

BAD HABIT AND BAD FAITH. THE AMBIGUITY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS IN THE EARLY MERLEAU-PONTY*

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ABSTRACT. Psychoanalysis had a profound influence on formation of Merleau-Ponty's thought. However, at the same time, he rejects Freud's idea that the unconscious consists of latent mental contents that cause a certain type of behavior. Instead of a hidden experience, Merleau-Ponty argues that the unconscious is an ambiguous consciousness. In *The Structure of Behavior* and *The Phenomenology of Perception*, he specifies this ambiguity by means of the concepts of habit, bad faith, bodily expression, affective intentionality and body schema. In this paper, I will present the interconnection of these aspects of the human existence, following Merleau-Ponty's two early major works. Further, I will show the difference of Merleau-Ponty's notion of bad faith from that of Sartre, and, finally, I will suggest a limitation of Merleau-Ponty's approach to the unconscious.

Keywords: *The Unconscious, Phenomenology, Habit, Bad Faith, Corporeity*

As long as phenomenology is not to refuse the notion of the unconscious wholesale, it must show that and how the unconscious appears. In S. Freud's work, three notions of the unconscious can be distinguished. The broad notion involves all the mental life that we do not realize now. The unconscious in the narrow sense encompasses the mental contents that have been repressed. The drive, which is represented by these contents, has met the resistance by which they are denied to consciousness. This concept of the unconscious as repression was considered by Freud (1971: 146) as the crucial discovery of psychoanalysis. However, the unconscious might still be seen in a third sense. Although the repressed content does not arrive

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to consciousness directly, nevertheless it manifests itself in symptoms, imaginations, affections and dreams. The repression thus goes hand in hand with the return of the repressed, from which the existence of repression can be deduced. Between the repression and the return of the repressed content, a “primary process” has taken place, whose two main forms are condensation and displacement. This unconscious work is the third meaning of the unconscious.

Already this brief recapitulation of Freud shows that the unconscious even in the meaning of repression has a specific manifestation. It is thus open to a phenomenological interpretation: one can ask about the way in which the unconscious appears. Between the *Structure of Behavior* and lectures from the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, M. Merleau-Ponty’s thought have undergone a profound change that is also reflected in his interpretation of the concept of the unconscious. Nonetheless, we can identify some constant features that Merleau-Ponty’s approach to the unconscious retained throughout this development. The first is rejection of the idea that the unconscious consists of latent mental contents that cause a certain type of behavior. The second is the interpretation of the unconscious as an ambivalent behavior, which includes a partially conscious attitude towards the repressed. In this paper, I will present Merleau-Ponty’s interpretation of the unconscious as an ambivalent consciousness, following his two early major works.

1. The disintegrated behavior

In the *Structure of Behavior*, the exposition of the unconscious is used to illustrate the way in which human behavior relates to its vital foundation. According to Merleau-Ponty, the relationship of behavior dominated by the sexual drive to normal behavior is that of the partial to the total. Normal behavior is a higher structure that integrates lower structures without remainder. Therefore, man has no autonomous drives which would manifest themselves in mental life and which the mind or ego would have to surmount. “Reorganized in its turn in new wholes, vital behavior as such disappears.”(SB: 181)¹ The unconscious, as described by Freud, will only appear when this integration fails. Even then, there is a distinction between the unconscious as a structure of behavior and the unconscious as mental contents revealed in the mind by psychoanalysis. For example, a complex, i.e. a stereotyped response

¹ In this and other points, Merleau-Ponty largely adopts K. Goldstein’s interpretation of the unconscious. (Cf. Goldstein 1995: 240ff.)

to environmental stimuli we cannot come to terms with, is a structure of behavior. However, the memories and traumas that emerge during the analysis are a means of understanding this structure of behavior for the analyst. The same relationship subsists, according to Merleau-Ponty, between manifest and latent dream contents.²

