

THE WORLD AND I'

[DRAFT – PLEASE EXCUSE MISTAKES.]

Solipsism is the view that the I – my self – is, in some sense, alone. There are different forms of solipsism, which vary along two dimensions. First, solipsistic views can differ in how alone they take the I to be: one might claim that the I is the only self in a world of objects or non-selves. Or one could take the I to be all that there is. Second, there are different views one might take up concerning the nature of these claims. They can be understood as metaphysical claims about what exists; epistemological claims about what can be known; or as phenomenological claims about the character of experience. (These options are not mutually exclusive.) The standard view is that solipsism in all its varieties is at best, a deeply unattractive position, and at worst, absurd. It is surely undeniable that I share the world with other people. Moreover, this fact features in my experience and is knowable by me. Nevertheless, both Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein – two of the twentieth century's most profound and interesting thinkers – hold that solipsism expresses something important about the human condition. My aim in this paper is to articulate what they take solipsism to express. Much has been written about Wittgenstein's views on solipsism (see, e.g., Anscombe 1959, Hacker 1986, Diamond 1991, Pears 1996). Merleau-Ponty's ideas about solipsism and our relations with others have also received a fair amount of attention in the literature (see, e.g., Madison 1981, Carman 2008, Romdenh-Romluc 2011, Morris 2012). Thus, one might wonder what more there is to say on the topic. I hope to show here that revisiting these ideas is a fruitful enterprise. I will argue that the form of solipsism that most concerns Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein is phenomenological, and their theories can be used to illuminate each other. Reading them together yields a single account of human experience that reveals how its structure makes phenomenological solipsism an ever-present possibility for us.

Merleau-Ponty, embodied consciousness, and the puzzle of solipsism

Phenomenological solipsism holds that experience is solipsistic: I experience myself as alone in some significant sense – my experience presents me as being the only self, or as the only one of a special kind of self. One may be puzzled by my claim that Merleau-Ponty endorses anything like this position, since he seeks to accurately describe the phenomenology of our lives, and it seems that each of us ordinarily experiences herself as just one of many similar selves who share a common world. Moreover, phenomenological solipsism seems to be ruled out by Merleau-Ponty's conception of consciousness as embodied. Solipsistic experience is instead associated with the view of the mind and body as distinct. On this conception, I am directly aware of my own mind through introspection, but I can never directly experience another. All I ever perceive are other bodies, but these are distinct from other minds. My experience thus presents me as being the only self in the world.² In contrast, Merleau-Ponty conceives of mind and body as intertwined aspects of a single embodied consciousness. Since I perceive many human bodies, my perceptual experience thus presents me as one of many embodied selves who inhabit the world.

However, there is a difference between perceiving what is in fact another self,

¹ I would like to thank audiences at the University of Amsterdam and [xxx] for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this paper, which is improved as a result.

² The conception of the mind and body as distinct is usually associated with epistemological solipsism: the view that I cannot know that other minds exist. However, this lack of knowledge flows from the experiential situation. I cannot know that other minds exist because the only mind I can experience is my own.

and perceiving it *as* a self. Merleau-Ponty's conception of consciousness says nothing about the latter. If I never perceive another *as* a self, then my experience has solipsistic tendencies, even if I perceive what are in fact other selves, and I know this to be the case. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty suggests that there is a solipsistic element to experience, which a thoroughgoing phenomenology must capture. He writes, '[t]here is here a solipsism rooted in living experience and quite insurmountable' (PhP 2002: 417). He continues, '[c]onsciousnesses present themselves with the absurdity of a multiple solipsism, such is the situation which has to be understood' (PhP 2002, 418). It is clear that Merleau-Ponty takes the solipsism in experience to be connected with having a perspective on the world – something that he takes to be essential to being a subject. In his discussion of intersubjectivity, he first searches for ways in which my experience presents me as a subject, and presents others as similar to me. After laying out some initial suggestions, he then objects to his analysis. He writes,

But is it indeed other people we arrive at in this way? What we do in effect is to iron out the I and the Thou in an experience shared by a plurality, thus introducing the impersonal into the heart of subjectivity and *eliminating the individuality of perspectives*. But have we not, in the general confusion, done away with the Alter Ego as well as the Ego? (PhP 408; 355—6; 414, my italics).

The worry that Merleau-Ponty raises here is that his analysis does not accommodate the fact that each self has a particular perspective on the world, and thus it subsequently fails to be an account of the relations between selves at all. It is after noting that each self necessarily has a perspective on the world that he comes to the conclusion that living experience contains a solipsism. But Merleau-Ponty never explicitly explains what he takes the connection between having a perspective and solipsism to be.

Wittgenstein and solipsism

Wittgenstein offers an account of human experience as solipsistic, which explains the connection Merleau-Ponty identifies between solipsistic experience and perspective.

