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Temporality and embodiment of the human being in contemporary sport and traditional Chinese and Japanese movement practices

PhD Thesis

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I declare that I have prepared the final dissertation independently and that I have listed all information sources and literature used. Neither this thesis nor any substantial part of it has been submitted for another or the same academic degree.

Prague, 2025

Student's signature

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ABSTRACT

Title: Temporality and embodiment of the human being in contemporary sport and traditional Chinese and Japanese movement practices

Objectives: The main objective of this dissertation is to provide an interpretation of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment, which identifies two different understandings of the body, and to apply this interpretation in order to analyse the issue of temporality within contemporary sport. Accordingly, the dissertation aims to demonstrate the ontological significance of the body and to investigate the concept of time within the human embodiment, establishing a shift in our understanding of the body from 'I use my body' to 'I am the body'. Subsequently, it aims to illustrate participants' existential state of being in relation to time in contemporary sport and to examine traditional Chinese and Japanese movement practices to demonstrate the different existential state that is cultivated through those practices.

Methodology: This is a desk-based study employing two traditions in philosophy as its methodology: phenomenology and analytical philosophy. The phenomenological method takes a first-person perspective on human experiencing, reflecting on how things appear to us in a primordial way. The experience is not of an individual and particular subject but rather the universal experience of being a human. Specifically, the thesis draws mainly upon Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, to demonstrate the ontological significance of the body and time. The method of analytical philosophy includes conceptual analysis and logical reasoning, which are employed for clarifying and construing the meaning of the concepts and formulating arguments presented in the thesis, and especially the concept of sport competition. Further, this dissertation analyses the issues identified in contemporary sport in a comparative manner. It introduces Eastern movement practices – Chinese Daoyinshu 导引术, and Japanese Zen meditative practices, Shikantaza 只管打坐 – as a counterexample to contemporary sport, for a better elucidation of the issues.

Results: The thesis concludes that the over-competitive sport environment stimulates an existential state of 'being toward the future' in participants. The concept of sport competition itself does not necessarily lead to this conclusion, but rather it is the milieu where sport competitions occur. The overemphasis on results, the prioritising constituted time over athletes' experiencing of time, and an imbalance between training and playing sports throughout athletes' careers – these factors jointly form a sport environment stimulating an existential state

of being toward the future. As a counterexample, two Eastern movement practices, Daoyinshu 导引术, and Shikantaza 只管打坐, cultivate a state of 'being in the present'. These two practices can be interpreted as one application of the understanding of 'I am the body', given the resonance between the Daoist philosophy and Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment, despite their distinct cultural origins and ontologies. While being in the present, the future is perceived as open, and the potentiality of bodily movement is recognised, leading to richer experiencing. In contrast, while being toward the future, there is a perceived narrowness attributed to the future, and the potentiality of bodily movements is constrained, leading to limited experiencing.

KEYWORDS: Body, Movement, Competition, Spontaneity, Merleau-Ponty, Daoism

ABSTRAKT

Název: Časovost a tělesnost člověka v současném sportu a v tradičních čínských a japonských pohybových aktivitách

Cíle: Hlavním cílem této disertační práce je poskytnout interpretaci pojetí tělesnosti Maurice Merleau-Pontyho, která identifikuje dvě různá chápání těla, a aplikovat tuto interpretaci pro účel analýzy problematiky temporality v současném sportu. Disertační práce si tak klade za cíl demonstrovat ontologický význam těla a zkoumat pojetí času v rámci lidské tělesnosti, čímž se ustanovuje posun v našem chápání těla od „používám své tělo“ k „jsem tělem“. Následně si klade za cíl ilustrovat existenciální stav bytí účastníků ve vztahu k času v současném sportu a zkoumat tradiční čínské a japonské pohybové aktivity, aby demonstrovala odlišné existenciální stavy, které se těmito aktivitami kultivují.

Metodologie: Jedná se o teoretickou studii, která jako svou metodologii využívá dvě filozofické tradice: fenomenologii a analytickou filozofii. Fenomenologická metoda zaujímá pohled první osoby na lidské prožívání a reflektuje, jak se nám věci jeví primordiálním způsobem. Nejde o zkušenost individuálního a konkrétního subjektu, ale spíše o univerzální zkušenost bytí člověkem. Konkrétně se práce opírá především o dílo Maurice Merleau-Pontyho *Fenomenologie vnímání*, pro demonstraci ontologického významu těla a času. Metoda analytické filozofie zahrnuje pojmovou analýzu a logické odůvodňování, které jsou v práci využívány k objasnění a interpretaci významu pojmů a formulování argumentů prezentovaných v práci, konkrétně pojmu sportovní soutěže. Logické uvažování slouží také jako metoda pro testování argumentů o sportovní soutěži a současném sportu. Tato disertační práce dále analyzuje problematiku identifikovanou v současném sportu komparativním způsobem. Představuje východní pohybové aktivity – čínské Daoyinshu 导引术 a japonské zenové meditativní praktiky Shikantaza 只管打坐 – které slouží jako protipříklad k současným sportům a hlubšímu objasnění dané problematiky.

Výsledky: Práce dochází k závěru, že přehnaně soutěživé sportovní prostředí stimuluje existenciální stav „zaměření se na budoucnost“ účastníků. Samotný koncept sportovní soutěže k tomuto závěru nutně nevede, ale spíše jej způsobuje prostředí, ve kterém se sportovní soutěže odehrávají. Přehnaný důraze na výsledky, upřednostňování konstituovaného času před prožíváním sportovců a nerovnováha mezi tréninkem a sportováním v průběhu sportovní kariéry – tyto faktory společně tvoří sportovní prostředí stimulující existenciální stav zaměření

se na budoucnost. Jako protipříklad jsou uvedeny dvě východní pohybové aktivity, Daoyinshu 导引术 a Shikantaza 只管打坐, které pěstují stav „bytí v přítomnosti“. Tyto dvě pohybové aktivity lze interpretovat jako jednu z aplikací chápání „jsem tělem“, vzhledem k rezonanci mezi taoistickou filozofií a Merleau-Pontyho pojetí tělesnosti, a to navzdory jejich odlišnému kulturnímu původu a ontologiím. Během pobytu v přítomnosti je budoucnost vnímána jako otevřená a je rozpoznáván potenciál tělesného pohybu, což vede k bohatšímu prožívání. Naproti tomu, při zaměření do budoucnosti je prožívání budoucnosti omezenější; potenciál tělesných pohybů je omezený, což vede k limitovanému prožívání.

Klíčová slova: Tělo, pohyb, soutěž, spontánnost, Merleau-Ponty, Taoismus

This thesis includes the following publications:

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INTRODUCTION

The central question that motivates my research and drives the focus of this thesis is: If our understanding of the body and human existence shifts from 'I use my body' to 'I am the body', how might we approach sport differently? Regarding the inquiry into the body, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology offers a comprehensive framework for the shift in understanding the body, accordingly providing insight into a different understanding of time and our relationship with the world. Because the conversion from 'I use my body' to 'I am the body' is not merely a change in a conceptual sense, but also entails a profound transformation in the understanding of human existence by recognising the significance of the once-overlooked body in the fundamental aspects of existence. This thesis will provide an interpretation of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment, which identifies the above two different understandings of the body. The term embodiment in the thesis title conveys the understanding of human existence in terms of 'I am the body' within Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. By applying the idea of embodiment to approach sport, this thesis attempts to examine the issue regarding competition in contemporary sport at an existential and ontological level.

The emphasis on competition turns contemporary sport into a highly demanding professional field where doping, overtraining, athletes' burnout, etc, have been recognised as persistent problems. Besides the apparent ethical issues in contemporary sport, I suggest that the over-competitive environment stimulates an existential state of 'being toward the future'. To better demonstrate the state of 'being toward the future' and its issue, I contrast contemporary sport with anti-competition movement practices, of which Chinese Daoyinshu 导引术 and Zen Buddhism practices Shikantaza provide good examples. Those movement practices are underpinned by Daoist and Buddhist philosophy, emphasising a state of 'being in the present' for wellness. Although I intend to contrast eastern non-competitive movement practices with contemporary sport, this is neither a comparative study of Daoism or Buddhism with contemporary sport ideology nor a comparison between the East and West.

The term temporality in the thesis title concerns the two existential states of being in relation to time, 'being toward the future' stimulated by the competitive contemporary sport environment and 'being in the present' cultivated in non-competitive traditional Chinese and Japanese movement practices. The general temporal dimension of human existence in terms of temporality is approached within Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment. The non-competitive movement practices illustrate the state of 'being in the present', where the Daoist idea of spontaneity is practised. This Daoist idea presents a holistic view of the human body and the relationship between humans and the world, which coheres with Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment, even though the two perspectives come from different approaches and cultural contexts[1]. I consider the Eastern movement practices to be a practical application of understanding human existence as 'I am the body'.

The different understanding of the body ('I am the body'), which is the overriding idea of the thesis encapsulated by the term embodiment, contains three subpoints: I. The body is not a mere object, although we tend to regard it as one; II. The body is the subject moving and acting instead of being moved by subjectivity; III. Subjectivity or consciousness is not just 'I think' but is manifested by the spontaneity of the body as 'I can'. The first three chapters of the thesis correspond to unpacking the three subpoints, which ground the discussion on time and temporality in the fourth chapter. Accordingly, the last two chapters illustrate the state of 'being towards the future' stimulated in contemporary sport and 'being in the present' cultivated in non-competitive movement practices. The chapters' contents are summarised below.

Chapter 1 presents the first subpoint of embodiment: The body is not a mere object, although we tend to regard it as one. This chapter aims to set a departure from the conventional dualistic understanding of the body, which often considers the body as a mere object passively undertaking experiences for the active mind to process. To distinguish the body from an object, it is necessary to examine what an object is. Based on Husserl's (1982) discussion on 'object and objectifying act', in other words, the 'noetic-noematic' structure of experience, Chapter 1 first expounds that 'having an object'

[1] Wang and Martínková (2024) have explored studies on human spontaneous movement based on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and the Daoist idea of spontaneity. They point out that the studies show a coinciding view of the relationship between movements and situations, as well as humans and the world.

is a primordial feature of a subject's perception. However, Husserl's discussions fall short of demonstrating how the physical object appears as an object in the directly given experience, thereby not revealing the bodily structure of perception. This is where Merleau-Ponty's (2012) illustration of the object in vision (what we see when we see an object) becomes crucial. Chapter 1 proceeds by elaborating Merleau-Ponty's approach to object: by considering the structure of how we see an object, Merleau-Ponty (2012) suggests the pre-objective role of the body, which is not an object but by which the object appears to us.

Chapter 2 illustrates the second embodiment subpoint: the body as the subject moving and acting. Both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty argue that the body is not an object. Husserl's (1989) pathbreaking idea of *Leib* illustrates the body's exceptionality, but it stops at distinguishing the body from objects. Chapter 2 first introduces Husserl's idea of *Leib* and then presents Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of the same phenomenon to show Merleau-Ponty's departure from Husserl. Merleau-Ponty (2012) makes a more radical move to demonstrate the idea of the body subject, namely, 'I am the body'. Merleau-Ponty (2012) elaborates the subject role of the body in movements through two concepts: body schema and motor intentionality, and illustrates a 'situational' spatiality of the body, by which the body is not positioned in the world but inhabits the world. The body subject can move spontaneously toward an object, responding to a situation, which shows motor intentionality. At the same time, in those movements, the body schema functions as the reference that the body subject has, by which she knows how and where to move without deliberately thinking and calculating. Chapter 2 is mainly dedicated to demonstrating the two concepts: body schema and motor intentionality.

Merleau-Ponty's work, as partly shown in Chapter 2, has contributed to an 'embodied turn' in skills studies and cognitive science nowadays. In this context, terms like 'embodied mind' (e.g. Sutton, 2007; Varela et al., 1993), 'embodied consciousness', or 'embodied cognition' (e.g. Cappuccio, 2019; Gallagher, 2023) have also appeared in the philosophy of mind and cognitive science research in recent decades. Those theories are sometimes generally referred to as Embodiment theories, which complicates the implications of the term embodiment since different fields of study use the same term with different denotations. It is worth noting that the body discussed by some

Embodiment theories in philosophy of mind is sometimes 'the body minus the brain'. For example, Goldman and Vignemont write:

> Embodiment theorists want to elevate the importance of the body in explaining cognitive activities. What is meant by 'body' here? It ought to mean: the whole physical body minus the brain. Letting the brain qualify as part of the body would trivialize the claim that the body is crucial to mental life, simply because the brain is the seat of most, if not all, mental events (Goldman & Vignemont, 2009, 154).

Those Embodiment theories that concern 'the body minus the brain' still imply the dualism framework of body versus brain/mind, which is not the body discussed in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, but rather an idea that Merleau-Ponty sought to oppose. Gallagher (2023) summarises the Embodiment theories in philosophy of mind as ranging from conservative views that are close to computational models of the mind to more radical, non-representationalist accounts. And the term Embodied Cognition does not represent a settled theory either. It is sometimes regarded as a complex research program that is dedicated to studying the body's contribution to cognition, as noted by Shapiro (2011), and sometimes regarded as one of the components of 4E cognition: embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive, e.g. Newen et al., (2018), Gallagher (2023). Although the idea of embodiment addressed in this thesis similarly emphasises the body, it is essential to clarify that the term embodiment here denotes a complex, holistic concept. It attempts to encapsulate a modality of human existence instead of merely emphasising the importance of parts of the body minus the brain.

Chapter 3 expounds the third subpoint of embodiment: consciousness is not just 'I think' but is manifested by the spontaneity of the body as 'I can'. The body subject in Merleau-Ponty's work can be understood as another way of saying embodied consciousness. It is worth noting that Merleau-Ponty's view on consciousness breaks down the Cartesian dualist framework of mind and body. This chapter first presents Merleau-Ponty's challenge to René Descartes's famous argument, 'I think, therefore I am' (In Latin, *Cogito, ego sum*). Descartes' argument is referred to as the Cartesian Cogito, which has profoundly influenced the classical understanding of consciousness as 'I think'. By analysing the Cartesian Cogito, Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between the spoken Cogito and the tacit Cogito. This distinction reveals a phenomenon about consciousness: consciousness is not completely unaware of itself, but can hardly fully capture itself. The

tacit Cogito could be understood as one of the features of consciousness within Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment. Merleau-Ponty's view on consciousness suggests that consciousness is more than the thinking mind; namely, consciousness is not just 'I think'. Thereby, Chapter 3 provides an interpretation of the view that consciousness is 'I can' in terms of two aspects of the spontaneity of the body: spontaneous movements as well as spontaneous valuation in and through movements.

The end of Chapter 3 on the spontaneity of the body connects the discussion of consciousness as 'I can' with the account of time and temporality in Chapter 4. As Merleau-Ponty (2012) argues, 'a spontaneity that is "acquired" – once and for all and that "is perpetuated in being as the result of being acquired" – is precisely time and precisely subjectivity' (451). Chapter 3 demonstrates the point that spontaneity is subjectivity, and Chapter 4 illustrates the relationship between subjectivity and time, which in turn clarifies the point that spontaneity is also time. Specifically, Chapter 4 first distinguishes the constituted time (objective time) that is commonly indicated by the clock from the primordial time that relates to subjectivity. In Merleau-Ponty's (2012) discussion, he implicitly states that the distinction between constituted time and primordial time is logically the same distinction he made between the body as an object and the body subject. Based on Merleau-Ponty, Wehrle (2020) makes a more straightforward articulation that the differentiation between constituted time and primordial time corresponds to the two states of 'having a body' and 'being a body'. 'Having a body' refers to the object intentionality as shown by the 'noetic-noematic' structure of experience. Wehrle (2020) argues that object intentionality is the 'presupposition for the experience of a stable and object-like time' (499). 'Being a body' refers to the spontaneous movements of the body, and those movements contain intrinsic temporal structure or movements of temporalisation, which corresponds to the primordial time.

The first four chapters of the thesis ground the theoretical foundation for the critical analysis of contemporary sport in Chapter 5. Based on the distinction between constituted time and primordial time, Chapter 5 first construes the temporality of competition from two dimensions: the individual subjective dimension and the intersubjective dimension. My argument is that, on the individual subjective dimension, sport competition offers athletes an enriched way to experience the primordial time through such an agonistic activity composed of abundant bodily movements. On the

intersubjective dimension, competition as a collective activity also requires a common understanding of competition (a concept) and a standard shared clock time (the constituted time) to operate. In addition to the temporal structure of competition, contemporary sport is analysed as a milieu where those competitions occur, within which the constituted time plays an influential role on the stimulated state of 'being toward the future' in this milieu. Chapter 5 presents three factors in contemporary sport that stimulate the existential state of 'being toward the future'. The three factors are I. Overemphasis on results, II. Prioritising our usage of constituted time over our experiencing of time, and III. The imbalance and dissociation between training and playing sports.

In contrast, Chapter 6 explores two eastern non-competitive movement practices: Daoist Daoyinshu 导引术 and Zen practice Shikantaza (Just Sitting) to present a counter-example: a state of 'being in the present'. These two practices are underpinned by the Daoist idea of spontaneity (zìrán 自然), which holds a view on the body and human existence that resonates with Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment. In this context, the Daoist concepts of qi 气 and xin 心 (heart-mind) are introduced to explain the Daoist idea of spontaneity and rationale of the practices. The state of being in the present cultivated through those practices refers to a kind of experiencing in which the practitioner is harmoniously sensitive, open, and responsive to the surrounding environments. The bodily movements of the practitioner are not guided or moved by any specific thoughts or goals; rather, the practitioner is the moving body whose movements are synchronising with the temporalising movement of the primordial time.

The two practices and the state of being in the present demonstrate an alternative approach to living and moving within the understanding of the body and human existence as 'I am the body'. Chapter 7 summarises three aspects of the value of being in the present. The three aspects are: I. Openness of the future; II. Recognised potentiality of bodily movements; III. Richer experiencing. In comparison, the issue with the state of being toward the future, and accordingly, the understanding of 'I use my body' is analysed from these three aspects: I. Perceived narrowness of the future; II. Constrained potentiality of bodily movements; III. Limited experiencing.

By illustrating the state of 'being toward the future' stimulated by contemporary sport and 'being in the present' cultivated in the eastern movement practices, I neither intend to problematise competition and advocate for non-competitive movement practices, nor prioritise the present over the future. In the understanding of primordial time, the past and future are the double horizon of the present. While moving and acting, the future is unfolding. The issue with hypercompetitive contemporary sport is that some particular future events (e.g. victory of a game, participation in the Olympics) are targeted as a matter of fact, planned on a linear timeline. Overemphasised competition turns the 'being open to the future', which is the temporal dimension of human existence, into a 'being toward the future'. In this state of being toward the future, time is utilised to chase futuristic objectives, whilst bodily movements are regarded as a means to achieve expected outcomes. The body's primordial role as the moving subject is overlooked, thereby leaving the potentiality of bodily movements - a way of interacting with and exploring the world - along with the richer experiencing we might gain through such interaction, disregarded.

METHODOLOGY

This desk-based study employs two traditions in philosophy as its methodology: phenomenology and analytical philosophy. The method of analytical philosophy includes conceptual analysis and logical reasoning, which clarify and construe the meaning of the concepts under discussion and formulate arguments presented in the thesis. Especially, the analytical philosophy method is employed in Chapter 5, which analyses the concept of sport competition and its temporal structure. Another crucial method used throughout the thesis is phenomenology. To make the thesis more comprehensible, it is necessary to explain phenomenology, specifically, the phenomenological way of thinking or the phenomenological attitude in viewing experiences, as Merleau-Ponty (2012) remarks that phenomenological work is only accessible through phenomenology. The following text will seek to elucidate this particular philosophical method and its significance.

In the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Smith (2018) explains that phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. This is a concise generalisation but needs further clarification. Some empirical studies conduct interviews to collect participants' first-person experiences in order to interpret some phenomena, and they claim this constitutes phenomenological research. I should emphasise that this thesis does not adopt the same kind of approach. The phenomenological method here follows the continental European philosophy tradition launched in the 20th century by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, and others. Whilst it does take a first-person perspective on the experience of consciousness, that experience is not the experience of an individual and particular subject, but rather the universal experience of a human being in the world. Hence, the first-person perspective is taken by the researcher, myself, as one of the fellow human beings reflecting on how things appear to me (and thus to us) in the 'primordial' way.

What does it mean to ask how things appear to me in the primordial way? In contrast to the primordial way, we are accustomed to viewing things with an analytical attitude, through already established beliefs or some theoretical framework. Think about how we answer a question like 'What is X?' We either do that by observations and experiments to investigate X's physical nature and define X in terms of its nature; or we

answer what X is by formulating the concept of X. For example, I have a thing on my desk now, and I want to know exactly what it is. I look at it to obtain information about its appearance. It is cubical and transparent, and it looks like it is made of glass. The upper side is open, and the inside is empty. I touch it to know its texture. It feels smooth and cold. When I pour some hot water inside, it feels warm. I can even use a microscope to observe its chemical composition or conduct experiments to test if all my observations are veridical. I summarise the information I obtain from all those methods, and say that it is a glass cup. At the same time, it is also a cube, according to the definition of 'cube': a symmetrical three-dimensional shape constituted by six squares. Following this, now I can either say that the thing on my desk is a glass cup, according to its physical nature, or it is a cube, according to its definition. Of course, the more comprehensive answer is that it is a cubic glass cup.

In this, our accustomed way of thinking, we focus on the thing concerned and we deliberate, analyse, judge, and then formulate an idea in language to understand and articulate it. The phenomenological approach, by contrast, reflects on this thinking process itself, in order to peel down the layers of a thing that are added by our analysis, and this shows how a thing can appear to us in a 'primordial' (or pre-analytical) way. I can define the thing on my desk as a cubic glass cup by conducting information collection and conceptual analysis. Nevertheless, primordially, or before I conduct this analysis, the cubic glass cup on my desk appears as an object in my vision and later the object of my analysis. Its characteristics: glassy, cubic, smooth, and cup-function are the particularities of the thing that are added after we conduct the accustomed way of thinking. This is not to say that there is something illegitimate in that; our analysis adds them, but it simply points out that the accustomed way is how we usually view things. Conducting a phenomenological approach requires, first of all, a recognition and suspension of this accustomed way of thinking. As Husserl (1982) writes:

> What makes so extraordinarily hard the acquisition of the proper essence of phenomenology, the understanding of the peculiar sense of its problems, and of its relationship to all other sciences (in particular to psychology), is that, for all this, a new *style of attitude* is needed which is *entirely altered* in contrast to the natural attitude in experiencing and the natural attitude in thinking (Husserl, 1982, XIX).

Moreover, it is important to clarify the difference between phenomenology and classical psychology. Although phenomenology is regarded as a study of the structure of consciousness, perception, acts, and act correlations, it describes them 'purely' - by suspending our accustomed way of viewing experiences. Psychology, instead, studies all sorts of mental processes and acts and explains them as a matter of fact or reality that belongs to particular subjects. To some degree, the outcomes of both studies are universal in the sense that they concern human conditions in general. Still, psychology aims to present the 'matter-of-fact ("empirical") universality', and phenomenology presents an '"eidetic" universality' (Husserl, 1982, XIX-XX). The 'eidetic universality' concerns the essence of phenomena, which is the ontological meaning of phenomena that cannot be separated from living subjects. Merleau-Ponty (2012) states more explicitly that 'Phenomenology involves describing, and not explaining or analysing' (lxxi). In other words, psychology tries to explain the perceived experiences of subjectivity, while phenomenology tries to describe the process of perceiving. As Merleau-Ponty (2012) remarks:

> The entire universe of science is constructed upon the lived world, and if we wish to think science rigorously, to appreciate precisely its sense and its scope, we must first awaken that experience of the world of which science is the second-order expression. Science neither has nor ever will have the same ontological sense as the perceived world for the simple reason that science is a determination or an explanation of that world (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, lxxii).