For Merleau-Ponty, the unconscious represents a pathological or infantile pattern of behavior. What Freud called “repression”, “complex”, “regression” or “resistance” are partial, disintegrated ways of conduct that take us away from adequate understanding of situation and our attitudes. A dreamer behaves like a child who reacts immediately to a ban without asking for its meaning. A dream is a return to primitive behavior that is easier to adopt than integrated conduct. The complex encompasses also an effort to avoid confrontation with it, so that we do not need to integrate our behavior into a more meaningful whole and accept responsibility for it. Merleau-Ponty (SB: 179) summarizes: “the pretended unconsciousness of the complex is reduced to the ambivalence of immediate consciousness.” The complex subsists along with a partially conscious refusal to integrate it, and its unconsciousness is therefore “pretended”. At the same time, however, the complex is a regress to immediate reactions that *points* to an escape from a more complex behavior, and in this sense it is ambiguous.

Merleau-Ponty replaces the causal explanation of Freud with the structural difference between partial and complex behavior. The impression that there are autonomous latent mental contents that cause rigid behavioral patterns arises due to repetition of the behavior. However, according to Merleau-Ponty, there is no such cause that would force us to repeat; rather, the primitive behavior attracts us simply by being less demanding. The rigidity of “automatic” behavior represents a permanent threat to which human existence might succumb. The more human existence recedes from integration, the more the causal explanation appears plausible. To sum up, according to the author of the *Structure of Behavior*, the unconscious is an insufficiently integrated behavior. Without using that term in this connection, Merleau-Ponty effectively adopts Goldstein’s interpretation of the unconscious as a bad habit.³ This interpretation is based on a sharp distinction between the normal and the pathological, and the propensity of human existence to “unconscious behavioral structuration” explained by its inner weakness.

² That the latent content of dream is not a cause of the manifest content but a means of understanding it, is a main thesis of G. Politzer’s book, to which Merleau-Ponty refers repeatedly. (Cf. Politzer 1928: 163ff.)

³ Goldstein explicitly conceives of symptoms in terms of habits. (Cf. Goldstein 1995: 253f.)

2. Bad faith

Just as in the previous book, the *Phenomenology of Perception* offers an exposition of the unconscious within a discussion concerning man's relation to his vital basis, and the unconscious is approached mainly as a pathological deviation from a normal situation. Yet, it receives the status of a privileged example, which shows the human condition better than anything else.

Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 164f.) explains the nature of the unconscious with the example of a repressed memory. A man who, after having a fight with his wife, cannot remember where he placed a book she gave him before, did not lose this memory by accident, but because it belongs to the region of life he refuses. Repression of a particular experience thus involves an affective, volitional, and cognitive component: a certain region of life is *recognized*, which he *refuses*, and therefore he *resists* anything that might belong to this region. These acts are not explicitly aware emotions, choices, and knowledge. Similarly, their performance is not exhausted by removing one particular possibility from life. Refusing or accepting a certain area of life rather changes the field of possibilities of how to feel, what to decide and what can be recognized explicitly. Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 520, fn. 57) calls these implicit acts of the subject, through which we find our possibilities in the world, "existence".

Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 165) defines existence as an "adhesion" of life to the world, which is a condition of experiences with specific things. Its performance resembles the sensitivity of sensory organs for their particular areas. The unconscious, as the negative modality of existence, becomes a (temporary) loss of sense for a certain field. The repressed memory is literally lost, and even if the man wants to get it back, he does not know where to look. At the same time, by refusing it, he recognizes it and decides to repress it.⁴ The unconscious thus displays an ambiguity: the particular memory is both lost and retained.

Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 165) borrows from J.-P. Sartre's vocabulary and describes this ambiguity as "metaphysical hypocrisy" and "bad faith". However, there is a fundamental difference between Sartre's classical concept of bad faith from *Being and Nothingness* and its Merleau-Pontian adaptation in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, which reflects their different notions of existence.