Initially, one may be surprised by the claim that Wittgenstein endorses phenomenological solipsism. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein tells us that 'the world is my world' (5.62), 'I am my world' (5.63), and that 'what solipsism means is quite correct' (5.62). These statements amount to an endorsement of the claim that I am my world, which looks rather like the view that the I is all there is (Bell 1996). Wittgenstein thus appears to be concerned primarily with a metaphysical sort of solipsism. Whilst metaphysics and phenomenology are not mutually exclusive, it is not obvious that Wittgensteinian solipsism is, or is intended to be, an account of lived experience. Why think, then, that Wittgensteinian solipsism has any connection with phenomenology?

A reading given by Bell (1996) provides the resources to answer this question. He takes Wittgenstein to tacitly accept what he calls the 'Franklin Requirement'. This is a condition alluded to by Christine Ladd-Franklin in a letter she sent to Bertrand Russell. It states that for solipsism to be acceptable, it must be fact-preserving (Bell 1996: 159). Bell connects this condition with the Wittgensteinian thesis that the language we use to describe the world is, to some degree, conventional – i.e., the nature of the world does not entirely dictate how we must describe it. I can, e.g., describe my dog as 'my dog', or as 'instantiated doghood', or as 'the furry Overlord'. The nature of the world does not determine which of these descriptions I should use. It is, of course, more usual to employ the phrase, 'my dog', but this is merely a matter of convention. It follows that there can be different ways of describing exactly the same set of facts. We can thus distinguish between descriptions of the world that posit a different set of facts to those we usually

take to obtain, and descriptions that acknowledge exactly the same set of facts, but describe them differently. Bell calls the latter 'alternative notations' (Bell 1996: 163). The Franklin Requirement holds that for some form of solipsism to be an acceptable philosophical position, it must be an alternative notation; it must not posit a different set of facts to the ones we usually take to obtain.

It is important to note that alternative notations are not competing hypotheses that explain the same set of data. For example, there are two main theories concerning the extinction of the dinosaurs. One theory states that this happened quickly as a result of a cataclysmic event, such as an asteroid colliding with the Earth. The second theory states that the dinosaurs became extinct gradually, over a period of millions of years. Both theories are consistent with the available evidence. But they are not alternative notations because they posit different sets of facts. Contrast this example with the following: 'Imagine a language in which, instead, of saying "I found nobody in the room", one said, "I found Mr. Nobody in the room"' (*The Blue Book*, p. 69). These two sentences are alternative notations. They describe exactly the same fact – that the room is empty of people. In particular, the surface grammar of the latter sentence should not lead us to think that it posits the existence of an extra person!

One might think that the difference between competing hypotheses and alternative notations is clear. However, a little more must be said on how they are to be distinguished. Contrast the claim that it was mere chance that led me to choose my dog (rather than any other) with the claim that Fate brought us together. Are these competing hypotheses or alternative notations? One might opt for the former on the grounds that the latter posits the existence of a mysterious force – Fate – which is missing from the former explanation. Yet one might also argue that they are alternative notations on the grounds that the positing of Fate makes no practical difference to the situation. It does not change what can be observed, nor does it make any difference to how one should behave. The only change that might flow from a belief in Fate is a difference in one's attitude towards events. Perhaps one will be more inclined to accept what comes one's way with grace, rather than rail against one's misfortunes. But even this is by no means certain. The example raises the question of what it is for a description to be fact-preserving in the way required for it to be an alternative notation. Bell takes Wittgenstein to hold that it must make no difference to our ordinary experience or practices. According to this criterion, the claim that it was mere chance I chose Billy from the dog pound, and the alternative view that Fate brought us together are alternative notations – my ordinary experience and practices are left untouched, no matter which view I adopt. Thus, on this reading, the Franklin Requirement holds that for some form of solipsism to be acceptable, it must be an alternative notation that preserves the facts, where this means that it must be a description that coheres with our lived experience.

One might then wonder what might be gained from an alternative notation, given that – by definition – it makes no difference to everyday experience of practice. Wittgenstein's answer is that it might reveal something of *philosophical* significance. His view is that the essence of our grammar is the essence of our world, i.e., the world as we find or live it – 'Essence is expressed by grammar' (1953: ss371). The essence of our grammar is what alternative notations have in common:

A proposition possesses essential and accidental features.

Accidental features are those that result from the particular way in which the propositional sign is produced. Essential features are those without which the expression could not express its sense' (TLP 3.34).

The method of varying notations allows us to discover what is essential to our grammar, thus revealing the essence of our world. It is interesting to note here that Wittgenstein is proposing something akin to the eidetic reduction. The eidetic reduction is part of Husserl's phenomenological method. Its aim is to reveal the essential structures of consciousness. One does this by imaginatively varying the features of the phenomena with which one is presented. This allows one to distinguish between those features that are essential to phenomena of the type in question, and those that are merely accidental.

The upshot is that the Franklin Requirement entails that an acceptable solipsism must be fact-preserving, which means that it must be a description of things that coheres with our everyday experience and practices. If an alternative, solipsistic notation is available, it will help reveal the essential structures of human experience. Wittgenstein's commitment to the Franklin Requirement, and his understanding of what this entails, means that we can take his solipsism to be an account of lived experience; we can understand Wittgenstein as doing phenomenology.

