as a reciprocal relationship between the indivisible thrust of time (or stretching over time), and the awareness of a 'fresh' present as different from that which has gone before it and that which is yet to come. Our experience of time is therefore one which involves a 'transition synthesis', a movement and differentiation which belongs to the very possibility of temporalisation itself, and is therefore opposed to the passive synthesis of time produced by a transcendental consciousness. It is my final assertion that the realisation of a transition synthesis, i.e. the very possibility of temporalisation itself, would seem to be disrupted for dyslexics, most notably in situations where use of the written word is required, and this assertion has a physiological correlate in the form of work currently being conducted on the connections between the features of dyslexia and problems of sequencing and timing in the brain and nervous system of dyslexics[235].

My assertion can be further clarified if we examine what occurs in the differentiation of one moment from another, that is, the taking up and continuation of previous intentions within a fresh present, a movement which inevitably changes the way in which we experience and thus express the world – differentiation – which nevertheless remains coherent with our previous projects. What would seem to be unconventional for dyslexics is not simply their ability to take up and continue preceding intentions, but more specifically, an attempt to bring to presence an existential meaning (a word, sentence, spelling, use of grammar) that has already been acquired and sedimented. Because the dyslexic is

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[235] See: Wolff, P., Michel, G. & Ovrut, M. 1990; and, Wolff, P. 1993. Although in its formative stages, it would be interesting to take this research further in a contemporary phenomenological vein, that is, through a new approach being taken to normal and abnormal behaviour by authors

a poor performer in sedimenting existential meanings, this has a hugely detrimental consequence for their capacity to pre-reflectively bring to presence meanings which are suited to a current situation, and therefore the intentions of the previous present fall short of being fulfilled. Thus, what *is* taken up in the fresh present is a sense of failure of previous intentions and there is an agitation of the aims of a current project – the endeavours of the dyslexic are being thwarted. In terms of a temporal theme, there is hence an experience of a new and different present, however this is a present which recognises the need to take up a radically new direction to its current project in order to fulfil the needs of a current situation. Instead of asserting that time seems to disappear for the dyslexic, it is perhaps more pertinent to suggest that the dyslexic is trapped in the same experience, for what *is* experienced is the frustrating effect of playing out the same present experience time and again, i.e. a thwarting of intentions which continues until a strategy is adopted to relieve the foreclosure of sedimented meanings, or the situation as the concern of a current project is abandoned. To give an overview of how these final arguments fit into my project as a whole, I now turn to a conclusion of what we have learned in all my previous chapters regarding the stylistic differences of dyslexia.

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such as Varela working between a phenomenology of time and neuroscientific approach to brain states (See: Varela, F. & Shear, J. 1999; and Petitot, J. et al. 1999.)

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to provide the philosophical groundwork for a phenomenological investigation into developmental dyslexia, and in doing so I have offered an original way of studying dyslexia that neither takes the form of an autobiographical report nor a clinical account of the causes of dyslexic problems. In the thesis I have used Merleau-Ponty's brand of existential phenomenology to describe the lived experience of the problems associated with dyslexia. These descriptions have been concerned with the particular style of intentional relationship exhibited by dyslexics when involved with situations which require a proficient utilisation of the written word, e.g. fluent reading. In order to present an authentic phenomenological account, my descriptions have not only been concerned with how dyslexics experience the breakdown of language, but also, the manner in which dyslexics are able to have a relationship with language, i.e. the different ways in which language is meaningful. Through these descriptions I have started to reveal how, instead of dyslexia being explained by phonological, visual and motor *deficits*, from a phenomenological perspective, dyslexics can be interpreted as having a *different* style of being-in-the-world in relation to written language. My descriptions are in no way opposed to the claims of previous clinical research, as the aims and conclusions of this thesis are not of an explanatory nature, and therefore it is hoped that future empirical research may be facilitated by my investigation.

The main findings of this thesis are as follows. In Chapter One I established that the unexpected failure to acquire written language skills in cases of dyslexia could

be studied in a way that draws attention to the experiential level of such a developmental disorder, and furthermore, that the focus of such a study would be on the different style of intentional relationship dyslexics share with language, as opposed to the possible deficits that are understood as causing the problems associated with dyslexia. Through Merleau-Ponty's critique of objective schools of thought I introduced the idea of focussing on the lived experience of dyslexics, a world of meaningful experience that is created through the intentional relationships between the body-subject and the world. Also in Chapter Two I emphasised the difficulties of applying Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological 'method' to dyslexia as such a descriptive process is, in part, already derived from the phenomenological interpretation of behavioural abnormalities, i.e. a substantial difference in the body-world dialogue of specific situations. I therefore drew attention to the importance of not only describing the manner in which dyslexics have a substantially different body-world dialogue in linguistic situations, but the way in which dyslexics are able to find such situations meaningful at all. Chapter Three introduced Merleau-Ponty's notion of the lived body, a locus of experience which is engendered with a pre-reflective, operative intentionality and the reciprocal levels of body schema and body image. The acquisition and habituation of skills by the lived body was then discussed as a concrete example of how intentional relationships are developed, and furthermore, how such relationships not only infuse our experience with an certain meaningfulness, but how they become self-effacing and are therefore only grasped as an indirect style. These findings are then applied to dyslexia and yield the following conclusions.