Nevertheless, further questions might be asked: What is the significance or value of simply describing? And what does Merleau-Ponty mean by saying that a scientific explanation is only the second-order expression of the perceived world? Certainly, results of scientific research, especially findings in psychology, are useful in understanding human conditions. However, it is important to realise that they are interpretations rather than descriptions. And this realisation can be achieved if we resist the tendency to explain or interpret, and try to be purely descriptive. Let me clarify this by presenting psychologist Henry Heft's (2003) reflection on his own area. In a paper called Affordance, Dynamic Experience, and the Challenge of Reification, Heft (2003) explores the fundamental reason why Gibson's idea of affordance and similar ideas are so prevailing in everyday experience and yet elusive in psychology research. Heft (2003) points out a 'psychologist's fallacy'. He references American psychologist and philosopher William James's (1976) distinction between concept (knowledge about) and percept (knowledge

of acquaintance), remarking that the conflation of concept and percept is the origin of a psychologist's fallacy (Heft, 2003).

In short, the term 'percept' refers more to feelings, an immediate knowing, which may be ineffable most of the time, but not mere instincts. For example, a child knows the colour of blue and the taste of an apple, although she has not learned what blue and apple mean in textbooks. I see my cubic glass on my desk, and I see the shape even though I don't know the geometrical meaning of a cube. The term 'concept' refers to knowledge about a thing, which is a product of intellectualising, or reflecting and analysing - for example, the definitions of 'blue' and 'cube'. When we conceptualise X, we are taking qualities out of the immediate experiences of X and, in this process, we tend to experience the mental representation of X and cease to engage in the immediate experience of X. When we experience the mental representation of X, 'we are experiencing the product of our analysis of the perceiving process, rather than experiencing a constituent of perceiving' (Heft, 2003, 154). In other words, the concept X is a product of the abstraction of the percept X (our direct experiences of perceiving X). Concept X might reflect some truth about percept X and capture characters of X itself, but it is mediated. By failing to recognise this and 'mistake concepts for percepts', Heft (2003) remarks that we commit the psychologist's fallacy. This is not only a fallacy in psychology but also 'it is symptomatic of a more general vulnerability in the nature of human reasoning processes that can appear in any number of contexts' (Heft, 2003, 154).

The value of purely describing by the phenomenological method will be to reveal and expose this fallacy in the attempt to understand human experiences. In our accustomed way of thinking, we deal with concepts most of the time: either formulating concepts or viewing things according to concepts. We explain the perceived world through concepts in science, which are the products of our analysis of the perceived contents. But we do not need concepts to be able to perceive; we perceive, and *then* we formulate concepts. This point can also be found in Husserl (1982), who argues that:

> it must be carefully noted that any transition from a phenomenon into the reflection which itself is an analysis of the really inherent,…, generates new phenomena and that we would fall into error were we to confuse the new phenomena - which, in a certain way, are recastings of the old- with the old phenomena (Husserl, 1982, 240).

Merleau-Ponty (2012) makes the same point, saying that:

> beginning from our experience of the world, reflective analysis works back toward the subject as if toward a condition of possibility distinct from our experience and presents universal synthesis as that without which there would be no world. To this extent, reflective analysis ceases to adhere to our experience and substitutes a reconstruction for a description (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, lxxiii).

This is why Merleau-Ponty remarks that a scientific explanation is only the second-order expression of our world experiences.

It is worth noting that suspending conceptual thinking does not correspondingly mean that phenomenology deals with the percepts and disregards the concepts. Although it is acknowledged that there is a parallel between the works of William James and Husserl, in that both philosophers share the same interest in the structure of consciousness[2], it might still be inappropriate to explain Husserl's phenomenology in James's terms since there are also great differences in research methods and goals between the two. The point here is to show, on the one hand, a distinction between phenomenology and classical psychology (as well as science in general); and, on the other hand, a resemblance between phenomenology and some psychological work (descriptive psychology or Gibson's ecological psychology[3], for example). The phenomenological way of thinking should be able to contribute to psychology studies. For instance, phenomenological reduction can serve as a method to avoid the psychologist's fallacy.

What needs to be further clarified is the 'essence' or 'eidetic universality' that phenomenology attempts to describe by the method of reduction. Husserl (1982) states that the phenomenological reduction is transcendental and eidetic. The words 'essence' and 'transcendental' might be misinterpreted as the traditional idealist view that they are metaphysical and separated from actual concrete existence. However, although transcendental reduction does indeed throw doubts on the beliefs we have about the world, and does indeed concern the field of pure consciousness, it does not do so by reducing the world to mere ideas or knowledge of the world, suppressing the existence of other things in the world. Zahavi (2015) explains that 'For Husserl, mind and world are

[2] For example, a more in-depth comparison between the two philosophers can be seen in Schuetz (1941).
[3] It is also acknowledged that Gibson's idea of affordance in his ecological psychology is inspired by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.

not distinct entities; rather they are interdependent, they are bound constitutively together' (231). It is obvious to all of us that the world exists in our experience unless we deliberately question it. The interest of phenomenology is to understand what is so obvious here. As Husserl writes in other texts:

> That the world exists, that it is given as existing universe in uninterrupted experience which is constantly fusing into universal concordance, is entirely beyond doubt. But it is quite another matter to understand this indubitability which sustains life and positive science and to clarify the ground of its legitimacy (Husserl, 1989, 420).

The 'essence' or 'eidetic universality' demonstrated through phenomenology should not be misunderstood as a summarised universal truth. Merleau-Ponty (2012) explains explicitly that the 'essence' here is not a goal but rather a means.

> The necessity of passing through essences does not signify that philosophy takes them as an object, but rather that our existence is too tightly caught in the world in order to know itself as such at the moment when it is thrown into the world, and that our existence needs the field of ideality in order to know and to conquer its facticity (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, lxxviii).

Despite the fact that different phenomenologists have different terminologies and focuses in their elaboration of human existence, what makes all phenomenological works phenomenology is that they all try to describe and demonstrate what it is like to be a human and to show how the world is unfolding in front of me, who is a conscious subject living in the world, through the method of phenomenological reduction. Through this method, I should find, as Merleau-Ponty (2012) writes:

> I am not a "living being," a "man or woman[4]," nor even a "consciousness," possessing all of the characteristics that zoology, social anatomy, and inductive psychology acknowledge in these products of nature or history. Rather, I am the absolute source (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, lxxii).

Again, I can examine my experience of being a human in this world, describe it from a first-person perspective, and use it as a research method because I am one of the human beings, and I am not looking at my personal particularities but rather at the universalities we share.

[4] Merleau-Ponty writes "man" here in the original text.

Moreover, regarding the analysis of the issue of temporality in contemporary sport, it is articulated in a comparative manner. I introduce traditional Eastern movement practices – Chinese Daoyinshu 导引术, and Japanese Zen meditative practices, Shikantaza 只管打坐 – as a counterexample to contemporary sport. I compare the two existential states of being in relation to time in these two cases: contemporary sport and traditional Eastern movement practices, for a better elucidation of the issues within contemporary sport.

Last but not least, as English is my second language, I utilise AI tools - Grammarly, ChatGPT, and Copilot - to improve the quality of my English writing. Grammarly and Copilot are employed to identify and correct grammatical errors, while ChatGPT is used to review the text and ensure the expressions accurately convey my intended meaning.

1. OBJECT AND OBJECTIFYING ACT

This chapter presents the first subpoint of embodiment: the body is not a mere object, although we tend to regard it as one, as the often-used phrase ‘my body’ suggests. To elucidate this point, exploring the question ‘what an object is’ is helpful and logically necessary. Both Husserl’s and Merleau-Ponty’s writings have provided answers to this question from different perspectives, which I think complement each other.

Husserl (1982) introduces a ‘noetic-noematic’ structure to describe the conscious experience of ‘having an object’. The object can either be a material thing or an idea, which is termed ‘noema’. The noema is an object because it is intended by the consciousness’s objectifying acts termed ‘noesis’. While in our accustomed way of thinking (as mentioned in the Methodology section), we may tend to either refer objects to material things or categorise objects into physical objects (existing/real) and mental objects (non-existing/unreal). Husserl’s (1982) idea of noema does not involve the two categories of physical or mental, although he does differentiate between two kinds of objectifying acts: one is perceptually sensing, and the other is attentively as well as explicitly sense-making. Husserl (1989) argues that the perceptually sensing has sense-objects, that is, the ‘founding objectivities, noemata’ (19).

Nevertheless, Husserl does not explore further how the sense-objects appear as objects for us, which is what Merleau-Ponty’s (2012) illustration of the object in vision complements. It is by demonstrating how an object appears for us as an object in vision, Merleau-Ponty (2012) points out the essential role of the body in perception. Hence, Merleau-Ponty (2012) argues that the body is not an object but by which there are objects (121). The following two sections first introduce Husserl’s ideas on objectifying acts, explaining why we tend to view the body as an object, then present Merleau-Ponty’s illustration of object, which preliminarily shows the pre-objective role of the body.

1.1 Husserl: the 'noetic-noematic' structure of experience

In *Ideal I*, to unpack the experience of objects, Husserl (1982) introduced a doctrine of the noetic-noematic structure of experience or, specifically, of intentionality. Generally speaking, intentionality refers to the phenomenon that consciousness is always 'consciousness of something'. Conscious activities such as judgement, perception, memory, etc, entail a direction toward something, just like rays always pointing to something. Husserl (1982) uses the noetic-noematic structure to describe this ray-like feature of consciousness. Noema denotes the 'something' side, that is, the object to which the consciousness intends. For example, it is the perceived while perceiving, the judged while judging, etc. And those perceiving, judging, and other acts of consciousness are objectifying acts since they always direct to an object, which is termed noesis. Hence, the 'consciousness of something' phenomenon consists of a noetic component, which is the objectifying act on the 'consciousness' side, and a noematic component, which is the object on the 'of something' side.

The noetic feature of consciousness that is objectivating might be misinterpreted as an idealist view, saying consciousness constitutes objects, which implies objects do not exist. To clarify, it is important to revisit the difference between the accustomed way of thinking and the phenomenological description of experience introduced in Methodology. The former is the context in which there are realist and idealist views on objects and the signification of the world. Merleau-Ponty (2012) comments that, from the idealist perspective, 'nothing exists except as an object for consciousness' and, according to the realist perspective, 'consciousness is inserted into the tissue of the objective world and of events in themselves' (452). Nevertheless, a phenomenological description of the experience of an object does not fall into the framework of idealism or realism, even though Husserl's description might appear like idealism[5]. It would be more appropriate to claim that the phenomenological description shows how realist and idealist views are possible[6].

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[5] Carman (1999) points out an conceptual idealism in Husserl's phenomenology, about which I will discuss later when differeiating Merleau-Ponty's approach from Husserl's.

[6] One of Merleau-Ponty's endeavours in *Phenomenology of Perception*, while discussing the body and time, is to bridge the realist view and the idealist view. He writes that, 'Our goal was to understand the relations between consciousness and nature, from the inside and from the outside. Or again, it was to

Husserl (1982, 214-215) discusses an example of seeing a blooming apple tree in a garden to explain the point above. When I see a blooming apple tree in a garden, it is obvious that my perception of the tree and the accompanying liking are not, at the same time, what is perceived and liked. At the common-sense level, the apple tree is a physical thing existing in a physical world with 'spatial actuality'. My perception and liking are psychological states that belong to me. In this situation, it is accepted that real relations exist between the real apple tree and other plants in the garden, as well as between the apple tree and me. In the case of mere hallucination, the perceived apple tree before me does not exist in reality, and neither does the real relation between me and the tree. In this case, 'only the perception remains, but there is nothing actual there which it is related' (Husserl, 1982, 215). Husserl (1982) regards this interpretation as what we tend to have in the accustomed way of thinking.

If we review the example above in a phenomenological way, the so-called 'real relation' between me and the tree that exists is an interpretation of the experience: by intellectualising or making sense of the experience, we put it in words, saying there is a real relation that exists there. By recognising this, I bracket this interpreted real relation between me and the tree, which is the method called phenomenological reduction. Even so, there is still a relation between the perceived and perceiving that remains in my perception, which is that the perceiving directs to the perceived. To explain the thinking process of phenomenological reduction, Husserl (1982) writes that:

> with the whole physical and psychical world, the actual existence of the real relation between perceiving and perceived is excluded, and, nonetheless, a relation between perceiving and perceived (as well as between liking and liked) remains left over, a relation which becomes given essentially in "pure immanence," namely purely on the ground of the phenomenologically reduced mental process of perceiving and liking precisely as they fit into the transcendental stream of mental process (Husserl, 1982, 215).

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connect the idealist perspective (according to which nothing exists except as an object for consciousness) and the realist perspective (according to which consciousnesses are inserted into the tissue of the objective world and of events in themselves). Or finally, it was to know how the world and man are accessible to two types of research, one explanatory, and the other reflective' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 452).

The quote above conveys that the general noetic feature of consciousness does not question the validity of the experienced physical world. In delusional perception, there is a noematic object, though a physical thing does not exist. A physical thing also always appears to me as a noema, which is the seen as seen, the smelled as smelled, etc. The objectivity of the noematic content is the invariant endpoint of an unlimited series of variable ray-like acts, which means that the same object can be perceived, analysed, remembered, loved, hated, etc. No matter what kind of acts are toward it, it remains an object of the act. Kuhn (1940) argues that the very objectivity of the object is to be defined in terms of the objectivating activity. 'Objectivity is not a mysterious quality which locates things beyond the flux of conscious life. It simply indicates the possibility of keeping the objective something before our mental eye as persistent or, again, dismissing and then recalling it as unalterably the same' (Kuhn, 1940, 110). When I claim that an object is constituted, I refer to the object as the noematic component in the noetic-noematic structure of intentionality. I will revisit this point about objectivity when discussing time and temporality in the fourth chapter.

1.2 From Husserl to Merleau-Ponty on the issues of Object

The section above introduces the noetic feature of consciousness that always has a noematic component: an object. But the difference between the phenomena of an object that is a material thing and a mere abstract object remains puzzling. If all objects of objectifying acts are termed noema, does this mean there is no difference between the two? The exact difference between the two phenomena is the core inquiry for both Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, though they approach the issue differently.

For Husserl, noema is an umbrella term that denotes the object of objectifying acts. He also recognises the distinction between the object we can see, smell, etc. and the object we think, imagine or judge. The distinction should still be understood within the noetic-noematic structure. In *Ideas II*, Husserl (1989) introduces two kinds of grasping attitudes toward an object, which can be understood as the differences on the noetic side. He writes that:

> It is one thing to see, i.e., to live through at all, to experience, to have something in the perceptual field, and it is another thing altogether to perform attentively an act of seeing in the specific sense,…. Again, it is one thing to be conscious at all that the sky is blue, and it is another thing to live in the performance of the judgment (that the sky is now blue) in an attentive, explicitly grasping, specifically intentional way (Husserl, 1989, 5).

Correspondingly, on the noema side, Husserl (1989) suggests a '*founding objectivities*, noemata' that belong to sense-objects as primal constitutive objects since they are 'ones to which all possible objects, in conformity with their phenomenological constitution, refer back' (19). This means that Husserl attributes the sense-objects that we see and perceive generally while living a primal founding objectivity. In contrast, the objects of thematic conscious activities, such as thinking and judging, have a different sense of objectivity, which I shall refer to as thematic objectivity hereafter.

So far, Husserl's noetic-noematic structure and the distinction between sensing and attentively sense-making, as well as correspondingly, the founding objectivity and thematic objectivity, illustrate the complex and enriching phenomenon on the issue of objectivity. Nevertheless, one question that Husserl does not answer is: What is the relation between the sensible material thing and the primal sense object? Or, how does a material thing become an object for me? Husserl's work (1982, 1989) focuses more on demonstrating different kinds of noesis and noema. Carman (1999) points out a 'conceptual dualism' in Husserl's Philosophy[7], about which Husserl asserts 'a strict categorical distinction between consciousness and reality' (208). Considering the distinction between material things in reality and objects of intentional acts, Husserl's (1982, 1989) discussion focuses more on the latter because noesis and noema are, respectively, the mental act and its content. Carman (1999) argues that this conceptual dualism 'prevents Husserl from acknowledging the body as the original locus of intentional phenomena in perceptual experience' (209).

[7] This is not to say Husserl has a dualistic metaphysical assertion. The categorical distinction is made at a purely descriptive level, which indicates a conceptual dualism.

Husserl's theory of intentionality concerns the structure of consciousness in which the role of the body barely registers. But for Merleau-Ponty (2012), intentionality 'is constituted neither by brute sensation nor by conceptual content, but by noncognitive – indeed often unconscious – bodily skills and dispositions' (Carman, 2012, x). By considering the body, Merleau-Ponty (2012) demonstrates how a material thing becomes an object for us. The answer to this question breaks down the duality between consciousness and reality, which is the essential first step to presenting the comprehensive picture of human existence as being in the world as a body subject.

1.3 Merleau-Ponty: the inherent way of seeing an object[8]

How does a material thing appear as an object for me? Merleau-Ponty demonstrates the answer by describing the inherent way we see an object. Take the cup on my table as an example; whenever I see my cup, I can only see one side of it. Certainly, I can turn the other side of the cup toward me or move myself to come into sight of its other sides. Even when moving, I am always limited to my position and, hence, only capable of seeing the cup from one perspective. Simultaneously, whenever I see the cup, other objects, such as the wall, the book near it, and the lamp behind it, are also in my sight around there, though they may be blurred when I focus on the cup. Regarding this phenomenon, Merleau-Ponty (2012) writes, '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' (70). He says that the dormant figures in the margins serve as a 'horizon', without which 'the inner horizon' of the viewed fragment cannot become an object (70).

Without a horizon, even my memory of an object alone cannot constitute an object for me. Now, I use a camera to zoom in on a cup full of patterns and take a picture of its patterns. When I check the picture, I may remember that the patterns are actually parts of a cup, but the picture can only show patterns for me, rather than a cup as an immediate given object. This is because the picture is full of patterns, resulting in no horizon to

[8] This section incorporates significant portions of the article Wang, Q. (2025). Bodily Movements in Video Game Practice: A Phenomenological Analysis of Digital Virtuality. *Body & Society*, *31*(3), 53–75. https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X241311811

display an object. When my gaze settles on the lamp next to the cup on my table, the cup automatically recedes into the margin of my vision, with other figures becoming a new horizon. Hence, Merleau-Ponty (2012) adds that my perspective, which is an object-horizon structure, can be 'the means that objects have of concealing themselves; it is also the means that they have of unveiling themselves' (70). My gaze and horizon correlate, allowing objects to present themselves in front of me.

It is worth noting that the horizon here is not a predefined static background like in a painting. The surroundings of the viewed object constitute the horizon. Hence, I do not attribute qualities to an object simply based on its visible side. I grasp the height and thickness of my cup not only from the side facing me but also from the whole relations between it and its surroundings (other objects that exist but are inconspicuous on the horizon), or in Merleau-Ponty's (2012) words, also from 'those that other objects can "see"' (71). He explains that 'we can see an 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'(71).

Overall, an immediate object appears as an object on a horizon constituted by its surroundings as spectators of its hidden sides. This is only possible because we, as the ones gazing at the object, are also one of the 'spectators'; otherwise, there will be no hidden sides that exist for us. We are one of the 'spectators' because we are situated within the world. What we see when we see an immediate object is actually a thing on a horizon, which is the object-horizon structure. In Merleau-Ponty's view, in this ordinary experience, neither object nor subject is posited (Carman, 1999, 216). The object and objectifying acts or noema and noesis are still artefacts of analysis by which I adopt a critical attitude toward the experience and ask myself, 'What am I really seeing?' (Carman, 1999). By answering this question, I find myself seeing an object. When our reflection comes to a stop at this answer without realising the analytical attitude adopted to reach the statement, we tend to conclude the distinction between object and objectifying act and, ultimately, a division of reality and consciousness. Carman argues that this is a conceptual dualism implied in Husserl's distinction between object and objectifying act.

When the same approach is also adopted to reflect on the body, we might make a distinction between an object body and a subject body. When we see our bodily parts and others' bodies, they are presented in vision in the same structure discussed above, and naturally, the bodies appear as objects for us to see, which is regarded as the objective physical body. And Husserl (1989) uses the German word *Körper to* refer to it. Nevertheless, the body itself also senses. Husserl (1989) gives an example of touching the left hand with the right hand. The touched left hand has its features, such as roughness or smoothness, which are the left hand's material properties identified or objectified by the touching right hand, but at the same time, the left hand has sensations too. The touched left hand is also touching, which Husserl refers to as a double sensation (Husserl, 1989, 152-153). The body that senses and can also be sensed is denoted by the German word *Leib* by Husserl (1989), which is translated in English as the animated or lived body. Husserl's demonstration of the animated body *Leib*, which distinguishes the body from a mere object and a material thing, certainly contributes to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology later. Nevertheless, considering the conceptual dualism mentioned above in Husserl's philosophy, the idea of *Leib* is not simply a subject body and is also different from the body subject suggested in Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment.

2. THE BODY SUBJECT[9]

The first chapter made the point that the body is not an object by exploring what an object is through the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. This chapter introduces the idea of the body subject in Merleau-Ponty's work. Nevertheless, in order to unpack the idea, it is still necessary to continue with Husserl since his discussion of the body contributes to the later Merleau-Ponty's inquiry into the phenomena of the body, though Merleau-Ponty stands apart from Husserl by different interpretations. For this reason, the first section of this chapter explores Husserl's idea of the body in terms of *Leib* and *Körper*. The second section presents the problems with Husserl's idea of *Leib* addressed by Merleau-Ponty. The last two sections unpack the idea of body subject in terms of two essential concepts of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology: body schema and motor intentionality.

2.1 Husserl's idea of *Leib*[10]

As the founder of phenomenology, Husserl does not overlook the phenomena of the body, and Husserl's discussions on *Leib* contribute to later Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, although they differ in terms of some interpretations of the phenomenon. I identify four characteristics of the Husserlian insights into the body: I. The body has the objective material layer as *Körper*; II. The body is not a mere thing, but *Leib,* because of the double sensation; III. The body as *Leib* is not the subject either, but a bearer of sensations, an organ of will; IV. The movements or experiences of the body are the sources for the constituting acts.

In the second book of *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy,* Husserl (1989, 151-168) dedicates one chapter to closely discussing the phenomenon of the body. He uses two German words, *Körper,* and *Leib* to emphasise two characteristics of the body, which in the English translation of the book

[9] This chapter incorporates some portions of the article Wang, Q. (2025). Bodily Movements in Video Game Practice: A Phenomenological Analysis of Digital Virtuality. *Body & Society*, *31*(3), 53–75. https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X241311811

[10] The English translation of Husserl's book used Body as the translation of the German word *Leib*. For better reading, I keep the word *Leib* here, instead of using 'Body' or its other denotations: 'animated body' or 'lived body' to directly represent Husserl's idea of the body to prevent any misinterpretation.

are respectively written as body and Body. For better distinction, I keep the two German words *Körper* and *Leib* here instead of the English version. For Husserl, *Körper* refers to the physical material body that can be perceived in the same way as a thing. There are some parts of *Körper,* such as my limbs, about which Husserl (1989) writes, 'I can look at them and feel them, just like other things, and in this respect the appearances have entirely the same nexus as do other appearances of things'(152).

