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# HUSSERL ON HABIT, HORIZONS, AND BACKGROUND

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In this chapter, I outline the main features of the phenomenological approach to implicit knowing, focusing on embodied cognition, pre-predicative knowledge, habits, and horizon-consciousness. Generally speaking, twentieth-century analytic philosophy approached implicit cognition either under the category of 'knowing how', construed as an ability or complex of dispositions (Gilbert Ryle 1949; but see Stanley and Williamson 2001), or as nonverbal, 'tacit knowledge' ("we can know more than we can tell," Polanyi 1966: 4; Fodor 1968). The European phenomenological tradition (especially Husserl, Heidegger, Gurwitsch, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Schutz, see Moran 2000), on the other hand, has a longer and more complex tradition of analyses of intuitive, tacit, 'pre-predicative' knowledge, centered on embodiment, that developed prior to and independently of recent analytic discussions, although there have been recent attempts to mediate between these traditions (see Dreyfus 2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2007; Dreyfus and Taylor 2015). British philosophy did have some mid twentieth-century connections with phenomenology, largely through Michael Polanyi and Gilbert Ryle, who offered discussions of tacit, skillful, habitual knowledge, but besides these figures, but mainstream analytic philosophy did not have engagement with the phenomenological tradition until recently largely due to a revival of interest in consciousness (Moran 2011).[1]

Phenomenology focuses especially on intuitively apprehended, embodied, skillful behavior. Husserl's mature phenomenology, greatly elaborated on by the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (who himself was trained in empirical and Gestalt psychology), specifically focuses on this pre-reflective, pre-predicative level of human experience. Philosophy of mind tended to ignore embodiment completely and now that has changed there is increasing interest in the phenomenological contribution.

## The Phenomenological Approach

Phenomenology as a methodology was announced by Edmund Husserl in his *Logical Investigations* (1901). He went on to develop his specific account of the phenomenological reduction in *Ideas I* (Husserl 2014) that brackets what is accidental in the experience in order to arrive at the essence. The key aim is the careful, unprejudiced *description* of conscious, lived experiences, precisely according to the manner in which they are experienced, without the imposition of

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external explanatory frameworks, whether from the natural or social sciences, from religion or philosophy, or even from common sense or ordinary language use. One attends to the *phenomena* of experience as given to the subject. Phenomenology continues in the European philosophy of cognition (e.g., Descartes, Kant) that begins from the centrality of the egoic subject. Scientific objective knowledge usually excludes or brackets the input of the knowing subject. Phenomenology, on the other hand, seeks to restore the knowing subject; the world is what it is *for* a knowing subject. Phenomenology thus opposes objectivism and naturalism and seeks to relate all knowing back to subjectivity (and the cooperation between subjects known as *intersubjectivity*). Indeed, phenomenology was especially critical of the emerging empirical psychology due to its inherent objectivistic naturalism. The contribution of the acting, knowing subject must be documented.

Knowledge is viewed as an essential, a priori *correlation* between subject and object. Traditionally, philosophy focused on one or other side of this correlation (i.e., objectivist or subjectivist) and has rarely (prior to Kant) foregrounded the essential subject-object relation. To unpack the subject-object correlation, phenomenology approaches all experience as *intentional*, that is, object-directed. The human subject is embodied, embedded, and enactive in a world that it endows ('constitutes') with sense. Human conscious experience, then, is a 'sense-giving' (*Sinnbegung*) or *meaning-constituting* enterprise. As the phenomenological psychologist Aron Gurwitsch put it (Gurwitsch 2009: 155), to experience a conscious act is to actualize a sense. Explicit propositional judgments and thoughts express articulated subject-predicate meanings, but perceivings, rememberings, imaginings are also objectually shaped (one imagines *something*), as are hopes, fears, feelings of sadness or elation, and so on. The objects intended and their 'modes of givenness' can be quite diverse and appear in different ways to different mental attitudes (so an artwork can captivate the senses but can also be an object of rational scrutiny or economic appraisal).

Phenomenology rejects all accounts of knowledge that posited the existence of meaningless 'sense data' that have to be processed by the mind. Rather sense perceptions, and even feelings, emotions and moods, all present themselves with intrinsic meaningfulness that conveys the 'world' to us in a special way. The world has multiple modes of senseful 'givenness' or 'phenomenality' to human conscious subjectivity. This pre-propositional, intuitive 'givenness' (*Gegebenheit*) of the world *as meaningful* is, phenomenology maintains, the foundational basis for propositional knowledge. Accordingly, phenomenologists pay more attention to the original connection between subjects and their world, namely the embodied, embedded, and enactive presence that makes the world phenomenally present to the subject. Bodily capacities and movements disclose the world in certain ways and these are largely intuitive and unconscious. I instinctively have access to the range of bodily movements that produces a particular action in the world, for example, I can freely vary my touching of the button with my finger or my elbow. I can lean closer to see something or step closer. I am in possession of a range of bodily capacities that I activate freely to apprehend the world.

