Part One

The Body

INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE[1]

[a. *Experience and objective thought.*]

Our 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. For example, I see the neighboring house from a particular angle. It would be seen differently from the right bank of the Seine, from the inside of the house, and differently still from an airplane. Not one of these appearances is the house *itself*. The house, as Leibniz said, is the *geometrical plan* [*le géométral*][2] that includes these perspectives and all possible perspectives; that is, the non-perspectival term from which all perspectives can be derived; the house *itself* is the house seen from nowhere. But what do these words mean? To see is always to see from somewhere, is it not? If we say that the house is seen from nowhere, are we not just saying that it is invisible? And yet, when I say "I see the house with my eyes," surely I am not saying anything controversial, for I do not mean that my retina and my crystalline lens, or that my eyes as material organs are operational and make me see the house. With only myself to examine, I know nothing of these things. With this assertion I wish to express a certain manner of reaching the object, namely, the "gaze," which is as indubitable as my own thought, and which I know just as directly. We must attempt to understand how vision can come about from somewhere without thereby being locked within its perspective. 95

To see an object is either to have it in the margins of the visual field and to be able to focus on it, or actually to respond to this solicitation by

focusing on it. When I focus on it, I anchor myself in it, but this "pausing" of the gaze is but a modality of its movement: I continue within one object the same exploration that, just a moment ago, surveyed all of them. With a single movement, I close off the landscape and open up the object. The two operations do not coincide accidentally: the contingen-
96 cies of my bodily organization, such as the structure of my retina, are not what necessitates my seeing the surroundings as blurred if I wish to see the object in focus. Even if I knew nothing of cones and rods, I would still understand that it is necessary to suspend the surroundings in order to see the object better, and to lose in the background what is gained in the figure, because to see the object is to plunge into it and because objects form a system in which one object cannot appear without concealing others. More precisely, the inner horizon of an object cannot become an object without the surrounding objects becoming an horizon, and so vision is a two-sided act. For I do not identify the detailed object that I now have with the one I glanced over a moment ago through an explicit comparison of these details with a memory of the initial overview. Compare this to a film when the camera focuses on an object and moves in to give us a close-up of it. In this case we can surely *remember* that we are seeing an ashtray or a character's hand, but we do not actually identify it as such. This is because the screen has no horizons. In vision, however, I apply my gaze to a fragment of the landscape, which becomes animated and displayed, while the other objects recede into the margins and become dormant, but they do not cease to be there. Now, along with these other objects, I also have their horizons at my disposal, and the object I am currently focusing on – seen peripherally – is implied in these other horizons. The horizon, then, is what assures the identity of the object throughout the exploration, it is the correlate of the imminent power my gaze has over the objects that it has just glanced over and the power it already has over the new details that it is about to discover. No express memory and no explicit conjecture could play this role – they could only provide a probable synthesis, whereas my perception is given as actual.

The object–horizon structure, that is, perspective, thus does not hamper my desire to see the object. Although it may be the means that objects have of concealing themselves, it is also the means that they have of unveiling themselves. To see is to enter into a universe of beings that *show themselves*, and they could not show themselves if they could not also be

hidden behind each other or behind me. In other words, to see an object is to come to inhabit it and to thereby grasp all things according to the sides these other things turn toward this object. And yet, to the extent that I also see those things, they remain places open to my gaze and, being virtually situated in them, I already perceive the central object of my present vision from different angles. Each object, then, is the mirror of all the others. When I see the lamp on my table, I attribute to it not merely the qualities that are visible from my location, but also those that 97
the fireplace, the walls, and the table can "see." The back of my lamp is merely the face that it "shows" to the fireplace. Thus, I can see one object insofar as objects form a system or a world, and insofar as each of them arranges the others around itself like spectators of its hidden aspects and as the guarantee of their permanence. Each act of seeing that I perform is instantly reiterated among all the objects of the world that are grasped as coexistent because each object just is all that the others "see" of it. Thus, our formula above must be modified: the house itself is not the house seen from nowhere, but rather the house seen from everywhere. The fully realized object is translucent, it is shot through from all sides by an infinity of present gazes intersecting in its depth and leaving nothing there hidden.

What we have just said about spatial perspective could also be said about temporal perspective. If I examine the house attentively and unreflectively, it seems eternal, and a sort of wonder emanates from it. Of course, I see it from a certain point in my duration, but it is the same house that I saw yesterday when it was one day younger; an old man and a child gaze upon the same house. The house surely has its own age and its own changes; however, even if it collapses tomorrow, it will always remain true that it existed today. Each moment of time gives itself as a witness to all the others. It shows, by taking place, "how this was bound to happen" and "how it will have ended." Each present definitively establishes a point of time that solicits the recognition of all others. Thus, the object is seen from all times just as it is seen from all places, and by the same means, namely, the horizon structure. The present still holds in hand the immediate past, but without positing it as an object, and since this immediate past likewise retains the past that immediately preceded it, time gone by is entirely taken up and grasped in the present. The same goes for the imminent future that will itself have its own horizon of imminence. But along with my immediate past, I also have the horizon

of the future that surrounded it; that is, I have my actual present seen as the future of that past. Along with the imminent future, I also have the horizon of the past that will surround it; that is, I have my actual present as the past of that future. Thus, thanks to the double horizon of retention and protention, my present can cease to be a present that is in fact about to be carried off and destroyed by the flow of duration and can rather become a fixed and identifiable point in an objective time.

98 But again, my human gaze never *posits* more than one side of the object, even if by means of horizons it intends all the others. My gaze can only be compared with previous acts of seeing or with the acts of seeing accomplished by others through the intermediary of time and language. If I imagine, taking my own gaze as a model, the gazes that scour the house from all directions and define the house itself, I still have but a concordant and indefinite series of points of view upon the object, I do not have the object in its fullness. In the same way, even though my present condenses within itself the time gone by and the time to come, it only possesses them in intention. And if, for example, the consciousness that I now have of my past appears to me to match precisely what it was, this past that I claim to take hold of again is not itself the past in person; it is my past such as I now see it, and I have perhaps altered it. Perhaps in the future I will similarly misjudge the present that I am currently living. Thus the synthesis of horizons is but a presumptive synthesis, it only operates with certainty and precision within the object's immediate surroundings. I no longer hold in hand the more distant surroundings, for it no longer consists in still identifiable objects or memories; rather, it is an anonymous horizon that can no longer provide precise testimony, it leaves the object incomplete and open, as it in fact is in perceptual experience. Through this openness, the substantiality of the object slips away. If the object is to achieve a perfect density or, in other words, if there is to be an absolute object, it must be an infinity of different perspectives condensed into a strict coexistence, and it must be given as if through a single act of vision comprising a thousand gazes. The house has *its* water pipes, *its* foundation, and perhaps its cracks growing secretly in the thickness of the ceilings. We never see them, but it *has them*, together with its windows or chimneys that are visible for us. We will forget our present perception of the house: each time that we can compare our memories with the objects to which they refer, allowing for other reasons for error, we are surprised by the changes the objects owe to their own duration. We believe,

however, that there is a truth of the past, we base our memory upon an immense world-Memory in which the house figures just as it truly was that day and that grounds its current *being*. Taken in itself – and as an object it demands to be taken as such – the object conceals nothing: it is fully spread out and its parts coexist while our gaze skims over them one by one; its present does not efface its past, and its future will not efface its 99
present. The positing of the object thus takes us beyond the limits of our actual experience, which throws itself against a foreign being such that, in the end, experience believes it draws from the object everything that experience itself teaches us. The ecstasy [*extase*][3] of this experience makes it such that every perception is perception of something.

