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**Phenomenological notion of the body and its possible
consequences for practice of body-oriented disciplines**

Self-report of PhD Thesis

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Prague 2023

ABSTRACT

Title: Phenomenological notion of the body and its possible consequences for practice of body-oriented disciplines

Objectives: This thesis aims to clarify the possible projection of phenomenological findings about the body into the body-oriented disciplines. The interpretation of René Descartes, Edmund Husserl and, above all, Maurice Merleau-Ponty comes to the postulate that the body itself is not an object, but rather it is that by which objects exist as objects in the first place. From this phenomenological postulate there follows the deep opposition of the phenomenological notion of the body to the notion on which body-oriented disciplines commonly (but usually only implicitly) base their theory and practice. The thesis thus presents not only the interpretation of positive phenomenological concepts, but also the interpretation of phenomenological criticism of the physiological and psychological (or psychologizing) concept of the body, which stand on the flaws and prejudices of the empiricist and intellectualist traditions of Western thought. Subsequently, the possible impacts of both phenomenological criticism and phenomenological concepts on the practice of body-oriented disciplines are discussed.

Methodology: This dissertation is a philosophical treatise. The first part is a philosophical interpretation of the key authors who contributed to the phenomenological notion of the body. When examples are used, it is only for the purpose of illustrating a certain principle or idea. The second part deals on a theoretical level with the possible implementation and projection of the presented philosophical ideas into the treatment of the body. This is achieved solely by fictitious examples of situations that could occur within these disciplines.

Results: In the light of phenomenological criticism and in relation to the phenomenological notion of the body, the physiological notion of the body and the evidence-based approach as its derivation (as well as the psychological notion) have been shown to be inappropriate. The objectification of the body, whether as a machine-like object or as a representation in the consciousness of its “owner”, fundamentally deviates from the immediate bodily experience in which the body is the subject, and which is our original manner of reaching the world. The commonly used objectifying techniques of treating the body are therefore only secondary, derivative and thus insufficient. Phenomenology offers some concepts that could challenge this situation. The concepts of body-schema and bodily intentionality draw the attention of the body-oriented experts to the body as an intentional subject, which differentiates, adapts and varies in order to achieve the intended practical task. The concept of bodily habit, unlike objectifying approaches, offers an entirely different basic element of working with the body, namely the meaningful core of the movement, which is not further divisible. The concepts of bodily empathy and bodily dialogue name phenomena that are common in practice but not explicitly developed precisely because they are not thematised, although they are from a phenomenological point of view more original and should therefore be the basis of treating of the body in the disciplines concerned.

Keywords: body, phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty, criticism of science, body-oriented disciplines

ABSTRAKT

Název: Fenomenologické pojetí těla a jeho možné důsledky pro praxi oborů pracujících s tělem

Cíle: Tato disertační práce si klade za cíl osvětlit možné promítnutí fenomenologických poznatků o těle do oborů pracujících s tělem. Interpretací klíčových tezí Reného Descartesa, Edmunda Husserla a především Maurice Merleau-Pontyho dochází k postulátu, že vlastní tělo není předmět, nýbrž to, díky čemu vůbec předměty existují jako předměty. Od tohoto fenomenologického postulátu se dále odvíjí hluboká opozice fenomenologického pojetí těla vůči pojetí, z kterého obory pracující s tělem běžně (obvykle však pouze implicitně) vycházejí ve své teorii i praxi. Práce proto předkládá nejen interpretaci některých pozitivních fenomenologických konceptů, nýbrž i interpretaci fenomenologické kritiky fyziologického a psychologického (či psychologizujícího) pojetí těla, stojících na omylech a předsudcích empiristické a intelektualistické tradice západního myšlení. Následně jsou diskutovány možné dopady obojího – jak fenomenologické kritiky, tak fenomenologických konceptů – na praxi oborů pracujících s tělem.

Metodologie: Tato disertační práce je filosofickým pojednáním. První část je filosofickou interpretací klíčových autorů, kteří přispěli k fenomenologickému pojetí těla. Jsou-li použity příklady, je to pouze za účelem dokreslení určitého principu či myšlenky. Druhá část se v teoretické rovině zabývá možnou implementací a promítnutím prezentovaných filosofických myšlenek do zacházení s tělem. Toho je dosahováno výhradně smyšlenými příklady situací, ke kterým by v rámci těchto oborů mohlo dojít.

Výsledky: Ve světle fenomenologické kritiky a ve vztahu k fenomenologickému pojetí těla se fyziologické pojetí těla a z něj vycházející evidence-based přístup (stejně jako psychologizující přístup) ukázaly jako nevhodné. Objektivizace těla, ať už jako jakéhosi stroje či jako reprezentace ve vědomí jeho „vlastníka“, se zásadním způsobem rozchází s bezprostřední

tělesnou zkušeností, v níž je tělo subjektem a která je původním způsobem dosahování světa. Běžně používané objektivizační techniky zacházení s tělem jsou proto pouze sekundární, odvozené, a tudíž nedostatečné. Fenomenologie nabízí některé koncepty, které by tuto situaci mohly změnit. Koncept tělesného schématu a tělesné intencionality obrací pozornost odborníků pracujících s tělem na tělo jako intencionální subjekt, který se diferencuje, adaptuje a variuje ve snaze dosazovat zamýšleného praktického cíle. Koncept tělesného návyku nabízí na rozdíl od objektivizujících přístupů zcela jiný základní element práce s tělem, a sice významové jádro pohybu, které je dále nedělitelné. Koncepty tělesné empatie a tělesného dialogu pojmenovávají fenomény běžně se již v praxi vyskytující, avšak explicitně nerozvíjené právě proto, že nejsou tematizované, ač jsou z fenomenologického pohledu původnější a měly by proto být základem práce s tělem v oborech které se tím zabývají.

Klíčová slova: tělo, fenomenologie, Merleau-Ponty, kritika vědy, obory pracující s tělem

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BACKGROUND – CURRENT NOTION OF THE BODY

The primary goal of the thesis, as its title announces, is to present a phenomenological notion of the body and to draw some consequences for the practice with the body. Offering an alternative could indicate a dissatisfaction with the current state of play. Moreover, proposing a change assumes a thorough and extensive description of *what* should be changed. Although the following text is indeed partially motivated by the author's dissatisfaction with the understanding of the body encountered in the literature and in everyday situations, this is certainly not enough to justify an all-encompassing critique of current conditions. For the everyday experience cannot be generalized and the study of the relevant literature can lead to only one conclusion: it is impossible to determine *what* the current notion of the body is, against which it would be possible to offer a definition. Instead of structuring the thesis expectedly as an extensive description of the current notion in the first part, and then fitting the proposed one into it in the second part, it is therefore arranged differently. Namely, it gives up the ambition to justify or substantiate the dissatisfaction with the current state, and rather stays at the level of pure philosophical speculation.

The thesis is thus primarily *philosophical*. Consequently, its critical position towards the current notion of the body is not based on how it is discussed in textbooks, how it is taught at universities, or how various samples of respondents (body-oriented experts, patients, athletes) describe it in interviews, and not even on the basis of an historical analysis of how the body was conceived in the past. The analysis arises *from within* the presentation of a phenomenological notion of the body in the sense that if the phenomenological notion is found to be demonstrably coherent, consistent, appropriate, sufficient, adequate etc., it follows that any other, the current one (whatever it is) included, must necessarily be incoherent, inconsistent, inappropriate, insufficient, inadequate etc. This applies at least to the first part of the thesis,

which tries to meticulously adhere to maximal philosophical generality. But still, it is constantly launching attacks against the so-called scientific notion, against so-called common sense, against philosophical traditions, from which various premises about the body arise, while I shall argue are unsustainable in confrontation with the phenomenological findings presented here. These general constructs are nevertheless impossible to fit into the immeasurably wide range of ever-changing everyday knowing about and dealing with the human body. For in addition to the professional treatment of another's body, each of us also constantly struggles not only with the bodies of others, but also with our own body. Consequently, everyone has their own notion of the body, and it would be preposterous to accuse everyone of standing for an inappropriate notion and to offer them a different one. Hence, it is necessary to emphasize that all criticism in the first part serves only as a strawman against which it is possible to more easily render the outlines of a positive contribution of the thesis – a phenomenological notion of the body.