Sartre defines bad faith as self-deception concerning the motivation of one's behavior, which arises from lying to oneself: "the one to whom the lie is told and the one who lies are one and the same person, which means that [...] I must

⁴ Importantly, Merleau-Ponty describes both psychological repression and some neurological disorders in the same way: "The patient knows his disability precisely insofar as he is ignorant of it, and he ignores it precisely insofar as he knows it." (PhP: 84.)

know the truth very exactly in order to conceal it more carefully and this [...] in the unitary structure of a single project.” (Sartre 1986: 49.) According to Sartre, bad faith is deliberate and conscious and it expresses aptly the situations described by the term “repression”. When the man from our example cannot find a certain memory, then, following Freud, it is the resistance of his inner censor that keeps it unconscious. Sartre argues that such an explanation just shifts the problem to another place without really resolving it. If the censor decides what to repress and what not, unconscious thoughts must be known to him. Therefore, Sartre (1986: 53) can describe the censor as “consciousness (of) being conscious of the drive to be repressed, but precisely *in order not to be conscious of it.*” Censorship itself is thus characterized by bad faith. Sartre concludes that, better than speaking of a mysterious censor who recognizes, approves, or rejects our thoughts that come from the unconscious, we should conceive of the situation as an ambiguous consciousness. The man does not know reflectively where the book from his wife is, but he is aware pre-reflectively of the repressed memory. The pre-reflective awareness of one’s own experiences is a condition of the reflective consciousness, and according to Sartre, the repressed experiences pose no exception.

Merleau-Ponty describes the unconscious in a similar vein, but in the end, he understands the ambiguity of bad faith differently from Sartre. The man who fell out with his wife both knows and does not know what he represses. Sartre would argue that this man knows about the repressed idea pre-reflectively and does not know about it reflectively. Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 165) emphasizes that the unconscious is connected with categorial knowledge of the repressed ideas: “Through this generality we still ‘have’ them, but just enough to hold them off at a distance from ourselves.” According to my interpretation, Merleau-Ponty suggests that this man does not discern one particular memory from another, but paradoxically without being aware of a particular experience, he recognizes that a recollection may belong to the region of life that he rejects. For this reason, a particular experience cannot form completely, and hence he cannot even know it. The angry man neither knows the specific ideas that he represses, nor may be able to explicitly recognize the region that he refuses to engage in. Yet he is able to discern that an *emerging* experience might belong to it. Accordingly, in the incipient stage, the experience is specific enough to be recognized as unwanted but not specific enough to possibly become an object of reflective consciousness. It is precisely this “blind” recognition of emerging experiences that distinguishes Merleau-Ponty’s concept of bad faith from that of Sartre.

A similar conceptual shift is also found in the volitional aspect of bad faith. Repression is not necessarily associated with an explicit refusal. It would be better to say that somewhere deep in us a decision was made to avoid some experiences at

all costs. The performance of these “existential decisions” does not lie on the shoulders of the individual, for they are mostly carried out through us or by means of us. Yet, we do not feel that they would be completely imposed on us or that they would happen automatically and without our complicity. Although we often cannot be held accountable for them, they are *our* personal, and frequently most important, attitudes and beliefs. Not only are conscious decisions and explicit knowledge conditioned by existential choice and “blind recognition”, moreover, our conscious life *assumes* this deeper setting of existence.⁵ Thus, according to Merleau-Ponty, existence is neither short of self-awareness in the form of a general knowledge of one’s own emerging experiences, nor lacking in will in the form of involvement or indifference towards various regions of life. And while in Sartre bad faith is a sign of recession from the true nature of existence, in Merleau-Ponty’s conception, it shows the ambiguity that marks out the very essence thereof.