There is a further reason why one might be suspicious of my claim that Wittgenstein endorsed phenomenological solipsism. The early Wittgenstein certainly *appears* to endorse solipsism of some sort, as the remarks cited above illustrate, but there is broad agreement amongst philosophers that solipsism is absurd, or at the very least, highly implausible. Many commentators thus deny that Wittgenstein's statements on this subject should be taken at face-value.³ Moreover, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein advances a number of considerations, collectively known as 'the private language argument', which are almost universally read as a rejection of solipsism. Thus it is generally agreed that even if Wittgenstein was once foolishly tempted into solipsism (and it is not certain that he was), his mature view was that solipsism is untenable and should be rejected. However, there is an alternative reading of Wittgenstein available, according to which the early Wittgenstein did endorse solipsism, and the private language argument is a development of the very same position (Bell 1996).

On this reading, Wittgenstein understands consciousness, or the subject, in line with a well-established philosophical tradition that takes a self to be essentially bound up with having a perspective or point of view on the world. The idea has its roots in perceptual experience. Perception is egocentric. One perceives the world as located in space around one. I see my dog stirring in his bed a short distance to my right; I see a collection of house plants a metre in front of me; my tactile experience presents the computer keyboard under my hands, just in front of my body; I perceive the sofa underneath me; and so on. It is part of this experience that I am aware of myself as located relative to the things I perceive. I am aware of myself as located at the centre of egocentric space – at the point from which things are seen. Thus to be the subject of perceptual experience is to have a point of view on the perceived world.

Wittgenstein then takes this notion of the subject to lead to the conclusion that the self is, as it is often put, 'systematically elusive' – one cannot come across the self (*qua* self) in either inner or outer space. A classic presentation of the Elusiveness Thesis is found in this passage from Hume.

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception (Hume 1978: 252).

³ See, e.g., Diamond (1991, 2000), Pears (1987, 1996)

Some version of this thesis has been endorsed by various philosophers, including Kant (1929), Sartre (1989), and Ryle (1949). Various arguments are offered in support of the Elusiveness Thesis. But the one on which Wittgenstein relies turns on the thought that a perspective is not an item that one can come across in experience. One perceives *from* a perspective, but this perspective cannot itself be perceived. Anything one may come across in the world is something *on* which one has a perspective; it is not identical with that perspective. Wittgenstein writes,

Where *in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?
 You say that this is exactly the case of the eye and the visual field.
 But really you do not see the eye.
 And nothing *in the visual field* allows you to infer that it is seen by the eye (TLP 5.633—5.6331).

We find the same thought expressed elsewhere too,

Visual space has essentially no owner... The essential thing is that the representation of visual space is the representation of an object and contains no suggestion of a subject (PR 100).

Wittgenstein assumes these points are true, in particular, of one's body. One can perceive one's own body, but this means that one has a perspective on it. One does not experience it as the perspective from which things are perceived,

If I wrote a book called "The world as I found it", I should also have therein to report on my body and say which members obey my will and which do not, etc. This then would be a method of isolating the subject or rather showing that in an important sense there is no subject: that is to say, of it alone in this book mention could not be made (TLP 5.631).

It follows that since the self is the point of view on the world, the self cannot be experienced as part of the world. In other words, the perspective on the world that is the I has no extension – it is the geometric point from which things are seen. 'The I... shrinks to an extensionless point' (TLP 5.64).

The idea of the self as a geometric point of view grounds Wittgenstein's claim that I am the world. Bell points out that this claim can be read in two ways. It is natural to read it as an identification of the world with the self, so that the world 'disappears', leaving only the I. This is, of course, the usual way to understand the strongest form of metaphysical solipsism: as the view that the self is all there is. But Wittgenstein's claim can also be read in the other 'direction' so that the I disappears, leaving only the world. A point of view is essentially a point of view *on something*. There can be no perspective without the existence of that upon which it is a point of view. In this sense, the perspective can be identified with that on which it is a perspective: the world. The latter is the reading intended by Wittgenstein – 'The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it' (TLP 5.64). Read in this way, the identification of the I with the world leaves the world exactly as it is, and so, 'solipsism strictly carried out coincides with pure realism' (TLP 5.64).

One might suppose that Wittgenstein's claim that only the world is left means that my psychological life – the experiences, thoughts, desires, wishes, emotions, and so on that I undergo every day – has been erased from the picture. Since my psychological life is an important feature of my ordinary experience, a description of things that left no place for it would violate the Franklin Requirement. However, Bell argues that Wittgenstein's solipsism does not deny the existence of my psychological life. Instead, it

offers a different description of it to the one offered by the traditional picture. Since Descartes, it is usual to think of subjectivity as an inner realm, distinct from the external world, and accessible only to the subject. My psychological states populate my inner realm. Just as external space contains dogs, cars, camels, trees, and all the other entities one encounters as one makes one's way about the world, so too inner space contains one's thoughts, feelings, desires, and so on. Whilst this picture is compelling, many writers – including Wittgenstein – have identified numerous difficulties with it. Wittgenstein's solipsism implies a rejection of this picture. The shrinking of the self to an extensionless point is the disappearance of inner space. The subject as a point of view on the world has no inner volume. But this does not mean that one's 'inner' states vanish. Instead, one should understand one's psychological life as happening in the world.