But *Körper* is not the main point. By bringing up *Körper,* Husserl (1989, 152-154) attempts to make a case of *Leib* that is exemplified in tactual bodily experience. He articulates the case of touching the left hand with the right hand. On the one hand, I perceive the soft, smooth skin of my left hand. Those 'tactual appearances', in Husserl's words, are 'Objectified as features of the thing, "left hand," belong in fact to my right hand' (152). On the other hand, I can also find a series of touch sensations that are 'localised' in my left hand (152). In short, the left hand that is touched is at the same time touching. In this situation, when I find the 'localised sensations' in my left hand, the left hand is not *Körper* anymore but becomes *Leib.* According to Husserl, the body, as *Leib,* is originally constituted in a double way: 'first, it is a physical thing, matter' (153). It has material qualities: colour, smoothness, softness, etc. 'Secondly, I find "on" it, and "in" it' the sensations of coldness, smoothness, softness (153). Hence, *Körper* and *Leib* do not respectively refer to the objective dimension and subjective dimension of the body phenomena; rather, *Leib is* constituted by a co-comprehension of these two dimensions. Halák (2021) interprets that 'The notion of Leib is therefore not exactly a conceptual opposite of the notion of physical body (Körper): the latter is rather included in and presupposed by the former as its "lower stratum"' (314-315).

Husserl (1989) also noticed that 'an eye does not appear to one's own vision' (155). He writes that 'what I call the seen Body [*Leib*] is not something seeing which is seen, the way my Body as touched Body is something touching which is touched' (155). When we look at our eyes in the mirror, we cannot see the eyes that are seeing. Following this, Husserl (1989) argues that the *Leib* is a never completely constituted thing. Again, it could be constituted 'originarily only in tactuality and in everything that is localized with the sensations of touch: for example, warmth, coldness, pain, etc' (158). For Husserl, the body becomes *Leib* through the introduction of sensations: tactile, thermal or pain.

Husserl's notion of *Leib* distinguishes the body from other mere material things. Nevertheless, the *Leib* is not the subject. Husserl (1989) uses Ego to refer to this subject or the 'I' as he writes: 'The subject, constituted as counter-member of material nature, is (as far as we have seen up to now) an Ego, to which a Body belongs as the field of localization of its sensations' (159). In the Supplements of the book about this chapter, Husserl (1989) explains, 'Ego as subject of pleasure and displeasure, Ego as subject of "acts" (329). Those "acts" include 'I pay attention, I grasp, I analyse, I believe…, and likewise of willing' (329). For Husserl*, Leib* has subjective sensations only in a 'metaphorical sense' because 'sensations are subjective but in quite a different way than acts are. I have sensations – it is in quite a different way that I carry out acts' (330). In short, *Leib* belongs to the subject (Ego) and is the means by which the subject perceives. Husserl (1989) writes: 'The Ego has the "faculty" (the "I can") to freely move this Body - i.e., the organ in which it is articulated - and to perceive an external world by means of it (159-160)'.

The claim that *Leib* belongs to the Ego might sound like a Cartesian dualistic view, arguing that the mind governs the body. Carman (1999) points out that, by the concept of *Leib,* Husserl argues for an immediate sense of embodied agency that is grounded by the double aspects of tactile sensation[11]. Zahavi (1994) also emphasises that there is a decisive difference between the Cartesian philosophy of subjectivity and Husserl's phenomenology. According to Zahavi (1994), 'Husserl claims that the body is the condition of possibility for other objects and that every worldly experience is mediated and made possible by our embodiment' (66). Specifically, the body's kinesthesis is the condition of possibility for the constitution of the object in representational thoughts (Zahavi, 1994, 68). In Zahavi's (2003) interpretation, Husserl's general view on perception is that perceptual intentionality presupposes an 'incarnated subject' that is a bodily subject because 'our very perception presupposes movement' and movement is always movement of the body (100). Moreover, Husserl (1989) writes that 'originally, the "I move", "I do", precedes the "I can do"' (273). The 'I do' or 'I move' is the body's everyday basic tactile-kinesthetic 'doings'. And the 'I can do' is an awareness of the

[11] Although Zahavi (2003) interprets that the body described as co-present in perception is a functioning body about which Husserl does not name it explicitly, while the idea of *Leib* is a thematised body in the theory of localisation of sensations.

body's capability of or capacity for such 'doings'. Built upon this view, Sheets-Johnstone (2011) argues that, in our infancy, the epistemological foundation of learning about ourselves and the world comes from spontaneous movement. Chapter 3 will come back to this point and unpack in more detail the significance of movement that incorporates the ideas of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty.

Overall, the Husserlian view on the body includes those four points mentioned at the beginning: I. The body has the objective material layer as Körper. II. The body is not a mere thing, but *Leib*, because of the double sensation. III. The body *Leib* is not the subject either, but a bearer of sensations, an organ of will, and freely moved by the Ego (subject). IV. The movements or experiences of the body are the sources for the constituting acts. Following this, it is reasonable to state that subjectivity for Husserl is embodied since it's closely related to or even conditioned by the body. Husserl (1989) also writes: 'I do not have the possibility of distancing myself from my body, or my body from me' (167). Carman (1999) remarks that Merleau-Ponty is indebted to Husserl's insights on the role of free bodily movement in perceptual awareness, but the idea of *Leib* above is not equivalent to the view that 'I am the body' argued by Merleau-Ponty's concept of the body subject.

2.2 The problem of *Leib* as addressed by Merleau-Ponty

As discussed above, Husserl's notion of *Leib* prioritises touch over vision because *Leib* is constituted through the double sensation of touching and being touched. Some philosophers, e.g., Carman (1999), Slatman (2005), Moran (2020), and Halák (2021), have found the idea that 'the body becomes *Leib* through double sensation' to be problematic when compared to Merleau-Ponty's view on the same phenomenon. Carman (1999) points out a conceptual dualism in Husserl's philosophy of the body and suggests that the body in *Leib*, for Husserl, is more like a 'quasi-object' inserted between the rest of the material world and the subjective sphere. Halák (2021) similarly argues that Husserl's discussion on *Leib* is built upon a subjective-objective framework: When perceived from outside, the *Leib* appears and exists as a thing, while perceived from within, the *Leib* senses. By the idea of *Leib,* Husserl attempts to make these two opposite events, the physical (the body as a thing) and subjective (the body senses), converge in one point. However, Halák (2021) points out that Husserl does not explain how these two

events can be maintained simultaneously in their difference, and what is the basis of the requirement to distinguish them, or how the transition from the material to the subjective is even made possible. Hence, Halák (2021) remarks that 'It is only by retrospectively projecting the categories of subjective and objective realms into the original phenomenon that one can speak of their "co-apprehension" in the body' (319).

Regarding the double sensation and the priority of touch over vision, Merleau-Ponty offers a different interpretation. In line with Husserl, Merleau-Ponty (2012, 93-94) also uses the example that I cannot see my eyes that are seeing. I can certainly see my eyes in a three-faced mirror, but it appears as the eyes of someone who is observing. When I look at the mirror directly, it refers me back to 'an original of the body that is not out there among things, but on my side, prior to every act of seeing' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 94). Departing from Husserl's view on the privilege of the tactile body, Merleau-Ponty (2012) argues that what happened in the visual experience also holds for the tactile body. For example, I can touch my left hand with my right hand while my left hand is holding a cup of tea. The touched left hand, for my right hand, is 'an intersecting of bones, muscles and flesh compressed into a point of space', which is not touching. While my left hand feels the warmth and smoothness of the cup, the left hand is touching, and it 'shoots across space to reveal the external object in its place' (94). For Merleau-Ponty, when the body sees or touches the world, the body can either be seen or touched, which is why the body can never be completely constituted.

The 'double sensation' is more like an artefact of analysis of the body's tactile experience rather than the ordinary experience itself. When we touch the left hand with the right hand, the two hands are not both touched and touching exactly at the same time in experience. It is either that my right hand is touching, and it senses the smoothness or roughness of my left hand, or my left hand senses the texture of the skin of my right hand. I do not have the two sensations together in the same way as I perceive two objects juxtaposed. Halák (2021) points out that for Husserl, the transition between 'being touched' and 'touching' is accomplished by a reversal of attention and apprehension (but Husserl does not describe what motivates this transition). This assumed transition also shows that the double sensation is not two sensations doubled at the same time but apprehended through the reversal of attention. A more critical view can be found in Sartre (1972), who argues, 'To touch and to be touched, to feel that one is touching and to feel

that one is touched – these are two species of phenomena which it is useless to try to reunite by the term "double sensation." In fact, they are radically distinct, and they exist on two incommunicable levels' (151).

Overall, Husserl's exploration of the body paved the way for later philosophers, particularly Merleau-Ponty, to contemplate it further. By comparing Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, Carman (1999) comments that, for Husserl, the body is a quasi-objective thing that I identify with thanks to the localisation in it of my subjective sensations, while for Merleau-Ponty, 'the attribution of sensations to myself in the first place presupposes my own prior identification with my body' (223). In other words, for Merleau-Ponty, the premise for the bodily sensations to be mine is that I am the body. Merleau-Ponty articulates this standpoint in more detail, specifically in the primordial way by which we humans exist as a body subject in this world. This primordial way is called 'embodiment' by Merleau-Ponty, and this means that we are embodied and situated in the world, and we take up the world through bodily movements. Merleau-Ponty illustrates this idea primarily through his phenomenology of perception. In the following sections, I will further unpack this idea of embodiment through his two concepts: body schema and motor intentionality

2.3 Body Schema

Merleau-Ponty drew this concept of body schema [un schéma corporel] from early neurological studies, mainly by Henry Head (Carman, 1999; Landes, 2012). This concept is often confused with the concept of body image. In another English version of *Phenomenology of Perception*, Colin Smith rendered 'schéma corporel' as 'body image' throughout his translation, which has been recognised as an error (Carman, 1999). Carman (1999) emphasises this schema-image distinction and traces it back to Kant. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant uses the notion of schematism to bridge the category and the appearance, which is a strict distinction between 'understanding and sensibility, between pure concepts and sensible intuitions' (Carman 1999, 218). Kant (2000) writes, 'there must be a third thing, which must stand in homogeneity with the category on the one hand and the appearance on the other, and makes possible the application of the former to the latter' (272). The schema is a 'mediating representation' or 'pure synthetic unity of the manifold 'that can be intellectual on the one hand and sensible on the other

(272). So a schema of a concept is 'a representation of a general procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image' (273). Consequently, Kant distinguishes schema from image. Image is always particular, and it is 'a product of the empirical faculty of productive imagination' (273). However, Schemata sketched out in advance or anticipated an enormous range of possible cases through which and in accordance with which the imagination could produce images at all (Carman, 1999).

The Kantian schematism above stresses an unfolding action or procedure on which the application of concepts rests, and understanding Merleau-Ponty's concept of body schema presupposes this kind of understanding of schema. This means body schema should neither be understood as a particular static thing nor as a self-awareness of or ideas about the body, which would actually be body image. Certainly, Merleau-Ponty does not agree with Kant's intellectualist notion of schemata. Carman (1999) explains that 'what is essential to the concept of the body schema, and what it shares with its Kantian predecessor, rather, is the notion of an integrated set of skills poised and ready to anticipate and incorporate a world prior to the application of concepts and the formation of thoughts and judgments'(219). In other words, the body image is the result of our objectifying act when the body is taken as the focus (object) of the act. The body in body image is an objectified body. And body schema is more like a function that conditions any acts. According to Merleau-Ponty (2012, 100-148), the function has two meanings: 1) it is the law to which the establishment of associations among tactile, kinesthetic, and articular contents themselves and the association between those contents and visual content in experiences are subjected; 2) it is the background or reference the body has while dealing with the world.

2.3.1 The body schema as the law governing image associations

In physiology, it is well recognised that we can sense our body in the space around us and the position of our limbs in movements. We can also sense our internal organs, such as hunger, fullness, fast heartbeats, etc. Sherrington (1906) termed the former type of sense proprioception and the latter interoception. Body schema was initially understood as a summary of those bodily experiences that provide us with momentary proprioception and interoception. Merleau-Ponty (2012) comments that researchers introduced the term 'body schema', designating a large number of image associations which are developed

throughout childhood and to the extent that 'tactile, kinesthetic, and articular contents are associated between themselves or with visual content and were thereby recalled more easily' (p. 101). This is probably why, initially, some researchers use body schema and body image alternatively[12].

Merleau-Ponty (2012) argues that body schema must be more than just image associations. I have explained the difference between image and schema above. For Merleau-Ponty, body schema is the law to which those image associations are subjected, and he used the case of allochiria to justify this argument. Allochiria is a pathology in which a patient mislocates the sensory stimuli to the corresponding opposite part of the body or space. If the body schema is just a set of image associations between bodily parts and sensations, it remains incomprehensible why a sensation received on the left hand would be identified on the right hand by a patient with allochiria. Merleau-Ponty (2012) writes:

> these associations must be constantly submitted to a unique law, …, 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 (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 101).

The same logic applies to the phantom limb phenomenon. The classical explanation of the phantom limb in terms of body schema considers it the 'residue of habitual cenesthesia', but it does not bring a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Merleau-Ponty, 2012,101). Merleau-Ponty (2012) suggests understanding body schema as the law of the constitution of the phantom limb. It is an, in principle, inter-sensorial unity that is not a 'mere result of associations established in the course of experience' but precedes them and, in fact, makes the associations possible (102). And this comes to the second definition of body schema: it is the background or reference that the body has while dealing with the world. I will explain this in terms of the spatiality of the body.

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[12] Landes (2012) explains this usage of body schema and body image in the Translator's Introduction in *Phenomenology of Perception*. For example, Landes (2012) finds that Paul Schilder translates his own German term, das Körperschema, as body image in English in his book The Image and Appearance of the Human Body: Studies in the Constructive Energies of the Psyche.

2.3.2 The body schema as the background in the bodily space's structure

Merleau-Ponty (2012) explains the second definition of body schema in terms of its usage in psychology, about which he says it is 'a global awareness of my posture in the inter-sensory world, a "form" in Gestalt psychology's sense of the word' (102). Nevertheless, it is not a form as a whole that is anterior to its parts. My bodily parts do not form my body in a way that bricks form a building. The global awareness of my posture is not just awareness of the existing parts of the body either[13]. To illustrate this point, Merleau-Ponty provides the following example:

> 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 my hands lean upon the desk (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 102).

In this posture, I know the position of my hands leaning upon the desk. Certainly, I can calculate the angle between my arms and the desktop and observe the height of the desk and its position in space to gain knowledge about the position of my hand. Besides this, I also clearly know where my hands are, which is "here". I can know my hands and desk are here without knowing about angles, height and geometry. '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', Merleau-Ponty (2012) writes, the "here" is the 'anchoring of the active body in an object, and the situation of the body confronted with its tasks' (103). This is why he argues that the spatiality of the body is a 'situational spatiality' rather than 'positional spatiality'. Instead of being positioned in the world as other objects, the body is situated in the world or inhabits the world.

Here is another angle I suggest to understand the situational spatiality of the body: drawing an analogy between the spatiality of the world and the body. In the first chapter, I illustrate Merleau-Ponty's point that an object appears on a horizon. When I gaze at my cup on the table, the things surrounding the cup become blurred (but I know they are still there), which forms a horizon for the cup to stand out as a clear object in my sight. I can

[13] Otherwise, the phenomenon of phantom limbs wouldn't be possible.

visually experience the spatiality of the world through this object-horizon or figure-background structure. Moreover, in Merleau-Ponty's example of leaning on a desk with both hands, in this posture, my hands supporting me and leaning over the desk are the focus of my awareness, in which the position of the rest of my body (shoulder, waist, etc.) is obscure, but I do not lose the sense of them. Here, the hand I am aware of can be considered in analogy to the cup I am gazing at in the visual experience of an object. The positions of the rest of my body that 'surround' my hands are like other surroundings around the viewed cup in my vision. They recede into the margins of my awareness, becoming dormant, but they do not cease to be there. The rest of my body is inconspicuous to my awareness, 'hiding' in the background, just as the surroundings of the viewed object hide on the horizon. In this sense, the body schema functions as the background.

Moreover, if this object-horizon structure in vision gives us a sense of space, analogously, there is a bodily space similarly structured by the focused limb and the background, which allows a limb to be the focus of my attention without losing sense of the others. In other words, there is a bodily space that allows the bodily parts to conceal and unveil themselves for my attention. Merleau-Ponty (2012) points out that 'our body is not primarily in space, but is rather of space' (149). Therefore, it is reasonable to state that the body is not positioned in space as an object; rather, the body inhabits space.

The world itself is a situational space, and the spatiality of the body is situational. Merleau-Ponty (2012) suggests that the bodily space and the spatial world form a practical systém, which offers a double horizon for the moving body (105). The bodily parts and the body form one horizon against which my moving bodily part can stand out, and the surroundings of the viewed object in the world structure the other horizon on which an object can appear. As Merleau-Ponty (2012) writes:

> one's own body is the always implied third term of the figure–background structure, and each figure appears perspectively against the double horizon of external space and bodily space (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 103).

Through this double horizon, I get a sense of the relation between me and the object (e.g., I immediately know if an object in front of me is reachable or not), and the object can immediately become the goal of my action.

Merleau-Ponty (2012) suggests that it is in movements that the spatiality of the body is brought about (105), and he elucidates two kinds of movement: concrete movement and abstract movement. The distinction between these two kinds of movements reveals a correlation between movement and situation on the one hand. On the other hand, it shows the motor intentionality of the body. The next section will unpack the concept of motor intentionality, by which we shall further see the signification of body schema and the primordial role of the body as the situated subject moving toward the world.

2.4 Motor intentionality of the body

In the classical understanding of bodily movements, we view that our movements are either a result of our thinking (under the instruction of the mind) or pure automatic reflexes (biological mechanism). Some movements might be easily located in this dichotomy, but if we take a closer look at our movements, most of them remain ambiguous under this framework. For example, I can easily pick up a cup of tea from my table without thinking about how to perform the moves. An experienced typist can type without even looking at the letters. Certainly, a typist's series of hand movements is more complicated than picking up a cup, but all those movements are immediate, fluent and without deliberation. They are not reflexes; we can also do them effortlessly without thinking.

To explain this phenomenon, Merleau-Ponty (2012) argues that 'places in space are not objective positions in relation to the objective position of our body'. Rather, our body merges with space and hence places 'inscribe around us the variable reach of our intentions and gestures' (144). As discussed earlier, the bodily space and external space structure a double horizon against which objects appear for us. Based on Merleau-Ponty's view, Kříž (2021) explains that I can pick up the cup of tea so easily, not because of a map of space in my memory, but because 'my motor experience embraces the cup into the meaningful web of possible motor tasks' (130). In terms of a more complicated habitual

skill, Merleau-Ponty (2012) argues that it is neither a form of knowledge nor an automatic reflex; rather, it is knowledge in the moving limbs given through bodily efforts. By practice over and over again, the body incorporates the instrument into bodily space, so an experienced typist knows where the letters are on the keyboard just as she knows where her limbs are.

The 'meaningful web of possible tasks' or 'the knowledge in the moving limbs' both refer to the body schema. These habitual movements can be understood as the articulation of body schema. In addition to the two definitions of body schema introduced above, when it comes to bodily movements, Halák (2018) points out that Merleau-Ponty specifically defines body schema as "'a preliminary attitude', 'privileged position' or 'point of departure' that we need to have at our disposal while confronting a particular situation in the world and the objects in it' (41). This understanding of body schema also provides a consistent interpretation of the phantom limb phenomenon. Accordingly, to have a phantom limb means to 'remain open to all of the actions of which the arm alone is capable and to stay within the practical field that one had prior to the mutilation' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 84). Halák (2018) explains that the concept of body schema needs to be understood as 'a preliminarily established reference level, in regard to which all the particular contents of experience make sense in the first place' (47).

During our interaction with the world, or in the process of dealing with the world, the body schema is continually activated, transformed and reactivated in and through movements. Halák (2018) summarises that, in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, the body schema does not have the status of objective reality and hence it cannot be exhaustively identified with a physical process occurring in the body. Instead, Merleau-Ponty uses the notion of body schema to 'dynamically integrate the third-person (objective, external) and first-person (subjective, reflexive) perspectives on the body and on human existence in general' (Halák, 2018, 46-47). Following this, it is plausible to suggest that the body schema concept explains the preliminary of motor intentionality.

Furthermore, of more importance in terms of motor intentionality is the 'solicitation' of the object for my action, which indicates a correlation between movement and situation or the mutual implication between the body and our environment. For Merleau-Ponty, movement is a subject's 'original manner of relating to an object'

(Merleau-Ponty, 2012,113). This idea of motor intentionality also inspired other researchers to provide an account of skills in terms of embodiment. For example, Dreyfus (2007) suggests 'absorbed coping' to interpret a master's skill, arguing it manifests an embodied and fully involved coping in the world, which is not facilitated by mental representational processes. Zimmermann and Saura (2017) say it's a wisdom provided by the body in which movements are guided and elaborated. Similarly, Faultier (2023) points out a 'form of bodily reflection' in dancers' experiences, by which 'the body itself takes the lead'. This is neither mindless, unconscious body nor pure reflex like automaticity, 'but of letting the limbs with their experience take over and produce the gaze' (Faultier, 2023, 814). To distinguish the motor intentionality from the explanation of movements in terms of mental representation, Merleau-Ponty (2012) himself stresses that: '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"' (141).

However, those habitual or skilful movements only convey one aspect of the phenomenon of bodily movements. In Merleau-Ponty's discussion of this theme, the pathology of Schneider's case reveals another aspect. Schneider is a patient with agnosia who cannot perform actions on command with his eyes closed. For example, if a mosquito bites Schneider's left hand, he can naturally grasp it; however, when asked to point to the same position with a ruler, he cannot do so, even though he understands the instruction and the meaning of "left hand" means (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 106). Similarly, Schneider may know how to knock on a door when he is standing in front of it, announcing himself, but when he is asked to simulate knocking in a situation where the door is hidden or out of reach, he fails to do so (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 119). The former type of movement, grasping and knocking, is termed 'concrete movement', while the latter, pointing and simulating knocking, is termed 'abstract movement'. Merleau-Ponty (2012) suggests that Schneider's pathology indicates a disassociation of concrete movement and abstract movement, which are often intertwined in a healthy person's daily activities. And Schneider's failure to perform abstract movement indicates 'a privilege enjoyed by concrete movement' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 106).

The unreflective, habitual, or skilful movements discussed earlier are concrete movements. They happen in a practical world in concrete situations. Abstract movements are conducted without corresponding to an actual situation. For example, I can pretend to pick up a cup without having a real cup in front of me. I do not just react to actual given situations; I can also imagine a virtual situation for myself to move in the imagination, such as play-acting, by which I am moving 'toward the possible' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 109–112). Regarding this phenomenon, Merleau-Ponty (2012) suggests that it is made possible by the function of 'projection' by which I organise before myself a free space in which the object that 'does not exist naturally can take on a semblance of existence' (114), which means that I project an object there for myself as the goal of reaching.

What distinguishes abstract movement from concrete movement is the nature of the situations encountered by the moving subject. Merleau-Ponty articulates the two kinds of movement here:

> within the busy world in which concrete movement unfolds, abstract movement hollows out a zone of reflection and of subjectivity, it superimposes a virtual or human space over physical space. Concrete movement is thus centripetal, whereas abstract movement is centrifugal; the first takes place within being or within the actual, the second takes place within the possible or within non-being; the first adheres to a given background, the second itself sets up its own background (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 114).

The function of projection in abstract movement implies the ability to assign significance to objects and situations and recall or rebuild the significant situations that conjure up movements. That is why Merleau-Ponty (2012) assumes that consciousness is an activity of such projection that 'deposits objects around itself like traces of its own acts' (138) rather than instructing and controlling the bodily parts to move. A healthy human adult can move according to current tasks afforded by the given situation and, at the same time, recognise possibilities for potential actions (Dreyfus, 2007; Romdenh-Romluc, 2007). What is impaired for Schneider is the power of projection, which allows him to place himself in possible situations[14].