3. The body as expression

This ambiguity of existence is broadened by a bodily dimension. Between existence and body, Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 163) finds a relation of mutual expression, which he illustrates by the example of neurotic symptom. A young woman whose mother has forbidden her from seeing the young man she loves gradually loses her voice. The *aphonia*, as a way to withdraw from communication, expresses her refusal to coexist with other people. On this example, Merleau-Ponty builds his distinctive concept of bodily expression. The body does not designate existence as something external that could exist without this designation. The bodily expression is completely permeated by what it expresses, and the existence, as the signified, cannot exist without the body, as the signifier. Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 164) even more strongly asserts both that existential attitude forms the body as an appropriate way of expressing itself, and the expressive body itself becomes what is expressed. Thus, the bodily way of denoting is not a re-presentation of the meaning denoted, but its actual presence. Neither the body nor the existence is an original that would be unilaterally translated; rather, they express each other by becoming each other. In the words of Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 169): “the body is existence as congealed or generalized, and [...] existence is a perpetual embodiment.”

⁵ Because this “anonymous” level of existence is assumed by our personal life and “reintegrated into personal existence” (PhP: 87), it is rather “pre-personal” than impersonal. (PhP: 216)

One of consequences of this conception of expression is that, without the sign that expresses it, a particular existential attitude expressed could not exist, even in terms of its content. In other words, a different way of expression would also change the meaning expressed. In the case of the young woman who lost her voice, this means not only that *aphonia* expresses withdrawal from the shared world, but also, more strongly, that this rejection of the world is accomplished by its manifestation in the symptom. Therefore, in the case of this particular woman, the rejection of coexistence could not have been manifested in another form than that of *aphonia*, since another symptom, such as *alogia*, would have expressed a different attitude. *Aphonia* thus becomes part of what it itself expresses, and, to a certain extent, it expresses itself.

However, if the bodily symptom affects the kind of disorder, just as the disorder determines the kind of symptom, the body actively enters into how we are open to the world. Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 166) illustrates this with an example of a touch that can stop a seizure. The touch can induce a change in existential attitude because the body does not manifest an (otherwise independent) attitude, but enters into it. Similarly, the explanation of a symptom does not imply conjecture about hidden experiences; rather, it requires understanding the symptom's function in generating the meaning that is being expressed by it. We can draw a consequence, which, however, Merleau-Ponty himself did not mention, that the therapeutic change consists in a shift in production of bodily expression. Thus, this strong concept of expression could explain the effectiveness of bodily anchored interventions in psychotherapy.

4. Affective intentionality

If the body can influence our overall attitudes, it is clear that its nature is not entirely different from that of existence. In the example of sexual desire, Merleau-Ponty shows that affections represent a kind of intentionality. By this, he rejects the idea that attraction could be a connection between bodily states of pleasure and mental representations of the other. Instead, he analyses the situation of attraction in its meaning. Erotic attraction is first and foremost a general atmosphere in which we perceive others in their sexual physiognomy and in which we are more sensitive to hidden hints and suggestions in their behavior. Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 172) compares sensual desire to sensory perception: "Sexuality emanates like an odour or a sound from the bodily region that it occupies most specifically." Body is not present in the erotic situation only through sensations of pleasure but it is simultaneously called by the other and preparing for sexual behavior. Moreover, to be attracted to

somebody is not just a kind of urge that would seek a discharge of energy accumulated in the nerves; rather, the situation is permeated by power relations, which Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 170) describes as a master–slave dialectic. When I long for someone, I am at the mercy of her because I make myself dependant on her answer. Nevertheless, if she responds to my desire and is seduced by me, she is at my mercy. Sexuality thus transcends the order of nature because it establishes a series of intersubjective relationships in which the subject of desire gets involved.

In this expanded concept of sexuality, Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 161) feels to be at one with Freud, who does not restrict libido to a reproductive instinct but rather conceives it as an ability to enter situations and adopt attitudes that have wider than sexual signification. For this reason, even behavior at first glance asexual may raise the suspicion of being sexually motivated, and virtually everything may turn out to be a sexual symbol. In this respect, wakeful life is no different from a dream in which arousal is translated into images.⁶ The dreamer experiences sexual arousal directly in the form, for example, of a wall he is trying to climb. To say, as Freud does, however, that besides the manifest content of the dream the dreamer experiences an unconscious idea that mediates the connection of desire with the image, is according to Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 171) an unnecessary construction. There is no repressed idea that would return in the shape of an image. Rather, the image is full of a sexual atmosphere that the dreamer immediately understands. For Merleau-Ponty, desire is present in perception in the same way as it is present in the dream image. In addition, in the dream image, it is present in the same way as the existential attitude is present in the symptom. All these cases point to the ambiguity of bodily existence.