Nevertheless, the audacity of the chosen must necessarily manifest itself in drawing consequences for practice, the content of the second part. How can it sound to body-oriented experts that they have to radically change the way they work according to “from-practice-detached” philosophical considerations? Although this question may seem a rhetorical one, answering it can be considered the second, implicit goal of the thesis. For philosophy, from the point of view of the thesis should never be detached from practice, but exactly the opposite: *every human action that has the ambition not to be an empty routine must be constantly philosophically revised*. Put another way, apart from the presented discrepancies of the current notion of the body, its fundamental deficiency consists in being critically “under-philosophised”. This may sound paradoxical, given that I indicated in the pre-previous paragraph that there is, too much literature dealing with the current notion of the body. But firstly, solving the general problem of oversaturation of academic texts is not the aim of the thesis (which in fact expands it itself), and secondly, the argument about under-philosophizing

was meant to aim directly at the practice of body-oriented experts rather than at the sphere of academic literature.

The question therefore is *how to get more philosophy into the practice with the body*. Should there be philosophers behind the backs of all body-oriented experts, who would tirelessly ask the question why do they do what they do? Perhaps it would be more practical if all experts cultivated in themselves a bit of a philosopher and at least occasionally asked this question themselves. This thesis wants to show that it pays off, even if it means changing the standard education of these experts.

Although the questions of the philosopher uneducated in the body-oriented disciplines might sometimes sound absurd, they can in fact often reveal the absurdity of established routines. Just to give one example: Is there a general theory of what the body is and how to affect it? Or in other words: Are there any universally accredited textbooks or guidelines? Is there a consensus among researchers? And if not (because actually there is not), what does it mean for practice? When speaking of research, what does the incantation "evidence-based" actually mean? How is it possible to mingle the exactness that should emerge from evidence-based research with the creativity of the process of conceptualization and operationalization? Or the strictness of statistical procedures with subsequent diverse interpretation of results? And if we wanted to ask a higher-level question, a philosopher might ask on what is the practice of the experts really built? Is it upon officially recognized methods, vaguely defined concepts, demonstrations of reliable techniques, the experience gained under the guidance of masters of the discipline, or upon their own experience? Is such an experience subjected to universal logical reasoning, their common sense, or their intuition? Do they feel more like scientists, craftsmen or artists? And what do they draw from their mistakes and accidental successes? According to this thesis, it would be beneficial for all body-oriented experts, physicians, surgeons, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nutritional therapists, gym teachers, sport trainers,

sport consultants, masseurs, spa employees etc., to ask these questions themselves. Hopefully, the thesis could be something to guide them to at least some of the answers.

The announced dissatisfaction of the author of the thesis, himself more a body-oriented expert than a philosopher, depends in the perceived discrepancy between the theory taught and the practice subsequently widely implemented among the body-oriented experts within his reach. But it is surely not just his feeling – it is being heard from many sides and, among other things, it is manifested by the sharp increase of various alternative methods. As already mentioned, the literature defining the current notion of the body in the need to criticize it as inadequate has increased so much in recent decades that it is no longer possible to contain it. Without the ambition to generalize, for the purposes of this introduction, it may nevertheless be instructive to notice two of the most common subjects of criticism: Cartesian dualism and evidence-based research.

René Descartes is usually considered to be the villain who separated the body from the mind. His role is clarified in the beginning of the first part of the thesis; however, there it is less about what he actually meant, but more about what is deeply rooted in his contribution to the so-called body-mind dilemma or dualism. This consists in the belief that there are two essentially distinct substances, and while the mind belongs as *res cogitans* to the one, the body as *res extensa* belongs to the other. The body is conceived as extended and divisible and thus equivalent to other extended and divisible things perceptible by the senses. And such a body is supposed *somehow* to house the unextended and indivisible mind. Descartes is therefore understood as the philosopher who justified the notion of the body as an object for the needs of science. The natural sciences could then apply their universal tool, *causality*, even to the human body, while the study of the mind was expelled first to the competences of philosophy and later to the humanities. Instead of dealing with it “somehow” or with asking the question of how the senses can be both perceiving and perceived, scientists constructed the machine-like model of the

body, which began to be justified not by Descartes' accounts, but by the fact that "it works". Against all those who refer to Cartesian dualism when trying to find out what is wrong with the current concept of the body, it is therefore appropriate to say together with one of the phenomenological classics that the problem is rather that "the science itself does not think" (Heidegger, 1968, 8). And that is why it is actually naive to try to find the philosophical foundation of the current dominantly scientific notion of the body – the only criterion that qualifies any knowledge as scientifically valuable is whether it works or not. In the case of the human body, it simply means that if it could be empirically proved that such and such treatment causes desirable observable consequences, it must be right. This banal principle more or less coincides with what is usually called the common sense (of which science is in fact a mere extension), which requires of us not to overthink anything and to act as simply as possible to make it work.

Evidence-based research can be understood as a term for this banal principle. The machine-like model of the body is endlessly developed into smaller and smaller details by statistically proven causal relations between objectively observable extended parts of the bodies of research participants. To objectively observe means to be purified from the human factor of the researcher, and this is supposed to be a virtue. Evidence-based findings have gradually become the most weighty in deciding what is good for the human body and what is not. And, indeed, many great historical achievements can be attributed to them, especially in general medicine, because nobody says that it could not *partly* work. However, this "partly" closely relates to the mentioned "somehow". There are other disciplines in which the body behaves less as an object (according to causal laws) and in which it is more relevant *how* the mind inhabits the body. Although it is in fact a big deal even for general medicine, the disciplines in which the body behaves less objectively suffer more from internal contradiction between the noble evidence-based endless machine-like model of the body and everyday practice, in which such a

disembodied and “from-practice-detached” knowledge is almost useless. From the author’s experiences in discussions with his colleagues, it seems that, although they refer to the scientific notion of the body and use its vocabulary, they in fact rely much more on their own experientially developed conceptions and their own bodily experiences. They are thus employing precisely the human factor condemned by science and resorting to the questions as those presented in one of the previous paragraphs of this introduction.

It is probably this schizophrenic situation of theory inevitably detaching from practice that conditions the rise of the alternative methods and techniques. If the educational process requires an ever-increasing accumulation of knowledge about the body as a machine, and evidence-based findings are applicable only at the cost of a greater and greater reduction of the complexity of the encounters between the experts and the subjects of their treatment, it is more than understandable that there will arise closed (esoteric) circles which teach about the body in a way that shows their internally coherent theoretical accounts to be closer to their recommended practical techniques. This development also corresponds to the description of the third phase of Thomas Kuhn's (Kuhn 1972) structure of scientific revolutions, in which normal science increasingly fails to explain anomalies and which he calls a “crisis”. From the (phenomenological) position of the thesis, this crisis primarily consists in a divergence from the primary source of all knowledge, from our immediate experience, which is inescapably embodied. In order to get out of the crisis it is therefore necessary to reconsider the pros and cons of an approach that is demonstratively based on disembodiment. It is undoubtedly advantageous when the objectification of the success of a certain standardized procedure allows its generalization, but it is concurrently useless if this success can only be achieved in completely unrealizable conditions and circumstances. And it is appropriate to admit that even what cannot be objectified, measured, standardized or generalized is not automatically reprehensible, but can even be more useful and successful.