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[14] Merleau-Ponty (2012) writes that, 'finally, if consciousness is an activity of projection, which deposits objects around itself like traces of its own acts, but which relies upon them in order to move on to new acts of spontaneity, then we understand simultaneously that every deficiency of "contents" has an effect upon the whole of experience and begins its disintegration, that every pathological weakening has to do with all of consciousness – and that, nevertheless, the disorder each time attacks consciousness from a certain

It is worth noting that the projecting ability is established upon the daily interaction between the body and the world by which the body takes up various lived situations and simultaneously incorporates objects into bodily space 'to move on to new acts of spontaneity' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 138, 143). Even though the thought of space (imagined space) might be seen as merely represented, Merleau-Ponty (2012) explains, '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 or transpositions, equivalences and identifications that turns space into an objective system' (143). This means the projection sources come from the body's actual encounter in the lived world.

Landes (2012) comments that, for Merleau-Ponty, the relation between the perceived world and the perceiving subject is like 'the relation between a question and its response or between a solicitation and a gearing into' (xliii). We should not view the body, subjectivity, and bodily movements discretely; they are also not separate from the surrounding environment. Bodily movements are correlated and solicited by situations. Those situations could be (either or both) actual or possible, concrete or abstract, given or projected. If we interpret this phenomenon from the perspective of the body, we can say that it is the body that has a motor intentionality by which the body moves toward an object in a situation, and hence, the body is the moving subject. Nevertheless, this only presents one side of the idea of embodiment of human existence from the perspective of the body, though it is an important and often neglected perspective. The next chapter will further present the idea from the other side, which is from the perspective of consciousness: an understanding of consciousness as embodied. The understanding of embodied consciousness will also lead to the exploration of temporality and time within the idea of embodiment in the fourth chapter.

"side," that in each case certain symptoms are predominant in the clinical picture of the illness, and finally that consciousness is vulnerable and that consciousness itself can suffer the illness' (138).

3. CONSCIOUSNESS AS 'I CAN' INSTEAD OF 'I THINK'

The second chapter introduced the body's subject role in moving and acting through the body's features (situational spatiality and body schema). This chapter will further elaborate on the implications of the idea of the body subject through a perspective on consciousness. From the mid-seventeenth through the late nineteenth century, consciousness was widely regarded as essential or definitive of the mental, which can be seen in the philosophy of Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, and Kant (Van Gulick, 2012). Especially, René Descartes's argument: *Cogito, ego sum* (I think, therefore I am) profoundly influences as understanding of consciousness as 'I think', which is referred to as the Cartesian Cogito. Merleau-Ponty (2012) identifies the Cartesian Cogito as a 'spoken Cogito' and demonstrates that within the spoken Cogito lies a 'tacit Cogito' underneath, making the spoken Cogito possible. The first section of this chapter presents the distinction between the spoken Cogito and the tacit Cogito, which shows the incompleteness of the understanding of consciousness as 'I think'. The following section demonstrates the view of embodied consciousness as 'I can' through two aspects of the spontaneity of the body: spontaneous movements and spontaneous valuation.

3.1 The spoken Cogito and tacit Cogito

In his Meditations II, first published in 1641, Descartes made a profound argument about the indubitability of two statements through his methodical doubt, which are 'I exist' and 'I think'. As he writes that:

> Am I so dependent on body and senses that I cannot exist without these? But I was persuaded that there was nothing in all the world, that there was no heaven, no earth, that there were no minds, nor anybodies: was I not then likewise persuaded that I did not exist? Not at all; of a surety I myself did exist since I persuaded myself of something [or merely because I thought of something]. But there is some deceiver or other, very powerful and very cunning, whoever employs his ingenuity in deceiving me. Then without doubt I exist also if he deceives me, and let him deceive me as much as he will, he can never cause me to be nothing so long as I think that I am something. So that after having reflected well and carefully examined all things, we must come to the definite conclusion that this proposition: I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time that I pronounce it, or that I mentally conceive it (*Meditation II* in Wilkinson (2000, 156)).

The above argument of Descartes was expressed more concisely in his later work, formulated as 'I think, therefore I am' (In Latin, *Cogito, ego sum*). And it is often referred to as the Cogito or Cartesian Cogito for ease of reference. It is worth noting that Descartes used the terms 'thought' and 'think' in such an inclusive sense that thought is anything immediately present to the mind (Wilkinson, 2000). Descartes deduces existence from thought through the logic that for X to be able to think, X must exist. The Cogito view casts the existence of anything beyond thoughts in doubt, including the corporeal body and the external world.

One of Merleau-Ponty's (2012) endeavours is also to challenge the Cartesian Cogito. He argues that the Cogito reveals self-awareness of consciousness and illustrates the consequences of the view that equates human existence with self-consciousness. Descartes rightly recognises the sense of certainty we usually have over our own thoughts. Nevertheless, for us to be able to tell what is immediately given in our mind, we need to be aware of ourselves and ourselves having some mental contents. Merleau-Ponty (2012) writes, 'At the root of all of our experiences and all of our reflections, we thus find a being that recognises itself immediately, because it is nothing other than self-knowledge and knowledge of all things, …. Self-consciousness is the very being of the mind at work' (390).

By recognising that I am thinking, I am certain of my self-consciousness. The consequence of equating this self-consciousness with consciousness itself is that I end up identifying my existence with my thinking that constitutes the world for itself. When I think, I can think about almost everything from the past to the future with no limits. And if I only interpret and understand the structure of my experience in terms of the Cartesian Cogito, which is to say I experience things through 'I think', it draws me out of the event with temporality and simultaneously frees me from limitations. I can get a sense of a transparent certainty from my thinking. And if I define my existence with my thinking, it seems that my existence also becomes transparent to me.

On the other hand, I do experience change in things, ageing and death, for example, which are out of my control and remind me of my limitations. I also experience the existence of others because I live in a society. But when I identify my existence with my thinking, I am only aware of my thoughts, and the others are mere objects of my

thoughts, by which I hardly regard the others as the same conscious human being as me. As Merleau-Ponty (2012) points out, 'If I have an absolute consciousness of myself, then the plurality of consciousnesses is impossible' (391). Even though the Cartesian Cogito reveal the phenomenon of self-consciousness, the statement 'I think therefore I am' leads to a conclusion of an absolute consciousness that can be transparent to oneself, which fails to capture other phenomena about human existence. Merleau-Ponty (2012) comments that the Cartesian cogito reveals 'not the absolute transparence of a thought that entirely possesses itself, but rather the blind act by which I take up my destiny as a thinking nature and carry it forward' (392).

Merleau-Ponty (2012) suggests a different interpretation of the Cogito:

> The Cogito that we obtain by reading Descartes (and even the one that Descartes performs with the intention of expressing it and when, turning toward his own life, he determines it, objectifies it, and "characterizes" it as indubitable) is thus a spoken Cogito, put into words and understood through words (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 423).

The point above can be understood by considering the noetic-noematic structure of intentionality of consciousness mentioned in the first chapter. When I think, I always think of something, which means my thinking always has an object that is the noematic component of the act. When I ponder over the question of my existence and what consciousness is, I find 'I am thinking'. But at the moment when I find I am thinking A, the 'I am thinking A' becomes the content or object of the awareness that is a new moment of thinking. The spoken Cogito is reflected and articulated by a conscious being. It should not be considered as the consciousness itself since, as Merleau-Ponty argues 'a part of our existence – the part that is busy conceptually determining our life and conceiving of it is as indubitable – escapes this very determination and conception'(423-424). By naming the Cartesian Cogito as a spoken Cogito, Merleau-Ponty (2012) suggests a tacit Cogito by which the spoken Cogito is possible. It is the 'I' who thinks 'I am thinking'. The tacit Cogito refers to the self or the existence, 'is prior to every philosophy, but it only knows itself in limit situations in which it is threatened, such as in the fear of death or in the anxiety caused by another person's gaze upon me' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 426).

Here is an example that may help illustrate the relation between the spoken Cogito and the tacit Cogito. While walking past a full-length mirror while shopping, I caught a glimpse of a person in the mirror. I then stopped in front of the mirror and realised that the person reflected was me. I began to observe myself in the mirror and took a photo of myself. I am certain that the person in the mirror and the one in the photo is me. It is not entirely inaccurate to claim that I see myself in the image, but it would be misleading to think that I am all that the image shows. The 'I' reflected in the mirror or captured in a photo is merely the image of me at a single moment. The actual 'I' is in front of the mirror, observing and capturing this moment in which I see myself. The relation between the spoken Cogito and the tacit Cogito could be compared to the relation between the image of me and the 'I' who takes the image.

Nevertheless, the tacit Cogito suggested here does not refer to the consciousness itself. Cogito still means 'I think'. Instead, the spoken Cogito and tacit Cogito reveal a phenomenon about consciousness: consciousness is not completely unaware of itself, but can also hardly fully capture itself. The tacit Cogito could be seen as one of the features of the consciousness suggested by the idea of embodiment in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. The idea that consciousness is embodied suggests that consciousness is more than the thinking mind, a point I illustrate in the following section through the spontaneity of the body, arguing that consciousness is 'I can'.

3.2 Consciousness as 'I can'

It is in demonstrating the motor intentionality of the body that Merleau-Ponty (2012) argues that 'Consciousness is originarily not an "I think that," but rather an "I can."'[15] (139), but Merleau-Ponty does not theorise this idea of 'I can' nor elaborate on it. I think this 'I can' speaks vividly of the connection between consciousness and body movements, which itself suggests an embodied consciousness, so I adopted this phrase here.

[15] Merleau-Ponty (2012) cited the phrase 'I can' from Husserl. For example, Husserl (1989) uses the term "I-can (ich kann)" in *Ideas II*, where the section titled 'Spontaneity and passivity: actuality and inactuality of consciousness'.

In Chapter 2, I have introduced motor intentionality in terms of body schema and situational spatiality of the body, highlighting the bodily condition or embodied aspects of intentionality. This section can be understood as exploring the implications of motor intentionality, which refers to embodied consciousness as 'I can'. I suggest that 'I can' encompasses two aspects of the spontaneity of the body. The first aspect is the 'I can' in direct relation to 'I move', referring to the spontaneity of bodily movements. The second aspect of 'I can' pertains to a 'knowing' of my capability and environmental possibilities for bodily movements, which relates to a spontaneous valuation. While the former might serve as the foundation for the latter, it is more appropriate to understand them as two sides of the same coin, both embodied.

It is worth noting that the 'spontaneity' or 'spontaneous' mentioned here does not imply the same meaning as 'automaticity' or 'automatic'. Wang and Martínková (2024) have examined the concept of 'spontaneous movement' used in the fields of science and philosophy and found different understandings of spontaneity implied in the usage of the phrase. They find that the understanding of spontaneous movement as an automatic machine-like mechanistic movement is reflected mainly in scientific studies, such as in neurology, physiology and psychology, where 'spontaneous movement' often refers to involuntary movements of the body. In contrast, in the field of philosophy within the Western tradition, spontaneous actions often refer to people's voluntary free actions. These two opposite understandings indicate a dichotomy of spontaneity: determined spontaneity and voluntary spontaneity resulting from the understanding of human beings in mind/body dualism. Wang and Martínková (2024) explain that:

> If we take the basic meaning of spontaneous as self-causing, these two groups of self-causing movements are considered as driven by two discrete 'selves', which are a result of dualism. Free movements and spontaneous moral actions result from a mind separated from the body since a free action is purely a result of the intellectual, as understood by Kant and others (see Bruya 2010, 237), while involuntary movements, seen in terms of determined spontaneity, concern the body, understood as biological (Wang and Martínková, 2024, 445).

In this section, spontaneous movements do not imply automatic movements or voluntary actions. They align with the understandings of spontaneity that come from a phenomenological reflection on the body, particularly those articulated by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. Wang and Martínková (2024) summarise these understandings as the

primal animateness of the body and embodied responsive dealing in the world. Although it holds different meanings, spontaneity is also a key concept in traditional Eastern movement practices and philosophy. Wang and Martínková (2024) describe it as the force of nature, whose implications resonate with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in terms of the relation between the body subject and the world. I will revisit this idea of spontaneity as the force of nature in Chapter 6. In this chapter, I present an alternative interpretation of the phenomenon of the body's spontaneity, which is articulated through consciousness as 'I can', encompassing two aspects: 'I can' in terms of the spontaneity of bodily movements and 'I can' in terms of spontaneous valuation.

3.2.1 The 'I can' in terms of the spontaneity of bodily movements

The section on motor intentionality from Chapter 2 serves as the basis of the discussion of the spontaneity of bodily movements. In studies of skills in dance and sports, the concept of motor intentionality is often drawn on to explain the spontaneous characters of experts' movements (e.g. Bergamin, 2017; Dreyfus, 2002, 2007; Zimmermann & Saura, 2017). Wang and Martínková (2024) summarise the understanding of this spontaneity in those skills studies based on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as embodied responsive dealing in the world. Nevertheless, I argue that this 'embodied responsive dealing in the world' not only applies to advanced skills but is also a general feature of bodily movements. Bodily movements are initially the way we, as body subjects, take up the world.

It is worth considering infants' spontaneous movement here. Although interpretations are different[16], infants' movements, such as arm-waving, kicking, sucking, etc, are commonly regarded as spontaneous in scientific research and philosophical studies. This shows a shared common sense between scientists and philosophers that the human body in infancy has the power to generate movements by him/herself. The divergence rests on how to understand this spontaneity. In her book *Primacy of Movement*, Husserlian philosopher Sheets-Johnstone (2011) argues that spontaneous movements in infancy are the epistemological foundation of learning about ourselves and the world. She writes:

[16] For the reason why the interpretations are different, see Wang and Martínková (2024).

> Clearly, our first consciousness is a tactile-kinesthetic consciousness that arises on the ground of movement that comes to us spontaneously, indeed, on the ground of fundamental and invariant species - specific kinetic acts that we simply ”do” in coming into the world, acts such as kicking, stretching, sucking, swallowing, and so on. Such acts happen to us before we make them happen (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, 118–119).

Wang and Martínková (2024) elaborate on Sheets-Johnstone's view on the primal animateness in infants' spontaneous movements as follows. Sheets-Johnstone uses infants' spontaneous movements as examples to articulate Husserl's point that 'originally, the "I move", "I do", precedes the "I can do"' (Husserl, 1989, 273). 'Doing' or 'moving' is the basic everyday tactile-kinesthetic 'doings' such as sucking, swallowing, chewing, reaching, grasping, kicking, etc. The 'I can do' is an awareness of the capability of the body or capacity for the 'doings'. By sucking and swallowing, I discover that my mouth can open and shut; by reaching and kicking, I find that my arm can extend, knees can flex and so on. It is also from those doings that some basic concepts emerge. Sheets-Johnstone uses the example of chewing, in which an organism 'catches itself in the act of grinding something to pieces' (Sheets-Johnstone, 1990, 29). The concepts such as grinding, sharpness, and hardness are generalised from the various bodily experiences of chewing.

A phenomenological view on the spontaneity of infants' movements does not simply refer to the body's biological mechanism since 'the body is not merely a thing of which we make sense as a functioning unit' (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, 128). Those spontaneous movements are also not automatic, machine-like movements. This spontaneity is viewed as a primal animateness of human existence in the sense that, during those movements, we do not deliberately think about moving possibilities or put ourselves in the task of moving. 'We come straightaway moving into the world; we are precisely not stillborn. In this respect, primal movement is like primal sensibility' (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, 117). By primal animateness, Sheets-Johnstone (2011) argues that 'in the beginning is movement' (119). It means that I move even before I have the self-awareness that I am moving.

However, Sheets-Johnstone (2011) does not illustrate the bodily structure of the primal animateness, even though the primal spontaneous movements default to movements of the body. Moreover, although she claims that transcendental subjectivity is developed from the primal spontaneity of movement, whether the subjectivity is

considered in terms of Merleau-Ponty's idea of body subject, or whether it is transcendental in a disembodied sense, remains ambiguous, especially given Sheets-Johnstone's distinction between her view and that of Merleau-Ponty. She states that the 'original kinetic spontaneity' is already in infancy. She writes:

> In effect, what is already there — but not by any means already 'all there' as Merleau-Ponty would have it (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 198) — is not the world and the body. What is already there is movement, movement in and through which the perceptible world and acting subject come to be constituted, which is to say movement in and through which we make sense of both the world and ourselves (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, 119).

To state that the 'acting subject' is constituted may lead to misunderstanding and confusion. The movement in question here is not merely an abstract concept or notion of movement, but the primordial bodily movements of infants. If this is the case, in terms of those spontaneous movements, the acting subject is the infant's body with primal animateness, in and through movement at its very beginning to 'grasp' for meaning, in other words 'sensemaking'. As Landgrebe (1977) states, the acting body 'is not just something constituted but is itself constituting' (108). Husserl (1989) himself also notes that 'I do not have the possibility of distancing myself from my body, or my body from me' (167). Whilst the body enables perception (just as by the spontaneous movements of the body, we make sense of the world), the body also obstructs the perception of itself. Husserl (1989) remarks that the perceived body 'is a remarkably imperfectly constituted thing' (167). Similarly, Merleau-Ponty (2012) explains this phenomenon by stating that 'the body is never completely constituted' (429). Accordingly, it is worth noticing that although we attribute the spontaneous movements in infancy as the epistemological foundation and the beginning of subjectivity, the subject of movement here is not the body that is primordially constituted, but rather the body constituting by moving toward the world. Sheets-Johnstone would probably agree with this, as she also mentions that our bodies, through movement, are 'the very source of our being in the world' (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, 128).

I suggest that the motor intentionality of the body, which is facilitated by the body schema, and the situational spatiality of the body could also help us understand infants' spontaneous movements. I agree with Sheets-Johnstone (2011) that the spontaneous movements in infancy show the primal animateness of the body with epistemological signification. Nevertheless, the movements should not be considered merely at the conceptual level, i.e., movement itself contains some significance and is abstracted away from the moving body. Therefore, I do not agree with Sheets-Johnstone's (2011) statement that what is already there is not the world and body but rather movement. For the movement is always a movement of the body. It is because we were born as a body that inhabits the world, which means we are not separate from the world, and hence, we can move in the world towards objects encountered in the world. That is also why, when a baby tries to grasp something, she looks at the object in front of her instead of her hands, since she is not moving her hands; she just moves.

Moreover, Sheets-Johnstone (2011) argues with Husserl (1989) that the 'I move' and 'I do' in infancy proceed to 'I can do'. It should be clarified that the 'I can do' here concerns the second aspect of consciousness as 'I can', which refers to the awareness of my capability and environmental possibilities for bodily movements. Although I argue that the spontaneity of bodily movements is a general feature of the body's subject's animated life, which is exemplified both in skilled practice and infancy. Skilled practices are indeed more complex and more intellectual than infants' kicking and arm waving. I think this is partly because the two kinds of movements happen in different life stages of the body, which have different developed capacities. Besides, skilled practices better exemplify a spontaneous valuation that concerns the second aspect of consciousness as 'I can'.

3.2.2 The 'I can' in terms of spontaneous valuation

I adopt the phrase 'spontaneous valuation' from Merleau-Ponty (2012, 465), who used it to discuss the body subject's implicit valuation of the sensible world in the chapter on Freedom of *Phenomenology of Perception.* Within Western philosophy tradition, freedom is often associated with volition and spontaneity in idealism, such as Kant's (2000) ideas on spontaneity in his characterisation of pure reason (see also Wang and Martínková, 2024). Hence, in the last chapter of his book, Merleau-Ponty (2012) elaborates on the

idealist view of freedom to show what is missing on an existential level in that view. Although the word 'valuation' seems to imply the presence of a thinking mind, it is not a valuation of a representation of something through thinking. By the word 'valuation', this aspect of 'I can' emphasises a faculty of consciousness that is actively sense-making. In corresponding terms, the movement aspect of 'I can' in terms of bodily movements can be understood as a relatively passive way of grasping through responding to encountered situations (about the corresponding relation between being active and passive, See Merleau-Ponty 2012, xiv, 452). They are both spontaneous because they are generated by the body subjects themselves.

So, what exactly does this spontaneous valuation refer to? Merleau-Ponty (2012) suggests that 'we must in effect distinguish between my explicit intentions, such as the plan I form today to climb those mountains, and the general intentions that invest my surroundings with some value in a virtual way' (464). For example, some figures are perceived as cubical, and some as triangular. Some roads are commonly perceived as flat to ride, and some are too steep to climb. In Merleau-Ponty's words, 'Everything happens as if, prior to our judgment and our freedom, someone were allocating such and such a sense to such and such a given constellation' (465). But we cannot always clearly name the senses, which, in Merleau-Ponty's (2012) view, 'reveal to us even more clearly the presence of a spontaneous valuation in us: for these are the floating figures that propose in turn different significations' (465). He continues:

> Without these spontaneous valuations, we would not have a world, that is, a collection of things that emerges from the formless mass by offering themselves to our body as things "to be touched," "to be taken," or "to be climbed"; we would never be aware of adjusting ourselves to the things and of reaching them out there where they are, beyond us; we would merely be aware of rigorously conceiving of objects that are immanent to our intentions; we would not be in the world, ourselves implicated in the spectacle and, so to speak, intermingled with things; we would have merely a representation of a universe (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 465-466).

It is worth noting that spontaneous valuation is intertwined with spontaneous bodily movements. I discuss them separately in these two sections just to make the two aspects of 'I can' more explicit. The movement itself serves as the valuation and implies an intention. For example, when I'm on a bouldering wall, I can instantly assess which holds are accessible to me. My arms and eyes search for nearby holds, and as I stretch my

arm, I instinctively recognise which holds might be useful and which ones are less advantageous for my movements. Similarly, based on Husserl's phenomenology, Heath and Larsen (2022) interpret moving while climbing as a direct form of perception led by vision and touch that exceeds the representation of thought, which shows the embodied character of consciousness.

One objection to the view above would be that this aspect of 'I can' as embodied consciousness (spontaneous valuation) only identifies the implicit intention of bodily movement. How about the explicit intentions, such as 'I plan to climb a mountain today', which is a more obvious conscious activity? How should we understand those explicit intentions as embodied? These explicit intentions and actions involve a temporal structure of consciousness. I will address this question concerning the temporality of consciousness in the next chapter. According to Merleau-Ponty (2012), the temporal structure is embodied because the body inhabits space and time. He argues that 'we are not temporal because we are spontaneous'; rather, 'we are temporal because time is the foundation and measure of our spontaneity' (451).

4. TEMPORALITY

The main task of this chapter is to present a distinction between constituted time (objective time) and primordial time (pre-objective time) that Merleau-Ponty (2012) made in the penultimate chapter of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, "Temporality". Merleau-Ponty develops his view on time by closely engaging in the works of Husserl and Heidegger. On the one hand, his ideas echo those of his two predecessors. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty approaches this topic in his particular way, which he also used to approach the topic of the body. He starts by clarifying the mistakes that the idealist (intellectualism) and realist (empiricism) commit in analysing time, and his goal is to connect the two perspectives[17], viewing time in its primordial way. The inquiry into the primordial time further clarifies Merleau-Ponty's view on consciousness as the embodied and embedded in the world. In Merleau-Ponty's words, 'We are not, in some incomprehensible way, an activity tied to passivity, a machine surmounted by a will, or a perception surmounted by a judgment; rather, we are entirely active and entirely passive because we are the sudden upsurge of time' (452). For Merleau-Ponty, the primordial time is neither subjective nor objective; rather, subjectivity is time (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 250; 444; 449-450). Romdenh-Romluc (2011) interprets this idea as that 'consciousness effects the passage of time by living its life. Thus time takes shape in the activity of consciousness' (250).

To clarify the idea of primordial time, it is important to first introduce the concept of constituted time. Given the scope of the thesis, I will not present in detail Merleau-Ponty's objections to idealism and realism on the question of time[18]. My primary aim is to apply the distinction between constituted time and primordial time to interpret competition and the issues in contemporary sport. For this purpose, I partly reference Heidegger's (1988) work, where he provides a clearer example of constituted time—time

[17] Again, as Merleau-Ponty writes himself in the section of The World as the Place of Signification in the Chapter on 'Temporality' in *Phenomenology of Perception*, 'Our goal was to understand the relations between consciousness and nature, from the inside and from the outside. Or again, it was to connect the idealist perspective (according to which nothing exists except as an object for consciousness) and the realist perspective (according to which consciousnesses are inserted into the tissue of the objective world and of events in themselves). Or finally, it was to know how the world and man are accessible to two types of research, one explanatory, and the other reflective' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 452).