Nonetheless, for any reader of Freud, the ambiguity of human behavior is hardly a surprising claim. After all, psychoanalysis is based on the fact that mental contents are over-determined and that their meaning depends on multiple unconscious thoughts condensed in them.⁷ Does “existential ambiguity” bring anything new at all? Merleau-Ponty approaches the problem of the unconscious with a phenomenological ambition to describe experience as we experience it, rather than interpreting it from the viewpoint of a hypothesis. Thus, he asks how the “over-determined experience” is understood before it becomes the object of an explicit (e.g. psychoanalytic) interpretation; in other words, how it is reflected in our behavior and how we perceive it. Merleau-Ponty aims at the *experience* of ambiguity. Concepts such as “blind recognition”, “atmosphere of perception,” or “expression that becomes its own

⁶ Cf. PhP: 223: “Every sensation includes a seed of dream [...]”

⁷ Cf. Laplanche, Pontalis 1988: 292f.

meaning” do not capture experience by marking out units of meaning that could be combined or “condensed” in it. Rather, they are means of describing a certain field in which meanings are found at once and in an indistinguishable way, but which is still perfectly definite and specific in what it makes possible for us to do and think. As far as existence consists of transpositions of thoughts and drives into perception and behavior, the concept of ambivalence coincides with that of over-determination. As far as there is no original of this translation, i.e. no drive or thought without behavior or perception, they differ. According to Merleau-Ponty, the human existence desires by perception and thinks by behavior, e.g. by images charged by drive and behavior eluding a certain area of life. The very terms “transposition” or “translation” should therefore be treated with caution, whilst they cannot be avoided.

5. Body schema

The concept of body schema had a fundamental influence on Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of these “silent transpositions.”⁸ The body schema designates a complex sensorimotor unity of body, which neurology studies primarily by comparing disorders and illusions with normal behavior. For instance, in case of *allochiria*, the patient experiences the stimuli that one side of body is exposed to on the other side. It follows that we do not feel a sensation simply where the nerve was irritated, but the body determines its position according to a schema, which we do not explicitly perceive and which can be affected by various disorders.

Here, the body schema will not be expounded in all its forms; we confine ourselves to a discussion of four domains: 1. the relationship between perceptions of different sensory organs; 2. the relationship between perception and movement of one’s own body; 3. awareness of the position of the body in space; and 4. the relationship of the will to the body.

1. The experience of different senses is integrated so that the sensory qualities of one sense are indicated by sensory qualities of another sense. In common perception, this inter-sensory unity is found in cases of synaesthesia. For instance, velvet smoothness is not perceived by touch only; thanks to the arrangement of visible elements, we can literally see it. 2. Sensorimotor unity designates the adaptation of a movement to current situation. For example, in the model-based drawing, we

⁸ Merleau-Ponty mentions the concept of body schema towards the conclusion of the chapter on sexuality. (PhP: 172.) In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, the greatest attention is paid to it in the chapter on spatiality and motricity. (PhP: 100ff.) Later, the body schema is extensively discussed in lectures *Le Monde Sensible et le monde de l’expression* from 1953. (MSME: 126ff.)

let sight lead the hand instead of giving attention to the emerging sketch and drawing the model by memory. 3. Even during a complex motion, we do not need to calculate position of parts of our own body, but we know on the fly where to find them. Likewise, during any activity, we take our whole body into account, not just the parts that we see, feel or otherwise perceive right now. 4. To have a body means that it is at our immediate disposal. Our intentions move the part of the body that is appropriate to the task, without our needing to consciously choose which one it will be.