Such a consideration returns in a circle to the initial idea that, thanks to the indefinability of the current notion of the body, all criticism serves mainly to positively define the offered alternative. If it is sometimes a little sharper, as in the previous paragraphs, it is more to create space for any alternative at all, to show that the that science's monopoly on knowledge is only spurious. For this is not to say that all scientific knowledge is completely wrong, but rather that it is in our interest to better understand what are its limits and where are the boundaries of its scope. In awe of its historical successes, we tend to extrapolate science to all areas of human life and thus make it impossible to develop approaches that are distinct from it. The thesis presents and promotes one such distinct approach, one that returns to immediate bodily experience and draws from the embodiment of body-oriented experts: the phenomenological notion of the body.

METHODOLOGY

The thesis is a *philosophical treatise*. Its aim is to express, present, clarify and defend thoughts related to the selected topic – the body in body-oriented disciplines.

The first part is an *interpretation* of works of key phenomenological philosophers (Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty), and predominantly of selected parts of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. In order to achieve maximum methodological purity and clarity, all the implications and consequences for theory and practice are reserved for the second part. If examples are used in the first part, they are exclusively examples taken from interpreted philosophers and serve not as examples of how to implement a given philosophical finding into theory or practice, but only to facilitate its understanding. It can therefore be argued that the first part is purely *theoretical* and *non-empirical*.

The second part considers on a theoretical level possible implications and consequences of presented findings for the theory and practice of body-oriented disciplines. Such considerations are illustrated with examples of how presented findings could be *potentially* implemented into the practice of body-oriented experts, that is, they are never related to the situations that *actually* happened to *existing* people, but to the cases that *might* occur within bodily treatment. In this sense, the thesis rests at a non-empirical level, although it has an ambition to revise the practice of body-oriented disciplines. Although the author is himself a physiotherapist, his practical experience is therefore never used in the form of examples on which philosophical findings could be substantiated, but only in the form of impulses that prompted him to agree with certain philosophical arguments and to reject others.

I. PHENOMENOLOGICAL NOTION OF THE BODY

In more than a hundred years, phenomenology gained weight in philosophical circles and became well established despite many internal inconsistencies and controversies. However, outside of these circles it is still regarded as incomprehensible or even intricate. Despite such reputation, it has in last few decades permeated many non-philosophical disciplines. This process is nevertheless connected with various complications, misinterpretations and ambiguities. This thesis is one of many attempts to release some key phenomenological thoughts from purely philosophical level, to implement them into the theories of body-oriented disciplines and to demonstrate how their practices could or should be affected by these thoughts. To be successful, it is necessary to interpret chosen phenomenological motifs in the most accessible and comprehensible (but at the same time not misleading) way. Hence, first part of the thesis is purely philosophical to keep the argumentation compact. The first half of the part is circumscribed by the question whether one's own body is or is not an object, the second half exposes two classical approaches built upon two philosophical traditions against which phenomenology defines itself and develops its original notion of the body. This creates a compact image thanks to which the current approach to the body appears as untenable. Second part then indicate the course which the body-oriented disciplines could or should head according to presented phenomenological discoveries about the body.

A. The body as an object and the body as that by which there are objects

In order to introduce the phenomenological notion of the body in the most comprehensible way, first part begins by putting the opening question: *Is one's own body an object?* First, the position of René Descartes is briefly exposed, and then it is questioned by arguments of Edmund

Husserl. Critical analysis of Husserl's contribution brings the topic to Merleau-Ponty's thorough and most consistent answer, through which the most important phenomenological motives concurrently arise.

René Descartes

Unusual interpretation of Descartes' key treatise, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Descartes 2008) is the distinction between the unextended and indivisible mind from the extended and divisible body. However, Descartes is not consistent in defining the body in the Second Meditation (Descartes 2008, 17-24) and in the Sixth Meditation (Descartes 2008, 51-64). In short, the Sixth Meditation is built up gradually, step by step, to prove the existence of bodily things and to explain the ambiguous character of one's own body and faculties of thinking which are dependent on the bodily substance. To be able to do so, Descartes makes an arc from the notion of one's own body as an extended, divisible and non-thinking object different from the mind, comparing it with a corpse or a clock, to the notion of own body as exceptional among other bodies and inseparable from, united to or fused with the mind, and back. This arc is necessary to enable the explanation of the duplexity of sensation (and implicitly the imagination and movement as well), which belongs both to the body and to the mind. Although Descartes is seen as the originator of dualism, he was actually more the one who first pointed out *exceptionalities that distinguish the body from other objects*.

Edmund Husserl

Almost three hundred years after, in 1931, Edmund Husserl followed on Descartes' ideas explicitly in his *Cartesian meditations*. Essential contribution of Husserl's *Cartesian*

Meditations is the disclosure of Descartes' inconsequence in doubting that enables him to presuppose the objective world researchable by deductive science. Moreover, Husserl discovers in them that one's own body is "uniquely singled out" among other bodies of Nature (Husserl 1982, 97), on what he follows up with a motif of experiencing one's own corporeality: touching one hand by the other. This idea is further developed in the third chapter of the second section of his *Ideas on Pure Phenomenology II* (Husserl 2000), where he thoroughly investigates the role of perception in the constitution of the corporeality of one's own body. Analysis of the hand-touching-hand situation leads him to distinguish the material body from the sentient Body. While Descartes hesitated between two distinct realms of extended divisible body and unextended indivisible mind when assigning to them faculties of sensation, imagination and movement, Husserl discovered two bodies – one on the side of object, extended, material one, and second on the side of subject, the sentient one, with different kind of spatiality, constituted through localized sensations. However, the fact that Descartes' inconvenience with the body is not solved but only rearranged follows from Husserl's prevarication when describing the relation between these two bodies. Husserl in fact *never calls into question that the body is an object*, although he observes some exceptionalities when compared with other objects. Despite a verbally proclaimed unity, Husserl backslides to Cartesian dualism.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

When Merleau-Ponty was writing his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Husserl's *Ideas II* had not been published yet, but he had access to it in depository in Louvain. One of the references mentions Husserl's remark about the body as being not "completely constituted". For him it was just one of the peculiarities of the body. For Merleau-Ponty it is more than just a peculiarity – it is an ontological turning point through which he disclaims that body is in full sense an

object. It is exactly the sentence with the rare reference to Husserl's *Ideas*, which announces the key principle of his ontological turn: "what prevents it [own body] from ever being an object or from ever being 'completely constituted' is that my body is that by which there are objects" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 94). This turn is subsequently manifested on what Husserl described as exceptionalities of own body: permanence, sensation and movement.

The permanence and perspectivity of objects, our belief in their hidden sides and their persistence out of our reach, is conditioned by the fixed perspective of our own always present body, which is engaged with them through many relations, although itself not being an object, because it is that by which they exist for it. Yet these two features of own body thus convert the notion of body from being an object in the world into being a means of communication with it, and the notion of the world from being a sum of determinate objects into being a latent horizon of our experience (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 95).

When considering sensation, according to Merleau-Ponty there "are not things first identical with themselves, which would then offer themselves to the seer, nor is there a seer who is first empty and who, afterward, would open himself to them" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 131). We could never perceive things "'all naked' because the gaze itself envelops them, clothes them with its own flesh" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 131), obtrudes them its own style or manner. The body sets up the element, in which objects can exist as objects, so it is precisely *the tangibility of the touching and the visibility of the vision that makes the tangibility and visibility of objects even possible*.

The motor experience of own body is for Merleau-Ponty the original *manner of reaching the world and the object* (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 141). One is first "introduced" into the world through one's own body, "... which must have given us the first model of transpositions, equivalences, and identifications that turns space into an objective system and allows our experience to be an experience of objects" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 143). Through motricity one's

own body grasps (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 5) and embraces time and space and fits itself to them (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 141) and the “scope of this hold measures the scope of [one’s] existence.” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 141). This whole-body-grasp of a situation irradiates from the body as a complex of incorporated possibilities of postures and movements, which constantly provide a “standard of measure” of the environment (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 140). In other words, one does not perceive environment as a collection of neutral objects and then consider what is possible to do with those objects: rather, a meaningful object appears *originally* as what one can do with it bodily.