Bell (1996) connects this point with Wittgenstein's no-ownership view of the self, which denies that my experiences, thoughts, and other psychological phenomena are owned.⁴ Once the self is conceived as a point of view on the world, this denial makes sense. (Recall Wittgenstein's remark that 'visual space has essentially no owner' (PR 100).) Experiences are undergone *from* a perspective. For example, you and I both experience my love for my dog. But we each have a different perspective on it. You see it in my gestures when I engage with him; the loving look on my face when I talk about him; the concern in my voice as I speak to the vet when he is ill. I, on the other hand, am the one who loves him, and I experience my love from this point of view. It manifests in such things as the lovable, familiar look of my dog; the sense of urgency that pervades the world when he is ill and needs medical attention. But a perspective is not the sort of thing that can own experience. Wittgenstein writes,

One of the misleading representational techniques in our language is the use of the word 'I', particularly when it is used in representing immediate experience... It would be instructive to replace this way of speaking with another in which immediate experience would be representing without using the personal pronoun, for then we'd be able to see that the previous representation wasn't essential to the facts' (PR 88).

These ideas point to the following picture of how one's psychological life manifests to one. It is experienced as all out in the world, and on a par with other worldly events:

Amongst other things, the world as I find it contains thoughts, feelings of misery and happiness, sensations, perceptions, desires, and the like. Some of these will indeed be contingently related to a particular body [found at the Centre] – but then again, some of them will be contingently related to ambient temperature, say, or the presence of food, or the fortunes of Sheffield Wednesday. In addition to thoughts, feelings, sensations and the like, which are events in the world, there will also be such things as football matches, hurricanes, and eclipses of the sun. And these too are events in the world. For me, as the Centre, none of these occurrences involves any identification of an owner, or bearer, or subject who has them. From this new perspective [that of Wittgenstein's alternative solipsistic notation] a hurricane is just as little, or as much, "mine" as is a headache (Bell 1996, 65).

Finally, one may wonder how this position has any call to be named 'solipsism' since the I has disappeared, leaving only the world. The answer to this is that the world that is left behind when the I disappears is 'the reality co-ordinated with' the point of view that is me (TLP 5.64). In other words, it is an essential perspectival world. In this sense, it is my world. I am the zero point around which it revolves. Bell tells us that the

⁴ This thesis is associated primarily with Wittgenstein's later writings such as PR, BBK, PI.

world is one 'pervaded' by my subjectivity (REF). This is what Wittgenstein means when he says, 'The I occurs in philosophy through the fact that "the world is my world"' (TLP 5.641).

I claimed earlier that Wittgenstein's endorsement of the Franklin Requirement means that he intends his solipsism to be a phenomenological account of experience, so to defend it we must show that it does indeed capture some aspect of human life. Bell (1996) suggests that it is an alternative notation describing the experience of any human subject, because adopting this description leaves our ordinary experience and practices untouched. But this does not seem credible. However, phenomenology – at least since Merleau-Ponty – does not discriminate against any type of experiences. The so-called pathological, the extraordinary, the rare, are all grist to the phenomenologist's mill in trying to understand the essential structure of human subjectivity. It follows that a phenomenological defence of Wittgenstein's solipsism need not show that it captures the experience of *any* human subject. It will be sufficient to show that it correctly describes *some* form of human experience. I will show that Wittgenstein's solipsism accurately captures certain experiences that are characteristic of schizophrenia.⁵

On Wittgenstein's picture, the I cannot be identified with the bodily self. I am a perspective on the world, whilst the body is just another thing in the world on which I have a perspective. This claim implies alienation from my own body – it is not experienced as me. It implies further that my body is experienced as lacking in subjectivity. In other words, it is presented to me as a mere object, such that there is no essential difference between it and inanimate things like rocks and chairs. Wittgenstein makes this alienation vivid in a remark quoted above.

If I wrote a book called *The world as I found it*, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not, etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could *not* be mentioned in that book (TLP 5.631).

In this remark, Wittgenstein distinguishes the subject from the body, and conjures up an image of the latter as a puppet whose strings are pulled by one's will. Alienation from the body is typical of certain characteristic forms of schizophrenic experience. Stanghellini states that 'in schizophrenic states, the body... is experienced as a sort of object that is detached from the prime initiator of the movement, their actions detached from the energy that should spontaneously feed it' (Stanghellini 2004, 157). Schizophrenic alienation from one's own body, which is experienced as a mere object, is expressed in the following first-person reports, '[There's] no inside of the body, but only a frame... food is falling into a vacuum... behind the chest is nothing, only a big hole' (Angyal 1936, 1042). 'I'm blessed with a bladder-emptyer that I can turn of and of, and an anal expeller' (Stanghellini 2004, 155).