By these translations and transpositions Merleau-Ponty (PhP: 243f.) believed to reach the essence of living body: “my body is precisely a ready-made system of equivalences and of inter-sensory transpositions. The senses translate each other without the need for an interpreter; they understand each other without having to pass through the idea.” The term “equivalence” specifies how Merleau-Ponty understands meaning of body “translations”. In the above example, visual and tactile configurations have *the same value* for the perception of velvet smoothness. Alternatively, when we imitate movements of another, for example, when we learn to dance, we do not need to control which movement of our body responds to which movement of our partner. We perceive directly whether the movements match each other, and thus have the same value, or not.

In all these cases, according to Merleau-Ponty, we are not only confronted with the same type of relationships but also with a certain kind of generality. Transpositions are immediate, i.e. not mediated by explicit awareness, and at the same time, they are not simply given but they progress according to a certain pattern. Merleau-Ponty (MSME: 133) states that the schema is both “specific,” while “indicating the general” and it “bestows meaning” as “a digest that we do not need to interpret”. This generality is further defined as “norm” (MSME: 131, 139, 143) and specific behavior as a “divergence” from this norm. (MSME: 143.) Thus, behavior is grounded in a sensorimotor norm, according to which perception or movement is taking place. This standard sums up past experience and therefore, in logical and temporal terms, precedes current experience. At the same time, however, it is “imminent” (MSME: 139) in the present experience because behavior also expresses the norm under which it is taking place.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the body schema is the basis of action, knowledge, including science, relations to others, including social relations, and expression in all forms, including art. As the lowest level of norms according to which our activities take place, it provides solid dispositions to higher ways of using body. For instance, we can concentrate on what others say because we master the phonetic side of language. These higher activities are then deposited in the body schema and affect it, thus

changing the basis of future behavior and perception. In this sense: “The body is the vehicle of being in the world” (PhP: 84) and “our general means of having a world.” (PhP: 147.)

What does the concept of body schema imply for the interpretation of the unconscious? The unconscious, no matter if a complex or repression, is based on body schema that it further transforms by creating a set of equivalences as a new standard for behavior and perception. From Merleau-Ponty’s remarks (MSME: 159), some specific traits of the unconscious as a norm can be deduced. Firstly, the modification of body use follows from the sexual drive. Further, as it corresponds to the above-mentioned broader concept of sexuality, the development of libido, and hence the relationship to one’s own body, is intertwined with the development of intersubjective relations. Merleau-Ponty adopts Lacan’s interpretation of the mirror stage and holds it that the body schema encompasses the view of ourselves as others see us. Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, the unconscious life is, on the one hand, interpreted in terms of modification of the body schema; on the other hand, the integration of drive into the body schema extends this concept beyond its original neurological use and opens it to results of the psychoanalytic investigation of intersubjectivity.

6. Conclusion

Instead of a hidden experience, i.e. experience in another mental place, Merleau-Ponty, in his first two books, understands the unconscious as an ambiguous consciousness. The ambiguity is defined gradually as bad habit that retains a reference to the adequate behavior; bad faith, i.e. a double relationship to one’s own experiences; bodily expression that signifies itself; drive that opaquely motivates behavior; and finally, body schema as a translation without the original and a behavioral norm.

These terms do not describe different ambiguities, but rather one essential feature of incarnate existence from different sides. Therefore, each of these concepts can be specified in terms of the others. The body schema is a model for understanding how drive is present in behavior. Similarly, the symptom can be understood as a special case of the body schema. At the same time, while defining the schematism, Merleau-Ponty uses the term “translation”, which is a meaning *expressed* in another language. Therefore, just as one can delimit body expression as a case of schema, the body schema can be understood as a case of expression. This is evidenced by the fact that the absence of the original of translation implies

that the expression expresses itself, whilst, on the contrary, if the expression expresses itself, it cannot be fully determined by an original.