Interlude: Experience and objective thought

The Interlude reproduces Merleau-Ponty's thought experiment from the Introduction to the Part I. of his *Phenomenology of Perception*, which serve to illustrate and clarify the claim that "[o]ur perception ends in objects, and the object, once constituted, appears as the reason for all the experiences of it that we have had or that we could have" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 69).

We never perceive objects *themselves* – in certain moment, we always have only *appearances* of them. In actual perception, objects offer themselves as dwellings for our gaze and to look at them means to inhabit them, to be "virtually situated in them" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 71). And this spontaneous step of perception, proceeding from having single appearance of an object to inhabiting it, to having it as a whole, positing the object as an object, this ecstasy (*extase*) of going beyond our actual experience, is exactly what makes every perception a perception of something (ibid., 73). When we presuppose the world as a cluster of definite objects, it becomes impossible not to subsume one's own body within them. Considering one's own body as one of the objects of the world we repress the consciousness we have about our direct experience, about our gaze as a means of cognition and we treat our eyes as a fragment of matter (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 73). Since we accept this, we accede to that what we see is just a projection on a retina and displace it was first the seeing what mediated its discovery. We abandon our *experience* to pass over to the *idea* (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 73) and we apply that also to our own body – we think of it only as of an idea of the body. And exactly this is, according to Merleau-Ponty, a decisive moment in the genesis of the objective world (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 74), this is the point in which science becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, because it enables to seal off the universe, keeping it consistent and taken for granted.

B. Merleau-Ponty's critical accounts on current approaches to the body

This section criticizes science from phenomenological positions. However, it is in fact impossible to subsume science under one philosophical principle to be able to oppose it, so the argumentation stays at a very general philosophical level, trying, with Merleau-Ponty, to clarify inconsistency or incongruency of scientific paradigm from inside, through its own findings about human body.

Phenomenological critique of mechanistic physiology and classical psychology

Merleau-Ponty calls the area of science that operates with the human body a *mechanistic physiology*. As was forwarded, this paradigm inserts the human body into the sealed-off universe of objects, where an object is defined as something existing *partes extra partes* in objective space. As an object as any other it is subjected to the linear “worldly” causality, so it “only admits of external and mechanical relations among its parts or between itself and other objects” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 75-76) and therefore “the functioning of the body had to be expressed in the language of the in-itself” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 75). The body becomes a “highly polished machine” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 78) of which consciousness is a product or a result. In such a machine, perception occurs in the linear dependence between stimulus and receptor, and between the receptor and the brain. Different sensory givens are linked to distinct parts of the neural tissue.

In expectation of turnover in recent (neuro)physiological theory and research, Merleau-Ponty drew quite radical philosophical consequences from certain findings about perception in recent neurological research. In relation to elementary stimuli, he attributed the organism's functions as differentiation, organization, anticipation (tuning at), articulation, understanding, grasping,

etc. He then pointed out that these events could not be imagined “as a series of third person processes, as the transmission of movement, or as the determination of one variable by another” – we cannot gain a “detached knowledge” of them (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 77). We must contrariwise look away from the body as an object and relate to the body as we experience it. However, for mechanistic physiology all these functions appear as that the consciousness of the body (the product or result of mechanical relations between material parts of the objective body) descends from the cortical level, that it “invades the body” and that “the soul spreads across all of its parts” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 78).

The paradigm that stands in the opposition to the mechanistic physiology, while in fact supporting it to enable its ostensible totality, is what Merleau-Ponty calls the “classical psychology” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 92). According to him, classical psychologists are mistaken in their inquiries on human experience because “they placed themselves into the realm of impersonal thought” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 97) to which science fixates, because it believes it can always identify “what came from the situation of the observer and what came from the absolute properties of the object” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 97). By this displacement, the experience of the living subject turns from the phenomenon into a psychological fact, a representation, an object. The classical psychology assumed that then this experience, “already besieged by physics and biology, would be entirely dissolved by objective knowledge when the system of the sciences was complete” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 97). This consisted in “imposing laws upon the ‘psyche’, which was opposed to the real, but treated like a secondary reality or like an object of science” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 97).

Phenomenological position consists in refraining from falling into these flawed approaches, investigating the experience undistorted by its results. It indulges the experience and its openness and indeterminacy. Phenomenological critique of science and its appeal to bracket what is taken for granted may sound presumptuous. However, it is exactly the opposite: it

accuses the science of the lack of modesty, of being totalitarian and prejudiced. In order to know “something valid for me across all the moments of my life and valid for other existing or possible minds” science disparages the original experience, which contrariwise consists in “the giving of oneself over to the appearance without seeking to possess it or to know its truth” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 35-36).

C. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological accounts of the body

This section presents positive phenomenological accounts, the key concepts in a way graspable for the second part, where they are confronted with the everyday practice of body-oriented disciplines.

Body-schema

Merleau-Ponty considered the body-schema, the term first used in neurology, to be a turning point in science. According to him, it indicates the need to express the unity of the body in experience. Although this unity is, in accordance with mechanistic notion of the body, in neurology understood as a sum of afference about own body, Merleau-Ponty demonstrates that this unity is a unity in principle and that the whole is anterior to its parts. However, this alone does not fulfil the potential of what the body-schema signifies about how we are our bodies. It concurrently expresses that the parts of the body are integrated according to their practical value, in order to organize the posture or the attitude towards a certain task. In this relationship, the body-schema shows up as a third term of the figure-background structure or as its counterpart, through which it could even be a structure. In Merleau-Ponty's metaphor of a darkness of the theatre required for the clarity of the performance, there thus should be the requirement emphasized. For the body-schema is the background for motor task and perceptual figures in the sense that it is their standard of measure, an invariable structure or a system of equivalences according to or against which they appear structured and though meaningful for us.

Bodily intentionality

For consciousness, in order to exist, there must be an intentional object of which it is conscious, into which it “throws itself” to become entirely by this reference to this object (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 123). The consciousness *is* in fact *nothing but* this act of self-irrealization, this “fabric of intentions”, and when it “ceases to be defined by the act of signifying”, it “falls back to the status of a thing”, to “an absolute ignorance of itself and of the world” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 123). The *Interlude* showed that in perception things offer themselves as dwellings for the gaze, and that to see an object means to inhabit it, to be virtually situated in it. The section on the movement of one's own body presented Merleau-Ponty's claim that the object appears as an object only because of our body, which is not an object itself, but that which introduces us to the space in which objects can appear as objects. The motor experience was found as “the original manner of reaching the world and the object” in the way that it embraces the intentional object into the “meaningful web of actual or possible motor tasks” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 141). Motricity is not a servant of consciousness, motor signification is not derived from intellectual signification, it is in fact otherwise, even though the intellectual signification is later liberated from the motricity. Merleau-Ponty finds the *bodily intentionality* as “original, and perhaps as originary” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 141).

The discovery of the bodily intentionality announces the turn in understanding of the consciousness: it is indeed intentional in the sense that it is always the consciousness of something, but this something could exist for it only if it first exists for the body. For the body it exists as achievable, graspable, manipulable, etc., as actually or potentially in our hands or in our legs.

Bodily habit

To acquire a bodily habit means to become able to accomplish a given motor-perceptual task no matter what internal or external conditions may have arisen and precisely across a variety of different objective conditions. The habit could neither be acquired by establishing a conditioned reflex through mechanically repeated exercises outside the context of a specific situation, nor by creating a conscious plan of the movement – to acquire a habit it is necessary to go through the situation, to experience it bodily, because it is a bodily grasping of bodily significance and it takes place on the level of bodily intentionality. Merleau-Ponty's examples of motor habits illustrate not only these findings but also the dynamics of body-schema, which might be in various habits extended or reduced for various purposes. Sometimes it improves or augments our motor skills, sometimes it refines or substitutes our perception. Moreover, the last two examples have opened a new field of phenomenological inquiry: the bodily habit concurrently carries an expression, which could be in various extent its purpose.