[b. *The problem of the body.*]

Obsessed with being, and forgetting the perspectivism of my experience, I henceforth treat my experience as an object and I deduce it from a relation among objects. I consider my body, which is my point of view upon the world, as one of the objects of that world. I repress the consciousness that I had of my gaze as a means of knowing and I treat my eyes as fragments of matter. From then on my eyes are placed within the same objective space where I attempt to situate the exterior object and I believe that the projection of the objects upon my retina brings about the perceived perspective. Likewise, I treat my own perceptual history as a result of my relations with the objective world. My present, which is my point of view upon time, becomes one moment of time among all others, my duration becomes a reflection or an abstract appearance of universal time, and my body becomes a mode of objective space. And finally, if the objects that surround the house or inhabit it remained what they are in perceptual experience, that is, gazes limited to a specific perspective, then the house would not be posited as an autonomous being. Thus, the positing [*position*] of a single object in the full sense of the word requires the composition [or co-positing] of all of these experiences in a single, polythetic act. Therein it exceeds perceptual experience and the synthesis of horizons – just as the notion of a *universe* (a completed and explicit totality where relations would be reciprocally determined) exceeds the notion of a *world* (an open and indefinite multiplicity where relations are reciprocally implicated).[4] I take flight from my experience and I pass over to the *idea*. Like the object, the idea claims to be the same for everyone,

valid for all times and for all places, and the individuation of the object at an objective point of time and space appears, in the end, as the expression of a universal positing power.[5] I no longer pay attention to my body, to time, or to the world such as I live them in pre-predicative knowledge, that is, in the inner communication that I have with them. I only speak
100 of my body as an idea, of the universe as an idea, and of the idea of space and of time. Thus is formed "objective" thought (in Kierkegaard's sense) – the objective thought of common sense and of science – which in the end makes us lose contact with the perceptual experience of which it is nevertheless the result and the natural continuation. The whole life of consciousness tends to posit objects, since it is only consciousness (or self-knowledge) insofar as it takes itself up and gathers itself together in an identifiable object. And yet the absolute positing of a single object is the death of consciousness, since it congeals all of experience, as a seed crystal introduced into a solution causes it suddenly to crystallize.

We cannot remain within this dilemma of understanding either nothing of the subject or nothing of the object. We must rediscover the origin of the object at the very core of our experience, we must describe the appearance of being, and we must come to understand how, paradoxically, there is *for-us* an *in-itself*. Not wanting to prejudge anything, we will take objective thought literally and not ask it any questions it does not ask itself. If we are led to rediscover experience behind it, this passage will only be motivated by its own difficulties. Let us, then, consider objective thought at work in the constitution of our body as an object, since this is a decisive moment in the genesis of the objective world. We will see that, in science itself, one's own body evades the treatment that they wish to impose upon it.[6] And since the genesis of the objective body is but a moment in the constitution of the object, the body, by withdrawing from the objective world, will carry with it the intentional threads that unite it to its surroundings and that, in the end, will reveal to us the perceiving subject as well as the perceived world.

III

THE SPATIALITY OF ONE'S OWN BODY AND MOTRICITY

[a. *Spatiality of position and spatiality of situation: the body schema.*]

127 Let us begin by describing the spatiality of one's own body. If my arm is resting on the table, I will never think to say that it is *next to* the ashtray in the same way that the ashtray is next to the telephone. The contour of my body is a border that ordinary spatial relations do not cross. This is because the body's parts relate to each other in a peculiar way: they are not laid out side by side, but rather envelop each other. My hand, for example, is not a collection of points. In cases of allochiria,[1] where the subject senses in his right hand the stimulus that is applied to his left hand, it is impossible to suppose that each of the stimulations individually changes its spatial value,[2] and the various points on the left hand are transported to the right insofar as they fall within a total organ, within a hand without parts that was displaced all at once. The points, then, form a system, and the space of my hand is not a mosaic of spatial values. Likewise, my entire body is not for me an assemblage of organs juxtaposed in space. I hold my body as an indivisible possession and I know

the position of each of my limbs through a *body schema* [*un schéma corporel*][3] that envelops them all. But the notion of the "body schema" is ambiguous, as are all concepts that appear at turning points in science. They can only be fully developed given a reform of methodology. At first they are employed in a sense that is not yet their full sense, and their immanent 128
development is what breaks up previous methods.

"Body schema" was at first understood to be a *summary* of our bodily experience, capable of providing any momentary interoceptivity and proprioceptivity with a commentary and a signification. It was assumed to provide me with the change of position of the parts of my body for each movement of one of them, the position of each local stimulus in the body as a whole, an assessment of the movements accomplished at each moment of a complex gesture, and finally a perpetual translation into visual language of the momentary kinesthetic and articular impressions. By speaking of the body schema, they believed themselves at first simply to be introducing a convenient name designating a large number of image associations, and they merely wanted to express that these were well-established associations constantly ready to come into play. The body schema was thought to develop gradually throughout childhood and to the extent that tactile, kinesthetic, and articular contents associated between themselves or with visual content and were thereby recalled more easily.[4] As such, it was described physiologically as a center of images in the classical sense. And yet the body schema clearly overflows this associationist definition in the very manner in which psychologists used the concept. For example, in order for the body schema to improve our understanding of allochiria, it is not enough that each sensation of the left hand be posited among the generic images of all the parts of the body that would come together to form around the sensation something like a superimposed *sketch* of the body. Rather, these associations must be constantly submitted to a unique law, the spatiality of the body must descend from the whole to the parts, my left hand and its position must be implicated in an overall bodily *plan* and must have their origin there, such that this hand can suddenly become the right hand, and not merely superimpose itself upon it or fold over it. When one attempts to shed light on the phenomenon of the phantom limb by linking it to the subject's body schema,[5] then nothing is added to classical explanations involving cerebral traces and renewed sensations unless the body schema, rather 129
than being the residue of habitual cenesthesia,[6] in fact becomes its law

of constitution. If the need was felt to introduce this new word, it was in order to express that the spatial and temporal unity, the inter-sensorial unity, or the sensorimotor unity of the body is, so to speak, an in principle unity, to express that this unity is not limited to contents actually and fortuitously associated in the course of our experience, that it somehow precedes them and in fact makes their association possible.