## Describing the Life of Consciousness

Husserlian phenomenology (Husserl in part was inspired by William James) showed a specific interest in the dynamics of consciousness, at the very time when experimental psychology largely embraced behaviorism as a methodology with an explicit exclusion of all references to consciousness. For phenomenology, consciousness is a multilayered, dynamic, flowing *whole*, a unified 'complex' or 'nexus' (*Zusammenhang*), a 'field' (*Feld, champ*, in Aron Gurwitsch's terms,

following Gestalt psychology, Moran 2019).[2] Already in the *Logical Investigations* Husserl sees a 'field of meaning' as an interconnected whole:

> As regards the field of meaning, the briefest consideration will show up our unfreedom in binding meanings to meanings, so that we cannot juggle at will with the elements of a significantly given, connected unity.
>
> (Husserl 2001, vol. 2: 62)

Consciousness is a seamless, unified, living stream, a temporally unfolding, interacting web of interrelated emotional and affective states, desires, feelings, moods, and so on. Although this unity is experienced by the subject as a seamless, flowing whole, it is composed of complex, a priori, eidetic structures that can be mapped through a reflective practice. Perceptions are modified into memories, all the while the sense of time continues in the background. Phenomenology thus seeks to uncover the alphabet or "ABC of consciousness" (in Husserl's phrase), its grammar and syntax; but also how the interlocking experiences "interpenetrate or intersaturate" (Husserl 1997: 62).

Husserlian phenomenology, moreover, maintains there are many layers or strata to consciousness; knowing or cognition takes place on multiple levels. Experiences, acts and attitudes (Husserl's 'position-takings', *Stellungnahmen*, explicit stances taken whether in the form of judgments or points of view) are founded on one another, interpenetrate, and modify one another. Furthermore, much of our experience (not just as children but as adults) is pre-linguistic and not formulated in explicit propositional thoughts. We simply see, touch, and feel things in our environment. Explicit perceptual judgments are founded on sensuous perceptions that already contain a degree of complexity. I do not just see patches of color and shapes but specific states of affairs, processes, and events. I *see the bird-flying* in a single, yet complexly stratified visual seeing, and then I may judge (perhaps pre-verbally) *that the bird is flying*. This complex pre-linguistic perception can become the evidential basis for any number of linguistic statements about the situation, for example, 'I saw a blackbird', 'That bird flew in a startled manner', and so on. For Husserl, the sensuous seeing is saturated with significance and always contains more than the articulated perceptual judgments that are founded on it. In this sense, our perceptual connection with the world has an intrinsic richness that is never captured completely in our explicit judgments.

Husserl (followed by Merleau-Ponty) also emphasize that our responses to experience are not governed by strict causality but in terms of what he and others called *motivation* (Husserl 1989: 231–259). There is no strict cause-effect relation in human action. Rather there is an inherent 'ambiguity' (Merleau-Ponty) or *freedom* in conscious responses. There are certain pathways available that allow one action to proceed to the next. A single thought makes sense within a complex of motivated intentions and fulfilments. I can *feel* the need to open the window because the room is stuffy, but I *decide* not to, because of the noise in the street outside. Motivation is closely connected with habit and association. In a response, I can follow blindly or I can also take a decisive stand. I may have a *desire* to smoke but I *resist* because I consider that smoking is harmful to my health. I come to see my desire as *unwelcome* but perhaps I still give in to the desire to smoke while taking a negative stance toward it. All this can take place at an intuitive, pre-verbal level. There is a motivated chain of experiences and attitudes that evolve in a specific way because of my character, my mood, my subjective states.

In the phenomenological tradition, cognition is founded not just on embodied perception but also on feelings, moods, the general sphere of affectivity (also embodied), that are deeply involved in shaping our experience as meaningful. Pervasive *moods*, such as anxiety, as Heidegger explicates in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1927: 172–188) provide an overall affective framework

through which our sense of world is primordially 'disclosed'. One's overall mood determines how emotions can display themselves, their temporal trajectory, and so on. It is *within* overall moods that particular emotions, such as anger or joy, get their peculiar configuration. Propositional thought, too, is cradled in a more pervasive state of mind or mood, such that our thoughts might be contemplative or agitated, imbued with urgency, or 'wanting to get things' done. Moods simply *befall* us. One is always in a mood. Even casual everyday normality is a mood although it is usually noticed only when it is disturbed by another 'counter-mood' (Heidegger 1927: 175). In this sense, moods belong to the domain of implicit cognition; through moods we make sense of our experience.