Bodily empathy and bodily dialogue

According to Merleau-Ponty, the *body is an eminent expressive space*. As he instantly adds, it is nevertheless “not merely one expressive space among all others”, but rather “the origin of all the others, it is the very movement of expression” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 147). The fact that we perceive the world not only as a neutral arrangement of matter, but as charged with a certain expressions, is again due to the fact that we are introduced into it by our body, which is itself always an expression of ourselves. In this sense, the expressivity of the body could be understood as another exceptionality of one's own body among other objects: not only is the expressivity of my body not a particular case of the general expressivity of external objects in

the world, but moreover this latter can only be understood through the former. And this applies in particular to the understanding of the expression of the body of the other – we usually do not need to know explicitly where our body parts are and how they correlate with body parts of someone else, rather, this is all together embraced into one system of correspondence in the level of motor intentionality (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 142). In other words, through our body-schema we are able to transpose ourselves to the body of the other. Virtually placing ourselves to the others, we (to a very various extent) could *understand their expression*. Ability to bodily understand the other's body expression through this virtual, unreflected transposition into it, is in secondary literature described as "*bodily empathy*".

It would be insufficient if disciplines in which two bodies interact would try to explain this interaction as a mere mechanical intervention by the body of an expert who possesses theoretical knowledge of physiological processes in the other's body as in a machine, or as imparting this knowledge to the other's mind, who on its basis should make these mechanical changes through his will-controlled representational body. Introduced Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological account on the body leads into an unequivocal conclusion that *the primary source of understanding of what is happening with the other's body should be the expert's own bodily experience*. Only if the sharing and transmission of experience takes place at the level of bodily intentionality and not at levels derived from it, it is possible to guide other's bodily habits in their natural complexity and malleability, to develop and rearrange the body-schema directly, not merely through its representations. The expert's body thus must participate in the encounter – at least as a model, but better as a guide. The actual intervention should happen through the *bodily dialogue*, recognizing what to do with the other's body, and especially *how* to do it, by the bodily empathy.

II. POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL NOTION OF THE BODY FOR PRACTICE

The second part discusses how the outlined phenomenological notion of the body could be projected into the practice of body-oriented disciplines. At first, it is nevertheless necessary to deal with the ways it is already being projected.

A. “Phenomenological” research”

Within the growing tendency to compensate dominant quantitative approach with qualitatively oriented studies, there is an increasing number of authors referring to Merleau-Ponty through engaging in some form of “*phenomenological*” *empirical research*. Although qualitatively oriented researchers use selected phenomenological terms and refer to key phenomenological philosophers, there is still no consensus on whether it is at all possible to create methodological tools for the needs of empirical research that would meet the epistemological criteria of phenomenological philosophy defined by its founders and current key representatives (e.g., Crişan and Copoeru 2020; Gallagher and Francesconi 2012; Køster and Fernandez 2021; Zahavi 2019a; 2019b; Zahavi & Martiny 2019). In various disciplines, several authors argue that a considerable proportion of such qualitative research is labelled “phenomenological” without proper justification and lacks clear delineation of the concept of phenomenology (e.g., Allen-Collinson and Evans 2019; Halák et al. 2014; Kříž 2019; Martínková and Parry 2011; 2013; Paley 2005, 2016). Hence, the first section of this part of the thesis deals with this phenomenon and preconceives in what it differs from subsequently presented way of application of phenomenological notion into the practice.

For phenomenological research studies it is characteristic, that instead of referring to original phenomenological texts they generally employ methodological tools developed by Max Van Manen (2016), Amedeo Giorgi (2009), Linda Finlay (2011) or else. These tools seem to rely on the researcher's ability to interpret the verbal or non-verbal expressions of those whose body is being treated, and/or those who are treating it, either directly during it happens or of their statements in subsequent interviews. The phenomenological aspect of research supposedly lies in the researcher's ability to go beyond their own taken-for-granted understandings of observed or heard. Probably it is the fact that while phenomenology was originally presented as a philosophical *method* by Husserl and understood as a manner or style of thinking by Merleau-Ponty, such methodological tools legitimize the shortcut that then it simply can be a qualitative method or style too (e.g., van Manen 2001, 460-461). Phenomenology as a philosophical method indeed tries to dig down through the sedimentations of acquired knowledge (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 5) to discover the very original ground on which experience arises. But this only applies on the most *general* philosophical, and thus non-empirical level. It reveals how *any* experience is possible. General phenomenological findings are thus very distinct from feelings and reflections that particular participants or researchers could have about their particular experience. It is even quite distinct from non-mechanistic and sometimes quite poetic descriptions of particular experiences made by researchers who are erudite in phenomenology (e.g., Bjorbækmo & Mengshoel 2016, Hughson & Inglis 2002).

It is therefore appropriate to agree with Zahavi (2019a; 2019b) who claims that such transpositions of phenomenology onto empirical research are based upon philosophical imprecision and bring more confusion than clarification into qualitative methods. Moreover, by promoting their research mistakenly as phenomenological, they attract justified criticism not only from philosophical positions (e.g., Halák et al. 2014, 123; Martínková & Parry, 2011, 191), but also from the scientific positions against which they define themselves (e.g., Paley 2016,

Sholl 2015). They create a misconception about phenomenology and its potential implications for treatment with the body, which makes it very easy for defenders of contemporary methods to deal with their criticisms.

Van Manen's and Giorgi's methodological tools are being employed within the wide scale of body-oriented disciplines qualitative research. In particular, it probably began to spread in nursing (Van Manen in e.g., Andrew 1998, Gramling 2004, Tracy 1997; Giorgi in e.g., Costello-Nickitas 1994; for overview see Dowling 2005, Zahavi & Martiny 2019). As suitable for capturing various kinds of disability described from first-person perspective, it has soon found its application in various sub-disciplines of medicine (Van Manen in e.g., Gad 2023, Santos Salas 2019; Giorgi in e.g., Moro-López-Menchero 2023 Osman et al. 2017, Zhang et al. 2022), especially in rehabilitation (Van Manen in e.g., Van der Meide et al. 2018, Giorgi in e.g., Råsmark et al. 2014) or more specifically in physiotherapy (Van Manen in e.g., Bjorbækmo & Mengshoel 2016, Bjorbækmo et al. 2018, Blixt et al. 2019, Smythe et al. 2012; Giorgi in e.g., Bertilsson et al. 2020, Dragesund & Øien 2018, Ekerholt & Bergland 2019, Hellem & Bruusgaard 2018, Skjaerven et al. 2008). All these studies and many more are more or less connected by understandable effort to overcome the evident insufficiency of quantitative approach to the body by implementing deeply philosophically rooted phenomenological notion of the body.

Although sport, physical education and dance are not so far from rehabilitation and physiotherapy, at least in the sense that they all in general thematize the process of motor learning (and motor habit), Van Manen's and Giorgi's methodological tools do not grow through their research so widely (but still there are rare cases: Van Manen in e.g., Browrigg et al. 2017; Giorgi in e.g., Ronkainen et al. 2020). Nevertheless, in Van Manen's words, the contention that phenomenology is the study of how individuals make sense of their own experiences is, unfortunately, quite widespread even in this area (e.g., Aggerholm & Larsen

2016, Hughson & Inglis 2002, Larsen 2016, Thorndahl & Ravn 2016). However, Merleau-Ponty's accounts project into sport studies much more through conceptualisation of skill acquisition (referring to Merleau-Ponty's accounts on motor habit and motor intentionality), usually in mediation through Stuart Dreyfus (Dreyfus & Dreyfus 1986). Phenomenology serves here to cover the insufficiency of both intellectualist and empiricist ways of explanation of how the acquisition is possible. The discussion usually turns into questioning the level of awareness or consciousness of the bodily action, wherefore interpretations of statements of interviewed sportsmen are meant to serve as arguments for this or that opinion (e.g., McNarry et al. 2019, Purser 2017). To which extent are interpretations of athletes relevant for such discussion is still a question, but authors that demonstrate their theories about skill acquisition on some practical situations in sport (e.g., Morris 2002) are definitely closer to the original spirit of phenomenology than those who seek to understand bodily situations through application of pre-prepared clues.