Thus we are making our way toward a second definition of the body schema: it will no longer be the mere result of associations established in the course of experience, but rather the global awareness of my posture in the inter-sensory world, a "form" in Gestalt psychology's sense of the word.[7] But the psychologist's analyses in turn overflow this second definition. It is insufficient to say that my body is a form, or a phenomenon in which the whole is anterior to the parts. For how is such a phenomenon possible? Because a form, when compared to the mosaic of the physico-chemical body or to that of the "cenesthesia," is a new type of existence. If the paralyzed limb of the anosognosic patient no longer counts in the subject's body schema, this is not because the body schema is neither the simple copy, nor even the global awareness of the existing parts of the body; rather, the subject actively integrates the parts according to their value for the organism's projects. Psychologists often say that the body schema is *dynamic*.[8] Reduced to a precise sense, this term means that my body appears to me as a posture toward a certain task, actual or possible. And in fact my body's spatiality is not, like the spatiality of external objects or of "spatial sensations," a *positional spatiality*; rather, it is a *situational spatiality*. If I stand in front of my desk and lean on it with both hands, only my hands are accentuated and my whole body trails behind them like a comet's tail. I am not unaware of the location of my shoulders or my waist; rather, this awareness is enveloped in my awareness of my hands and my entire stance is read, so to speak, in how
130 my hands lean upon the desk. If I am standing and if I hold my pipe in a closed hand, the position of my hand is not determined discursively by the angle that it makes with my forearm, my forearm with my arm, my arm with my torso and, finally, my torso with the ground. I have an absolute knowledge of where my pipe is, and *from this* I know where my hand is and where my body is, just as the primitive person in the desert is always immediately oriented without having to recall or calculate the distances traveled and the deviations since his departure. When the word "here" is applied to my body, it does not designate a determinate

position in relation to other positions or in relation to external coordinates. It designates the installation of the first coordinates, the anchoring of the active body in an object, and the situation of the body confronted with its tasks. Bodily space can be distinguished from external space and it can envelop its parts rather than laying them out side by side because it is the darkness of the theater required for the clarity of the performance, the foundation of sleep or the vague reserve of power against which the gesture and its goal stand out,[9] and the zone of non-being *in front of which* precise beings, figures, and points can appear. If my body can ultimately be a "form," and if there can be, in front of it, privileged figures against indifferent backgrounds, this is insofar as my body is polarized by its tasks, insofar as it *exists toward* them, insofar as it coils up upon itself in order to reach its goal, and the "body schema" is, in the end, a manner of expressing that my body is in and toward the world.[10] With regard to spatiality, which is our present concern, one's own body is the always implied third term of the figure–background structure, and each figure appears perspectivally against the double horizon of external space and bodily space. We must, then, reject as abstract any analysis of bodily space that considers only figures and points, since figures and points can neither be conceived nor exist at all without horizons.

One might reply that the figure–background structure or the point–horizon structure themselves presuppose the notion of objective space, or that, in order to experience a skillful gesture as a figure *on* the solid background of the body, the hand must be united with the rest of the body through this relation of objective space and that, in this way, the figure–background structure again becomes one of the contingent contents of the universal form of space. But what sense could the word "on" 131
have for a subject who could not be situated by his body in front of the world? It implies a distinction between up and down, that is, an "oriented space."[11] When I say that an object is *on* a table, I always place myself (in thought) in the table or the object, and I apply a category to them that in principle fits the relation between my body and external objects. Stripped of this anthropological contribution, the word *on* is no longer distinguished from the word "under" or the term "next to . . ." Even if the universal form of space is that without which there would be, for us, no bodily space, it is not that through which there is a bodily space. Even if the form is not the *milieu in which* but rather the *means by which* the content is posited, when it comes to bodily space the form is an

insufficient means for this positing, and to this extent the bodily content remains, in relation to it, something opaque, accidental, and unintelligible. The only solution in this direction would be to admit that the body's spatiality has no meaning [*sens*]of its own distinct from objective spatiality, and this would erase the content as a phenomenon and thereby erase the problem of its relation to form.

And yet, can we pretend not to find any distinct sense in the words "on," "under," and "next to . . .," or in the dimensions of oriented space? Even if analysis discovers the universal relation of exteriority in all of these relations, the evidentness of up and down, or left and right, for someone who inhabits space prevents us from treating all of these distinctions as mere non-sense and invites us to seek, beneath the explicit sense of the definitions, the latent sense of experiences. The relations between the two spaces would thereby be the following: from the moment I want to thematize bodily space or to work out its sense, I find in it nothing but intelligible space. But at the same time, this intelligible space is not extricated from oriented space, it is in fact nothing but the making explicit of it, and, detached from this source, it has absolutely no sense. Homogeneous space can only express the sense of oriented space because it received this sense from oriented space. If the content can be truly subsumed under the form and can appear as the content *of* this form, this is because the form is only accessible through the content. Bodily space can only truly become a fragment of objective space if, within its singularity as bodily space, it contains the dialectical ferment that will transform it
132 into universal space. This is what we tried to express by saying that the point–horizon structure is the foundation of space. The horizon or the background would not extend beyond the figure or around it if they did not belong to the same genre of being as it, and if they could not be converted into points by a shift of the gaze. But the point–horizon structure can only teach me what a point is by organizing in advance the zone of corporeality in which the point will be seen and, around this zone, the indeterminate horizons that are the counterpart of this act of seeing. The multiplicity of points or of "heres" can only, in principle, be constituted by an interlocking of experiences in which one of them is perpetually given as an object and that turns itself into the very heart of this space. And, finally, far from my body being for me merely a fragment of space, there would be for me no such thing as space if I did not have a body.

If bodily space and external space form a practical system, the former being the background against which the object can stand out or the void in front of which the object can *appear* as the goal of our action, then it is clearly in action that the spatiality of the body is brought about, and the analysis of movement itself should allow us to understand spatiality better. How the body inhabits space (and time, for that matter) can be seen more clearly by considering the body in motion because movement is not content with passively undergoing space and time, it actively assumes them, it takes them up in their original signification that is effaced in the banality of established situations. Let us examine closely a case of morbid motricity that lays bare the fundamental relations between the body and space.

[b. *The analysis of motricity in Gelb and Goldstein's study of Schneider.*]

One patient,[12] whom traditional psychiatry would class among those suffering from psychic blindness, is incapable of performing "abstract" movements with his eyes closed, namely, movements that are not directed at any actual situation, such as moving his arms or legs upon command, or extending and flexing a finger. He cannot describe the position of his body or even of his head, nor the passive movements of his limbs. Finally, when his head, arm, or leg is touched, he cannot say at what point his body was touched; he does not distinguish between two points of contact on his skin, even if they are 80 millimeters apart; he recognizes neither the size nor the form of objects pressed against his body. He only accomplishes abstract movements if he is allowed to 133
see the limb in question, or to execute preparatory movements involving his whole body. The localization of stimuli and the recognition of tactile objects also become possible with the aid of preparatory movements. Even with his eyes closed, the patient executes the movements that are necessary for life with extraordinary speed and confidence, provided they are habitual movements: he takes his handkerchief from his pocket and blows his nose, or takes a match from a matchbox and lights a lamp. He makes wallets by trade, and the output of his work reaches three-quarters the output of a normal worker. He can even,[13] without any preparatory movements, execute these "concrete" movements on command. In this patient, as well as for patients with cerebellar injuries, a dissociation between the act of pointing and the reactions of taking or

grasping can be observed:[14] the same subject who is incapable of pointing to a part of his body on command quickly reaches with his hand for the point at which a mosquito is biting him. We must, then, seek out the reason behind the privilege enjoyed by concrete movements and grasping movements.