## Tacit and Reflective Self-Awareness

Husserl thought of phenomenological analysis as proceeding in self-conscious reflection. However, he also maintained that self-reflection presupposes an underlying, more basic level of 'unreflected' or 'pre-reflective' consciousness (Husserl 1989: 259). The self or ego is not necessarily fully present in a self-aware manner in our direct object-oriented experiences. We do not have complete possession of our egoic experiences. Normally, we are focused outside ourselves. Jean-Paul Sartre famously discusses this 'first-order' 'unreflective' consciousness in *The Transcendence of the Ego* (Sartre 1937) in an example repeated by Dreyfus 2005; Kelly 2000). In immediate, direct consciousness one focuses on the object and one is not aware of oneself except in a 'non-positional' way (Sartre 1937: 7). There is only the 'street-car-to-be-caught'. Sartre writes:

> When I run after a tram, when I look at the time, when I become absorbed in the contemplation of a portrait, there is no I. There is a consciousness of the *tram-needing-to-be-caught*, etc., and a non-positional consciousness of consciousness. In fact, I am then plunged into the world of objects, it is they which constitute the unity of my consciousnesses, which present themselves with values, attractive and repulsive values, but as for me, I have disappeared, I have annihilated myself. There is no place for me at this level, and this is not the result of some chance, some momentary failure of attention: it stems from the very structure of consciousness.
>
> (Sartre 1937: 8)

Self-awareness, on this account comes as a new and secondary experience, building on a pre-reflective experience, as when one experiences the gaze of others, promoting shame, for instance (when I see myself as the other sees me, I experience *shame*).

Merleau-Ponty similarly rejects a purely intellectualist or cognitive reading of the Cartesian *cogito*. Beneath the reflexive *cogito*, is a 'pre-reflective' or 'tacit' *cogito*, that is, a sense of the 'I am' as given in my immediately bodily self-presence as 'me-here-now' which is not yet articulated into the reflective reasoning form, 'I think therefore I am', that is mediated through language (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 422). The active 'performance' of the *cogito* is merely a reflective highlighting of what is already tacitly present. Merleau-Ponty further maintains that I encounter my thoughts in ways I had not consciously expected. He writes in his late *The Visible and the Invisible*:

> Genuine conversation gives me access to thoughts that I did not know myself capable of, that I was not capable of, and sometimes I feel myself followed in a route unknown to myself which my words, cast back by the other, are in the process of tracing out for me.
>
> (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 13)

There is a vast domain of pre-reflective conscious experience, not just at the perceptual but at the cognitive level. I am not always aware of what I am going to say next. Sometimes, something just 'slips out' and I see my own understanding in a new way.

## The Phenomenology of Embodied Perception

Merleau-Ponty, especially in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), greatly elaborated on Husserl's accounts of this pre-theoretical, preconscious experience that is closely connected to the motor significance of the body. For phenomenologists, the 'perceptual body' or 'phenomenal body' (Gurwitsch) is the opposite of the body as described by science. Gurwitch writes (in his review of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*) of Merleau-Ponty's conception of the body:

> The body in question is not the organism in the sense of biological science but, on the contrary, the phenomenal body, the body with which I live, which I experience as mine, which defines my situation within and my point of view upon the world.
>
> (Gurwitsch 2010b: 493)

The body implicitly possesses an orientation, and is responsible for giving a sense of what is up, down, near, far, reachable or not reachable. As Husserl puts it, the body is the 'zero-point' (*Nullpunkt*) or orientation. Husserl and Merleau-Ponty both begin from the complexity of multimodal sensuous perception as the anchor-point for our embodied and embedded being-in-the-world (Wheeler 2005). Perception has more thickness and complexity that classical empiricism appreciated. Perception is a whole-body activity involving the 'interlacing' and 'overlapping' (Merleau-Ponty's terms) of the senses (seeing, hearing, tasting touching, smelling, feeling), combined with proprioceptive experiences of bodily movement (Merleau-Ponty's 'motility'), balance, orientation. The body also is experienced within the fields of vision and touch. There is also an overlapping and intertwining between the different sense modalities. Perception is multimodal; 'the senses communicate among themselves', as Merleau-Ponty puts it – I grasp by different sensory pathways that a surface is *rough* (sight, touch). In paintings, Merleau-Ponty, writes I see the raised, embossed pattern on the cloak in the painting even though I cannot touch it. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty thought there was a degree of synaesthesis in all perception. I *see* the surface as rough and scratchy on my skin even without touching it.