If any author wants to be considered as doing phenomenology, it is necessary first to decide whether the phenomenological theory should be used to explain the practice with the body or whether the practice with the body should serve as an illustration of the phenomenological theoretical findings. The thesis stands on the latter and is convinced that the former is very problematic. Explanation of bodily situations or translations of statements made about them in phenomenological terms are valuable in the sense that they confirm aptness of phenomenological notion. But they are not helping in bringing the change in how body-oriented experts treat bodies of others, the change must rather happen in their hands. It is thus necessary to formulate key phenomenological findings in the way understandable for them, and for that purpose it is beneficial to illustrate them on examples from practice. Yet for that there is no need for any qualitative empirical research, or at least not at all for a methodological tool.

Besides the dominating efforts to employ phenomenology in empirical research, there is a wide scale of theoretical studies in which phenomenological notion of the body plays various roles according to how each author understands or interprets the original phenomenological philosophers, dominantly Merleau-Ponty. However, compared to the empirical studies, which are easy to criticize due to their presented schematicity, theoretical studies are contrariwise impossible to discuss them other than each separately. It has to be postulated that there are many of them which at least partly resonate with positive message of this thesis, but even such cases usually lack the radicality that follows from the ontological level of presented phenomenological notion of the body. In sport these are especially articles of David Morris (1999, 2000, 2002, 2005, 2021), Gunnar Breivik (2008, 2011, 2013), Vegard Fuchse Moe (2005, 2018) or Øyvind Standal (2011, 2016, 2016, 2020), in physiotherapy David Nicholls (2010, 2016) Gunn Kristin Øberg (2013, 2015), in general medicine Dan Zahavi (2010, 2013, 2019a, 2019b, 2021), Shaun Gallagher (2001, 2005, 2020) or Carl Edvard Rudebeck (1992, 2000, 2001).

B. Phenomenologically inspired transformation of practice with the body

This last section presents how to draw consequences corresponding to the depth and radicality of presented phenomenological notion of the body. It copies the structure of the second half of the first part and demonstrate what each concept or claim brings to the practice with the body. First it is about to demonstrate insufficiency of physiological as well as psychological approaches to the body on practical cases, then to provide an alternative by implementing concepts of body-schema, bodily intentionality, bodily habit, bodily empathy and bodily dialogue into practice through examples.

Inapplicability of physiological approach in practice

From the phenomenological critique of the mechanistic physiology, it followed that body-oriented disciplines should not primarily approach the body as a measurable and analysable object which should be treated using universal standardized techniques. Such approach should be understood as secondary, derived from the primary pre-objective experiential level. In other words, the fact that the body-oriented expert is a body and has a bodily experience with the world should be the primary ground for understanding what shall be done with the other's body and how.

These claims are in the thesis substantiated by few examples. Absence of parts of the objective body in amputees does not necessarily imply the loss of a particular type of experience or manner of relating to the world them (Merleau-Ponty 2020, 121) – they usually still perceive and approach objects as graspable or walkable. Accordingly, the case of phantom limb consists in specific failure of adaptation of bodily behaviour to the changed situation. On the other hand, objective presence of the body does not automatically imply the capability of using it, as when

unusual intertwining of the fingers leads into a failure in pointing with a specific finger. From phenomenological perspective it could be considered as a slight apraxia: the subject understands what is expected, is able to formulate it, however, this still does not have to be enough for practical accomplishment of the required task.

Instead of being concerned by the experiential level of bodily issues, the dominant evidenced-based approach in medicine and paramedical disciplines as well as in sport standardly “focuses on identifying and measuring alterations in physical tissues that can be categorized as deviations from presumed general norms” (Halák & Kříž 2022, 19). However, in common practice, health-care professionals encounter cases in which such deviations do not systematically correlate with experiential difficulties of those they work with, even though the difficulties are paradoxically the original reason for their interventions. Quantitative evidence-based studies therefore fail to shed light on these cases. In the thesis, the fact that “disclosing objective physiological structures and causal relations between them alone does not make it possible to design optimal therapeutic intervention” (Halák & Kříž 2022, 19) is demonstrated by analysis of research on hallux valgus by Menz et al. (2010) and Chang et al. (2020).

In relation to these difficulties of the mechanistic notion of the body, which is concerned by measurable deviations of tissues, the belief emerged that these bodily processes must be approached with regard to the bodily *function* or *functionality*. However, there is no comprehensive definition of ‘function’ and although they suggest to focus less on measurable deviations of particular physiological tissues and more on whether parts of the body fulfil their presumed general function or purpose they “remain attached to a universalistic third-person account of the living body that is typical of the mechanistic paradigm (...). [B]ecause their conceptual framework is still abstract and universalistic, they fail to consider crucial aspects of embodiment (Halák & Kříž 2022, 19-20).

In quantitative evidence-based sport studies the machine-like body of athletes is objectified to be measurable and the treatment with it standardizable (e.g., Franchini et al. 2019, Hellem et al. 2019, Padulo et al. 2016). The idea is to discover statistically significant correlations between selected objective parameters of body, according to which the training should be adjusted in order to improve the performance. Following from previous findings, it should be clear that any eventual success in treatment based exclusively on analysis of mechanistic variables in the body will always remain partial and coincidental. Intervention aiming exclusively at elimination of objective deviations or at achievement of objective parameters does not systematically lead to subjective relief or better performance because it simply does not allow the body-oriented experts to determine the presumed cause of the experiential difficulty. Objective measurement of a physiological structure of the body does not provide satisfactory insight into the real matter of intervention which concerns an experiencing body oriented towards the world.

Inapplicability of psychological approach to the body in practice

Just as the physiological approach to the body, the reflective psychological approach is derived from the pre-objective experiential level and thus secondary. In order to modify the bodily intentionality or to reorganize the body-schema, it is necessary to go beyond the level of conscious awareness. Focusing subject's attention on bodily processes does not have potential to compensate for the insufficiency of the physiological approach. Hence, it is inappropriate in treatment with the body to rely only on verbal or schematic instructions and descriptions. In everyday bodily tasks, we do not turn our attention inwards or create a conscious movement plan beforehand (besides Merleau-Ponty as already discussed, see also Dreyfus 2002; Romdenh-Romluc 2007). In fact, it is an exact opposite – the most effective and harmonious movements are usually those in which the body "ceases to obstruct" and "disappears" (Leder

1990), when the movement proceeds smoothly without having to focus on it, or even because of it. If the body begins to enter consciousness during its normal functioning, it usually means that it obstructs or complicates the realization of the movement intention. The thesis demonstrates that on some examples from neurorehabilitation. And the same applies to sport: experiences from practice unequivocally show that although verbal instructions are important supplements of skill acquisition, it is always primarily necessary to jump into it, to go through it without a clear idea of what exactly will happen and how it will end.

In contrast to therapeutic and educational intervention based on explicit awareness of the body, verbal instructions, and explicit memorizing of motor drills, presented phenomenological notion of the body suggest that it should take place primarily at the level of patients or trainee's bodily intentionality, in bodily interaction with the therapist or trainer. Consequently, "physical parts of the body are neither simply *causes* of a subject's experiences nor mere *instruments* through which the subject materializes their purely mental intentions in the physical world" (Halák & Kříž 2022, 19). The subject's intentions and physiological means must be viewed as elements of a larger system in which their particular roles depend on the presence and specific quality of all the other elements and on the way, they are synergically configured within a functioning body oriented toward the world.