[c. "*Concrete movement.*"]

Let us take a closer look. One patient asked to point to a part of his body, such as his nose, only succeeds if he is allowed to grasp it. If the patient is directed to interrupt the movement before it reaches its goal, or if he is only allowed to touch his nose with a wooden ruler, then the movement becomes impossible.[15] It must thus be admitted that "grasping" and "touching" are different from "pointing," even for the body. From its very beginnings, the grasping movement is magically complete; it only gets under way by anticipating its goal, since the ban on grasping is enough to inhibit the movement. And it must be acknowledged that a point of my body can be present to me as a point to grasp without being presented to me in this anticipated grasp as a point to indicate. But how is this possible? If I know where my nose is when it is a matter of grasping it, how could I not know where my nose is when it is a matter of pointing to it? This is likely the case because the knowledge of a location can be understood in several senses. Classical psychology does not
134 have any concepts for expressing these varieties of the consciousness of location because for it the consciousness of location is always a positional consciousness, a representation, a *Vor-stellung*, because as such it gives us the location as a determination of the objective world and because such a representation either is or is not; but, if it is, then it delivers to us its object without any ambiguity and as an identifiable term throughout all of its appearances. We must, on the contrary, forge here the concepts necessary to express that bodily space can be given to a grasping intention without being given to an epistemic one.

The patient is conscious of bodily space as the envelope of his habitual action, but not as an objective milieu. His body is available as a means of insertion into his familiar surroundings, but not as a means of expression of a spontaneous and free spatial thought. When ordered to perform a concrete movement, he first repeats the order in an interrogative tone of voice, then his body settles into the overall position required by the task,

and finally he executes the movement. The whole body can be seen collaborating here, and the patient never reduces it to the strictly indispensable traits as does the normal subject. Along with the military salute come other external marks of respect. Along with the gesture of the right hand that pretends to comb his hair comes the gesture of the left hand that pretends to hold the mirror. Along with the gesture of the right hand that hammers the nail comes the gesture of the left hand that pretends to hold the nail. This is because the instruction is taken literally and because the patient only succeeds in carrying out concrete movements on command on condition of placing himself into the spirit of the actual situation to which they correspond. When the normal subject executes the military salute on command, he sees nothing there but an experimental situation, he thus reduces the movement to its most significant elements and does not fully place himself in the situation.[16] He role-plays with his own body, he amuses himself by playing the soldier, he "irrealizes" himself in the role of the soldier[17] just as the actor slides his real body into the "great phantom"[18] of the character to be performed. The normal subject and the actor do not take the imaginary situations as real, but inversely they each detach their real body from its living situation in order to make it breathe, speak, and, if need be, cry in the imaginary. This is what our patient can no longer do. In life, he says, "I experience movements as a result of the situation, as the sequence of events themselves; 135
my movements and I, we are, so to speak, merely a link in the unfolding of the whole, and I am scarcely aware of any voluntary initiative [. . .] everything works by itself." Similarly, in order to execute a movement upon command, he places himself "within the affective situation of the whole, and the movement flows from this whole, just as in life."[19] If his trick is interrupted and he is reminded of the experimental situation, all of his dexterity disappears. Kinetic initiation again becomes impossible. The patient must first "find" his arm and "find" the requested gesture through preparatory movements; the gesture itself loses the melodic character that it presents in everyday life and quite clearly becomes a sum of partial movements laboriously placed end to end.

I can thus – by means of my body as a power for a certain number of familiar actions – settle into my surroundings as an ensemble of *manipulanda* without intending my body or my surroundings as objects in the Kantian sense, that is, as systems of qualities linked by some intelligible law, as entities that are transparent, free of all local or temporal

adherence, and ready to be named or at least available for a gesture of designation. There is, on the one hand, my arm as the support of these familiar acts, my body as the power of determinate action whose field and scope I know in advance, and my surroundings as the collection of possible points for this power to be applied; there is, on the other hand, my arm as a machine of muscles and bone, as a flexing and extending apparatus, as an articulated object, and the world as a pure spectacle with which I do not merge but that I contemplate and that I point to. As for bodily space, there is clearly a knowledge of location that is reduced to a sort of coexistence with that location but that is not a nothingness, even though it cannot be expressed by a description, nor even by the mute designation of a gesture. The patient bitten by a mosquito need not look for the point of the bite; he finds it immediately, because it is not for him a matter of situating it in relation to axes of coordinates in objective space, but rather of reaching with his phenomenal hand a certain painful place on his phenomenal body. Between the hand as a power for scratching and the point of the bite as a place to be scratched, a lived relation is given in the natural system of one's own body. The
136 operation takes place wholly within the order of the phenomenal, it does not pass through the objective world. Only the spectator, who lends to the subject of movements his own objective representation of the living body, can believe that the bite is perceived, that the hand moves itself in objective space and, consequently, is surprised that the very same subject fails in the designation experiments. Likewise, the subject placed in front of his scissors, his needle, and his familiar tasks has no need to look for his hands or his fingers, for they are not objects to be found in objective space (like bones, muscles, and nerves), but rather powers that are already mobilized by the perception of the scissors or the needle, they are the center-point of the "intentional threads" that link him to the given objects. We never move our objective body, we move our phenomenal body, and we do so without mystery, since it is our body as a power of various regions of the world that already rises up toward the objects to grasp and perceive them.[20] Likewise, the patient need not seek a situation and a space in which to deploy concrete movements, this space is itself given, it is the present world: the piece of leather "to be cut" and the lining "to be sewn." The workbench, the scissors, and the pieces of leather are presented to the subject as poles of action; they define, through their combined value, a particular situation that remains open, that calls for a

certain mode of resolution, a certain labor. The body is but one element in the system of the subject and his world, and the task obtains the necessary movements from him through a sort of distant attraction, just as the phenomenal forces at work in my visual field obtain from me, without any calculation, the motor reactions that will establish between those forces the optimum equilibrium, or as the customs of our milieu or the arrangement of our listeners immediately obtains from us the words, attitudes, and tone that fits with them – not that we are trying to disguise our thoughts or simply aiming to please, but because we literally are what others think of us and we are our world. In concrete movement, 137
the patient has neither a thetic consciousness of the stimulus nor a thetic consciousness of the reaction: quite simply, he is his body and his body is the power for a certain world.

[d. *Movement toward the possible, "abstract movement."*]

What happens, however, in experiments in which the patient fails? If a part of his body is touched and he is asked to locate the point of contact, he begins by putting his entire body into motion and thereby obtains a rough idea of the location, then he makes the location more precise by moving the limb that is being touched and he completes the task by twitching his skin in the area being touched.[21] If the subject's arm is horizontally extended, then he can only describe its position after a series of pendular movements that present him with the position of the arm in relation to his torso, the position of the forearm in relation to the arm, and the position of his torso in relation to the vertical. In the case of passive movement, the subject senses that there is movement without being able to say what movement and in which direction. Here again he resorts to active movements. The patient deduces that he is lying down from the pressure of the mattress on his back, or that he is standing from the pressure of the ground on his feet.[22] If the two points of a compass are placed on his hand, he only distinguishes between them provided he is able to swing his hand and to first bring one point into contact with his skin, then the other. If letters or numbers are traced on his hand, he only identifies them provided he moves his hand himself and it is not the movement of the point on his hand that he perceives, but rather the movement of his hand in relation to the point. This is demonstrated by drawing on his left hand normal letters, which are never recognized,

object, consciousness must rely upon a previously constructed "world of thought," there is always a depersonalization at the heart of consciousness. From this appears the principle of a foreign intervention: consciousness can be ill, the world of its thoughts can fall to pieces; or rather, since the "contents" dissociated by the illness did not figure in normal consciousness as parts and only served as the supports for significations that transcended them, consciousness can be seen attempting to maintain its superstructures even though their foundation has collapsed. It mimics its customary operations, but without the power of obtaining their intuitive realization and without the power of hiding the strange deficiency that steals from them their full sense. If the mental illness is, in turn, tied to a bodily accident, then this is understood, in principle, in the same way. Consciousness projects itself into a physical world and has a body, just as it projects itself into a cultural world and has a habitus. This is because it can only be consciousness by playing upon significations given in the absolute past of nature or in its personal past, and because every lived form tends toward a certain generality, whether it be the generality of our habitus or rather that of our "bodily functions."