Pre-linguistic bodily perception is our core being-in-the-world. Husserl speaks of perception as providing an 'primordial belief' (*Urdoxa*, Husserl 1973a: 59), which Merleau-Ponty interprets as a 'perceptual faith' or belief in the world that is presupposed by science (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 14). Merleau-Ponty writes:

> The perceiving person is not spread out before himself in the manner that a consciousness must be; he has an historical thickness, he takes up a perceptual tradition, and he is confronted with a present. In perception we do not think the object and we do not think the thinking, we are directed toward the object and we merge with this body that knows more than we do about the world, about motives, and about the means available for accomplishing the synthesis.
>
> (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 247–248)

The body has an inbuilt, antecedent knowledge; the body literally *incorporates* knowledge. Polanyi agrees: "Our body is the ultimate instrument of all our external knowledge, whether

intellectual or practical" (Polanyi 1966: 15). Bodily systems cooperate with each other to render our experience of the objective world. As Gurwitsch puts it in his review of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, the perceptual body is an interlacing system of competencies – a 'synergetic system':

> Since the body as a whole forms a synergetic system, the qualities mediated by the several sense organs (i.e., visual, auditory, tactile, and other) imply, symbolize, and modify each other.
>
> (Gurwitsch 2010b: 489)

There are bodily self-movements integrated into all perceptual activities. For Husserl, visual perception involves a specific series of eye movements, tiltings of the neck, turning of the head or body, in the experience of looking at something (and Husserl noticed that one chain of movements can stand in for another, for example, I can turn just my head or rotate my body). The body instinctively substitutes one chain of movements with another to gain the same equivalent result. Similarly, touch requires *movement* (not just staccato tapping); one has to move one's fingers over a surface to apprehend smoothness (a single touch will not yield smoothness, although it might yield hardness or softness). As Merleau-Ponty points out (Polanyi makes a similar point), in seeing, one is not aware of the accompanying blinking of the eyes, but only the vista to be seen. The whole of bodily perceptual experience involves implicit knowledge of this embodied but consciously felt kind. The hands 'instinctively' reach out to feel the surface of the desk or to steady oneself. This is perceptual knowledge even before it is articulated in explicit thoughts or words. Skilled performance takes this knowledge to a higher more expert level, but it is still primarily intuitive and inarticulate. A dancer can make minor adjustments to a pose without following an explicit map of rules (although beginners often use these rules to guide their practice).

The primary experience of embodiment is sensuous, 'instinctual' and habitual. I simply *inhabit* my body in an *animated* (Husserl 1989: 252, speaks of 'ensouled') manner. There is a receptivity in sensibility that is already an openness to the flow of the specific sensory fields. Furthermore, each individual has a unique embodiment, which Husserl calls 'style' or 'habitus' (Husserl 1989: 290), involving typical gestures, peculiar mannerisms, facial expressions, tone of voice, accent, walking gait, stance, pattern of thought or speech. Memories, skills, practical abilities are likewise literally *incorporated* into the body in an individual manner, in the way we hold ourselves, move our bodies, walk, sit, eat, look weary, adopt a defeated air, and so on (Young 1990; Sheets-Johnstone 2003). All these idiosyncrasies shape, inform, and characterize an individual's style in a uniquely identifiable way. Moreover, the subject experiences her agency in and through this embodied style.

Knowledge involves an integration of parts into a whole. We recognize a familiar face even if much is occluded. I *recognize* your face even if I do not consciously *know* the color of your eyes (or whether you have changed your hair). Indeed, facial recognition is a paradigm for implicit knowledge (cf. Polanyi 1966: 4). Similarly, one has an implicit bodily sense of how far one can reach or whether one can jump over a certain gap. Of course, this bodily intentionality can be 'inhibited' (Young 1990) for all kinds of reasons, including assumptions about age or gender, confidence, or ability, but that is not to deny a certain intrinsic bodily intentionality operating at an implicit level and providing a platform for conscious thought and action.

Although Husserl was primarily a logician and epistemologist interested in systematic propositional knowledge connected through logical consequence, he also recognized that there is a deep, pre-propositional, presupposed, embodied knowledge, which yields vistas that are

passively 'synthesized' and combined into unified forms. In his *Logical Investigations* (Husserl 2001), Husserl describes how we not only perceive *patterns* in the carpet or on the tiled floor, but we also *expect* those patterns to continue under the table or desk to the hidden parts of the carpeted floor. There is a built-in, implicit anticipatory intention in our perceptual apprehension; our eyes move towards to limit or horizon of our viewing, but it is not at the level of an expectation. Husserl writes penetratingly:

> Intention is not expectancy, it is not of its essence to be directed to future appearances. If I see an incomplete pattern, e.g. in this carpet partially covered over by furniture, the piece I see seems clothed with intentions pointing to further completions – we feel as if the lines and coloured shapes go on 'in the sense' of what we see – but we expect nothing. It would be possible for us to expect something, if movement promised us further views. But possible expectations, or occasions for possible expectations, are not themselves expectations.
>
> (Husserl 2001, vol. 2: 211)