A second component to Wittgenstein's solipsism is the notion of my own

⁵ Sass (1993) also suggests that Wittgenstein's solipsism can be employed to make sense of certain important and puzzling aspects of schizophrenia. Unfortunately, space prevents me from engaging with his ideas here. However, it is worth noting an important difference between our accounts. Sass's proposal is that the logic of schizophrenic thinking is analogous to the logic of Wittgenstein's solipsism. My proposal, in contrast, is that Wittgenstein's solipsism is a (partial) account of the structure of experience, which (partially) explains how certain kinds of schizophrenic experience have the character they do. I take it that this difference in our approaches means that mine is able to escape some of the criticisms leveled at Sass by Read (2001), although it is clear the latter would disagree with the interpretation of Wittgenstein offered here.

psychological goings-on as events I encounter in the world, which are just as much or as little 'mine' as hurricanes, and other impersonal worldly events. My psychological life is not experienced as owned by me. This claim again implies alienation – this time separation from one's own psychological life. Once more, we find that this is characteristic of schizophrenic experience, as the following remarks attest. 'My first personal life has been lost and replaced by a third person perspective' (Parnas 2000, 124). 'It is not me the one who feels', and 'It is not me who feels – *It feels*' (Stanghellini 2004: 157). 'Feelings are not felt by me, things are not seen by me, only by my eyes' (Spitzer 1990: 393–4). '[I doubt] that it is me thinking, myself' (Rosser 1979: 182).

The third component is the identification of the self with a bare point of view on the surrounding space – a perspective on the world that is not part of it – and the correlative claim that since the world is experienced from my own perspective, it is my world. The alienation from one's own body in schizophrenia is an experienced separation from one's bodily insertion in the world. Unsurprisingly, this often goes hand in hand with experience of oneself as a mere point of view on the world – a distant spectator who does not interact with the spectacle. Moreover, just as Wittgenstein connects the notion of the self as point of view with the solipsistic conception of the world as *my* world, so too, we find that the schizophrenic experience of oneself as a mere perspective is often accompanied by the sense that the world is *mine*. Sass writes, 'perhaps the most emblematic delusion of this enigmatic illness [schizophrenia] is of being a sort of God-machine, a kind of all-seeing, all-constituting camera eye' (1999, 320). The experience is expressed in statements such as the following. 'I feel like an emperor inside a pyramid' (Stanghellini 2004, 155). 'My thoughts can influence things', 'This event happens because I think it', 'To keep the world going, I must not stop thinking' (Spitz 1990, 393–4). 'I could create the events of my universe by just thinking them, believing them to be true... What really terrified me was when I realized that I could conceive of wrenching the world from its axis' (Sass 1999, 330).

In summary, Wittgenstein's solipsism takes as its starting-point, the idea that the self is a point of view. Once this notion is in place, his solipsistic picture flows from it. Any item one experiences is something on which one has a perspective; it is not identical with that perspective. The self is thus divorced from the body, and slips out of the world. One's psychological life has to be part of the world on which one has a perspective – there is no 'where' else to situate it. To experience the world from a perspective is to experience oneself as the origin of egocentric space, with the world laid out around one. In other words, it is to experience oneself as the zero point, around which the world revolves. The I is thus a Godlike view on its own world. Wittgenstein's solipsistic notation is confirmed as an accurate description of lived experience by the characteristic forms of schizophrenic experience identified above, which are often found together in the experience of a single subject (Sass 1999; Stanghellini 2004). However, Wittgenstein's solipsism cannot be a complete phenomenological account because the schizophrenic experiences that confirm it stand in stark contrast to non-schizophrenic experience, which presents the subject as just one of many similar selves who share a common world. Something is missing from Wittgenstein's account. To see what this is, we must return to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy.

Merleau-Ponty and the body

Merleau-Ponty, like Wittgenstein, identifies the subject with a point of view on the world. But unlike Wittgenstein, he pays close attention to the experience of one's own body, and it is this, which – for most of us – mitigates the solipsism that flows from being a

perspective on the world. There are two features of bodily experience that are particularly relevant in the present context: the awareness of one's perspective as embodied, and the transfer of the body schema to other people. I will consider both of these in turn.