[18] For this discussion, see Merleau-Ponty (2012,432-457); for further discussions, see Romedenh-Romluc (2011).

as it is manifested by using the clock. Merleau-Ponty's (2012) discussion provides another example, which is a metaphor of time understood as a river. The problem with the clock time is that it eliminates the temporality structure by reducing the significance of past and future to discrete 'nows' on a linear axis. And the analysis of the metaphor of time as a river reveals that change or process is a subjective experience, and hence time does not flow as an external thing (like a river). Both examples are general interpretations of our time experience, which point back to the primordial time.

The primordial time is the fundamental temporal characteristic of consciousness. The constituted time is significant in the way that it manifests how the consciousness comprehends time. The distinction between primordial time and constituted time is essential in showing the interplay between living and conceptually comprehending. On the one hand, if the subject's very living of life is temporal, which means no matter whether we are aware of it or not, our existence is temporal. On the other hand, how we comprehend time also shapes how we live our lives, and how we live also affects how we understand time[19]. The third section of the chapter will illustrate the understanding of primordial time in terms of the spontaneous movement of the body, providing a clearer explanation of the perspective I will adopt when discussing contemporary sport in the following chapter.

4.1 Constituted time

When we talk about time in everyday life, we usually refer to the time indicated by the clock. Heidegger (1988) points out that the idea of time in the use of clocks indicates the common understanding of time that can be traced back to Aristotle. According to Heidegger (1988), the Aristotelian concept of time is 'counted in connection with motion' and is characterised as 'a sequence of nows' (256). Based on the Heideggerian view, Martínková and Parry (2011) describe this common understanding of time vividly as follows:

[19] Heidegger (1988, 269-274) mentioned a mode of existence called 'falling' as a reason why the primordial time is obscured from us, in which time is seen as infinite nows on a timeline. In falling we tend to overlook our motality. Nevertheless, this Heideggerian perspective on 'falling' is beyond the scope of the thesis to explain.

> Usually, when we talk about time, we understand it as linear, homogeneous, infinite, objective, divisible, quantifiable and measurable. …. This understanding of time is characterised by an axis, which is divided into past, present and future, where the present is a point between the past and the future. The length of this axis can be divided into a myriad of moments or units of the same duration, each following successively (Martínková and Parry, 2011, 23).

To interpret the view above, when past, present, and future are just points located on the axis of time, the past is the present that is no longer, and the future is the not-yet present. The relation between the future and the present is understood to be the same as the relation between the present and the past. In this way, the future and past are two abstracted concepts related to 'present' with assigned meanings of 'not yet' and 'no longer'. They are 'presents' or 'nows' that happen at different locations on the axis of time. In this way, what is on the axis of time becomes a sequence of 'nows'. Heidegger (1988) explains that the 'nows' are not the parts from which the axis of time is structured as a whole because the 'nows' are considered as discrete instants, and time is viewed not as a whole but merely as discrete 'nows' in sequence. He writes that, 'the common conception thinks of the nows as free-floating, relationless, intrinsically patched on to one another and intrinsically successive' (Heidegger, 1988, 263). Following Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty (2012) remarks that the sequence of nows does not merely 'commit the error of treating the past and the future as presents: it is, in fact, inconsistent since it destroys the very notion of the "now" and the very notion of succession' (435).

Nevertheless, there must be a reason for this common understanding of time to pervade from Aristotle's era till modern society. As Heidegger (1988) states: 'we measure time because we need and use time, …, when we look at a clock, since time itself does not lie in the clock, we assign time to the clock' (260-261). The time measured by the clock is indeed useful. But it is also important to recognise that it only characterises time by defining how we interpret time in our usage. The time indicated by the clock shows our initial approach to an interpretation of time, which points back to a primordial time by which this common understanding can be intelligible (Heidegger, 1988). Hence, Heidegger (1988) suggests that 'Aristotle's definition of time is not in any respect a definition in the academic sense. It characterizes time by defining how what we call time becomes accessible' (256-257).

Besides the above understanding of time as a sequence of nows, Merleau-Ponty (2012) focuses more on analysing a metaphor about time that shows another general understanding: time flows as a river. According to Merleau-Ponty, this metaphor dates back to Heraclitus and has since been used to describe how time flows or passes. The river metaphor implies that time runs from the past toward the present and future, by which 'the present is the outcome of the past, and the future is the outcome of the present' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 433). Merleau-Ponty (2012) suggests that this idea of time presupposes a witness to the flowing process. He writes that:

> When I say that the water currently passing by was produced by the glacier two days ago, I imply a witness fixed to a certain place in the world, and I compare his successive perspectives: over there he witnessed the melting of the snow and he followed the water along its descent; or perhaps after two days of waiting he sees from the riverside the pieces of wood float by that he had tossed into the river at the source (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 433).

For a person who happens to pass by and see a river, she does not know the source of the river. She may assume that the river flows from somewhere and claim that the water is produced by a glacier at the source. Or she may not wonder about the source of the water but simply see it flowing. Only in the former case, the water has undergone a time event for the witnessing subject. In other words, only the former case provides a common sentiment about the passing of time because it distinguishes the past state of the water and its current state[20]. I sense the passing of time by noticing changes in things. I realise these changes by comparing their current state to their previous state. For the comparison to be possible, I at least need to have seen or known (or imagined) both states of the thing. Merleau-Ponty (2012) points out that 'Change presupposes a certain observation post where I place myself and from where I can see things go by' (433). Even though time seems to be like a river made up of the events which happen, it is worth noting that 'there are no events without someone to whom they happen…' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 433). There is no time event that happens to the water or river if there is no observer with a finite perspective to whom the water flows from one place to the other. By analysing the river metaphor, Merleau-Ponty (2012) argues that there is no time in things.

[20] The person who sees the river might also not wonder about the source but simply see the river flowing. In this case, it can be claimed that there is only one flowing river for the person; the stream rushing before her eyes is also flowing at the same time somewhere further away.

Nevertheless, one objection to the above analysis might be that the analysis does not invalidate the subjective experience of the process, which consists of a sequence of before, now, and after, although a process or event always presupposes that there is a subject to whom the process occurs. The metaphor of time as a river seems to be right in conveying the subjective experience, though we can agree that a river itself does not have time. I think Heidegger's (1988) comment on the Aristotelian concept of time can also be applied here: the metaphor presents an interpretation of time which points back to a primordial time by which the metaphor can be intelligible. Following Merleau-Ponty (2012), I call the time described by the metaphor and the time in the use of the clock constituted time. As Merleau-Ponty (2012) argues, 'Constituted time – the series of possible relations according to the before and the after – is not time itself, it is merely the final registering of time, and it is the result of time's passage, which objective thought always presupposes but never manages to grasp' (438). To distinguish from constituted time, I call the time that Merleau-Ponty refers to 'primordial time'[21].

In the previous chapter, I used an example of seeing myself in a mirror to describe the relation between the spoken cogito and the tacit cogito. This example can also be applied here to analogically demonstrate the relation between constituted time and primordial time: I pass a mirror and see myself in it. The image in the mirror is me, but it is not precisely the 'I' seeing it. The significance of 'I am seeing' for the 'me that is seen' is analogous to the significance of the primordial time for the two general understandings of time: time as river or time in a clock. It is not entirely wrong to claim the image of me shows the 'I' in some way, just as the river metaphor describes the time experience to some extent. The time experience refers to the phenomenon that I notice that I am experiencing, while remembering what I have experienced, and I am expecting what will come next. Time, as a river, is constituted when I articulate such experience. When I conceptualise the time experience, the concepts of past, present and future are called upon to designate the 'already happened', 'happening' and 'about to happen'. On the conceptual level, the past, present, and future become three discrete concepts. When we

[21] Merleau-Ponty does not use the phrase 'primordial time' to distinguish it from constituted time or objective time, but simply uses the word 'time' in his discussion. Nevertheless, He uses the word primordial while describing time experience, for example, he writes,'…time, in the primordial experience of it that we have, is not for us a system of objective positions through which we pass, but rather a moving milieu that recedes from us, like the landscape from the window of a train' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 443).

further formulate the time experience on the conceptual level, an axis of time is stretched out on which the past and future are reduced to the 'no longer now' and 'not-yet now' to be located on the timeline. So as the image of me can be observed, modified and thereby objective for the observing 'I', in this sense, the time constituted is likewise objective, which is linear, divisible, quantifiable and measurable.

4.2 Primordial time

The previous section argued that neither the objective time indicated by the clock nor the subjective experience of time flowing as a river fully captures the primordial experience of temporality. The problem with the clock time is that it eliminates the temporalising structure of time by reducing the past and future to the 'nows' at different timeline locations. And the analysis of the metaphor of time as a river reveals that change or process is a subjective experience, and hence time does not flow as a thing like a river. Accordingly, an account of the primordial time needs to solve the problems posed by the analysis of constituted time: I. How could the 'no longer', 'now' and 'not yet' be understood in a way that the experiential significance of each can be preserved (which means past and future can keep their meanings instead of becoming the 'nows')? II. How is the transition from the 'no longer' to 'not yet' made possible? Merleau-Ponty's (2012) account of the primordial time answers the questions above by arguing 'we are the sudden upsurge of time' (452). This argument implies two essential points that answer the questions: I. The past and future are the horizons of the field of presence. II. There is only one ever-changing present that is the living present, which is the passage of time and cohesion of life itself (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 439-446).

4.2.1 The past and future are the horizons of the field of presence

There are two questions to answer about primordial time. This section focuses on the first question: how could the 'no longer', 'now' and 'not yet' be understood together in a way that the experiential significance of each can be preserved? As mentioned earlier, Merleau-Ponty argues that the 'succession of nows' in the common understanding of time, as manifested by the clock, destroys the meaning of now and the very meaning of succession. Romdenh-Romluc (2011) interprets that 'Merleau-Ponty holds that an account of time should explain the special way in which the past and future exist yet are absent' (244). The meanings of the past and future, or the 'no longer' and 'not yet', are

indicated by the ‘no’ that specifies their absence from the present. What is not at present has either just passed by or has not happened yet; simultaneously, the ‘just passed by’ and ‘not happened yet’ are still accessible for me and impact my present activities.

For example, I am writing those words now at 9:30 am; I know the afternoon will come. Because I have some other plans in the afternoon, I have to make use of the morning time as much as possible to finish this dissertation on time. If I don’t have any other plans, I can spend my whole day on this task. I probably would not be writing now, but I will start to write by going for a walk outside and having a coffee. My anticipation of my afternoon plan has influenced how I do my morning work. And because I went to bed later than my regular bedtime yesterday, I woke up tired this morning. I slowly got through my morning routine, which helped me fully wake myself up, so now I can write, though sluggishly. The tiredness from yesterday’s activities and the restless sleep from last night still weigh upon me, hence I am having a sluggish morning. The afternoon plan has not happened yet, and last night’s sleep has passed, which means neither of them is what I am doing now, but I anticipate the afternoon, and I can still feel the restlessness from last night. In this way, the afternoon and last night are absent from the present morning, yet exist for me.

Romdenh-Romluc (2011) interprets that, for Merleau-Ponty, this particular way in which the past and future exist, yet are absent, can be understood in terms of perspective (the figure-background structure). By analysing the metaphor of time as a river, Merleau-Ponty (2012) reveals that the experience of temporality is a subjective experience, which means the difference between ‘before’ and ‘after’ requires a subject who is located at a specific position/situation, with which she can make a comparison to recognise the difference. In other words, because I’m here at this moment, which gives me a perspective, and in comparison, I have the sense of ‘there’ which is not here, and ‘the other moment’ that is not now. Merleau-Ponty argues that the three dimensions of past, future and present are not given to us through discrete acts; he writes:

> I do not represent to myself my day, rather, my day weighs upon me with all of its weight, it is still there; I do not recall any particular detail, but I have the imminent power of doing so, I have it “still in hand.” Similarly, I do not think about the evening that is about to arrive, nor of what it will entail, and yet it “is there,” just like the back of the house whose front I am looking at, or like the background beneath the figure (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 439).

In the first chapter on the inherent way of seeing an object, I present Merleau-Ponty's (2012) illustration of the figure-background structure of perspective. When I gaze at a fragment of a landscape, the background or horizon is dormant in my vision, but 'they do not cease to be there' (70). The relationship between the present and the past/future might not be exactly the same as the relationship between the figure in gaze and its horizon. I think Merleau-Ponty made the analogy here to describe the experiential significance of the past and future, which is that they are horizons of the field of presence in the sense that they are absent from the present but do not cease to be there.

4.2.2 The primordial time is a network of intentionalities

Regarding the second question: How is the transition from 'no longer' to now and 'not yet' made possible? - essentially, 'what it is for time to go by' (Romdenh-Romluc, 2011, 244) - Merleau-Ponty (2012, 439-444) draws upon Husserl's (1964) account of protention and retention of time-consciousness to explore this issue. Simply speaking, protention is the immediate time-consciousness of 'yet to come' and retention is the immediate time-consciousness of 'just having been'. The protentions and retentions are 'intentionalities that anchor me to my surroundings' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 439). Merleau-Ponty (2012) emphasises that the protentions and retentions do not emanate from a central I, 'but somehow from my perceptual field itself, which drags along behind itself its horizon of retentions and eats into the future through its protentions' (439).

To understand retention and protention as intentionalities of consciousness, it is important to distinguish the distant past that I have memory of and the experience of 'just having been'. Husserl's example about melody is very helpful in explaining the issue here. When I am listening to a melody that consists of the tones of A, B, and C. When I hear B, A is what I have just heard, and C is what follows. Even though A just passed, and C is not yet, they still somehow exist for me; otherwise, I won't be able to hear the melody but a single B tone. And the no-longer-tone A and not-yet-tone C in the melody are different from my memory of the sounds of A and C when I recall each of them. The sounds A and C in memory are the contents or the objects of the recalling consciousness, which means they are noema in the noetic-noematic structure of experience. While my access to the no-longer-tone A that exists for me to be able to hear the melody is a retention. About the access, Husserl explains that:

> While it itself is actual (but not an actual sound), it is the retention of a sound that has been. A ray of meaning [Strahl der Meinung] can be directed toward the now, toward the retention, but it can also be directed toward that of which we are conscious in retention, the past sound (Husserl, 1964, 50).

Although I can represent past experiences in my memory and arrange them in a time order, which constitutes an objective linear time, I do not experience the temporal continuity in this way. Following Husserl (2019), Merleau-Ponty (2012) describes that when every new moment arrives, the previous moment is modified: I am not cut off from the previous moment, but again, 'it would not be past if nothing had changed,…. When a third moment takes place, the second one suffers a new modification; having been a retention, it now becomes the retention of a retention, and the layer of time between it and myself becomes thicker' (439). Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty (2012) points out that 'Time (the primordial time) is not a line, but rather a network of intentionalities' (440).

It is worth noting that these intentionalities of retention and protention are not "act intentionality" but "operative intentionality". Merleau-Ponty (2012) adopts these two phrases from Husserl[22] and explains that act intentionality is 'the thetic consciousness of an object that, in intellectual memory, for example, converts the "this-thing" into an idea' (441). Operative intentionality is what lies beneath the thetic consciousness of an object, and it is what makes the act intentionality possible. The act intentionality is sometimes also referred to as thematic object intentionality. For instance, Wehrle (2020) argues that object intentionality is the 'presupposition for the experience of a stable and object-like time', namely the constituted time (499).

By explaining that the primordial time is a network of operative intentionalities, Merleau-Ponty (2012) illustrates that, in experience, there are no different presents (or past and future) that need to be made in transition; consciousness has only one living field of presence with the horizons of past and future. And the activity of consciousness itself

[22] As discussed in the first chapter, Husserl (1989) distinguishes two kinds of grasping attitudes toward something, which correesponds to these two kinds of intentionalities: one is to perform attentively an act of seeing in a specific way such as judging, analysing, etc. and the other is to experience, to have something in the perceptual field.

in the field of the living present is the moving passage of the primordial time (438-446). As he writes:

> "In" my present – given that I catch hold of it while it is still living and with all that it implies – there is an ecstasy toward the future and toward the past that makes the dimensions of time appear, not as rivals, but as inseparable: **to be in the present is to have always been and to be forever. Subjectivity is not in time because it takes up or lives time and merges with the cohesion of a life** (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 446) (Bold text is added by the author).

4.3 The primordial time and spontaneous movements of the body

According to Merleau-Ponty (2012), the primordial time refers to the temporalising movement: the horizontal future unfolds, becoming the actual present, and the actual present modifies the just experienced, and the just experienced sinks down, becoming the horizontal past. The horizontal future is what is implicitly perceived as yet to come, while the horizontal past is what is implicitly perceived as having been, and the actual present is what the subject now perceives explicitly (Romdenh-Romluc, 2011). Hence, the temporalising movement also consists in 'the conversion of the implicit to the explicit, and the explicit to the implicit' (Romdenh-Romluc, 2011, 250).

Considering the implicit horizontal past and future are attributed to the two intentionalities of consciousness: retention and protention, it is reasonable to conclude that the primordial time takes shape in and through the activity of consciousness. Nevertheless, the conclusion does not imply that primordial time is a personally subjective interpretation or that it is constituted by consciousness's activity. Rather, the activity itself is the primordial time. In other words, temporality itself is subjectivity. For example, Merleau-Ponty writes:

> I do not think about the passage from the present to another present, I am not the spectator of this passage, I accomplish it. I am already directed toward the present that is about to arrive, just as my gesture is already at its goal, I myself am time, a time that "perdures" and that neither "flows by" nor "changes,… (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 444-445).

Although Merleau-Ponty does not explicitly explicate a relation between the primordial time and bodily movements, the view that the subject's activity accomplishes the passage of time implies the correlation. The subject in Merleau-Ponty's discussion is the body subject. And the subject's activity is essentially the subject's interaction with the

world (Romdenh-Romluc, 2011). The previous two chapters have shown that the body subject's interaction with the world manifests a spontaneity of the body: spontaneous bodily movements and spontaneous valuation in and through movements.

Regarding the primordial time, Merleau-Ponty also attributes it to spontaneity. Following Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty (2012) argues that 'Time is "self-affection of itself": time, as a thrust and a passage toward a future, is the one who affects; time, as a spread-out series of presents, is the one affected' (449-450). The self-affecting movement literally denotes a meaning of spontaneity. Besides, he also writes explicitly that 'a spontaneity that is "acquired"[23] – once and for all and that is perpetuated in being as the result of being acquired" – is precisely time and precisely subjectivity' (451).

From a Merleau-Pontian view, it is reasonable to state that the spontaneous movement of the body encompasses primordial time, or that primordial time is the body's spontaneous movements. This view can also be found in Fuchs (2005) and Wyllie (2005), who articulate the lived time within bodily movements[24]. The phrase lived time is commonly used in the field of phenomenology-based psychopathology (e.g., Fuchs, 2005; Minkowski, 2019; Wyllie, 2005), and it denotes a similar meaning to the primordial time. Fuchs (2005) distinguishes between explicit and implicit temporality in his exploration of the lived time within psychopathological cases. Implicit mode of temporality refers to the lived time that 'runs with the movement of life' (195). It is implicit in the experience of being fully engaged in the current task or in the flow state, whilst when time is felt as passing by, 'it becomes explicit or conscious' (195). Fuchs (2005) argues that 'implicit temporality and tacit performance of the body are nearly synonymous' (196). The tacit performance of the body refers to a phenomenon that 'the body functioning in the tacit mode, as the medium of everyday performance' (Fuchs, 2005, 196). In other words, we conduct daily activities that are accomplished through bodily movements encompassing primordial time, often without being explicitly aware of the body and time.

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[23] The acquired sponateity refers to the spontaneous valuation as one aspect of the embodied consciousness, which has been discussed in Chapter 3.

[24] Besides, from a different perspective, Gallagher (2011) also presents the time in action, which illustrates an intrinsic lived temporalities in bodily actions at both the micro-level of motor control regarding neurological events and the macro-level regarding the temporal structure of intentions.

Wyllie (2005) also points out that 'lived time is connected with the experiences of the embodied human subject as being driven and directed towards the world in terms of bodily potentiality and capability' (173). Accordingly, Wehrle (2020) makes a more straightforward argument that the differentiation between constituted time and primordial time corresponds to the two states of 'having a body' and 'being a body'. 'Having a body' refers to the state of living and seeing things with the object intentionality, in which the body is also seen as an object. And this object intentionality is also the 'presupposition for the experience of a stable and object-like time' (Wehrle, 2020, 499). 'Being a body' refers to the state of living and moving spontaneously as the body subject, and those movements contain intrinsic temporal structure or movements of temporalisation, which corresponds to the primordial time. Accordingly, it is reasonable to sum up that the constituted time is what we use, and sometimes we think we can have, in the same way that we think we use our body to do things. The primordial time is what we carry out, the execution of bodily movements, which is simultaneously the moving body.

5. CONTEMPORARY SPORT: COMPETITION AND THE STATE OF 'BEING TOWARD THE FUTURE'

The previous four chapters have demonstrated a fundamental understanding of human existence around how to understand objects, the body, consciousness, and time based on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. Although they are not directly related to sport, they serve as the essential theoretical foundation upon which I critically examine the phenomenon of contemporary sport and one of its core features: competition. Although there is still a debate in the philosophy of sport about whether all sports are competitive (e.g. Howe, 2019; Krein, 2015; Kretchmar, 1975; Mareš & Novotný, 2022; Parry, 2019, 2022). For example, Howe (2019) as well as Mareš and Novotný (2023) suggest that some sports are not contesting games. The arguments of Howe (2019) as well as Mareš and Novotný (2023) do not invalidate the view that contest is the essential feature of most sports, especially contemporary Olympic-type sports. Instead, their argument attempts to expand the scope of sport to include non-competitive but meaningful physical activities, which is not the concern of my discussion.

This chapter focuses on the contemporary professional sport system, of which Olympic sports are typical examples that are essentially organised as competitions. Parry (2019) defines Olympic-type sport as institutionalised, rule-governed human physical skills contests. I adopt this definition for the sports I discuss in this chapter. It is also worth clarifying that I approach the competition feature of those sports in terms of time and temporality from a phenomenological philosophy perspective. I view sport competition as a single specific human activity, and the term contemporary sport designates the milieu in which those activities take place.

In the literature, some studies have already approached competition in sports from phenomenological perspectives[25]; those that are most relevant to my discussion are Kretchmar (2014; 2019), Morgan (1976; 1978), McCoy and Martínková (2022), and

[25] For example, Aggerholm (2025), Gugutzer (2024), Kretchmar (2014; 2019), Martínková and Parry (2011), Morgan (1976; 1978), as well as McCoy and Martínková (2022). Although Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is also sometimes referenced to reinterpret sport, the focus is more on the embodied perspective on skills acquisition, habits and the significances of bodily experience in playing sports (e.g. Allen-Collinson, 2009; Hogeveen, 2011; A. C. Zimmermann & Morgan, 2011; A. Zimmermann & Saura, 2017). Chapters 2 and 3 have already introduced this embodied perspective.

Martínková and Parry (2011). I will start with the interpretations of competition and agonism from Kretchmar (2014; 2019) and McCoy and Martínková (2022) and proceed to the discussion on time in sport from Morgan (1976; 1978) and Martínková and Parry (2011). Based on the literature, I illustrate the temporal structure of competition from two dimensions. First is an individual subjective dimension, which considers the significance of competition for each participant in the sense that each participant conducts and experiences the activity. Second is the intersubjective dimension, which considers competition as a collective activity undertaken by the participants together. These two dimensions correspond to the temporal structure of competition regarding the primordial time and the constituted time introduced in Chapter 4.