From the outset of his mathematical and logical investigations, Husserl was fascinated by the way one can apprehend intuitively not just individual entities (grasped as 'unities') but also collectivities, groups or sets of things – *flocks* of birds, *herds* of cattle, *fields* of grass, a mountain *range*. Husserl thought of these groups as grasped by a particular intuitive act that he called 'collective combination' (Husserl 2003). For him it was the pre-theoretical basis for acts of counting – first I have to apprehend a group of items, before I traverse them or colligate them in an act of explicit counting. So, right from the beginning, Husserl was concerned especially with *implicit* perceptual knowledge. He starts from what he calls generally 'intuition' (*Anschauung*), the direct sensuously founded perception or insight not yet mediated by concepts. Husserl begins from the initial passivity or receptivity of experience: noises, colors, tickles, itchings, scratchings, impose themselves on consciousness. They have a salience over the receding or sunken background. A sudden noise wakes me from my reverie and I turn my attention towards it. A pre-linguistic child can see and react to the *pattern* on the carpet, is drawn towards the *flickering light* coming through the window. Furthermore, our perceptual awareness is always editing out or selecting what we choose to perceive or not (Polanyi speaks about 'attending *from*', Polanyi 1966: 10). Thus, I look at the surface of the table in sunlight and I literally *see* the table as flat, smooth and uniformly colored, even though there are clearly patches of sunlight and shadow crisscrossing the table that make the surface appear mottled, and, if I look at it again, I can pay attention to this explicit patterning of light and shade on what I had initially apprehended as a unified colored surface. A painter will need to attend to that mottled surface to render it on the canvas, whereas someone buying the table as furniture attends only to its uniformly colored surface and excludes the mottled patterns of light. There are different forms of 'givenness' of the object depending on the intuitive intentional approach.

## Passive Synthesis

The later Husserl, in *Experience and Judgment* (Husserl 1973a), introduces a new and paradoxical notion of 'passive synthesis' that is supposed to capture the genesis of categoriality in sensibility, offering a critique of Kant (for whom all syntheses are active). Husserl speaks of a "passive agreement of intentionalities in a synthetic unity" (Husserl 1973a, 62) and of "the world as the universal ground of belief 'pregiven' (*vorgegeben*) for every experience of individual objects" (Husserl 1973a: 28). For Husserl, pre-theoretical, 'prepredicative' judgments,

for example, perceptions form the basis for explicit predicative judgments (Husserl 1973a: 61). In this work, Husserl claims that *explicit logical* acts, such as negation, have their foundation in the pre-predicative sphere. Thus, he writes:

> It thus appears that negation is not first the business of the act of predicative judgment but that in its original form it already appears in the prepredicative sphere of receptive experience.
>
> (Husserl 1973a: 90)

I have to have an intuitive *sense* of something being rejected before I can make an explicit judgmental act of denial.[3]

Similarly, mental experiences such as *doubt* are already anchored in bodily perception, when the continuous flow of harmonious confirmations is disrupted, for example, in looking at a man turns out to be disrupted when the man turns out to be a mannequin. Again Husserl writes:

> One and the same complex of sense data is the common foundation of two apprehensions superimposed on each other. Neither of the two is canceled out during the period of the doubt. They stand in mutual conflict; each one has in a certain way its own force, each is motivated, almost summoned, by the preceding perceptual situation and its intentional content. But demand is opposed to demand; one challenges the other, and vice versa. In doubt, there remains an undecided conflict.
>
> (Husserl 1973a: 92)

One further feature of this passivity is our experience of the temporal flow of experience itself. All experience is temporally unified and cumulatively compounded in an organic way. As Merleau-Ponty puts it: "In every movement of focusing, my body tied a present, a past and a future together. It secretes time" (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 249). For Husserl, time is the deepest, most fundamental organizing feature of consciousness. It is a kind of passive synthesis, joining one moment to the next to yield the sense of harmonious experience. Perception is dynamic, self-organizing, and constitutes a harmonious continuum that is glued together without my specific active synthetic intervention.

The inner coherence or organization of the field of consciousness occurs on both what Husserl terms the *noetic* (or experiential act) and the *noematic* (or objectual content) sides. I have a sense of continuity of *myself* (I wake up as the same person each morning) and of my surrounding world (my room). The data in a field are unified by their relevance with each other, as Gurwitsch elaborates. The field of consciousness is always structured with a 'focus' or 'theme' (of varying width) of attention surrounded by a structured periphery of inattentional contents. I am only vaguely aware of the world outside my window, of the weather, of the clouds. Gurwitsch and Merleau-Ponty both describe in detail the inner organization of our perceptual fields. The field of perception consists not just of the actual contents present (whether sharply given or vaguely apprehended) but also of a background of potentialities and "inactualities that constitute a 'field of freedom'" (Gurwitsch 2010a: 197). This field contains *affordances* and *solicitations*, to use the language of J.J. Gibson (1979), which he encountered in Husserlian phenomenology through his teacher David Katz, a student of Husserl, see Moran 2015). A climber will see a rockface as offering footholds and handholds that simply stand out. Thus, Gurwitsch states: "All perceptual consciousness is supported and pervaded by an inexplicit, unformulated, and silent reliance on the familiarity of the world" (Gurwitsch 2010b: 488). Furthermore, as Husserl puts it, "everything unfamiliar is the horizon of something familiar" (Husserl 2014: 116). Experience

has a gradient from familiar to unfamiliar. I can only grasp what is unfamiliar within an overall horizon of familiarity. I reach for the hotel doorhandle even if it is not shaped like my doorhandle at home. There is a passive knowledge guiding my hand to grip the handle.