[k. *The intentionality of the body*.]

Finally, these clarifications allow us to understand motricity unequivocally as original intentionality. Consciousness is originarily not an "I think that," but rather an "I can."[97] Schneider's motor disorder cannot, any more than his visual disorder, be reduced to a weakness in the general function of representation. Vision and movement are specific ways of relating to objects and, if a single function is expressed throughout all of these experiences, then it is the movement of existence, which does 172
not suppress the radical diversity of contents, for it does not unite them by placing them all under the domination of an "I think," but rather by orienting them toward the inter-sensory unity of a "world." Movement is not a movement in thought, and bodily space is not a space that is conceived or represented.

> Each voluntary movement takes place in a milieu, against a background determined by the movement itself (. . .). We execute our movements in a space that is not "empty" and without relation to them, but which is, on the contrary, in a highly determined relation with them: movement

> and background are only, in fact, moments artificially separated from a single whole.[98]

The gesture of reaching one's hand out toward an object contains a reference to the object, not as a representation, but as this highly determinate thing toward which we are thrown, next to which we are through anticipation, and which we haunt.[99] Consciousness is being toward the thing through the intermediary of the body. A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, when it has incorporated it into its "world," and to move one's body is to aim at the things through it, or to allow one's body to respond to their solicitation, which is exerted upon the body without any representation. Motricity is thus not, as it were, a servant of consciousness, transporting the body to the point of space that we imagine beforehand. For us to be able to move our body toward an object, the object must first exist for it, and hence our body must not belong to the region of the "in-itself." Objects no longer exist for the arm of the person suffering from apraxia, and this is what renders his arm immobile. Cases of pure apraxia, where the perception of space is intact, where even the "intellectual notion of the gesture to be performed" does not seem confused, and where nevertheless the patient does not know how to reproduce a triangle,[100] or cases of constructive apraxia, where the subject exhibits no gnosic disorder, except that which has to do with the localization of stimuli upon the body, and yet is not capable of reproducing a cross, a *v*, or an *o*[101] – all of these cases show clearly that the body has its world and that objects or space can be present to our knowledge without being present to our body.

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[1. *The body is not in space, it inhabits space.*]

Thus, we must not say that our body is *in* space, nor for that matter *in* time. It *inhabits* space and time. If my hand executes a complicated movement in the air, I do not have to add together all the movements in one direction and subtract the movements in the other in order to know its final position. "Every recognizable change enters into consciousness already charged with its relations to something that has gone before, just as on a taximeter the distance is presented to us as already transformed into shillings and pence."[102] At each moment, previous postures and movements constantly provide a standard of measure. This has nothing

to do with the visual or motor "memory" of the hand's starting point: cerebral lesions can leave the visual memory intact while suppressing the consciousness of movement and, as for "motor memory," it clearly could not determine the present position of the hand if the perception of where it was born had not itself included an absolute consciousness of the "here," without which one would be sent from memory to memory and would never have a present perception. Just as it is necessarily "here," the body necessarily exists "now"; it can never become "past." Even if we cannot preserve the living memory of the illness when we 175
are healthy, nor the living memory of our body as a child when we have become an adult, these "gaps in memory" do nothing but express the temporal structure of our body. At each moment in a movement, the preceding instant is not forgotten, but rather is somehow fit into the present, and, in short, the present perception consists in taking up the series of previous positions that envelop each other by relying upon the current position. But the imminent position is itself enveloped in the present, and through it so too are all of those positions that will occur throughout the movement. Each moment of the movement embraces its entire expanse and, in particular, its first moment or kinetic initiation inaugurates the link between a here and a there, between a now and a future that the other moments will be limited to developing.

Insofar as I have a body and insofar as I act in the world through it, space and time are not for me a mere summation of juxtaposed points, and no more are they, for that matter, an infinity of relations synthesized by my consciousness in which my body would be implicated. I am not in space and in time, nor do I think space and time; rather, I am of space and of time;[103] my body fits itself to them and embraces them. The scope of this hold measures the scope of my existence; however, it can never in any case be total. The space and time that I inhabit are always surrounded by indeterminate horizons that contain other points of view. The synthesis of time, like that of space, is always to be started over again. The motor experience of our body is not a particular case of knowledge; rather, it offers us a manner of reaching the world and the object, a "praktognosia,"[104] that must be recognized as original, and perhaps as originary. My body has its world, or understands its world without having to go through "representations," or without being subordinated to a "symbolic" or "objectifying function." Certain patients, if they stand next to the doctor and observe his movements in a mirror, can imitate the doctor's movements

and raise their right hand to their right ear and their left hand to their nose. But they cannot do so if they are in front of him. Head explained the patient's failure through the inadequacy of his "formulation": the imitation of the gesture would be mediated through a verbal translation. In fact, the formulation can be precise without the imitation being successful, and the imitation can be successful without any formulation at all.
176 Certain authors in this field[105] thus introduce, if not a verbal symbolism, then at least a general symbolic function, a capacity for "transposing" of which imitation would be, like perception or objective thought, merely a particular case. But it is clear that this general function does not explain adapted action. For these patients are capable not merely of formulating the movement to be accomplished, but moreover of representing it to themselves. They know very well what they have to do, and nevertheless, rather than bringing their right hand to their right ear and their left hand to their nose, they touch one ear with each hand, or even their nose and one eye, or one ear and one eye.[106] What has become impossible is the application and adjustment of the objective definition to their own body. In other words, right hand and left hand, eye and ear are still given to them as absolute locations, but are no longer inserted in a system of correspondence that links them to the homologous parts of the doctor's body and that makes them available for imitation, even when the doctor is facing the patient. To be able to imitate the gestures of someone facing me, I need not know explicitly that "the hand appearing to the right of my visual field is my partner's left hand." The patient is precisely the one who resorts to such explanations. In normal imitation, the subject's left hand is immediately identified with his partner's, the subject's action immediately adheres to his model, the subject projects himself into or "irrealizes" himself in the model,[107] identifies himself with the model, and the change of coordinates is eminently contained in this existential operation. This is because the normal subject has his body not only as a system of current positions, but also, and consequently, as an open system of an infinity of equivalent positions in different orientations. What we called the "body schema" is precisely this system of equivalences, this immediately given invariant by which different motor tasks are instantly transposable. This is to say that the body schema is not merely an experience of my body, but rather an experience of my body in the world, and that it gives a motor sense to the verbal instructions. The function destroyed in the disorders of apraxia is thus surely a motor function.