Furthermore, I analyse contemporary sport as a milieu where competitions occur. In this milieu, a shared basic understanding of competition and time is used to organise and regulate the competitions. The basic understanding of competition is that it entails comparison, though the value of competition and how it should be conducted are still debated[26]. The shared understanding of time is the objective notion of time (the constituted time), which specifically is understood as a timeline made up of quantifiable and measurable time units. The two generalised understandings of competition and time dictate the operation of competitions nowadays. This leads to the issue of contemporary sport that I argue in my thesis, an existential state of athletes stimulated by the contemporary sport environment: 'being toward the future'.

5.1 Current discussion on competition in the relevant literature

There are a few discussions on competition within the phenomenological philosophy approach in the philosophy of sport literature. Kretchmar (2014; 2019) has attempted to illustrate the phenomenology of competition through a Husserlian eidetic analysis. By doing this, Kretchmar (2014) examines the everyday experience of competitive activities within the noetic noematic structure of experience suggested by Husserl. Kretchmar (2014) states that competition requires comparison, which involves an intention to compare and the activity itself as a contest where the comparison occurs. He writes, 'The intentionality of seeking comparisons would be the act or noetic element among Husserl's

[26] In this discourse, the implications or value of competition is the main focus of the debate e.g. Hyland, (1988); Kretchmar (2012); Russell (2014); Berg (2018); Simon et al.(2018).

noetic-noematic correlates. The contests themselves then stand as the object or noematic element of all contesting acts' (Kretchmar, 2014, 3).

The nature of comparison grounds plurality as one factor of competition because 'A comparison between one, as it were, makes no sense' (Kretchmar, 2014, 4). Besides, competition is not just about comparing among multiple parties; it also involves the parties attempting to establish superiority over the others. The latter element calls for normativity and disputation as other factors of contesting. Accordingly, the disputation factor brings up temporality as another essential factor. Kretchmar (2014) argues that 'the commitment to superiority is time-sensitive for purposes of generating a contest. It has to precede the test taking, affect the way the test is confronted, inform the participants that the test score per se will be inconclusive relative to the competitive outcome' (8). The last factor of a competitive project is comparability, which means all involved parties share a common test. For Kretchmar (2014), plurality, normativity, disputation, temporality, and comparability are essential for contesting to be intelligible.

It is worth noting that the 'temporality' in Kretchmar's (2014) discussion refers to the importance of timing for the participants to commit to a contest. It is more of a time-sensitive feature of competition rather than the temporality that denotes the temporalisation phenomenon of human existence. As discussed in the previous chapter, the temporalisation phenomenon is the primordial time in human activities: the conversion of the implicit horizontal future to the explicit present, and the explicit present to the implicit horizontal past. Morgan's (1976; 1978) analysis of the difference and relation between the futural dimension of sport and sportive training presents a more relevant view on this aspect of temporality (I will present his view in the third section).

In addition, McCoy and Martínková's (2022) analysis of three agonistic social practices — sport, philosophy, and democracy — is another relevant work on competition within phenomenological philosophy. They illustrate the ontological basis of agon through an ancient Greek concept of '*polemos*' (war/struggle). Based on the phenomenology of Heidegger and Patočka, McCoy and Martínkova (2022) argue that polemos underpins agonistic practices and is embedded in human existence, driven by Dasein's Care for their existence. They state, 'The necessity to 'care' for our own existence impacts our social lives: we sometimes find ourselves in conflict with others' intentions, goals, and views about how to live together' (McCoy & Martínková, 2022,

249). The concept of polemos reflects the ontological struggle inherent in human existence, given the situation of human life: we live in the world together with others, while each individual must care for his or her existence to be an individual. To interpret it, on the one hand, it is the distinction that brings about individuality within a group; on the other hand, the difference also sets people in conflict, by which the struggle and agonism are conditions of human existence.

Moreover, McCoy and Martínková (2022) emphasise that there is also a cooperative side of agon, which manifests well in philosophy, democratic politics and sport competition. An open and adversarial argument binds people together in a discussion, and a good competition in sport often helps the participants to achieve mutual excellence. Their analysis highlights the process of struggle, openness to outcome, participation, and cooperation as essential factors in agonistic practices. Competition in sport is a process of striving toward a goal in which individuals have the opportunity to excel, prove themselves, and achieve recognition from others. Participation and the process are the logically necessary conditions for the understanding of competition and sport results (McCoy & Martínková, 2022, 258). The participation and process in sport competition is actualised by athletes' bodily skill execution or bodily performance.

Both works of Kretchmar (2014, 2019) and McCoy and Martínková (2022) have offered an interpretation of competition or agon from a phenomenological philosophy approach. However, they present two very different accounts of the issue. I think that their accounts focus on two different dimensions of the phenomenon of competition. As a human activity, competition entails meaning for each participant, which is the focus of the account on agonism of McCoy and Martínková (2022). Simultaneously, as Kretchmar (2014) has pointed out, comparison grounds plurality, which means competition is necessarily a collective or intersubjective human activity. For a competition to be conducted intersubjectively in a meaningful way, participants must share a common understanding of competition. This understanding can be summarised as a competition concept, which can then be employed to organise a contest. Kretchmar's (2014) elaboration focuses on the competition that functions at the intersubjective dimension.

If the elaboration on agonism of McCoy and Martínková (2022) explicates the concrete existential meaning of sport competition at the individual subjective dimension, Kretchmar's (2014, 2019) work based on Husserl's noetic-noematic framework

explicates a practical common understanding of competition, which is a conceptual abstraction of the concrete agonistic activity. This might explain why the meaning of the temporality of competition for Kretchmar (2014) differs significantly from Morgan's (1976, 1978) account of the temporality in sport, but both are informative. Again, Kretchamr points out the significance of the timing at the intersubjective dimension. Morgan's (1976, 1978) analysis focuses on the temporality of human existence on the individual subjective dimension. In the following section, I attempt to analyse the temporal structure of competition from both dimensions because they are two constitutive aspects of competition as a human activity.

5.2 The temporal structure of sport competition

In this section, I present the temporal structure of the sport competition from two dimensions, which correspond to relationships between competition and primordial time and constituted time. In the individual subjective dimension, sport competition as an agonistic physical activity provides participants with the opportunity to experience primordial time. In the intersubjective dimension, sport competition as a process of comparing performance requires a shared clock time (the constituted time) to operate.

It should be clarified again that when I refer to the individual subjective dimension, I do not mean athletes' personal interpretation of their contesting experiences. Instead, by considering competition as an activity conducted by every athlete, I examine the participants' structure of experience in the competition on the concrete existential level, or, in McCoy and Martínková's (2022) words, on the ontological level. As mentioned earlier, McCoy and Martínková (2022) argue that polemos (struggle) underlines agonism, which is driven by each individual's care for their existence in a community. My analysis does not contradict their view, but supplements it from a different Merleau-Pontian perspective.

As presented in the previous chapters, for Merleau-Ponty (2012, 439-444), the activity of consciousness is primordial time. Consciousness is embodied by the 'I can' in and through spontaneous bodily movements and valuation. In other words, consciousness in a Merleau-Pontian view refers to the body subject with motor intentionality. Thereby, the primordial time is the body subject's moving. By being the moving body, the body subject experiences or lives out the primordial time. Sport competition primarily consists

of a series of tasks and challenges that are carried out through bodily movements. Following this, the process of competition in sport is the unfolding of the primordial time. By fully engaging in a competition, which means by being the spontaneously moving body subject while contesting, athletes might experience the implicit primordial temporality. Similarly, though from a Heideggerian perspective, Martínková and Parry (2011) also argue that the original temporality is present in any human activity and the practice of any sport.

The experience of original temporality might be aware afterwards when players engage in a practice fully immersively or move spontaneously. Similarly, Andrieu et al. (2018) describe an 'emersion' in some leisure activities such as yoga, scuba diving and (naked) surfing, in which the living body is 'awakened' and 'emersed' and hence spontaneously interacting with the environment. About the spontaneous moving experience, Loland (2021) uses the example of skiing to describe this experience: 'Skis and poles become indistinguishable prolongations of the body as the skier moves creatively and innovatively in what is experienced as a fluid web of interconnections'. The movements in such experience are often referred to with qualities of flow, rhythm and dynamic. The state of 'being in the present' illustrated in the next chapter further demonstrates this phenomenon from the context of Eastern movement practices based on Daoism and Buddhism.

However, not every athlete in every sporting contest engages in the activity fully immersively or fully experiences the primordial temporality. Martínková and Parry (2011) point out that the everyday use of the objective notion of time (constituted time) in sport shapes how athletes train and practice the activity, which in turn affects their experience of the sport and the original temporality. By analysing the role of time played in different kinds of sport, they identify four groups: time-constituted sport, event sport, mixed sport, and sport that encourage the experiencing of original temporality. Within the first three groups, the notion of time as objective is either a constitutive element of that sport, such as basketball and football or a more or less critical regulative element, such as cross-country skiing and swimming. Sport in the fourth group are typically not measured or constrained by a timer, and involve high risks or danger that might lead athletes to realise the finitude of life and thereby intuit the original temporality (Martínková and Parry, 2011).

Besides, the later work of Martínková (2024) argues that the example of ultra sports might challenge the above categorisation of sport according to time. Ultra sports require athletes to endure the challenges brought up in the ungroomed nature through pragmatic cyclic activities such as long-distance swimming, running, cycling, or country skiing (Martínková, 2024). They are competitions that involve time measurement on the one hand. On the other hand, the rules of competition are set to facilitate athletes' immersion into the natural environment and hence encourage experiencing the original temporality. The timing introduced in the activity is not to encourage speed or efficiency, but to expand athletes' exposure to the activity (Martínková, 2024). The example of ultra sports shows that the presence of a timer in sports based on the constituted time does not necessarily obstruct experiencing the original temporality.

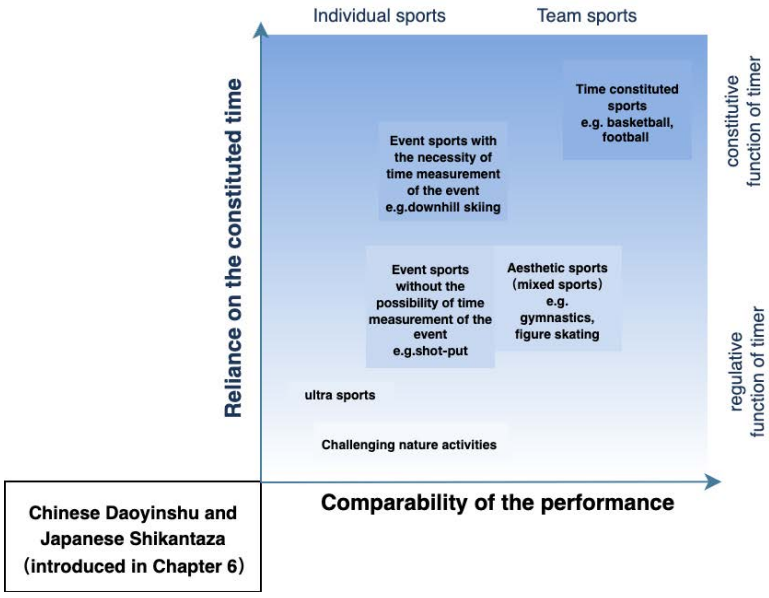
Moreover, Krein (2015) has analysed the non-competitive features of physical activities conducted in nature, which share some similarities with ultra sports. According to Krein (2015), challenging nature activities are athletes' dynamic interaction with the natural environment. They are not competitions against nature because 'there is no relevant comparison to be made' (273). They are not competitions against athletes themselves either, because 'meaningful competition requires being able to accurately measure what it means to win and who the actual winners are' (273). The challenging nature activities are usually conducted in nature venues, where conditions are uncontrollable, making it difficult to compare the achievements. The experience of solitude and the uncontrollable natural environment also applies to ultra sports. Even in the Olympics, the conditions of open water swimming can vary vastly, which makes the records of individual races incomparable (Martínková, 2024). Martínková (2024) argues that ultra sports are more appropriate nature sports than Krein's (2015) challenging nature activities because ultra sports have basic rules that establish the race and facilitate immersion into nature and an institutionalised competitive setting.

Nevertheless, compared to sports in the other three groups – time-constituted sports, event sports, and mixed sports – the degree of competitiveness or the ambience of contesting in ultra sports is weaker than basketball, a 400-meter race, and gymnastics regarding their contest setup. Athletes' achievements in ultra sports are less comparable than the points scored by two teams in a basketball game. The weak comparability of results can apply to most individual sports versus team sports. Because team sports often

involve an introduced scoring system to record each team's overall performance, the impact of unmeasurable individual variables on the outcome of a competition is minimised. For example, if an athlete falls ill the night before a competition, a football team can replace that athlete. But in a javelin competition or 400-meter race, if the athlete still chooses to compete, her performance and the outcome of the competition would be affected by the unexpected personal circumstances. Still, the ambience of contesting in an ultra race is weaker than in a 400-meter race because the contesting conditions of an ultra race are less modified and supervised, and thereby, the comparability of the outcome is inferior to that of a 400-meter race.

Subsequently, I suggest that different sports demonstrate different degrees of competitiveness; in other words, the ambience of contesting in different sports can be put on a spectrum. This contesting ambience is mainly shaped by the organisation of competition in the intersubjective dimension, rather than resulting from athletes' personal competitive attitude towards the sport. I summarise two correlated factors that shape the contesting ambience of sport competition: I. The reliance on the usage of constituted time and II. The comparability of the performance (see Figure 1). The usage of constituted time refers to the function of the clock or timer played in regulative and/or constitutive rules[27] of the sport.

Figure 1. *Spectrum of contesting ambience of different sport competitions*



[27] D'Agostino (1981) famously distinguished between constitutive rules and regulative rules in sports. Constitutive rules define the sport, specifying the actions conducted in that sport. Regulative rules only guide the actions undertaken in the sport.

Notes: The intensity of colour represents the degree of competitiveness of the sport or the intensity of the contesting ambience. The reliance on the constituted time refers to the role of the timer in the regulative and constitutive rules of the sport.

Accordingly, the intensity of the contesting ambience of a sport competition[28] can be optimised in two ways: I. minimising the individual variables that might decrease the comparability of the outcomes (it means encouraging athletes to participate as a team instead of as individuals); II. standardising contesting conditions by setting time and space limitations through regulative and/or constitutive rules. For instance, the space limitation is typically set by sport fields that are usually defined in constitutive rules and sport venues specified in regulative rules. Time limitations necessitate the use of constituted time to measure athletes' performance and/or regulate the process. Martínková and Parry (2011) similarly argue that their categorisation of time-constituted sports and event sports corresponds to the constitutive and regulative functions of the objective notion of time in sports.

For Martínková and Parry (2011), the more extensively the objective concept of time is used in sports, the more difficult it is for athletes to experience the original temporality. They write:

> Objective time demands that the game be played no matter how the athlete feels or whether he or she wishes to play, which can lead to a disrespecting of the self ("it is time to play the game" versus "I feel like playing the game"). …Objective time dictates to human beings what to do, while they remain unaware that it is they who actually enable objective time its being. On the other hand, of course, without the notion of objective time there would be no sports of this kind (i.e. no "time constituted" sports) (Martínková and Parry, 2011, 27).

I suggest that the problem identified by Martínková and Parry (2011) above is not only a problem attributed to time-constituted sports competitions, but also more of a problem of the contemporary sport system. The current system is regulated mainly according to the constituted time, stimulating a 'being toward the future' state of athletes, which I will illustrate in the following section. In the intersubjective dimension of competition, it is necessary to have a shared idea of time to organise the competition

[28] To some degree, it is also correlated with the degree of fairness of competition. However, even though the ambience of contesting of a javelin game might be less intense than that of a football game, it does not mean football is a fairer competition than javelin.

collectively, and the more involved the constituted time is in the competition, the better comparability of the measured performance and hence the more intense the contesting ambience can be.

To sum up this section, the temporal structure of sport competition is considered from two dimensions. In the individual subjective dimension, competition, as one of the human activities, attributes the temporalisation movement of primordial time. The process of contesting, specifically, athletes' carrying out of the contesting activity, is the primordial time, where the future outcome is not predetermined but unfolded gradually. The primordial temporality of competition is significant in highlighting each individual's concrete experience in the sport. In the intersubjective dimension, an abstract conceptual notion of time and competition sketch a common understanding about the activity and enable it to be practised collectively. The constituted time is the shared idea of time manifested by the use of clocks in the sport, which, again, is significant in terms of organising the competition and intensifying the contesting ambience.

5.3 The stimulated state of 'being toward the future' in contemporary sport

The objective notion of time is useful in organising competitions; however, as Martínková and Parry (2011) pointed out, it also often dictates what people should do and impacts athletes' experience of competitions. I suggest that this issue with the objective notion of time comes together with the existential state of 'being toward the future' stimulated in contemporary sport. By the term contemporary sport, I refer to the milieu in which the sport competitions discussed in the previous section occur.

To explain the significance of contemporary sport as a milieu, it is necessary to refer back to Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment, outlined through the first four chapters of the thesis. In short, the idea of embodiment views human existence as a body subject being in the world, which means the body subjects (humans) are inseparable from the world in which we inhabit. Specifically, Chapter 2 on the body subject's motor intentionality illustrates a correlation between bodily movements and the situations. The situations we encounter in the world solicit our movements or actions, and the situations can be concrete actual situations and/or projected abstract situations.

A milieu or environment is a sum of situations. Human activities entail a milieu where they are conducted. And by self-awareness and self-reflection, we contemplate and analyse our activities and subsequently thematise the milieu with some basic shared understandings about the activities. Those shared basic understandings feature the milieu, which in turn influences human actions, accordingly shaping the existential states of humans in the milieu.

In the case of contemporary sport, with each sporting competition being a specific activity undertaken by each participant, the term 'contemporary sport' generalises and thematises these competitions, providing a name for the context in which the competitions occur. In this milieu, generalised understandings of competition and time are shared, which guide the organisation and participation. I identify three main factors in contemporary sport that stimulate the existential state of 'being toward the future': 1. Overemphasis on results; 2. Prioritising the usage of constituted time over experiencing time; 3. The imbalance between training and playing sports.

5.3.1 Overemphasis on results

In the literature, the zero-sum logic of sport competitions is often mentioned, referring to the overemphasis on the winning result in contemporary sport, which has been discussed extensively by sport philosophers. For example, Simon (2015) has criticised the emphasis on winning in sports by arguing that competition in sports is a 'mutually acceptable quest for excellence through challenge' (47). He argues that the value of sport competition does not lie in winning but in overcoming the challenge presented by a worthy opponent (Simon et al., 2015, 46). In contrast, Russell (2014) claims that the excellence pursued by athletes in competitive sports is relative excellence, which is judged by comparing with others, rather than an excellence for its own sake. For Russel (2014), sport competition conceptually requires striving to win over others, which is an internal moral flaw attributed to the activity itself. Kretchmar (2012) and Berg (2018) have construed views that acknowledge the zero-sum logic as part of sport competition without diminishing the moral values of sports by the logic.

A common position against the zero-sum result of sports is to advocate focusing on the process of trying to win rather than the winning outcome. Simon's (2015) 'mutual quest for excellence' is one of the values of the process of trying. Hyland (1978) identifies

friendship, and Feezell (1986) emphasises the value of play with sportmanship, which are also the positive benefits people can attain through sports by focusing on the process. Nevertheless, those views could also lead to overemphasising the process and neglecting the outcome. Kretchmar (2012) points out that the winning result matters for competitors, who crave the glow that comes with victory, the prizes that have material value and contain priceless symbolic worth. Berg (2018) argues that the pain of loss also has value because 'it puts the importance of excellence and experience of winning into perspective' (268). It is practically factual that for every participant, the competition result matters.

I agree with Kretchmar (2012) and Berg (2018) that the zero-sum logic is the logic of competition, which is neutral and does not necessarily lead to moral issues in sports. It reflects a common understanding of competition mentioned in the previous section: a competition is structured to make a comparison. A comparison produces a ranking, a 'better than' and 'worse than' kind of conclusion (Kretchmar, 2012). And a competition is itself a process of comparing. Therefore, I don't think competition conceptually gives importance only to the result, nor does the conceptual meaning of 'sport', since 'competition' and 'sport' denote particular kinds of activity that themselves are processes.

By pointing out the overemphasised result in contemporary sport as one factor that stimulates the state of 'being toward the future', I do not refer to the zero-sum logic of competition. Instead, I focus on the general operation of contemporary sport merely according to the common understanding of competition (making comparisons), which in turn influences how people perceive sport competition and outcomes. As discussed in the previous section, sport competition, as a collective activity, requires a shared understanding to be conducted and organised in the intersubjective dimension. The constitutive and regulative rules of sports reflect the shared knowledge about specific sport and contribute to organising the corresponding competition, which, as neutral as the zero-sum logic, are part of the activity. Besides, some supplementary rules and operations in contemporary sport are set to incentivise the comparison, adding extra weight to the winning result.

For example, professional sports usually offer massive prize money for winners. A huge gap between the first and second place prizes is usually deliberately set to highlight the value of winning. In the FIFA World Cup 2022, the champion team, Argentina, received $42 million, the runner-up team, France, received $30 million,

resulting in a $12 million difference. The difference between third place and fourth place is only $2 million (Croatia gained $27 million and Morocco gained $25 million). Also, teams in the 9th to 16th places received equally $13 million, and teams in the 17th to 32nd places received $9 million, much less than the prize money gap between the champion and the runner-up.

The final game of the World Cup might be the most lucrative, with profits from ticket sales, sponsorship, and broadcasting, which could justify the massive prize money for the champion team. However, this is also a consequence of the operation of contemporary sport that emphasise the final result of the games. According to the agenda-setting theory in the mass communication field, news media can significantly influence the public's perception of the importance of topics (Frederick, 2024). Sport media coverage usually focuses more on the final game and the winners' stories. For instance, Finals are usually scheduled in prime-time television slots. Only the top three finishers will attend the post-match press conference, and the champion often receives the most media coverage.

That money and fame add extra glory to victory. Some may consider these to motivate athletes to strive for victory and a reasonable reward for the winners' efforts. Nevertheless, it is precisely this view that casts doubt on the value of the spontaneous or organic outcome of a competition. It seems that without money and fame, athletes would not be motivated to strive for victory. And because external rewards for victory have been introduced, it is also difficult to discern what motivates athletes nowadays. If we recall the sport games we played at primary school, a small win could also bring us great joy, even though there were no extra prizes for that small victory.

To clarify, I am not suggesting that money and fame corrupt athletes' motives or contemporary sport. However, it is important to recognise that these factors add extra significance to winning results. As a consequence, it may steer people's motivation to engage in sport competitions, drawing their focus more to the future glorious victories. When winning is targeted as the only goal, the original openness of the future unfolding while carrying out the activity may get overlooked by the narrow focus. The other potential future story, other than winning, then becomes unacceptable.

In addition to highlighting winning, promoting the pursuit of records also emphasises a future result that should be better. The idea of 'higher, faster and stronger' requires constantly comparing the current performance with the past and pushing toward a future performance better than the current one. In this process, once a performance is done and a game is finished, it immediately becomes the past because, in a constant comparison with the future, there is no room to let the 'now' pond over. The pursuit of records aims at the result that always remains in the future, advocating for constant comparison of the past and moving toward the future. This overemphasis on results is the first factor that stimulates the existential state of 'being toward the future'.