Implementation of body-schema and bodily intentionality into practice

The way how the body-schema was phenomenologically interpreted (in contrast with traditional neurological or psychological conceptions) suggests a significant revision of how body-oriented experts should comprehend the way the subjects of their treatment perceive the world and act in it. To bring this concept into everyday practice of body-oriented experts therefore means to focus their attention on a completely different way of their subject's bodily experience

internal organization. In contrast to the mechanistic machine-like notion of the body in which bodily parts are viewed as laid side by side, connected by causal relationships and as such being assembled into a meaningful whole, phenomenological concept of body-schema supersedes the whole to its elements – bodily parts are in the experience distinguishable only through their partial role in achieving the goal of the task. Instead of employing a biomechanical model of levers, forces, plasticity, elasticity, contractibility etc., it is thus more appropriate to be first concerned by the overall *practical value* of the bodily habit and to assess whether individual parts of the body-schema fulfil their role adequately in accordance with the overall *intention*.

One of the most fundamental attributes of bodily intentionality is thus the ability to dynamically *differentiate* body-schema into isolated parts which fulfil partial functions necessary to support the overall performance. The thesis contains few examples from practice, from which follow a particular finding that the multiplicity is a positive phenomenon and its reduction a disorder (which is in opposition to one ideal and many pathologies in objectivistic approaches). This also applies to *adaptability* of bodily intentionality, the ability to reorganize the body-schema in order to adapt to changed or continuously changing circumstances, and to *variability*, an ability to perform movements and hold postures in various ways without it being requested by the situation itself, both illustrated on few examples from practice.

Bodily intentionality must therefore be understood as the relationship of the body-as-a-subject to the world, which can achieve various degrees of organisational complexity – specifically, the abilities to differentiate, adapt, and vary within a body-schema were mentioned. “Pathological”, unhealthy or suboptimal state then consist in the reduction or disintegration of these abilities and thereby in decreasing of the adequacy of the response to specific environmental challenges. “Physiological”, healthy or optimal state, on the contrary, consist in their maintenance or improvement, that is to say, in the sufficiently fine structure of the bodily response to environmental challenges. And consequently, a suboptimal sports performance as well as the

most common musculoskeletal problems, such as pain in and mechanical damage of connective tissues, or the limitation of the range of movement, should be considered as consequences of specific ways of disintegration of bodily intentionality.

Implementation of bodily habit into practice

If the body-schema is a concept through which the body-as-subject is for practical purposes more graspable as structured and organized, the habit is a concept through which the bodily intentionality is graspable in its individual presentations. Concurrently, acquisition (as well as improvement, correction or change) of the bodily habit is in Merleau-Ponty's words a "reworking and renewal of the body-schema" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 144). From all this, it is drawn several fundamental consequences for practice.

Firstly, establishing habit as an element means that it is further irreducible in the sense that it grasps a bodily signification, so it could not be analytically reduced into sequences in which its overall sense disappears. In practice, however, this does not mean that the only possible way to acquire, improve or correct habits consists in their performance in the natural settings of the given physical activities. The meaningful core of the habit should not be confused with the conscious purpose of the physical activity in the level of representational knowledge – they could be only partial, cut out of the physical activity, and still they could remain meaningful for the body when put into bodily understandable training or therapeutic situation.

Focus on the meaningful core of the habit in practice relates also with already explained principle, that when the body understands the movement, it is able to perform it across a variety of different objective conditions. This is essential for practice, because it is precisely for this reason that the exercising of bodily habit in the therapist's office or sports skill training without

a real opponent is transferable and therefore not futile. On the contrary, if the therapy or training is focused on the meaningful core of the habit and the body catches and incorporates it, it will be manifested precisely by the ability to transpose the habit to another situation, or, as described in the previous section, by the ability to adapt to changing conditions.

Concept of habit opens for practice the topic of awareness of the level of awareness of the own body during the performance, training or therapy. The most developed discussion about this topic is in academic writings about sport. Often motivated by own sports experiences, these authors emphasize the “magic” of skill acquisition, because they realize how much that happens beyond their conscious control and how insufficient is to rely on verbal instructions. For practice, it thus does not follow that trainer’s and therapists should give up trying to correct or guide their trainees or patients with verbal instructions, but they should know that they are thematizing what should be naturally hidden in order to work well.

The level of awareness of acquiring or performing the bodily habit is very closely connected to the so-called “flow” phenomenon, which could be phenomenologically interpreted as that the body-as-experienced fully dissolves in its intention, that it disappears in the “zone of non-being in front of which precise beings, figures, and points can appear” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 103). In practice, it could be the main aim to enable the subject of treatment to experience the flow. The concept of flow is much more applicable to sport, dance or music performance, however in medical and paramedical disciplines it has its analogies. For example, therapy leading to a significant weight reduction may cause so substantive change of bodily experience that it could be considered as a flow (Albertsen et al. 2019). Similarly, the patients undergoing the successful physiotherapy may experience a phenomenon that can be compared to the flow when their bodily intentionality finally discover the optimal way of performing given exercise – the individual parts of body-schema stop to fight one with another and start to work synergically towards the aim of the exercise.

The role of bodily empathy and bodily dialogue in practice

The essence of the suggested phenomenologically inspired change in practice consist in building on the fact that the body-oriented experts are *themselves embodied*. Presented phenomenological notion of the body pointed out to the possible depth of *sharing bodily experience*, which precisely is from what, above all, should be drawn consequences for practice. If one's own body is originally not experienced as an object but as that by which there are objects, and as that what introduces us to the world, wherefore the world appears to us originally according to what can be done with it bodily, in such a world it therefore applies primarily to the bodies of others. And if perception of objects consists in inhabiting them or virtually placing into them, then also understanding and grasping of the bodies of others primarily, originally, naturally and spontaneously happens by inhabiting their bodies, by immediate identification with their bodies. It is possible through the general attribute of expressivity of our own bodies, by which we are able to read expressions of what surrounds us, especially of what is the most similar to us, namely the other's body. Through a "miraculous extension of its [expert's body] own intentions, a familiar manner of handling the world" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 370), it is not only possible, but from the position of this thesis even adequate and necessary to approach the bodies that are being treated to achieve the desirable success.

The current model of treatment of the other's body as described above should be therefore dramatically revised. Phenomenology shows that sharing other's bodily experience could mean not just to know what the other experiences, but to experience it directly in bodily "co-presence", through "invading other's world", which was for the practical purposes defined as *bodily empathy*. The practice of body-oriented expert should therefore primarily consist in developing this capability through unflagging effort to bodily understand what express the bodies of their subjects by inhabiting them, identifying with them in the most immediate

manner, that is, on the level of bodily intentionality. Although the scientific language rather obscures the natural capability of bodily empathy and does not allow for its thematization, it is certain that during that process this faculty is being developed – the refinement of vision and touch to be able to distinguish nuances in the bodily expressions, which correlate with the subjective difficulties more than measurable deviations from universal norms. Hence, one of the most important consequences of phenomenological notion of the body is, that in the educational process the bodily empathy should be brought out of the shadows of objectification of the body and positively thematized and emphasized as a capability to unfold.

But this is still not enough: to be able to *transform the other's body*, it is necessary to implement bodily dialogue into the practice. Phenomenological concept of bodily dialogue consists, as well as the concept of bodily empathy, in relying on the fact that the body-oriented experts are themselves embodied and that their experience of the world is primarily and originally corporeal – their body must participate in the encounter with their subjects. The experts' bodies should, as much as possible, be a direct guides in the encounters – their more developed and healthy bodily intentionalities should guide, develop, improve, refine, adjust or correct the less developed and less healthy intentionalities of the subjects of their treatment. This should be a sensitive dialogic process in which one guides the other just to the extent that is needed to the gradual improvement of the intended movement or posture. As much as possible, it is advisable for this guidance to take place through touch (targeted pull, resistance), for touch is in an essential sense the primary element of corporeality. Expert must take up the behaviour of the subject's body as expressive of its bodily intention, which is lacking something with respect to the given bodily task. And, inversely, the expert must act so as to make the subject's intentionality take up the trainer's intention, already expressing an optimal grasp of the situation.