On Wittgenstein's solipsistic picture, one's body is experienced as just one of the items in the world on which one has a perspective. His description implies alienation from one's own body, which is experienced as apart from, rather than identical with, oneself. The schizophrenic experiences that fit this description highlight the fact that such alienation is absent from at least some forms of *non-schizophrenic* awareness. Merleau-Ponty accounts for this by describing one's awareness of one's perspective not as an extensionless point of view, but as embodied. One might initially take Merleau-Ponty's claim to be the simple observation that one experiences one's own body as located in the same place as the point from which one's perspective originates. However, his claim runs deeper than this. To see the world from a perspective is to experience items in the world as located relative to where one appears to be. If one merely experienced one's body as being in the same place as one's point of view, one would still experience it as located relative to one's apparent location. It would still be an object on which one had a perspective – rather than being experienced as the embodiment of one's point of view. Merleau-Ponty holds instead that one experiences one's body as being the *origin* of egocentric space. It is presented as the zero point that establishes its co-ordinates; it is not presented relative to those co-ordinates. To put matters more simply, my body is not presented as just another item that is located relative to me; I perceive worldly items as located relative to my body.

The thesis that I experience my body as being the origin or zero point of egocentric space means that it must feature in my perceptual field without being something on which I simply have a perspective. Initially, this claim may strike one as implausible. I experience it using the same senses that I use to experience other worldly items – I can see, touch, hear, etc. my own body. My senses give me an awareness of worldly things as located around me in space – they provide me with a perspective on those things. Thus it seems my sensory awareness of my body must provide me with a perspective on it. However, whilst Merleau-Ponty does not deny that I can experience my body using my senses, he rejects this simple account of the situation. He begins by considering what it is like for one's two hands to touch each other, and makes the following observations:

The two hands are never touched and touching at the same time with respect to each other. When I press my 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 arrangement in which the two hands can alternate in the role of 'touching' and 'touched'. What was meant by talking about 'double sensations' is that, in passing from one role to the other, I can recognise the hand touched as the same one that will in a moment be touching (PhP 93).

In this passage, Merleau-Ponty claims that when my two hands touch one another, one is the object of tactile experience (the touched), whilst the other is the subject (the touching). Moreover, there is a phenomenological difference between the two roles. I am aware of the touched hand in the same sort of way that I am aware of other worldly objects when I touch them. But my awareness of the touching hand is different. I am aware of the touching hand as the *subject* of experience. I am aware of it, in other words, as part of *me*. This means that in my experience, there can be no 'distance' between me and the touching hand. There is always 'distance' between me and an object on which I

have a perspective, since experiencing oneself as having a perspective on something is to experience it as located relative to me, and to experience it as located relative to myself is to experience myself as separate from it. It follows that when I experience my hand touching, my awareness cannot present it as something on which I have a point of view.

How should we understand this experience? The difference lies in the structure of awareness. It is usual to think of awareness as having what is known as an 'act-object' structure. On this model, to be aware of something involves an act of awareness that is directed at that thing. Perceptual awareness of things in the world has this structure. Seeing a table, e.g., involves an act of awareness that is directed at the table. Seeing Shmoo the cat involves an act of awareness that is directed at Shmoo. But there is an alternative way that awareness may be structured. On this account – what Moran (2001) calls the 'adverbial model' – to be conscious of *x* does not involve an act of awareness directed at *x*. Instead, it describes the kind of thing or activity that *x* is – a conscious thing or activity. We can get some purchase on this idea if we consider what it is to dance joyfully. It is implausible to suppose that this should be analysed as involving an act of joy that is directed at one's dancing. This implies that the dancing is independent from the joy, so that one could engage in the very same dancing, without its being joyful. One could dance sadly, e.g., by directing an act of sadness at the very same dancing. But this is surely wrong. To dance joyfully is for one's dancing to have particular joyful qualities, which are different from those it has if one dances sadly. Thus a better analysis takes 'joyfully' to describe the way in which one dances, i.e., the sort of dancing it is. On the adverbial model of awareness, certain cases of what it is to be conscious of something are treated in the same way as joyful dancing. They do not involve acts of awareness that are directed at some thing or activity. Instead, 'conscious' describes the sort of thing or activity it is. The difference between the experience of being touched, and the experience of touching can be analysed using this distinction. My awareness of my touching hand has an adverbial structure. It does not consist in an act of awareness that is directed at my hand as its object. I am not, in other words, aware of my hand. Instead, I am conscious *in*, or better, my hand is sensitive. It follows that there is a form of bodily awareness that does not present me with my body as an object on which I have a perspective, because it is not, properly speaking, awareness of my body at all. Instead, it is awareness in my body, or my body's sensitivity.

My awareness in my body, or my body's sensitivity, is the experience of the subject of perception (myself) as a bodily being. As such, it is awareness of myself as an embodied subject who is part of the world. This sense of myself as a part of the world is reinforced by what Merleau-Ponty refers to as the 'double nature of sensations'. My experience of my body can switch between the two forms of awareness, so that the touched can become the touching, and vice versa. In this way, I experience myself the touching subject, as something that – like all the worldly items I encounter – can be an object for touching, and as such, something that is located in, and part of a world of touchable objects.