5.3.2 Prioritising our usage of constituted time over our experiencing time

Chapter 4 on temporality illustrated the distinction between constituted time and primordial time. The former is a notion of objective time manifested in the usage of time (clock), and the latter is the temporalising movement embedded and embodied in human activities. In modern society, the clock and the idea that time is objective and measurable permeate all aspects of our lives, and contemporary sport is no exception. As aforementioned in the previous section, Martínková and Parry (2011, 27) have pointed out the problem with this notion of time: the objective time often dictates the time for playing sports, which might lead to disrespecting the self of athletes: 'it's time to play the game' versus 'I feel like playing the game'. This misunderstanding of time may also stress and obstruct athletes from experiencing the primordial temporality immersively. While Martínková and Parry (2011) might consider this as more of a problem of time-constituted sports, I suggest that this problem arises from a fixation on the notion of objective time, prioritising the usage of constituted time over experiencing, which is also attributed to the contemporary sport milieu rather than just to particular sport.

Since the commercialisation of contemporary sport, selling the timeslot of sport events has been the main source of revenue for the sport industry, which again includes event ticket sales and TV deals. Broadcasting contracts have greatly influenced the scheduling of professional sport events. The television networks seek to maximise viewership and advertising revenue to generate profits from the broadcast timeslots; therefore, games are usually scheduled according to the prime time of broadcasting. Also, the more matches, the more revenue can be generated, which leads to an excessive workload for athletes. For example, Shah (2024) reveals that Top European football

leagues such as the EPL, La Liga and Serie A are already facing the problem of dense domestic schedules. International competitions further exacerbate this problem, with tournaments such as the UEFA Champions League, the UEFA Nations League and the expanded FIFA World Cup format increasing the athletes' workload. Those Matches are often played in rapid succession, with athletes having only a short rest period between games.

Based on Manchester City midfielder Rodri's knee injury last season, Tim Spiers, a football journalist from The Athletic (*The NewYork Times*), has harshly criticised the current football match schedule, arguing that the overload is the main cause of injuries among top athletes. Spiers (2024) writes, 'City, who play Watford in the Carabao Cup tonight, 49 hours after the Arsenal game finished, could play up to 75 games this season if they reach the final of every competition they're playing in, while Chelsea could play 74'. With international tournaments at the top of the club matches during the season, top players like Rodri (If he hadn't been injured) or Bernardo Silva have up to 85 matches scheduled between early August and mid-July, averaging one match every four days (Spiers, 2024). Not only in football, but NBA and NFL athletes also face similar issues of overloading and injury (Shah, 2024).

In contemporary sport, not only has the merchandise of famous athletes and clubs been commercialised, but also the time athletes spend participating in their sports. Match time is nowadays mainly regulated and planned for match consumers. The match time literally means money. For the players, their salaries highly depend on the match time; meanwhile, the match time is also their playing or carrying out of the activity, which is their physical effort. Nevertheless, the bodily experience layer of match time is often neglected nowadays; otherwise, how can we fail to consider the fatigue and risk of injury that comes with a schedule of one match every four days, including travel and training? When the game schedule is arranged merely based on the objective linear timeline in a milieu where time means money, we tend to constantly plan the timing of the next competition in pursuit of efficiency and profit. The prioritising of the usage of time over athletes' experiencing time is the second factor that stimulates the existential state of 'being toward the future'.

5.3.3 The imbalance between training and playing sports

According to an article posted by Athlete 365 on the Olympics website, the average elite athlete trains for six hours a day, six days a week, and twelve months a year (Athlete365, 2024). A study focusing on the training of Norwegian international rowers from 1970 to 2001 shows that the athletes spend 17% of their waking time on training (Fiskerstrand & Seiler, 2004). Although among the recent research in sport science, there is no general number specifying the training volume of athletes throughout their careers, there are many studies about overtraining and the impact of training load on athletes. (e.g Collette et al., 2018; Meeusen et al., 2013; Myrick, 2015; Sperlich & Holmberg, 2017). It is reasonable to state that training occupies a significant portion of an athlete's sport life.

Compared to training, the sport competitions that athletes aim for through training preparation are relatively rare occasions. For example, the quadrennial Olympic Games are considered the most important events for many athletes in all kinds of sports[29]. Athletes' training programs are often planned around the quadrennial event. There are also other domestic and international sport competitions during the four years, while those competitions are mostly matches for the qualification for the final at the Olympics. Those competitions are sometimes considered part of the training plan. For example, replacing training with competition and driving training with competition have been two training strategies commonly applied by Chinese coaches to prepare athletes for the Olympic cycle (Deng, 2022). Similarly, Game-based training has also been increasingly used as a specific method of conditioning and training the skills and physical fitness of team sports athletes (Gabbett et al., 2009). In this way, most of the sport competitions in athletes' careers also serve as training.

Considering that the general retirement age for an elite athlete is 34, it is rare for an elite sport career to last more than ten years (Athlete365, 2024). While ten years can only cover two Olympic cycles, it is also difficult for athletes to obtain sufficient fitness and luck to participate in two Olympic Games (without injury or other personal reasons). If the Olympic is the most important event that athletes aim for, where they actually play

[29] Some sports, such as football and basketball, have their own well-organised professional leagues and international competitions (such as the World Cup) and may not consider the Olympics to be the most important event. But this is another issue that goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

the sport and compete instead of training, there is a significant disproportion between training time and actual competition time throughout an athlete's career.

According to Morgan (1976; 1978), training is a precondition of playing sports. From a Heideggerian perspective, he points out that, in training, time is understood and interpreted as 'a time for something'. Training has an infinite, unfulfilled futural end, by which time is experienced as empty; while, in contrast, playing sports is grounded in a self-contained, non-instrumental projection of the future (Morgan, 1976). In other words, in training, athletes use time to prepare for future competitions, which is not just for enjoying the training task itself. Hence, training always involves a futural end that is something other than itself. Morgan (1978) writes, 'training, as any other planned activity, only makes sense in terms of its futural intent to realise some state of affairs' (12). In comparison, the time spent playing sports could be just for the playing itself. Hence, according to Morgan (1976,1978), training is an instrumental activity for an end beyond itself, while sport is autotelic. He argues that, 'Sport then, unlike training, offers man an opportunity to be a whole being by creating its own fulfilled totality, a self-constituted plenum, which does not infinitely disperse itself by indeterminately pointing beyond itself' (Morgan, 1976, 422).

Morgan's (1976, 1978) analysis shows that time is experienced differently in training and playing sports. Though he does not explicitly distinguish between constituted time and primordial time, the time used in training resonates with the aforementioned constituted time, while playing sports, as practised as an autotelic activity, offers the experience of primordial time. Nevertheless, it would be oversimplified to attribute the distinction between training and playing sports to the distinction between constituted time and primordial time. Martínková (2013) suggests a distinction between intrinsic instrumentality and extrinsic instrumentality of sport. The intrinsic instrumentality is in line with the autoleticity of sport discussed by Morgan (1976, 1978): sports have goals within themselves. The extrinsic instrumentality of sports points out the fact that professional sports are also sometimes used to pursue values external to them, such as fame and wealth.

Although I agree with Morgan that playing sports might be more valuable than training, in that playing sports can offer an opportunity for participants to be whole beings, the other environmental factors that influence athletes' playing should also be considered. Still, training is more driven by a future goal than playing sports. Particularly when significant sporting events are relatively rare and athletes' careers primarily focus on training, the imbalance between training and playing sports is the third factor of contemporary sport that stimulates the state of 'being toward the future'. By contrast, the next chapter provides a counterexample of this state, illustrating the state of 'being in the present' cultivated through Eastern movement practices: Chinese Daoyin exercise and Zen meditation practices. By presenting the significance of the state of 'being in the present', the issue with the 'being toward the future' state shall be better illuminated.

6. MOVEMENT PRACTICES WITH THE IDEA OF SPONTANEITY AND 'BEING IN THE PRESENT'

This chapter illustrates the state of being in the present through two movement practices: early Chinese health-preserving practice Daoyinshu (导引术) and Zen Buddhism meditative practice Shikantaza (just sitting 只管打坐). To better understand these two practices and the state of being in the present cultivated through them, it is essential to first introduce the underlying ontology in traditional Chinese culture and Daoist philosophy, which holds a particular view about the body, nature, human life, and the relationship between humans and the world. I draw on the Daoist concept of zìrán 自然 to explain this view, which is commonly translated as spontaneity in English.

Chapter 3 has presented the spontaneity of the body implied in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology through the idea of consciousness as 'I can'. The Daoist concept of spontaneity, which will be introduced later in this chapter, does not merely concern the body, but the understanding of humans as embodied subjects is implied in the Daoist philosophy and traditional Chinese culture in general. Kohn (2008) suggests that the ancient Chinese believed human beings are, by nature, embodied creatures, and over several millennia, they have made the body the foundation of the great human endeavour of perfection. The traditional Chinese medicine is developed in this context, as is Daoyinshu, a series of movement practices developed along with traditional Chinese medicine for health-preserving and sometimes as a treatment (Kohn, 2008; Wang, 2003). I will further explain this in the following sections.

Wang and Martínková (2024) describe the Daoist concept of spontaneity as a force of nature and point out a resonance between this concept and the spontaneity of the body in Merleau-Ponty's work. The first section of this Chapter presents the Daoist concept of spontaneity and further explains the resonance with Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment. Given the resonance, Daoyinshu practice serves as a good example of the practical application of understanding the body as the moving subject situated in the world. I describe the cultivated state of being through the practice of Daoyinshu as 'being in the present'. In addition to Daoyinshu, the Zen Buddhism practice of Shikantaza also exemplifies the state of 'being in the present'. The similarity between these two kinds of

practices could be explained by the origin of Zen[30]. The second section introduces these two practices, Daoyinshu and Shikantaza, respectively and their connections. The third section illustrates the state of being in the present that is commonly cultivated through these two practices.

6.1 The Daoist concept of spontaneity (zìrán 自然)

The phrase Zìrán 自然, a concept in Daoism, is interpreted as an idea of spontaneity when translated into English. The two Chinese characters 自然, when they are composed together, also convey the meaning of 'naturalness' or 'nature' (自然 zìrán). It is worth noting that the character 自 zì) holds three meanings in Chinese: (1) 'from'; (2) the self; and (3) a sense of reflexivity, while the character 然 (rán), in addition to meaning 'so' in classical usage, may also refer to and intensify the character 自 (zì) (Bruya, 2010, 208–209). Thereby 自然 zìrán can also be literally translated as self-so (e.g. Franklin, 2019; Sukhoverkhov et al., 2021). Franklin (2019) remarks that the role of Zìrán 自然 in Daoism is similar to the role of causa sui (self-caused) in European philosophy. Bruya (2010, 213) also explains Zìrán 自然 with self-causation and spontaneity, yet he emphasises a different understanding of the self and causation. Bruya (2010) writes that, 'The self that is referred to is never divorced from a wider, interactive context; it is always assumed to persist within an organic web of mutual influence, and because of this one cannot conceive of an egoistic or deviant form of Daoist self-causation' (213). The meaning of spontaneity or self-causation in Daoism is synonymous with 'natural' (in line with the second meaning of the phrase 自然 zìrán); the self in the Daoist context refers to neither an atomist nor an individualist perspective of agency (Bruya, 2010, 213).

[30] Zen is transcribed as 'Chan' 禅 in Chinese. Originally, Chan was a translation of the Sanskrit word 'dhyāna' (meaning to 'meditate') from the Buddhist sutras that spread from India to China in the 2nd century A.D. at the latest (Martínková & Wang, 2022). Ma (2007) interprets that the translation of character 禅 (Chan) for 'dhyāna' is a creative translation under the influence of Daoist thought. The word 禅(Chan) is derived from the classical Daoist text: Metaphorical Language in Zhuangzi (Ma, 2007). For a more detailed explanation about the history of Zen and Chan and their connection with Daoism, see Martínková & Wang (2022).

To explain the self within an organic web, Bruya (2010) emphasises that in early Daoist metaphysics, 'there is no metaphysical break between human and animal or human and spiritual' (213). The continuum is possible because the ancient Chinese believed that 'qi 气' makes up everything in the universe (Bruya, 2010; Kohn, 2007, 2008; Wang, 2003; Yuasa, 1993). The idea of qi can also be found in the early Chinese medical classic *Huangdi Neijing 黄帝内经*, which states that life consists of qi (Wang, 2003, 4). Kohn (2007) explains that qi is 'associated with mist, fog, and moving clouds'; it is 'contained in the foods we eat and the air we breathe', and 'more subtly it is also the life force in the human body and, as such, forms the basis of all physical vitality'(105). Bruya (2010) interprets that qi carries information about the fluctuating interior conditions of a thing, a person, a place or a situation, and humans receive information about the world not only through the five senses but also through the perception of the flowing of qi. 'There being no ontological difference among a stone, a person, or a circumstance, information is derived from each in the same way' (Bruya, 2010, 213). There is indeed a difference in the scale of sentience from a stone to an animal to a human. Bruya (2010) explains that the difference is 'one of sensitivity to the information that is carried by the flowing qi and the complexity of the internal response' (214). For the Daoists, the heart-mind (xin 心) organ of humans is 'responsible for cognitive-affectivity', which senses and processes information, and at the same time plays a significant role in 'shaping circumstances and conveying information' (Bruya, 2010, 213).

Kohn (2008) also points out that both the traditional Chinese medical text and the Daoist text do not present 'a separation of mental from bodily symptoms but take both as indications of disharmony' (5). For example, according to Kohn (2008), in *Huangdi Neijin 黄帝内经* chapter 2, the cognitive-affectivity of humans (often referred to as the 'mind') can be measured out by five different forms that are related to five inner organs: 'Blood is stored in the liver,…; Constructive energy is stored in the spleen,…; The pulse is stored in the heart,…; Qi is stored in the lungs,…; Essence is stored in the kidneys,…' (Kohn 2008, 6). Kohn (2008) interprets that each inner organ has its own particular body fluid or form of qi and also its specific sentience energy (or the mental/psychological energy). Hence, the body with sentience in Chinese culture is considered 'an integrated energetic organism that consists of dynamic flows of qi at various levels of subtlety' (Kohn, 2008, 6). The views about qi 气 and xin 心 are essential for understanding the

rationale of the movement practices that will be introduced later.

Moreover, the causation meant by Daoist self-causation is a kind of influence and reaction. Instead of the causality conceived as efficient or determined causality by which a change is caused externally and discretely, Bruya (2010) explains that causality in Daoist thought is more of 'a mutual pulling and a drawing forward' (213). A change, instead of being caused, is 'drawn out, attracted, elicited, allowed' (214). Bruya (2010) uses a river metaphor to describe the self-causation or spontaneity in Daoism:

> Both circumstances and interior motivations draw an individual forward as a river draws forward its contents, attracting rivulets and channeling the water and everything in it....The river metaphor must not be understood as an inexorable flow that is either acquiesced to or resisted but a more subtle flow, as with wind currents - each particular pattern of qi following the directions most suitable to interior and exterior conditions (Bruya, 2010, 214).

Based on Bruya (2010), Wang and Martínková (2024) interpret the Daoist spontaneity as a force of nature and emphasise that it is an elicitation enabled by the situation rather than the enactment of the action by the thinking subject. The Daoist concept of spontaneity also upholds the idea that 'it is for humans to harmonise themselves with the situation and give in to it and its pullings rather than making individual choices about what to do' (Wang & Martínková, 2024).

Despite the distinct perspectives on the composition of the human body and the cosmos, the inseparability and integrability between the human being and the world in Daoist spontaneity resonates with Merleau-Ponty's idea about human existence: being in the world, which means humans are situated and inseparable from the world. Moreover, the spontaneous actions of humans discussed in Daoist texts emphasise the effortlessness of skill execution and responsiveness to situations, which also resonates with Merleau-Ponty's illustration of bodily movements. For example, Chapter 3 of *Zhuangzi* (*庄子*), named 'Essentials for Keeping a Good Health' ('养生主'), presents the story of a skilful butcher who can carve up a bullock in a virtuosic manner. The butcher describes his craft as following the patterns of nature, which is written and translated as follows:

> 始臣之解牛之时，所见无非全牛者。三年之后，未尝见全牛也。方今之时，臣以神遇而不以目视，官知止而神欲行。依乎天理，批大郤，导大窾，因其固然。技经肯綮之未尝，而况大軱乎？… 彼节者有闲，而刀刃者无厚，以无厚入有闲，恢恢乎，其于游刃必有余地矣，是以十九年而刀刃若新发于硎。

> When I first began to carve a bullock, I saw nothing but the whole bullock. Three years later, I no longer saw the bullock as a whole in parts. Now I work on it by intuition and do not look at it with my eyes. My visual organs stop functioning while my intuition goes its own way. In accordance with the natural grain, I cleave along the main seams and thrust the knife into the big cavities. Following the natural structure of the bullock, I never touch veins or tendons, much less the big bones! ... There are crevices between the joints, but the edge of my knife is very thin. When I insert the thin edge of my knife into these crevices, there is plenty of room for it to pass through. That is why, after nineteen years, the edge of my knife is still as sharp as if it had just come from the whetstone (Zhuang, 1999, 42–45).

In the story, what is emphasised by the butcher's skill is neither his personal physical nor intellectual capability but the natural structure of the bullock that elicits a way of carving up that appears skilful. Bruya (2010) points out that the text highlights the relation between the human agent and the circumstances, together with responsiveness in action and direct attention to what is happening. He writes, 'spontaneous action in a Daoist sense is neither impulsive nor isolated, nor is it necessarily routine. It arises only in response to situations' (Bruya, 2010, 217). Wang and Martínková (2024) interpret that the spontaneous response to situations, as described in Daoism, is not mediated through our thoughts, previous experience, or prejudice, but a direct response to circumstances. The Daoist description of spontaneous actions resonates with Merleau-Ponty's view on the relation between the situations and bodily movements (either habitual or skilful), as well as the perceived world and the perceiving subject. Landes (2012) vividly explains that, for Merleau-Ponty, the relation is akin to 'the relation between a question and its response'(xliii).

Furthermore, Bruya (2010) identifies two general categories to classify the spontaneous actions described in *Zhuangzi*: wholeness and fluency. Fluency denotes 'accuracy and reliance on methods and skill', as the butcher's example above shows, which involves effortlessness and responsiveness. Wholeness refers to the state of the acting subject integrated with the environment as a whole. Wang and Martínková (2024) explain that wholeness summarises the experience of broad awareness without any kind of distractions; in other words, an aware 'whole' is not an individual person but rather the experience of openness to a situation and sensitivity to it. I suggest that the habitual spontaneous bodily movements discussed by Merleau-Ponty's (2012) motor intentionality resonate more with the fluency category of spontaneity in Daoism. The two movement practices, Daoyinshu and Shikantaza, that will be introduced in the next

section, correspond more to the wholeness category. It is also worth noting that these two categories are not discrete; they are correlated, and both constitute the experience of spontaneity, but the actions might have a focus/feature that tips more toward one than the other.

6.2 Examples of two Eastern movement practices

Bruya (2010) suggests that the wholeness category of Daoist spontaneity can be further divided into two subcategories: collection and shedding. 'Collection is a process of engendering internal coherence by exploiting natural internal resources through concentrative practices' (Bruya, 2010, 216). Shedding is to diminish distractions, consideration of rewards, discursive knowledge, selfishness, the external form of an object and even perception and the skill itself. Collection and Shedding supplement each other: 'Shedding clears a space for collection, and collection fills the space, thereby facilitating shedding' (Bruya, 2010, 216). I suggest that these two subcategories, collection and shedding, can be applied to explain the difference and connection between the Daoist health-preserving Daoyinshu and Zen Buddhist meditative practice Shikantaza (Just Sitting). Both practices cultivate the experience of the Daoist spontaneity, which I refer to as the state of 'being in the present'. Essentials of Daoyinshu focuses more on collection, and Shikantaza centres more on shedding.

The two subcategories (Collection and Shedding) are no more than a framework for interpreting these two kinds of practices. Similarly, Yuasa (1994) points out that Daoist martial arts (Daoyinshu can be seen as the forerunner of martial arts) and Buddhist meditative methods are generally closely related by their history and share a similar cultivated state: a unification of qi and heart-mind as well as the 'inner' and 'outer' worlds. Yussa (1994) suggests that meditation is training to gaze into the inner world, letting the wandering thoughts disappear while maintaining the body's posture in a state of silence and stillness. In martial arts in general, the body's posture is standing and facing the outer world (usually the opponent). They are akin to different paths to the same destination, while the postures of the body are the foundation for both practices. According to Yuasa (1993, 77), during the Sung and Ming periods in ancient China, Buddhists were engaged in seated meditation (zazen), Confucians in "quiet sitting"

(seiza), and Daoists in "ki guiding meditation" (doin)[31], which are three meditation-cultivation methods utilising body and heart-mind (xin 心).

By applying both perspectives of Bruya (2010) and Yuasa (1993) to the case of Daoyinshu and Shikanzaza, I suggest that the method of the Daoyinshu focuses more on the somatic aspect of the body (seemingly outer) that can be explained in terms of dealing with the qi 气 and collection, while the latter focuses more on the sentience or cognitive-affectivity of the body (seemingly inner) that can be explained in terms of dealing with the heart-mind xin 心 and shedding. I will introduce the two practices in more detail below and illustrate the 'being in the present' state.

6.2.1 Daoist health-preserving practice: Daoyinshu (导引术)

Daoyinshu 导引术, the forerunner of qigong 气功 (or generally referred to as Daoist martial arts), is a traditional Chinese movement practice developed in the traditional Chinese medicine system under the influence of Daoism. By its name, it literally refers to a method/art of guiding and pulling (Dao 导 means guiding, yin 引 means pulling or stretching, shu 术 means method, technique or art). Early practices of Daoyinshu were elucidated through illustrations and textual descriptions, as evidenced by two excavated manuscripts: Daoyin Tu 导引图 (Exercise Chart), found at Mawangdui tomb, dated back to 168 BCE, and the bamboo tablets of the Yinshu 引书 (Stretch Book) found at Zhangjiashan tomb, dated back to 186 BCE. Kohn (2007) explains that this practice arose as part of traditional Chinese medicine, which 'encourages people to relish the world in all its aspects, to find great health and to enjoy their physical and social pleasures' (108), and as a result, the earliest practice is very practical in nature. I will mainly introduce the early documented Daoyinshu and its underlying ideas in this section, since they are the more original practical application in line with the aforementioned early Daoist idea of spontaneity[32].

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[31] Zazen, seiza, ki, and doin are Japanese meditation-related terms in Romanised spelling, equivalent to the Chinese terms: zuochan 坐禅, zhengzuo 正坐, qi 气, and daoyin 导引.

[32] During the sixth to ninth centuries, the daoyin practice underwent a further formalisation, exemplified by the text in the Daoist Canon called *Taiqing daoyin yangshengJing 太清导引养生 (Great Clarity Scripture on Healing Exercises and Nourishing Life).* Different from early practice, the sequences of movements prescribed in the text do not treat specific ailments but are designed for longevity and

According to Kohn (2008), the body is often represented metaphorically in Daoist and traditional Chinese medical texts as a system of waterways and undulating channels, by which qi/vital energy flows through the body. The body is also viewed as a microcosm of the universe; therefore, the ancient Chinese believed that everything we do with our bodies can never be separated or isolated from the world. According to Wang (2003), the worldview of traditional Chinese medicine suggests that 'humans live amid the universe, and our vital activities are inevitably influenced by the natural laws of material movement' (2). Wang (2003) explains that, based on this worldview, all the activities of the human body are considered to have formed close patterns with nature. 'The relationship between vital activities of the human body and nature, as well as society, should be harmonious and orderly; otherwise, it is not good for health' (Wang, 2003, 2-3). Kohn (2007) points out that, in the Chinese medical system, 'health, unlike in the modern West, is not just the absence of symptoms and ailments. It is the presence of a strong vital energy and of a smooth, harmonious, and active flow of qi' (106). In this context, Daoyinshu is a practice designed to guide the qi in bodily movements, which means one makes a conscious effort to establish harmony with the flow of the energy in the body, aligning oneself with the cosmos (Kohn, 2008, 11).