> In cases of this genre, it is not the symbolic or significative function in general that is affected, but rather a much more originary function, one that has a motor characteristic, namely, the capacity for motor differentiation of the dynamic body schema.[108] 177

The space through which normal imitation moves is not (in contrast to concrete space with its absolute locations) an "objective space" or a "space of representation" founded upon an act of thought. It is already sketched out in the structure of my body, it is my body's inseparable correlate. "Taken in its pure state, motricity already possesses the elementary power of sense-giving (*Sinngebung*)."[109] Even if, in what follows, thought and the perception of space are liberated from motricity and from being in space, in order for us to be able to imagine space, it must first be introduced into it through our 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 and to open onto an "in-itself." "Motricity is the primary sphere in which the sense of all significations (*der Sinn aller Signifikationen*) is first given in the domain of represented space."[110]

[m. *Habit as the motor acquisition of a new signification.*]

Acquiring a habit as the reworking and renewal of the body schema presents significant difficulties for classical philosophies, which are always inclined to conceive of synthesis as intellectual synthesis. It is true, of course, that what links elementary movements, reactions, and "stimuli" together in habit is not an external association.[111] Every mechanistic theory runs into the fact that the learning process is systematic: the subject does not weld individual movements to individual stimuli, but rather acquires the power of responding with a certain type of solution to a certain form of situation. The situations may differ widely from case to case, the responding movements may be entrusted sometimes to one effector organ and sometimes to another, and situations and responses resemble each other in the different cases much less through the partial identity of elements than by the community of their sense. Must we thus place an act of the understanding at the origin of the habit that would first organize the habit's elements only to later withdraw from it?[112] For 178
example, in learning the habit of a certain dance, do we not find the

formula of the movement through analysis and then recompose it, taking this ideal sketch as a guide and drawing upon already acquired movements (such as walking and running)? But in order for the new dance to integrate particular elements of general motricity, it must first have received, so to speak, a motor consecration. The body, as has often been said, "catches" (*kapiert*) and "understands" the movement. The acquisition of the habit is surely the grasping of a signification, but it is specifically the motor grasping of a motor signification. But what exactly does this mean?

Without any explicit calculation, a woman maintains a safe distance between the feather in her hat and objects that might damage it; she senses where the feather is, just as we sense where our hand is.[113] If I possess the habit of driving a car, then I enter into a lane and see that "I can pass" without comparing the width of the lane to that of the fender, just as I go through a door without comparing the width of the door to that of my body.[114] The hat and the automobile have ceased to be objects whose size and volume would be determined through a comparison with other objects. They have become voluminous powers and the necessity of a certain free space. Correlatively, the subway door and the road have become restrictive powers and immediately appear as passable or impassable for my body and its appendages. The blind man's cane has ceased to be an object for him, it is no longer perceived for itself; rather, the cane's furthest point is transformed into a sensitive zone, it increases the scope and the radius of the act of touching and has become analogous to a gaze. In the exploration of objects, the length of the cane does not explicitly intervene nor act as a middle term: the blind man knows its length by the position of the objects, rather than the position of the objects through the cane's length. The position of objects is given immediately by the scope of the gesture that reaches them and in which, beyond the potential extension of the arm, the radius of action of the cane is included. If I want to become habituated to a cane, I try it out, I touch some objects and, after some time, I have it "in hand": I see which objects are "within reach" or out of reach of my cane. This has nothing to do with a quick estimate or a comparison between the objective length of the cane and the objective distance of the goal to be reached. Places
179 in space are not defined as objective positions in relation to the objective position of our body, but rather they inscribe around us the variable reach of our intentions and our gestures. To habituate oneself to a hat,

an automobile, or a cane is to take up residence in them, or inversely, to make them participate within the voluminosity of one's own body. Habit expresses the power we have of dilating our being in the world, or of altering our existence through incorporating new instruments.[115] One can know how to type without knowing how to indicate where on the keyboard the letters that compose the words are located. Knowing how to type, then, is not the same as knowing the location of each letter on the keyboard, nor even having acquired a conditioned reflex for each letter that is triggered upon seeing it.

But if habit is neither a form of knowledge nor an automatic reflex, then what is it? It is a question of a knowledge in our hands, which is only given through a bodily effort and cannot be translated by an objective designation. The subject knows where the letters are on the keyboard just as we know where one of our limbs is – a knowledge of familiarity that does not provide us with a position in objective space. The movement of his fingers is not presented to the typist as a spatial trajectory that can be described, but merely as a certain modulation of motricity, distinguished from every other through its physiognomy. The question is often presented as if the perception of the letter written on the paper came to awaken the representation of the same letter, which in turn evoked the representation of the movement necessary to reach it on the keyboard. But this language is mythological. When I glance over the text offered to me, there are no perceptions awakening representations, but rather wholes that arrange themselves at the present moment, endowed with a typical or familiar physiognomy. When I take my place before my machine, a motor space stretches beneath my hands where I will play out what I have read. The word that is read is a modulation of visual space, the motor execution is a modulation of manual space, and the whole question is how a certain physiognomy of "visual" wholes can call forth a certain style of motor responses, how each "visual" structure in the end provides its own motor essence, without our having to spell out the 180
word or to spell out the movement in order to translate the word into movement. But this power of habit is not distinguished from the one we have over our body in general. If I am told to touch my ear or my knee, I bring my hand to my ear or to my knee by the shortest path without my having to imagine the position of my hand at the outset, the position of my ear, or the trajectory from one to the other. We said above that in the acquisition of habit it is the body that "understands." This formula

will seem absurd if "understanding" is the act of subsuming a sensory given under an idea, and if the body is a mere object. But the phenomenon of habit in fact leads us to rework our notion of "understanding" and our notion of the body. To understand is to experience [*éprouver*] the accord between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the realization – and the body is our anchorage in a world. When I bring my hand toward my knee, I experience at each moment of the movement the realization of an intention that did not aim at my knee as an idea, or even as an object, but rather as a present and real part of my living body, and ultimately as a point of passage in my perpetual movement toward a world. When the typist executes the necessary movements on the keyboard, these movements are guided by an intention, but this intention does not posit the keys as objective locations. The subject who learns to type literally incorporates the space of the keyboard into his bodily space.

The example of instrumentalists demonstrates even more clearly how habit resides neither in thought nor in the objective body, but rather in the body as the mediator of a world. It is said that an experienced organist[116] is capable of playing an organ with which he is unfamiliar and that has additional or fewer keyboards, and whose stops are differently arranged than the stops on his customary instrument. He needs but an hour of practice to be ready to execute his program. Such a brief apprenticeship prohibits the assumption that new conditioned reflexes are simply substituted for the already established collection, unless, that is, they together form a system and if the change is global, but this would be to go beyond the mechanistic theory since in that case the reactions would be mediated by a total hold on the instrument. Shall we say, then, that the organist analyzes the organ, that he forms and maintains a rep-
181 resentation of the stops, pedals, and keyboards, as well as their relation in space? But during the short rehearsal that precedes the concert he hardly behaves like someone who wants to draw up a plan. He sits on the bench, engages the pedals, and pulls out the stops, he sizes up the instrument with his body, he incorporates its directions and dimensions, and he settles into the organ as one settles into a house. He does not learn positions in objective space for each stop and each pedal, nor does he entrust such positions to "memory." During the rehearsal – just as during the performance – the stops, the pedals, and the keyboards are only presented to him as powers of such and such an emotional or musical

value, and their position as those places through which this value appears in the world. Between the musical essence of the piece such as it is indicated in the score and the music that actually resonates around the organ, such a direct relationship is established that the body of the organist and the instrument are nothing other than the place of passage of this relation. From then on, the music exists for itself, and everything else exists through it.[117] There is no place here for a "memory" of the location of the stops, and the organist does not play within objective space. In fact, his rehearsal gestures are gestures of consecration: they put forth affective vectors, they discover emotional sources, and they create an expressive space, just as the gestures of the augur define the *templum*.