Merleau-Ponty's account of how one experiences one's point of view as embodied inserts the I back into the world. But it is not sufficient to completely dispel solipsism, and capture the nature of non-schizophrenic experience. On his account so far, the subject is no longer a godlike perspective on the world, but a flesh-and-blood part of it. However, recall that on Wittgenstein's account, it is not just the elusiveness of the subject that leads to solipsism. Experience is also solipsistic because it is perspectival and to be aware of the world as laid out in space around one is to experience oneself as the centre of that world. The fact that one experiences one's perspective as bodily does not

alter the privileging of one's own perspective as the zero point around which the world revolves. The solipsism that flows from having a point of view must be mitigated in non-schizophrenic experience by an awareness that somehow de-centres one's own perspective. Merleau-Ponty holds that to de-centre the point from which I view the world, I must be able to occupy the perspective of others. As we saw earlier, I experience my point of view in perception as being the perspective of my body – I experience my point of view as embodied. Correlatively, to occupy the perspective of another must be to experience the other's *bodily* perspective; it must be to inhabit the other's body. Merleau-Ponty explains how this is possible with his account of the momentary transfer of one's body schema to the bodies of others.

Merleau-Ponty draws on Schilder's (1950) work on the body image to make his case. Merleau-Ponty prefers the term 'body schema' – *schema corporel* – which emphasises its role in providing a framework for the subject's experience of the world. In what follows, I will use his preferred terminology. For Merleau-Ponty, the body schema is one's embodied sense of self; it is one's bodily 'grasp' of the sort of creature one is. It comprises one's motor abilities; one's sense of how one appears from the outside; cultural beliefs the subject holds about her body; her emotional attitudes towards it; etc. The body schema can be usefully thought of as comprising two components: (i) a reasonably settled sense of oneself as an embodied creature of a certain sort, with particular properties; (ii) a continuous awareness of one's changing posture as one moves through the world. The body schema is only partly available to consciousness. Whilst I have used the term 'grasp' to describe it, the above definition should make it clear that it is not wholly cognitive, although the subject's thoughts about her body can enter into it. Similarly, whilst I have described it as the 'sense' one has of one's body, it is not a wholly perceptual phenomenon either.

There is clearly an essential connection between one's body schema and the physical object that is one's body. However, if the body schema simply tracks and reflects one's physical body, then it is unclear how it could be transferred to another person. To understand how such a transfer is possible, we need to know more about the relation – as Merleau-Ponty conceives it – between one's physical body and one's body schema.

His understanding of their relation is grounded in an important distinction: that between the living body (*Leib*) and the objective body (*Körper*). The latter is the body conceived as a mere physical object, whilst the former is the body as the subject experiences and lives through it. The subject's body is her means of being in the world. Her experience of it, therefore, is not awareness of an object separate from herself; it is her conscious inhabiting of the world. The fact that her body is her means of living in the world means that her body as she experiences it (her living body) does not simply follow the objective body's contours. Moreover, this is not some defect in her bodily awareness – i.e., we should not class all such experiences as illusory – rather, this is what it is to live through the body. We can get some initial purchase on this idea by considering a different case: the experience of time passing. The units of time – seconds, minutes, hours – are uniform; each second (minute, hour) is the same length as any other. But one does not always experience them as uniform. It is a commonplace truism that time passes quickly when one is doing things one loves, and drags when one is engaged in boring activity. More pronounced experiences of time stretching or speeding up often accompany the use of certain drugs. Such temporal experiences do not 'match' the uniformity of time's units. But it would be odd to thereby class them all as illusory. We might class very extreme experiences of time's stretching or compressing as illusory, but in the majority of cases we do not, because the stretching or compressing of time in

different contexts just is the way that we *live* in time. Merleau-Ponty makes a roughly analogous claim about the subject's experience of her own body. There may indeed be cases where the subject's experience of her body is so different from its objective properties that it should be classed as illusory (an example might be cases of lycanthropy where the subject experiences herself as being a wolf). But in less extreme cases, we should not class bodily experience that does not exactly map on to the objective body's properties as illusory because these differences are simply to do with the way that the body is lived.

There are many examples to illustrate the way in which the subject's experience of her own body does not exactly match its objective properties. I will provide just two here. The first is given by Schilder (1950). After injuring his hand in a car accident, he came to experience the space around it as having a special significance, so that his hand hurt if people came too close to it. Schilder states that after the accident, his sense of himself as an embodied subject changed so that it included a sense of his hand as vulnerable. He suggests that this illustrates a more general fact. The space immediately surrounding one's physical body is experienced as part of the living body. Second, the subject lives her body partly as a collection of capacities for action. Her capacities can be extended through the use of tools. When the subject habitually uses a tool, her sense of herself expands to take in the tool, which is subsequently experienced as part of her embodied self, albeit temporarily. For example, just as one does not need to consciously calculate whether a gap is wide enough to walk through – one can immediately see whether or not one's body will fit through it – so too, when one is practised at riding a bike, one can immediately see whether a gap between two bollards is wide enough to cycle through. Moreover, one can have proprioceptive (or perhaps quasi-proprioceptive) sensations in a tool. Schilder (1950) notes that the blind person senses the ground with the end of their stick in much the same way that one senses objects by touching them with one's hands (or other parts of one's body). He no longer feels the stick in his hands as an intermediary between himself and the world. Instead, sensations in his hands are immediately transformed to yield experience of the world at the surface of the stick.