## The Habitual Body

Phenomenologists emphasize how this deep, instinctual, inner embodied awareness becomes 'sedimented' (Husserl's term) or bedded down in *habit* and shaped by wider cultural tradition. Habit is associated with disposition, possession, skill, performance of routines, the very *embodiment* of activities (the pianist's fingers reach for the appropriate keys). According to Husserl, moreover, *habit* (*Habitus*, *Habitualität, Hexis, Habe*) belongs with association, memory, temporal synthesis, to the essence of consciousness (Husserl 1989: 143). Habit, for Husserl, plays an essential role in the constitution of *meaningfulness* (*Sinnhaftigkeit*) at all levels: in perceptual experience, the developmental formation of the self, to the development of wider social bonds, establishing history and *tradition*. Habit is the glue to binds together the *harmonious course of life* in the world.[4]

Each individual possesses a corporeal or bodily *habitus* (Husserl uses *Habitus*, Husserl 1973b, 76). In medicine, the term 'habitus' refers to someone's overall 'bearing', 'form', how they present themselves (Husserl speaks of a 'habitual style', Husserl 1989: 260n. 1). There is, furthermore, a degree of contingency or 'facticity' in bodily givenness. Some people simply have better 'innate' or 'natural' balance, a pregiven ability to navigate water with less effort when swimming, a capacity to retain musical sequences. One may take joy in hearing specific sounds, another not (Husserl speaks of this as belonging to sheer *facticity*, Husserl 1989: 288), and so on. Husserl and Stein recognize that embodiment gives one particular traits and disposition that belong to 'nature' (Husserl 1989: 289). One person has longer limbs than another. Such natural capabilities (perceptive, proprioceptive, perceptive, cognitive), of course, may be isolated, strengthened and indeed fine-tuned by training (balance can be tuned by visualization techniques for instance). As Edith Stein puts it, capacities can be strengthened through 'habituation' (Stein 1989: 51). Intellectual and explicit thematic structures can be imposed on this bodily pre-givenness, but only within certain limits. One cannot become anything one likes. Habits, furthermore, can be passive or active. As Husserl writes in *Ideas* II:

> Habits are necessarily formed, just as much with regard to originally instinctive behavior . . . as with regard to free behavior. To yield to a drive establishes the drive to yield: habitually. Likewise, to let oneself be determined by a value-motive and to resist a drive establishes a tendency (a "drive") to let oneself be determined once again by such a value-motive . . . and to resist these drives.
>
> (Husserl 1989: 267, translation modified)

Habits and skills are in a continuum between actions have a degree of purposive intentionality, and more 'automatic' or 'mechanical' forms of behavior. Of course, the margins between conscious and preconscious experience are very difficult to delimit precisely. According to Merleau-Ponty, *habitus* has to do primarily with our ambiguous bodily insertion in the world. Merleau-Ponty in particular characterizes different kinds or levels of knowing (*savoir*) that he uses to explain the case of the phantom limb and similar embodied experiences:

> the ambiguity of knowledge amounts to this: it is as though my body comprises two distinct layers (*couches*) that of the habitual body (*corps habituel*) and that of the actual

> body (*corps actuel*). Gestures of manipulation that appear in the first have disappeared in the second, and the problem of how I can feel endowed with a limb I no longer have comes down to knowing how the habitual body can act as a guarantee for the actual body.
>
> (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 84)

Merleau-Ponty thinks of habit as also providing a kind of *anticipatory* knowledge, for example, one walks through a low doorway without first measuring it or one knowing intuitively that my car will fit through the gap when passing (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 144). We essentially incorporate ourselves in the car, into the door, which are not encountered as external objects but rather instruments expressing my abilities. As Merleau-Ponty summarizes:

> Habit expresses our power of dilating our being in the world, or of altering our existence through incorporating new instruments.
>
> (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 145)