My first phenomenological description of dyslexia understands the features of dyslexia as a peculiar difference in the intentional relationships developed by the lived body. This assertion can be interpreted in greater detail as follows: firstly, the dyslexic's body schema can be understood as unsuitable for acquiring the skills needed for proficient levels of literacy, and therefore a poor habituation of such skills may occur; secondly, if the body schema *is* unsuitable, the sedimentation of such skills into habitual, intentional relationships which infuse the dyslexic's linguistic situations with meaning is compromised, and I conclude that the dyslexic is marked by an operative intentionality that tends to become disrupted in linguistic situations. I also note that although there is a loosening of the dyslexics operative intentionality, there is still some sort of intentional relationship at work, and therefore dyslexia is by no means a *loss* of meaning, rather, they can be seen as having a different *style* of being-in-the-world. These foundational conclusions are then applied to the contexts of space, expression and time.

In Chapter Four's study of spatiality, depth and movement, I established through Merleau-Ponty's discussion of spatial orientation that meaning should be considered as a form of directionality, whilst his phenomenological description of depth revealed that our intentional relationship with the world is marked by a spatio-temporal 'co-existence', and hence otherness. When applying the notion of lived space to dyslexia, I concluded that the equilibrium between dark space (involved, pathological) and clear space (impartial, disinterested) that grants a lived distance and 'grip' over our situations is unbalanced in favour of clear space. The consequences of this follow that objects in the dyslexic's perceptual field

present themselves as having equal importance, and therefore the dyslexic finds it hard to become spatially attuned to the requirements of the linguistic situation. In the context of movement, the problem of spatial attunement is further interpreted as a disruption of interrogation, that is, being unable to maintain a smooth *transition* between different perspectives.

Chapter Five has made the most notable contribution towards describing the specific differences in the dyslexic's style of being-in-the-world. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of expression is grounded in perception and thus language is understood as having a gestural meaning. This existential meaning of language is therefore experienced as an *indirect* style rather than *representational* content, and such meanings are created through the differential spread of language, both drawing from and producing new sediments of existential meaning. My initial conclusions concerning the dyslexic's problems of sedimentation were applied to this context, and as a general claim I interpreted the dyslexic's experience of language as a congealment of existential meaning. In furthering this claim, I argued that dyslexics are prone to an unsteady sedimentation of existential meanings, and that this is experienced by dyslexics as a loosening of their intentional relationship in linguistic situations, more specifically, a foreclosure of the differential spread of language. However, in becoming aware of such problems, the dyslexic tries to develop compensatory strategies in an attempt to find a re-equilibrium with the requirements of the situation. Those strategies which prove successful are habituated by the dyslexic body and therefore contribute towards the style of intentional relationships peculiar to dyslexia. Thus, the experience of dyslexia is one of a slackening of intentional relationships that

are unique to dyslexia through their habituation of compensatory strategies, and I noted that this discovery would be suitable for future empirical research of a qualitative nature.

The final chapter of the thesis gave a more ontological underpinning to my conclusions through a study of temporality. After drawing attention to the shortcomings of the storage hypothesis of memory, notable its dependency on re-presentation, I introduced an alternative approach to memory and time in the form of Husserl's double intentionality of retention - a phenomenological description of how a temporal object can endure and remain meaningful over a passage of time. Although Merleau-Ponty takes much from Husserl's investigation into time, most notably the idea of specific intentionalities (protentions and retentions) modified into a network of intentionalities, he is critical of the need for a continuous passive synthesis that is accomplished by a transcendental consciousness. What Merleau-Ponty proposes is a *ek-static* form of temporality that is marked by a transition-synthesis, that is, a presence which continuously outruns itself due to it being surrounded by the infinite horizons of a past and future. The thickness of time and co-existence of temporal dimensions is understood as the ontological ground for our intentional relationships with the world, most notably our capacity to obtain a distance and awareness of the self through *expression*. In applying these observations to dyslexia, I was able to elaborate on the faltering of operative intentionality by concluding that the dyslexic has a different style of temporalisation, a style that is characterised by a susceptibility towards flattening out the thickness and implicatory nature of time. As such, this is experienced as a

stuttering of the smooth transition between temporal dimensions, and the dyslexic's opening onto language through expression of the self is compromised.

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