The body schema is bound up with the subject's experience of her body. Component (ii) the body schema is the continuous awareness of one's changing posture as one moves through the world – i.e., it just is the ongoing experience of one's body. Component (i) is the reasonably settled sense of oneself as an embodied creature of a certain sort. We can think of component (i) as affecting (ii) (and so affecting the experience of one's body). In the case of Schilder's injured hand, his (i) sense of himself as an embodied subject changed to include a sense of his hand as vulnerable. This then affected (ii) how he experienced his bodily self, so that the space around his hand took on a special significance for him. Similarly, we can think of a tool user's (i) sense of herself altering as she becomes habituated to using the tool so that this then affects (ii) and she experiences the tool as a temporary part of her own body. The body schema's role in bodily experience means that it is what underlies the living body. Since the living body does not exactly map on to the contours of the objective body, the body schema's function cannot be to simply track and reflect the latter's properties.

The distinction between the living body and the objective body, and the body schema's role in the former, opens up the possibility of the body schema's expansion beyond the boundaries of the objective body. Indeed, this is what happens in the two examples given above. The body schema expands to encompass the space surrounding the objective body, and the tools habitually used by the subject. Merleau-Ponty continues by claiming that not only can the body schema be extended, it can also be

momentarily *transferred* to the body of another subject. This allows the subject to perceive the world as *for-the-other*. To understand this claim, we need to know a little more about Merleau-Ponty's account of perception and the body schema's role in it. Perception, for Merleau-Ponty, never presents the perceiver with a 'neutral' world of things. Instead, she is confronted with an environment that solicits her to act in various ways. She sees food as inviting her to eat it; footballs appear to solicit kicking; and she perceives her dog as drawing her to stroke and feed him. Perception has this character because it involves the exercise of skills that have both a perceptual and motor component. Merleau-Ponty holds that when the perceiver acquires a motor skill – such as the ability to ride a bicycle – she also acquires the ability to perceive the world in certain ways. She can perceive certain environments as appropriate for exercising that skill. In the example given above, she perceives bikes as *for-riding*, and different sorts of terrain as more or less appropriate for riding along. On this view, each perceptible object corresponds to a set of the perceiver's motor capacities – those that can be used to interact with it. Actually perceiving the object involves using these motor capacities. We saw above that Merleau-Ponty takes the body schema to incorporate the body's 'sense' of what it can do, so the body schema is partly constituted by the body's motor abilities. Thus on his account, perceiving an object involves using one's body schema.

Merleau-Ponty then argues that when she sees another subject, one's body schema is transferred momentarily to that person. This allows one to see the surrounding world as soliciting *the other* to act:

No sooner has my gaze fallen upon a living body in process of acting than the objects surrounding it immediately take on a fresh layer of significance: they are no longer simply what I myself could make of them, they are what this other pattern of behaviour is about to make of them (PhP 353).

Merleau-Ponty holds that to see the world as *for-the-other* in this way is to see the other as a centre of action, and so to see her as another subjectivity – another view of the world. Correspondingly, to see the world as *for-the-other* is to see it as laid out from this other perspective. This decentres my own point of view, so that I no longer experience it as the zero point around which the world revolves.

Round about the perceived body a vortex forms, towards which my world is drawn and, so to speak, sucked in: to this extent, it is no longer merely mine, and no longer merely present, it is present to *x*, that other manifestation of behaviour which begins to take shape in it. Already the other body has ceased to be a mere fragment of the world, and become... a certain 'view' of the world. There is taking place over there a certain manipulation of things hitherto my property. Someone is making use of my familiar objects. But who can it be? I say that is another person, a second self (PhP 353).

Conclusion

Both Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein take there to be an important connection between having a perspective on the world and solipsism. Merleau-Ponty never makes this connection clear, but Wittgenstein offers an account of it. On his solipsistic picture, the I is a bare perspective on the world, and cannot be identical with anything in it, including one's body. One's psychological life is part of the world on which one has a perspective, and no more or less 'owned' by me than other worldly events such as cyclones and football matches. The world is my world because it is one that revolves around me – the insubstantial, godlike point of view at its centre. Wittgenstein's solipsism beautifully captures certain experiences that are characteristic of schizophrenia, but it is incomplete on its own, since it does not provide an analysis of non-schizophrenic experience. Merleau-Ponty's account of bodily experience explains how the solipsism that flows from

being a perspective on the world is mitigated in non-schizophrenic experience. In the latter, the subject does not experience herself as a bare point of view on the world. Instead, she experiences her point of view as embodied. This is made possible by adverbial awareness of her own body. Second, the subject is able to experience the world as revolving around other subjects through the momentary transfer of her body schema. This decentres her own perspective, so that she experiences the world as one that is equally shared by others.

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