## Skillful Coping

In a recent discussion, the Berkeley philosopher Hubert L. Dreyfus has combined Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of motor intentionality with Heidegger's concept of everyday being-in-the-world to offer his own interpretation of everyday expertise, or 'skillful coping', which prioritizes bodily response and claims to avoid a Cartesian intellectualist (rule-following) and representationalist construal (Dreyfus 2002a, 2002b, 2005). Dreyfus argues that, for an expert practitioner, the action must be a form of absorbed coping, where no degree of self-aware ego is prominent and there is no implicit or explicit conceptualization or rule representing. Countering Dreyfus, John McDowell insists on practice being permeated by a degree of self-awareness. The Dreyfus/McDowell debate highlights the issue of whether habitual action requires conscious deliberation or is illuminated by recourse to reasons or even some kind of self-awareness. Phenomenologists tend to emphasize latent, habitual, embodied knowledge that is not conceptually shaped as the starting point. Indeed, higher level intellectual reasoning is also shaped by habit and make follow largely instinctual pathways.[5] Polanyi claimed that skillful practices follow rules of which the follower is not aware (Polanyi 1958: 51), but Dreyfus thinks there is no rule following involved at all. Polanyi also points out that too much self-consciousness can intrude – he mentions the phenomenon of 'stage fright' (Polanyi 1958: 58), where an actor becomes overly self-conscious. In this regard Dreyfus and Polanyi agree that intrusion of the self into the process can disrupt the absorbed coping. But the phenomenological dimensions of this 'coping' need to be much more clearly articulated. Someone skilled in mental arithmetic will be able to 'see' certain conclusions of calculations without explicitly running through them. A writer may habitually invoke certain metaphors and never use others even when consciously composing a text.

There is much debate about the kinds of 'knowledge' or 'cognition' incorporated in the body. The main phenomenological features are that this implicit cognition is experienced directly in a felt first – person way, can be passive or active, but it is always temporally unfolding, dynamic, and elaborated in phases. For Husserl, higher cognitive processes such negation or doubt are anchored in *perceptual* experiences of cancellation or conflict. For Husserl as well as for James, the seamless continuity and flow of conscious experience itself involves a series of harmonious syntheses.

## The Concept of Horizon

Increasingly, Husserl and the phenomenological tradition recognized the importance of consciousness of *horizon*, or what Husserl called 'horizon-intentionality'. Husserl introduced the concept of 'horizon' as "'what is co-given' but not genuinely" in *Ideas I* (Husserl 2014: 77), and it is given explicit treatment in *Experience and Judgment* § 33 where he speaks of "the horizon of typical pre-acquaintance in which every object in pregiven" (Husserl 1973a: 150). Husserl distinguishes between the object apprehended and the 'potential perceptual field' (Husserl 2014: 162) surrounding it. This constitutes a 'background' of actualizations and also of 'inactualities' that constitute a 'field of freedom' (Gurwitsch 2010a: 197). I see an object from one side but I have the implicit awareness that it has other sides and I can traverse those sides by walking around it or moving the object around. All experience possesses a focal point and a wider field or context (Husserl borrows the terms 'fringe' and 'horizon' from William James). Both focal point and horizon are apprehended intuitively and without language. For example, I pick up my pen to write, but maybe I also use it absent-mindedly as to lever a paperclip. The object has an intrinsic openness to become thematic in new, unforeseen contexts (the screwdriver used to open a paint tin). The *theme* furthermore can also be 'released' back into the thematic field (Gurwitsch 2010a: 254). There is an implicit accompanying consciousness of the horizon when one is perceiving or thinking about an intentional object.

*Horizon-consciousness*, for Husserl is indefinite and empty but it has a particular character relative to the theme. There is always what is relevant or irrelevant, interesting or uninteresting, wrapped up in the experience. Every experience has specifically and lawfully determined but also essentially unlimited horizons of intentional implication, including not just what is actually given but also available potentialities and possibilities in which such intentional objects are apprehended and made meaningful. As Gurwitsch elaborates, the proposition (statement or state of affairs) being focusing on is the theme but it always indicates another such that a chain of implications becomes visible. The theme unfolds in an overall 'meaning-field' (Gurwitsch 2009: 317). To invoke Gurwitsch's example, each mathematical problem has its theme, field, and horizons. These horizons are only vaguely apprehended – they present as possibilities that can be actively traversed. Some mathematicians will just 'see' or 'intuit' these horizons better than others. Nevertheless, these possibilities are, for phenomenology, predelineated according to the particular essence of the tool in question, depending on the horizonal *foresight* of the user. In Husserl's terms, we have tacit knowledge of the overall horizon or context of a problem and motivation to find a solution and this motivation may not need to be articulated (I simply want to discover the truth).

The manner we experience the wider context of our intersubjective, cultural lives (our implicit knowledge of our language or religious tradition) is also manifest in this horizonal way. An individual has a broad, vague, passively available access to the known vocabulary in her or her own language or to the rituals in her religious tradition. Sometimes, specific words may have to be a actively searched in memory, but mostly, reasonably appropriate words present themselves effortlessly to the speaker. Each speaker depends upon the wider context of the language as known to that speaker and in dialogue one's horizons are further expanded. Indeed, Hans-Georg Gadamer, drawing on phenomenology speaks of mutual understanding as involving 'fusion of horizons' (*Horizont-Verschmelzung*, Gadamer 1960), seeing beyond what is immediately present.