The Daoyin Tu 导引图 (Exercise Chart) found at the Mawangdui tomb (hereafter referred to as Mawangdui Daoyin Tu) consists of 44 illustrations of human figures of both sexes and different ages conducting all kinds of bodily movements, which are explained in brief captions (see Figures 2 and 3). In most cases, the figures are standing with various reaching and bending movements, showing a dynamic stretching of the body. Most figures work with their limbs only, but a few work with utensils such as a pole (Harper, 2013; Kohn, 2007, 2008). Although most captions on the chart are illegible, some show that a few postures are named after animals. According to Kohn (2007, 2008), the most well-known animal-based exercises are Bear Amble 熊经 (see #41 in Figure 2), showing a figure walking in a stately fashion with arms swinging, and Bird Stretch 鸟申 (see #32 in Figure 2), showing a figure bending forward with hands on the floor and head raised.

immortality in the religious Daoist context (Kohn, 2007). Qigong 气功 and Taichi quan 太极拳 are the current forms of Daoyin shu, having evolved over several centuries (Kohn, 2008).

Figure 2. *Mawangdui Daoyin Tu*

Notes: The source of this figure is Li (2018)

Figure 3. *Mawangdui Daoyin Tu Facsimile of MSII.C.34*

Notes: The source of this figure is Harper (2013)

The other text Yinshu 引书 (Stretch Book) found at the Zhangjiashan tomb has more written explanations. According to Kohn (2007; 2008) the text Yinshu 引书 is made of three parts, including an introduction to seasonal health routines, a series of around 100 exercises and a conclusion on the cause and development of disease and ways of prevention. Especially, the part of seasonal health routines indicates the idea of having a daily life routine, such as hygiene, diet, sleep, bodily movements, according to the environment and the natural pattern. The part on exercises provides specific practice instructions. After introducing 40 exercises, it explains the medical uses of the practices. Kohn (2007) lists three examples of the exercises from the text, which are translated into English as below,

> Bend and Gaze is: interlace the fingers at the back and bend forward, then turn the head to look at your heels (#12).
>
> Dragon Flourish is: step one leg forward with bent knee while stretching the other leg back, then interlace the fingers, place them on the knee, and look up (#19).
>
> Pointing Backward is: interlace the fingers, raise them overhead and bend back as far as possible (#29) (Kohn, 2007,110-111).

It is worth noting that breathing is often emphasised in the texts; some include it in the exercise instructions, and some have specific instructions on breathing at different times of the day. For example:

> The goal of daytime breathing exhaling and inhaling must be light, and ears and eyes are perceptive and bright….
>
> The goal of dusk breathing: breathe deeply, long and slow, causing the ears to not hear; and when tranquil go to bed. The ethereal-spirit and earthly-spirit are at ease in the form; thus you can live long.
>
> When breathing at midnight: after awakening do not change from the sleeping posture; do it deeply and slowly, without exertion. MSVI.A.4 (SS23–39, SS52–59) in Harper (2013)

Overall, Daoyinshu broadly denotes different kinds of practices that regulate the qi through movements and breathing. Kohn (2007) interprets that, by the practice, daoyin followers hope to align with the body and perfect the functioning of the body, which is different from other exercises, such as yoga, that try to control and overcome the body's natural characteristics. Daoyinshu also features Bruya's (2010) explanation of collection as one subcategory of wholeness in the Daoist idea of spontaneity. Bruya (2010) describes

collection as ‘a process of engendering internal coherence by exploiting natural internal resources through concentrative practices’ (216). In the case of Daoyinshu, the natural internal resources are the natural characteristics of the body and the flow of the qi. And the concentrative practice is the dynamic stretching, moving and breathing. The emphasis in Daoyinshu and Daoist idea in general, is ‘health, long life, and the experience of mundane pleasures and see them as a key motivation of the practice, more spiritual states being possible but not essential’ (Kohn, 2007, 128). This emphasis also partly resonates with Zen meditative practices, while the approach in Zen is more of shedding than collection. While different Zen schools have different meditation methods, the next section focuses on one specific practice: Shikantaza (just sitting).

6.2.2 Zen meditative practice: Shikantaza (Just Sitting)

Shikantaza (只管打坐), meaning just sitting, is a meditation practice often associated with the Sōtō school of Zen Buddhism in Japan. In Japanese, another term, ‘zazen’, is used to refer to sitting meditation in general. Zazen is a description of a meditation in terms of body posture. Martínková and Wang (2022) explains that Zazen primarily refers to the seated posture, although the practitioners may use different ways to meditate while sitting. For example, the Rinzai School employs an approach of tackling kōan within zazen, which is viewed as a tradition. In the Sōtō school, whose tradition is Shikantaza, ‘there is nothing beyond sitting in zazen’ (Martínková & Wang, 2022, 225).

Dōgen Kigen (道元希玄), the founder of the Sōtō school, explained this practice in detail in Chapter 58 of his book *Shōbōgenzō* titled ‘Zazengi’ (‘The Standard Method of Zazen’) and his article ‘Fukanzazenji’ (‘Universally Recommended Instructions for Zazen’). Based on Dōgen (2006, 139f), Martínková and Wang (2022) describes that ‘zazen is a position of sitting in the half or full lotus posture, on a cushion, thumbs meeting in line with the navel. Lips and teeth should come together, eyes should be open, breathing should be soft, through the nose. It is important to sit with a straight back’ (225). Dōgen (2006, 140) describes the stability of zazen metaphorically as a mountain-still state. In this posture, ‘the two knees and the buttocks make a stable triangle on the ground, which enables stability of the body’ (Martínková & Wang, 2022, 225).

The practice is usually conducted in a specific environment without stimuli to distract the practitioner, such as ‘a quiet room of moderate brightness and temperature’, where the practitioner usually faces a wall. It can also be ‘a place in quiet nature, such as a park or even somewhere more remote but safe’ (Martínková & Wang, 2022, 226). Unlike Daoyinshu, which consists of all kinds of movements and postures, Shikantaza literally emphasises only a sitting posture. One objection to including this practice in the discussion of Eastern movement practices might be that sitting is a static state that is not a movement. However, this objection implies an understanding of movement in comparison with stopping (no moving) concerns merely the apparent status of the body. In the context of Eastern philosophy (Daoism and Buddhism), the world is considered transient and permanently changing (Martínková & Wang, 2022). In other words, the world is constantly moving, so is life and the human body (the heart beats, blood flows). Under this worldview, the just sitting practice may appear motionless and silent, yet it is, in a subtle way, still a dynamic practice (Martínková & Wang, 2022).

The name Shikantaza, meaning just sitting, itself indicates that this method of zazen is purposeless, or objectless. Although there is no aim, the optimal state that Shikantaza might cultivate is ‘beyond thinking’ or ‘non-thinking’, which is called hishiryō (非思量) in Japanese and feisiliang (非思量) in Chinese. It’s worth clarifying that ‘beyond thinking’ or non-thinking’ neither refers to a mental state that zazen practitioners should cultivate, nor implies not thinking. Martínková and Wang (2022) explain that, ‘while thoughts usually appear, practitioners are advised not to develop them’ but simply notice them. ‘Gradually, during practice, the number of one’s thoughts diminishes’ (229). Loori (2004) provides a precise distinction between ‘thinking’, ‘not-thinking’ and ‘non-thinking’, as below,

> Thinking is linear and sequential, a separation from the reality that is the subject of thought, and thus is an abstraction rather than the reality itself.
>
> Not-thinking is suppressive. It cuts away thoughts the moment they arise, making the mind into a great impenetrable mountain-dead, unresponsive.
>
> Non-thinking has no such edges. It is the boundless mind of samadhi that neither holds on to, nor lets go of, thoughts. It is the manifestation of the Buddha-mind in which the dualism of self and other, thinking and not thinking, dissolves (Loori, 2004, 135).

Bruya's (2010) explanation of shedding, one of the other subcategories of wholeness in the Daoist idea of spontaneity, is also relevant to describing the practice of Shikantaza. Shedding is a state that diminishes 'distractions, any consideration of rewards, discursive knowledge, selfishness, the external form of an object, and even perception (paradoxically), even skill itself' (Bruya, 2010, 216). Through shedding, the subject deals with more of the cognitive-affective aspects of the body, in other words, the heart-mind (xin 心), which is considered the origin of all kinds of thoughts. Although my discussion above seems to attribute collection to Daoyinshu and shedding to Shikantaza, the two categories are not discrete and mutually exclusive. In the process of the two practices, shedding and collection proceed in tandem and supplement each other. Daoyinshu might start from the collection that facilitates shedding, and Shikantaza starts from shedding that paves the way for collection. According to Bruya (2010), the process of collection and shedding brings 'the cognitive-affective state to something often compared to a calm pool of water that mirrors the surroundings' (216). I attribute this state to 'being in the present'.

6.3 The state of 'being in the present'

In their interpretation of Shikantaza, Martínková and Wang (2022) point out that the practice 'enables the widening and deepening of the scope of the present moment', which is 'a new kind of experiencing and a fresh approach to the world' (230). I suggest that the state of 'being in the present', in other words, fully experiencing the here and now, is the core idea of Zen. For example, to explain Zen, Dōgen (2005, 78) quotes Zen master Yoka Genkaku (永嘉玄覺) (665–713): '... walking also is Zen, and sitting also is Zen. In talking and silence, movement and rest, the body is at ease.' According to Dōgen (2005, 216), even the everyday activities such as eating, bathing, and sweeping the floor, can be a form of 'dignified behaviour' as long as the practitioner can fully be in the here and now.

The state of being in the present can be understood as being more open and sensitive to the surrounding environment. In other words, it is to become more fully aware of the given situation we encounter. A verse of Dōgen titled 'Innate Spirit' (also translated as 'Original Face') articulates this awareness or attention to the encountered situation vividly. The verse is collected by Heine (1997) in Edward Seidensticker's translation in *The Zen Poetry of Dogen: Verses from the Mountain of Eternal Peace* and it reads:

In the spring, cherry blossoms, in the summer, the cuckoo.

In autumn the moon, and in winter the snow, clear, cold (Heine, 1997, 5–6).

Yasunari Kawabata, a Japanese writer who won the Nobel Prize in literature, once commented on the above verse, saying that although the seasonal figures in the verse are conventional and ordinary, and the words used are mediocre, the two most common figures have been strung together, transmitting the very essence of Japan. (Kawabata, 1969). Because these seasonal figures can be commonly seen every year, they become too ordinary. And thereby they are too common to be noticed by people who are occupied with 'more important' daily life tasks and thoughts. But when we can detach from the endless thoughts of daily life, we might start paying attention to those ordinary but enchanting things in our surroundings.

The verse of Dōgen does not simply sum up the representative image of Japan; rather, it illustrates a vivid experience of being in the present. When we are fully in the present moment, we get to notice our primordial bodily sensations, which are 'not the sensing of some objective quality of the world, such as colours, but, prior to that, direct sensing'(Martínková & Wang, 2022, 231). By direct sensing, we might be able to joyfully see and smell the blossoms in spring, hear the cuckoo in summer, notice the bright full moon in autumn and feel the snow in winter. 'The 'clear' and 'cold' also indicate direct bodily sensing, without intellectualisation and conceptualisation'(Martínková & Wang, 2022, 231).

In addition, the breathing and seasonal regimens emphasised in the Daoyinshu texts also facilitate fully living in the here and now. Proper breathing requires full awareness and attention to every breath we take. Eating, working, and sleeping according to the seasons also requires full attention to the environment, temperature change, different available crops in different seasons, etc. By fully being in the present, we can notice and experience the inhaled and exhaled air in the body, the subtle bodily reactions to the change of the weather and food. It is also worth clarifying that the present in 'being in the present' does not refer to one of the temporal concepts among the past, present and future. In other words, being in the present does not mean neglecting the past and future. Instead, it is more of being in the field of presence with the past and future at the horizons. This field of presence holds the temporalising movement of the primordial time: the conversion of the implicit 'forthcoming' to the explicit here and now, and the explicit here

and now to the implicit ‘already gone’. Hence, the state of being in the present means being synchronised with the temporalising movement of the primordial time, which is simultaneously being the moving body that is sensitive and responsive to the environment.

7. THE ISSUE WITH 'BEING TOWARD THE FUTURE' AND CORRESPONDING SUGGESTIONS

This chapter analyses issues within the state of 'being toward the future' stimulated by the contemporary sport environment presented in Chapter 5, by comparing it with the state of being in the present discussed in Chapter 6. I argue that the state of being toward the future reflects a discordant, self-perceived relationship between the human subject and the body. It is underpinned by an instrumental understanding of the body and, accordingly, time, which is 'I use my body' and 'I use time'. The two Eastern movement practices and the cultivated state of being in the present demonstrate an alternative approach to living and moving within the understanding of the body and human existence as 'I am the body'. Considering the common usage of Daoyinshu and Shikantaza, which are primarily made to contribute to practitioners' wellness, the value of the underpinned understanding of 'I am the body' is apparent. I divide the value into three aspects to further explain its significance: I. Openness of the future; II. Recognised potentiality of bodily movements; III. Richer experiencing. By contrast, the issue with the state of being toward the future, and accordingly, the understanding of 'I use my body' also encompasses three aspects: I. Perceived narrowness of the future; II. Constrained potentiality of bodily movements; III. Limited experiencing.

Regarding the first aspect, it is necessary to revisit the distinction between constituted time and primordial time discussed in Chapter 4. Time in usage is the constituted time where the concepts of past and future are construed. Primordial time denotes the temporalising movements by which 'the implicit forthcoming', 'the explicit here and now', and 'the implicit just gone' structure a unit that is the field of the presence where the two implicit are horizons of the explicit. The field of presence is not static, but dynamic and transient. Merleau-Ponty (2012) writes that 'to be in the present is to have always been and to be forever. Subjectivity is not in time because it takes up or lives time and merges with the cohesion of a life' (446). This also resonates with the Daoist and Buddhist view that the world and human life are transient and permanently changing and moving (Martínková & Wang, 2022).

Therefore, in the cultivated state of being in the present, the future for the subject remains open. Openness means that the future is not expected but is intertwined with the activity conducted by the subject at the moment, and it unfolds gradually through the process. While in the contemporary sport milieu, which stimulates a state of being toward the future, activities are expected to have a particular future outcome. Sport matches are expected to produce rankings or scores and a winner. Sport federations organise those events to select winners, cheering for the best performance in the finals; however, celebrations centre mainly on the outcome of the contest. Sport media and audiences often engage in the event by expecting to see who will take the victory home. Athletes train and compete, aiming for a record or victory. The perceived future is not open and dynamically unfolding, but it is aimed, expected and reduced to be a fixed outcome of something. In the state of being toward the future, the organic openness of the future is overlooked with a perceived narrowness, rendering all possible futures beyond the expected particular outcome unacceptable—sometimes even unbearable.

The second aspect concerns the potentiality of bodily movements. Within the understanding of 'I am the body', bodily movements are organically my interactions with the world. Kleinman (1972) explains this phenomenological view as follows,

> To the phenomenologist, to understand the body is to see the body not in terms of kinesiological analysis but in the awareness and meaning of movement. It's to be open to gestures and action; it's the grasping of being, acting, and living in one's world. Thus movement becomes significant not by knowledge about the body but through an awareness of the self - a much more accurate term (Kleinman, 1972, 176–177).

In addition, Chapter 4 presented that bodily movements encompass a primordial temporalising structure. While being in the field of presence, the body's movement is synchronised with primordial time, by which the movements are not conducted for something in a perceived future but are responses to situations encountered at the very moment. In this sense, the openness of future situations endows the potentiality for bodily movements, which, in other words, are the improvisations of the moving body subject. While in a state of being toward the future, the body's actions are guided and disciplined to achieve the futural objectives. Especially when the openness of the future is overlooked and only particular outcomes are expected, improvisations scarcely occur and are even prohibited, which constrains the potentiality of bodily movements.

Subsequently, richer experiencing might also be easily overlooked when in a state of being toward the future. In their discussion on adventure sport, Zimmermann and Saura (2017) point out that 'the subject of experience is the one who exposes itself in order for something to happen or not' (162). In the case of adventure sport, in order to have an experience, one needs some kind of permission to let go of the fear and worries. In other words, it is necessary to embrace and allow the unknown and the uncertain to have an experience (Zimmermann & Saura, 2017). Zimmermann and Saura (2017) describe the experience in adventure sports as 'hearing' and 'seeing' with all of our body, interacting and following the organic elements from the environment and their rhythm. It is reasonable to state that this experience in adventure sports also exemplifies the state of being in the present; a similar interpretation can also be found in the 'emersion' experience described by Andrieu et al. (2018), and Loland's (2012) example of the body's spontaneous movements in skiing. In the state of being the present, the openness of the future and improvised bodily movement contribute to richer experiencing. By contrast, when we perceive an event with a narrow focus on an outcome, and engage with it solely through this limited lens, we may miss the abundance of experience offered by the event itself and the process of participation.

So far, the argument might be misinterpreted as that 'having an objective for the future' is problematic, and it is the issue with 'being toward the future'. It is worth noting that, by stating 'being toward the future', I mean being toward an objective in the future with a narrow focus on that objective, while time and body are used and moved as means for achieving the aimed end. Following this, we might fail to recognise the primordial temporal structure of bodily movements, as well as the primordial role of the body, which is the moving subject with her own capacity and potentiality that can be cultivated through interactions with the world.

Regarding the current contemporary sport milieu, which stimulates a state of being toward the future, there is no single particular solution that can fix the whole system. The issue lies more fundamentally in our understanding of the body and time. Therefore, it is necessary to first have a more robust shift in understanding of the body from 'I use my body' to 'I am the body'. Kleinman's (1972) suggestions for objectives of physical

education provide a direction for thinking about more concrete policies and activities to facilitate the shift. He lists the objectives as follows,

> 1. To develop an awareness of bodily being in the world.
>
> 2. To gain understanding of self and consciousness.
>
> 3. To grasp the significations of movements.
>
> 4. To become sensitive of one's encounters and acts.
>
> 5. To discover the heretofore hidden perspectives of acts and uncover the deeper meaning of one's being as it explores movement experiences.
>
> 6. To enable one, ultimately, to create on his own an experience through movement which culminates in meaningful, purposeful realization of the self (Kleinman, 1972, 177).

When the primordial role of the body is recognised, we can start to recognise the significance of bodily movements and experiences and, hence, move and experience spontaneously with more awareness about the body and the environment. Only then can we attempt to redesign a contemporary sport system that operates sports with a comprehensive understanding of the importance of athletes' experiences and makes them the centre of operation and policy-making.

CONCLUSION

The central inquiry of the thesis is that if our understanding of the body and human existence shifts from 'I use my body' to 'I am the body', how might we approach sport differently? Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment provides a theoretical foundation for the shift in understanding. The idea of embodiment views human beings as body subjects being in the world. It contains three subpoints: I. The body is not a mere object, although we tend to regard it as one; II. The body is the subject moving and acting instead of being moved by subjectivity; III. Subjectivity or consciousness is not just 'I think' but is manifested by the spontaneity of the body as 'I can'. The first three chapters of the thesis presented the three subpoints. Based on the previous chapters' discussion on the subject role of the body and spontaneity, Chapter 4 illustrated a distinction between constituted time and primordial time in Merleau-Ponty's discussion on temporality. Further, it explained the idea that movements of the body subject encompass the primordial time. The first four chapters of this dissertation established a view on the body, movement and time, which states that I am the body whose moving and living itself is time.

Nevertheless, what is the significance of the understanding of 'I am the body'? How does it contribute to the engagement in and practical operation of contemporary sport? Given the pervasive dualistic understanding of the body in modern society and contemporary sport, namely the view that 'I use my body', examining the phenomenon and issue arising from this misunderstanding is necessary. Chapter 5 termed the phenomenon a state of being toward the future and argued that it is stimulated by a highly competitive contemporary sport milieu. To construct the argument, I first analysed the temporal structure of sport competition from two dimensions. In an individual subjective dimension, competition, as one of the human activities, attributes the temporalisation movement of primordial time because each participant conducts and experiences the activity. The primordial temporality of competition is significant in highlighting each individual's concrete experience in the sport. In an intersubjective dimension, a notion of time and competition sketch a common understanding about the activity, enabling it to be practised collectively. The constituted time is the shared idea of time manifested by our usage of clocks in sports, which is significant in organising the competition and intensifying the contesting ambience.

The temporal structure of competition does not stimulate a state of being toward the future. While contemporary sport is a milieu where competition occurs, I identified three factors of the milieu that stimulate participants' state of being toward the future. The first factor is overemphasis on results. This overemphasis on result does not refer to the zero-sum logic of competition, but to supplementary rules and operations in contemporary sport that are set to incentivise comparison, adding extra weight to the winning result. Also, the pursuit of records in some sports aims at the result that always remains in the future, advocating for constant comparison of the past and moving toward the future. The second factor is prioritising our usage of constituted time over our experiencing time. Match time in contemporary sport is mainly regulated and planned for match consumers nowadays. Game schedules are arranged merely based on the objective linear timeline (constituted time); we tend to constantly plan the timing of the next competition in pursuit of efficiency and profit, overlooking the workload and experience of athletes. The third factor is the imbalance and dissociation between training and playing sports. Training is generally more driven by a future goal than playing sports. Considering significant sporting events are relatively rare and athletes' careers primarily focus on training, the imbalance between training and playing sports further stimulates the state of being toward the future.

As a counter-example of contemporary sport and the state of being toward the future, Chapter 6 brought in two traditional Eastern movement practices, Daoyinshu and Shikantaza, and introduced the cultivated state of being in the present. The two practices can be interpreted as one application of the understanding of 'I am the body', given the resonance between the Daoist philosophy and Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment, despite their distinct cultural origins and ontologies. Being in the present means being in the field of presence with the past and future at the horizons. It does not mean neglecting the past and future. The field of presence holds the temporalising movement of the primordial time: the conversion of the implicit 'forthcoming' to the explicit here and now, and the explicit here and now to the implicit 'already gone'. Thereby, the state of being in the present refers to being synchronised with the primordial time, which is simultaneously being the moving body that is sensitive and responsive to the environment.

By comparing these two states: being toward the future and being in the present, Chapter 7 concludes three aspects of the issue with the state of being toward the future, and accordingly, the understanding of 'I use my body'. The issue is illuminated in contrast with the value of being in the present, and accordingly, the understanding of 'I am the body'. The first aspect is about the openness of the future that we are able to recognise when being in the present, while we tend to overlook it when being toward the future. Openness means that the future is not expected but is intertwined with the activity conducted by the subject at the moment, unfolding gradually through the process. While being toward the future, the perceived future is aimed, expected and reduced to be a fixed outcome of something, which renders all possible futures beyond the expected particular outcome unacceptable—sometimes even unbearable. The second aspect concerns the potentiality of bodily movements. In the state of being in the present, bodily movements are responses to situations encountered at the very moment. The openness of future situations endows the potentiality for bodily movements. Nevertheless, when the body's actions are guided and disciplined to achieve future objectives, improvisations scarcely occur and are even prohibited, which constrains the potentiality of bodily movements. This leads to the third aspect of the issue: limited experiencing. The openness of the future and improvised bodily movement contribute to the richer experiencing in the state of being in the present. When we perceive an event with a narrow focus on an outcome and engage with it solely through this limited lens, we also constrain our experiencing within it, overlooking what is also offered by the event itself and the process of participation.

Although this dissertation does not offer specific practical recommendations on how to approach contemporary sport differently based on the understanding of 'I am the body'. It constructs a comprehensive theoretical framework grounded in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and supplemented by examples from the ancient Eastern cultures, laying the foundations for a shift in understanding of the body. As for translating this understanding into contemporary sport practices, it requires further multidisciplinary research. I propose that applying this embodied view to physical education is a more profound pathway to drive fundamental change in the contemporary sport system. Yet, this demands time and a redesigned physical education curriculum – one that assists students in comprehending the subject role of the body, learning to perceive, move, feel and explore the world as the body rather than by controlling the body.

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