The entire problem of habit here is to determine how the musical signification of the gesture can be condensed into a certain locality to the extent that, by entirely giving himself over to the music, the organist reaches for precisely the stops and the pedals that will actualize it. Of course, the body is eminently an expressive space. No sooner have I formed the desire to take hold of an object than already, at a point in space that I was not thinking about, my hand as that power for grasping rises up toward the object. I do not move my legs insofar as they are in space and eighty centimeters from my head, but rather insofar as their ambulatory power continues my motor intention downward. The principal regions of my body are consecrated to actions, the parts of my body participate in their value, and the question as to why common sense places the seat of thought in the head is the same as the question of how the organist distributes musical significations in the space of the 182
organ. But our body is not merely one expressive space among all others, for that would be merely the constituted body. Our body, rather, is the origin of all the others, it is the very movement of expression, it projects significations on the outside by giving them a place and sees to it that they begin to exist as things, beneath our hands and before our eyes. Even if our body does not impose definite instincts upon us from birth, as the animal's body does, then it at least gives the form of generality to our life and prolongs our personal acts into stable dispositions. Our nature, in this sense, is not an ancient custom, since custom presupposes nature's form of passivity. The body is our general means of having a world. Sometimes it restricts itself to gestures necessary for the conservation of life, and correlatively it posits a biological world around us. Sometimes, playing upon these first gestures and passing from their

literal to their figurative sense, it brings forth a new core of signification through them – this is the case of new motor habits, such as dance. And finally, sometimes the signification aimed at cannot be reached by the natural means of the body. We must, then, construct an instrument, and the body projects a cultural world around itself. At all levels, the body exercises the same function, which is to lend "a bit of renewable action and independent existence"[118] to the momentary movements of freedom. Habit is but a mode of this fundamental power. The body, then, has understood and the habit has been acquired when the body allows itself to be penetrated by a new signification, when it has assimilated a new meaningful core.

What we have discovered through the study of motricity is, in short, a new sense of the word "sense." The strength of intellectualist psychology, as well as of idealist philosophy, comes from the ease with which they show that perception and thought have an intrinsic sense and cannot be explained through an external association of fortuitously assembled contents. The *Cogito* was the moment of insight into this interiority. And yet, every signification was simultaneously conceived as an act of thought, as the operation of a pure "I"; if intellectualism easily won out over empiricism, it itself remained incapable of accounting for the variety of our experience, for the regions of non-sense in our experience, and for the contingency of its contents. The experience of the body leads
183 us to recognize an imposition of sense that does not come from a universal constituting consciousness, a sense that adheres to certain contents. My body is this meaningful core that behaves as a general function and that nevertheless exists and that is susceptible to illness. In the body we learn to recognize this knotting together of essence and existence that we will again meet up with in perception more generally, and that we will then have to describe more fully.

IV

THE SYNTHESIS OF ONE'S OWN BODY

[a. *Spatiality and corporeality.*]

The analysis of bodily spatiality has led us to results that can be generalized. We observe for the first time with regard to one's own body what is true of all perceived things: the perception of space and the perception of the thing, or the spatiality of the thing and its being as a thing, are not two distinct problems. The Cartesian and Kantian tradition already teaches us this – it turns spatial determinations into the very essence of the object and it shows existence *partes extra partes* and the spatial distribution to be the only possible sense of existence in itself. But this tradition clarifies the perception of the object through the perception of space, whereas the experience of one's own body teaches us to root space within existence. Of course, intellectualism sees that the "thing-motif" and the "space-motif"[1] intertwine, but it reduces the former to the latter. Experience reveals, beneath the objective space in which the body eventually finds its place, a primordial spatiality of which objective space is but the envelope and which merges with the very being of the body. As we have seen, to be a body is to be tied to a certain world, and our body is not primarily in space, but is rather of space.[2] Persons suffering from anosognosia who

speak of their arm as a long and cold "serpent"[3] are not, strictly speaking, unaware of its objective contours, and even when the patient looks for his arm without finding it or fastens it in order not to lose it,[4] he surely
185 *knows* where his arm is, since that is precisely where he looks for it and where he fastens it. If, however, the patients experience [*éprouvent*] the space of their arm as strange, and if I can in general sense the space of my body as enormous or as tiny despite the evidence of my senses, this is because there is an affective presence and extension of which objective spatiality is neither the sufficient condition, as is shown in anosognosia, nor even the necessary condition, as is shown by the phantom limb. The spatiality of the body is the deployment of its being as a body, and the manner in which it is actualized as a body. By seeking to analyze it, we thus did nothing but anticipate what we have to say concerning bodily synthesis in general.

We discover in the unity of the body the same structure of implication that we described above with regard to space. The various parts of my body – its visual, tactile, and motor aspects – are not simply coordinated. If I am seated at my desk and want to pick up the telephone, the movement of my hand toward the object, the straightening of my torso, and the contraction of my leg muscles envelop each other; I desire a certain result and the tasks divide themselves up among the segments in question, and the possible combinations of movements are given in advance as equivalent: I could remain leaning back in my chair provided that I extend my arm further, I could lean forward, or I could even partly stand up. All of these movements are available to us through their common signification. This is why, in the very first attempts at grasping, children do not look at their hand, but at the object. The different segments of the body are only known through their functional value and their coordination is not learned. Similarly, when I am seated at my table, I can instantly "visualize" the parts of my body that it conceals from me. As I clench my foot inside my shoe, I can see it. I have this power even for parts of my body that I have never seen. This is how some patients have the hallucination of their own face *seen from within*.[5] It has been shown that we do not recognize our own hand in a photograph, or even that many subjects hesitate in recognizing their own handwriting among other samples, but that, conversely, everyone recognizes his own silhouette or a filmed version of his own gait. Thus, we do not recognize through vision what we have nevertheless often seen, and conversely we recognize immediately

the visual representation of what is invisible in one's own body.[6] In autoscopy,[7] the double seen by the subject is not always recognized through certain visible details; rather, the subject has the absolute feeling that he is seeing himself and consequently claims that he sees his double.[8] We all see ourselves as if through an inner eye that, from a few meters away, gazes at us from our head to our knees.[9] So the connection between the segments of our body, or between our visual and our tactile experience, is not produced gradually and through accumulation. I do not translate the "givens of touch" into "the language of vision," nor *vice versa*; I do not assemble the parts of my body one by one. Rather, this translation and this assemblage are completed once and for all in me: they are my body itself. 186