Similarly, one has an implicit, unarticulated *sense* of one's family, friends, familiars, customs, habits, traditions, and so on. One knows one's place in the social order. This is a vast domain of mostly passive, unarticulated knowledge that makes possible other kinds of articulated acting

and knowing (such as deciding to visit my cousin, or choosing to stay in Anglophone countries). Phenomenologists have explored how such traditional knowledge becomes embedded or sedimented, how it is transmitted to others, but also how it can be distorted or worn down to become an impediment or prejudice. The wine-taster or tea-taster (what Polanyi calls the 'connoisseur') has knowledge that comes from deep experience and copying the mastery of others. This habitual knowledge is passed on through apprenticeship and training and similarly skills can be lost.[6] Heidegger, for instance, discusses how a work of art belongs to a *world* and if that world becomes lost (e.g. the world that believed in the Greek gods), then the art-work can no longer exhibit that world, but perhaps enters another context, for example, as a museum piece representing ancient Greek sculpting technique (but no longer radiating the presence of a god). Art objects and indeed all cultural objects and practices depend heavily on the contexts and horizons within which they are disclosed and which shape their meaningfulness to the subject.

## Conclusion

Overall, the phenomenological tradition with its detailed analyses of the perceptual process as a bodily incorporated 'knowledge' that involves a range of bodily movements coordinated with disclosure of properties of the object, habitual skillful action, intuitive awareness of the focal point ('theme') of a particular act of concentration, and also of the horizons of our objects and actions, as well as the overall implicit background awareness of culture and tradition, offer extremely rich discussions of implicit cognition that deserve much closer scrutiny by the cognitive sciences and philosophies of mind and action. Classical phenomenology (Husserl and his followers) have a deep analysis of knowledge and agency as based on and enabled by implicit bodily awareness and situated overall in broader horizons of significance and possibilities. This broader understanding of implicit cognition deserves much deeper scrutiny.

## Related Topics

Chapters 13, 14, 15, 23, 24

## Notes

1 Both Ryle and Polanyi had exposure to European philosophy. Ryle was familiar with phenomenology (Ryle 1932), especially Husserl, Heidegger (Ryle reviewed *Being and Time,* Ryle 1928), and Merleau-Ponty (O'Connor 2012), whereas Polanyi drew on Gestalt psychology (Polanyi 1958; Fuchs 2001), and was familiar with Ryle's concept of 'knowing how' (Polanyi 1966: 7). Polanyi was not favorably disposed to the analytic currents of his day (logical positivism, behaviorism, ordinary language philosophy, as he encountered them in Manchester and Oxford). In fact, Polanyi's notion of 'indwelling', is his adaption of 'empathy' (*Einfühlung*), or sympathetic understanding, found in Theodor Lipps and Wilhelm Dilthey (Polanyi 1966: 16–17). For Polanyi, indwelling does not distinguish the human sciences from natural sciences, rather it is involved in all knowing. It is by dwelling in things that we learn to see them (Polanyi 1966: 18). Although not an existentialist (he rejected Sartre's idea that we can *choose* our values), Polanyi saw knowledge as a committed, existential act guided by values that are tacitly grasped. Indeed, Polanyi asserts that "into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known, and that this coefficient is no mere imperfection but a vital component of his knowledge" (Polanyi 1958: v), and he maintains that it is "our personal participation that governs the richness of concrete experience to which our speech can refer" (Polanyi 1958: 90).

2 Having studied initially with Husserl, Gurwitsch went on to study at the University of Frankfurt with the renowned Gestalt psychologists Adhemar Gelb and Kurt Goldstein. Gestalt psychology approaches conscious experiences in a holistic way as a *field* made up of interconnected *moments* rather than distinct parts) organized in a coherent structure. Husserl too speaks regularly of the 'field of intuition' (Husserl

2014: 56), 'sensory fields' (*Sinnesfelder*, Husserl 2014: 73), 'fields of perception' (*Wahrnehmungsfeld*, Husserl 2014: 51), 'fields of memory' (*Erinnerungsfelder*, Husserl 2014: 51), 'field of view' (*Blickfeld*), and so on.

3 This phenomenon is important for the phenomenology of disability and informed consent. A person can refuse food by keeping their mouth closed, for example, even if they cannot articulate that refusal. Bodily resistance can be understood as itself an act of refusal or negation.

4 Husserl's analyses of habit (Husserl 1973a, 1989) deeply influenced the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in his own influential discussions (Bourdieu 1977, 1985, 1990).

5 Polanyi, who spoke several languages, gives the example of reading his morning correspondence that arrives in several languages, but he is so intent on the meaning of the letters that he does not notice explicitly or remember in what language the letter is written (Polanyi 1958: 59).

6 As Polanyi writes: "It follows that an art which has fallen into disuse for the period of a generation is altogether lost. There are hundreds of examples of this to which the process of mechanization is continuously adding new ones. These losses are usually irretrievable. It is pathetic to watch the endless efforts – equipped with microscopy and chemistry, with mathematics and electronics – to reproduce a single violin of the kind the half-literate Stradivarius turned out as a matter of routine more than 200 years ago" (Polanyi 1958: 55).

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