CONCLUSIONS

In the first part, this thesis offers an interpretation of the phenomenological notion of the body, intended to be accessible, comprehensible and graspable for body-oriented disciplines, but without losing ontological depth.

The phenomenological notion of the body is introduced through answering the question *whether one's own body is an object* comparable to other objects in the world. As this question has a relatively long tradition, the answer was first sought in the *Meditations* of René Descartes, who is also generally (and simplistically) considered to be the originator of the body-mind dichotomy in modern thought. Although his intention was to define a sharp borderline between two distinct substances (as he really did in the Second Meditation), he later (in the Sixth Meditation) got into difficulties when he had to admit that *the body as experienced really does not behave like other objects in many ways*. Despite the alibi loop through which he superimposed the former conclusions on later doubts, these doubts remained and inspired his followers. One of them was Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, who revealed Descartes' loop and developed the idea of *exceptionalities by which one's own body in experience differs from other experienced objects*. This led him to the discovery of the experiencing body (*Leib*), which he situated on the side of the subject. However, although he made several fundamental philosophical steps to overcome Cartesianism, the body-mind dichotomy persisted, because he retained the material body (*Körper*) with the same ontological weight as the experienced body. It was Maurice Merleau-Ponty who made the revolutionary step of superseding the body-as-a-subject with the body-as-an-object. The rest of the first half of the first part of the thesis aims at clarifying the brief answer that *one's own body cannot be an object, because it is by which there are objects*. Unlike his predecessors he interprets the exceptionalities of one's own body's permanence, sensation and movement no more as mere

exceptionalities, but as an indication of a fundamental change in understanding not only of one's own body, but also of the perception of objects.

The way in which the basic misleading presupposition in the perception of the world arises was described in the Interlude and was summarized by Merleau-Ponty's quote: "[o]ur perception ends in objects, and *the object, once constituted, appears as the reason for all the experiences of it* that we have had or that we could have". Respectively, the real mistake consists only in the fact that with such preset perception, one's own body, which is in fact its source, must be necessarily included among other objects. And it is precisely this inconsistency that is the fundamental precondition of the scientific notion of the world.

As a second way of showing the unsustainability of the current notion of the body, Merleau-Ponty's double critique was presented from within two philosophical traditions that are compensating each other's inconsistencies, although in fact they are contradictory and therefore incompatible – namely, mechanistic physiology and classical psychology. Within mechanistic physiology he points out some attributes in relation to elementary stimuli (differentiation, organization, anticipation, articulation, understanding, grasping), that are inexplicable through a determination of one variable by another, but only through their practical sense. So, it seems as if the consciousness of the body, which is on the one hand considered as the result of mechanical relations between material parts of the objective body, on the other hand pervades the body as its attribute. This inconsistency is nevertheless the basis of classical psychology, which reduces the experience of one's own body into mere representations objectifiable from the position of the impersonal disembodied spectator.

As a counterweight to the critical account, the rest of the first part of the thesis introduced some positive phenomenological concepts that might be useful for the practice of body-oriented disciplines, namely body-schema, bodily intentionality, bodily habit, bodily empathy and bodily dialogue. Body-schema expresses the idea that the body is experienced as a basic unity,

whose parts are integrated according to their practical value, organized towards a certain task, of which it is concurrently the background, a standard of measure. Bodily intentionality expresses that the consciousness is not originally “I think that” but “I can” – objects of the world exist for us because they first exist for our body as achievable, graspable, manipulable, walkable, etc. The original manner of reaching of the world is through the body. Bodily habit is an element of bodily intentionality – it is a bodily grasping of a certain bodily significance. With a few examples of habits, the aptness of the concept of body-schema was demonstrated by illustrating its dynamics, as well as the concept of bodily intentionality by showing that their acquisition could be understood neither as establishing a conditioned reflex, nor as creating a conscious plan. Bodily empathy is a natural capability of immediate pre-reflective identification with the other’s body, which is hardly explicable scientifically, but unequivocally consequent from previous phenomenological discoveries, especially from the claim that it is the body that understands what the situation asks for. As well as the fact that objects of the world exist for us only because they first exist for our body, the other’s body is originally understandable for us because we spontaneously and naturally tend to inhabit our own body. Bodily dialogue expresses that the most immediate and thus fruitful way of developing, improving, correcting the other’s body-schema, bodily intentionality and bodily habits is by sharing the bodily experience through touch, or at least through demonstration. It suggests that there exist more original, immediate and natural ways of affecting the other’s body than that based on the scientific notion of the body.

Secondly, the thesis proposed how the phenomenological notion of the body should transform the practice of body-oriented disciplines. Before doing so, it was nevertheless necessary to deal with the existing phenomenological (or at least declaratory phenomenological) literature with similarly practical ambitions. Since it predominantly consists of so-called “phenomenological research”, which is not in line with the presented phenomenological concept of the body, this

literature was not taken into account in the following. Yet it was necessary to discuss it in order to expose which philosophical negligence precisely makes phenomenology lose its credibility.

To emphasize the need for a change in the practice of body-oriented disciplines, the phenomenological critique of mechanistic physiology and classical psychology was then demonstrated with practical examples. First, the inapplicability of so-called “evidence-based” approach was illustrated. Objective measurements and standardization as well as statistical procedures applied to them was shown as not very relevant in relation to the subjective difficulties of subjects of treatment, and moreover as largely fruitless for therapy or training. Classical psychology also proved to be similarly inapplicable to the body in practice. It manifests itself in the belief that the best way to influence the other's body is to direct their attention to their bodily experience. As demonstrated by a few practical examples, it would be always insufficient, or even counterproductive, to approach the body as an instrument controllable by the subject's consciousness, for the original manner of reaching the world is immediately the bodily one.

The proposal to implement the concepts of body-schema and bodily intentionality into practice consists in turning the body-oriented experts' attention from the objective machine-like body to the body as intentional subject differentiating and coordinating its parts, adapting and varying its postures and movements according to a successful fulfilment of an intended practical task. Instead of pushing the other's body into one universal norm, the multiplicity of ways of performance is valued as positive. Moreover, assessing the optimality of the bodily response as integration or disintegration of bodily intentionality in practice emphasizes the question of *how* the bodily habit is performed rather than *whether* the subject is capable of it. In relation to the presented phenomenological notion of bodily habit, it was necessary to clarify in more detail what it implies for practice. For the emphasis on the meaningful core of the habit could suggest that the only way to acquire it is to try to perform it again and again as a whole in its complexity

and right in the situation in which it is required. It was nevertheless explained that habits do not necessarily lose the orientation towards the practical goal even when cut out of the complex bodily action or from natural circumstances.

The concepts of bodily empathy and bodily dialogue were found as already naturally and spontaneously occurring in practice, although usually unknowingly or even unacknowledged for its controversy against the established scientific approach to the body. Therefore, their implementation into practice consists "only" in the rehabilitation of these natural capabilities and their positive thematization in education of body-oriented disciplines. The best way for a body-oriented expert to understand the issues of the other's body is to identify with their body immediately through gradually developed bodily empathy. The best way to help them with their issues is to guide their less developed and integrated bodily intentionality in a dialogic process through touch or demonstrations of the expert's more developed and integrated bodily intentionality – which is again a capability that should be purposefully improved.

Given the scope of this thesis, it is of course impossible to live up to the ambitions it has raised. Since it is primarily a philosophical work, it emphasises the consistency of the argumentation, which is why its main strength is the presumed irrefutability of its conclusions. It is therefore possible to doubt the applicability of these conclusions for practice, but they cannot be thrown off the table as unjustified. Their applicability should therefore be the justified subject of extensive discussions in the body-oriented disciplines, as well as discussions about unsustainability of current notion of the body and the ways of treatment of other's body that follow from it. Although this thesis is considerably critical and radical, it is nevertheless necessary to point out again at the end, that the suggested change does not consist in the replacement of one notion by another or the rejection of all scientific knowledge, but only in the rigorous definition of its competences.

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