Shall we thus say that we perceive our body through its law of construction, just as we know in advance all of the possible perspectives of a cube from its geometrical structure? But – to say nothing still of external objects – one's own body teaches us a mode of unity that is not the subsumption under a law. Insofar as it is in front of me and offers its systematic variations for observation, the external object lends itself to a mental examination of its elements and it can, at least as a first approximation, be defined as the law of their variations. But I am not in front of my body, I am in my body, or rather I am my body.[10] Thus, neither its variations nor their invariant can be explicitly posited. I do not simply contemplate the relations between the segments of my body and the correlations between my visual body and my tactile body; rather, I am myself the one who holds these arms and these legs together, the one who simultaneously sees them and touches them. The body is, to adopt Leibniz's term, the "effective law" of its changes. If one can still speak of an interpretation in the perception of one's own body, then it would be necessary to say that it interprets itself. "Visual givens" only appear here through their tactile sense, and tactile givens only through their visual sense, each local movement only against the background of a global position, each bodily event (whatever the "analyzer" that reveals it) only against a significative background where the furthest repercussions are at least indicated and the possibility of an inter-sensory equivalence is immediately provided. 187
What unites the "tactile sensations" of the hand and links them to the visual perceptions of the same hand and to perceptions of other segments of the body is a certain style of hand gestures, which implies a certain style of finger movements and moreover contributes to a particular fashion in which my body moves.[11]

[b. *The unity of the body and the unity of the work of art.*]*

The body cannot be compared to the physical object, but rather to the work of art. In a painting or in a piece of music, the idea cannot be communicated other than through the arrangement of color or sounds. If I have never seen his paintings, then the analysis of Cézanne's œuvre leaves me the choice between several possible Cézannes; only the perception of his paintings will present me with the uniquely existing Cézanne, and only in this perception can the analyses take on their full sense. And even though they are composed of words, the same is true of a poem or a novel. It is well known that a poem, if it carries a primary signification that can be translated into prose, also leads a secondary existence in the mind of the reader that defines it as a poem. Just as speech does not merely signify through words, but also through accent, tone, gestures, and facial expressions, and just as this supplemental sense reveals not so much the thoughts of the speaker, but rather the source of his thoughts and his fundamental manner of being, so too poetry – while it may be accidentally narrating and signifying – is essentially a modulation of existence. The poem is distinguished from the cry because the cry employs our body such as nature gave it to us, that is, as poor in expressive means, whereas the poem employs language, and even a specialized language, such that the existential modulation, rather than dissolving in the very instant that it is expressed, finds in the poetic apparatus the means to make itself eternal. But even if it is independent of our living gestures, the poem is not independent of all material support, and it would be irremediably lost if its text was not perfectly preserved. Its signification is not free and does not reside in the heaven of ideas; it is locked up between the words on some fragile piece of paper. In this sense, like every work of art, the poem too exists in the manner of a thing and does not eternally subsist in the manner of a truth. As for the novel, although it can be summarized, and although the novelist's "thought" can be abstractly formulated, this notional signification is drawn from a
188 larger signification, just as the description of a person is drawn from the concrete appearance of his physiognomy. The novelist's role is not to set forth ideas, or even to analyze characters, but rather to present, without ideological commentary, an inter-human event and to allow it to ripen and burst forth to such an extent that every change in the order of the narration or in the choice of perspectives would modify the *novelistic* sense

of the event. A novel, a poem, a painting, and a piece of music are individuals, that is, beings in which the expression cannot be distinguished from the expressed, whose sense is only accessible through direct contact, and who send forth their signification without ever leaving their temporal and spatial place. It is in this sense that our body is comparable to the work of art. It is a knot of living significations and not the law of a certain number of covariant terms. A certain tactile experience of the arm signifies a certain tactile experience of the forearm and the shoulder, as well as a certain visual appearance of the same arm. This is not because the different tactile perceptions in themselves, or the different tactile and visual perceptions together, all participate in a single intelligible arm (in the manner that all perspectival views of a cube participate in the idea of the cube), but rather because the arm seen and the arm touched, just like the different segments of the arm itself, together *perform* a single gesture.

[c. *Perceptual habit as the acquisition of a world.*]

Just as we saw above that the motor habit sheds light on the particular nature of bodily space, here habit in general likewise clarifies the general synthesis of one's own body. And, just as the analysis of bodily spatiality anticipated that of the unity of one's own body, we can similarly extend what we have said about motor habits to all habits. In fact, every habit is simultaneously motor and perceptual because it resides, as we have said, between explicit perception and actual movement, in that fundamental function that simultaneously delimits our field of vision and our field of action. The exploration of objects with a cane, which we gave above as an example of a motor habit, is just as much an example of a perceptual habit. When the cane becomes a familiar instrument, the world of tactile objects expands, it no longer begins at the skin of the hand, but at the tip of the cane. One is tempted to say that the blind man constructs the cane and its various positions through the sensations produced by the pressure of the cane upon his hand, since these different positions in turn mediate an object to the second degree, namely, an external object. Perception would remain a reading of the same sensible givens, just one that is accomplished faster and faster and performed upon more and more tenuous signs. But habit does not *consist* in interpreting the pressure of the cane on the hand like signs of certain positions of the cane, and then these positions as signs of an external object – for the habit

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relieves us of this very task. The pressures on the hand and the cane are no longer given, the cane is no longer an object that the blind man would perceive, it has become an instrument *with* which he perceives. It is an appendage of the body, or an extension of the bodily synthesis. Correlatively, the external object is not the geometrical plan or the invariant of a series of perspectives; it is a thing toward which the cane leads us and whose perspectives, according to perceptual evidentness, are not signs, but rather appearances.

Intellectualism can only conceive of the passage from the perspective to the thing itself, or from the sign to the signification, as an interpretation, an apperception, or an epistemic intention. Sensory givens and perspectives at each level would be contents grasped as (*aufgefaßt als*) manifestations of a single intelligible core.[12] But this analysis simultaneously distorts the sign and the signification; it separates them by objectifying the sensory content, which is already "pregnant" with a sense, and the invariant core, which is not a law, but a thing. The analysis masks the organic relation between the subject and the world, the active transcendence of consciousness, and the movement by which it throws itself into a thing and into a world by means of its organs and instruments. The analysis of motor habit as an extension of existence continues, then, into an analysis of perceptual habit as an acquisition of a world. Reciprocally, every perceptual habit is still a motor habit, and here again the grasping of a signification is accomplished by the body. When the child becomes habituated to distinguishing between blue and red, we see that the habit acquired with regard to this pair benefits all the others.[13] Is it thus the case that through the pair blue–red the child perceived the signification "color"? Is the decisive moment of habit thus to be found in
190 this moment of insight, in the advent of a "color-perspective," or in this intellectual analysis that subsumes the givens under a category? But in order for the child to be able to perceive blue and red under the category of color, this category must be rooted in the givens, otherwise no act of subsuming could recognize this category therein. This particular manner of vibrating and of attracting the gaze that we call "blue" and "red" must be manifested from the outset upon the "blue" and "red" panels the child is shown. With the gaze we have available a natural instrument comparable to the blind man's cane. The gaze obtains more or less from things according to the manner in which it interrogates them, in which it glances over them or rests upon them. Learning to see colors is the

acquisition of a certain style of vision, a new use of one's own body; it is to enrich and to reorganize the body schema. As a system of motor powers or perceptual powers, our body is not an object for an "I think": it is a totality of lived significations that moves toward its equilibrium. Occasionally a new knot of significations is formed: our previous movements are integrated into a new motor entity, the first visual givens are integrated into a new sensorial entity, and our natural powers suddenly merge with a richer signification that was, up until that point, merely implied in our perceptual or practical field or that was merely anticipated in our experience through a certain lack, and whose advent suddenly reorganizes our equilibrium and fulfills our blind expectation.