A similarly “ambivalent” relationship is found between the concepts of habit and body schema. Merleau-Ponty sometimes (PhP: 89) uses the term “habitual body” where he otherwise speaks of “body schema” instead. He also calls one’s own body “the primordial habit” (PhP: 93) and explicitly propounds to clarify the notion of body schema by means of the concept of habit (PhP: 526, fn. 115; 146; 247). Habits also provide the main source of how we should understand the general character of the body. (PhP: 139.) However, a reversed explanatory order between concepts of habit and body schema can be found in Merleau-Ponty as well. Thus, habits are “but a mode of the power of body” (PhP: 148) and “acquiring a habit” is “reworking and renewal of the body schema” (PhP: 143). This suggests that we should explain habits by means of the concept of body schema, rather than body schema by means of the concept of habit. Since both terms are explained by means of the other, it cannot be argued that the notion of habit, which grounds the approach to the unconscious in the *Structure of Behavior*, is replaced by the notion of body schema in the *Phenomenology of Perception*.

Nevertheless, a certain shift can be observed with regard to the overall approach to psychoanalysis. In the *Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty categorically asserts that the term “fragmentary” or “primitive behavior” is sufficient to explain unconscious formations. (SB: 178f.) However, in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, where neurological disorders, such as the phantom limb, are to be clarified, he resorts to the concept of “repression”. (PhP: 85, 88.)⁹ When he returns to the question of the phantom limb in the later lectures, he even considers “defensive mechanisms against disease” as part of the body. (MSME: 137.) This change in approach to psychoanalytic concepts reflects how Merleau-Ponty shifts from the influence of Goldstein, under the influence of Schilder.¹⁰

Among the terms by means of which Merleau-Ponty specifies the ambiguous character of existence, bad faith has a special place. Unlike others, bad faith does not concern how the subject relates to the world, but how one relates to one’s own experiences. If the habit and body schema are explained by Merleau-Ponty, finally, as forms of operative intentionality, i.e. as a kind of consciousness, bad faith denotes a relationship of the subject to this intentionality; that is to say, a form of self-consciousness. The ambivalence of bad faith consists in a double relation to one’s

⁹ Merleau-Ponty also calls organism, whose definition of “anonymous existence” coincides with the definition of the body, as the “innate complex”, which is continuously being repressed by the personal life. (PhP: 86.)

¹⁰ Cf. Goldstein 1995: 253f. and Schilder 2000: 32.

own experiences, while the ambivalence of habit, schema or expression consists in a double relation to the environment. Thus, Merleau-Ponty seems to suggest that the subject is generally and “blindly” aware even of the “silent transpositions” of the body schema.

This summary makes it possible to designate one problematic spot in Merleau-Ponty’s early approach to the notion of the unconscious. In the *Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty claims that we resort to an unconscious behavior because it is easier for us than the integrated behavior. It is, therefore, similar to a habit that we adhere to not because we cannot do otherwise, but because we are not in need to act otherwise. Later development only refines this approach but does not change it essentially. However, Freud’s description of psychoanalytic therapy offers a different picture of the unconscious. According to Freud (1964: 147), the technique of therapy consists in the analyst’s recognizing the patient’s resistances and making them conscious to the patient. Once the patient has worked through their resistance, repressed connections occur to them. I believe that this resistance, whose surmounting is marked by unbidden thoughts, cannot be found in the case of habit breaking. Habit involves inertia, repression entails resistance. Moreover, although, in the course of life, habit and repression often come together, the explanation of repression as a form of habit misses the specificity of the psychoanalytic concept. This omission is not accidental, but rather reflects the fact that Merleau-Ponty hardly even addresses the therapy situation. However, a description of the patient’s behavior during treatment is one of the roots of the theory of the unconscious. Therefore, despite its ingenuity, it remains doubtful whether Merleau-Ponty’s notion of ambiguous existence covers all the experiences indicated by the original concept of the unconscious.

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