

ABSTRACT

Title: Phenomenological notion of the body and its possible consequences for practice of body-oriented disciplines

Objectives: This thesis aims to clarify the possible projection of phenomenological findings about the body into the body-oriented disciplines. The interpretation of René Descartes, Edmund Husserl and, above all, Maurice Merleau-Ponty comes to the postulate that the body itself is not an object, but rather it is that by which objects exist as objects in the first place. From this phenomenological postulate there follows the deep opposition of the phenomenological notion of the body to the notion on which body-oriented disciplines commonly (but usually only implicitly) base their theory and practice. The thesis thus presents not only the interpretation of positive phenomenological concepts, but also the interpretation of phenomenological criticism of the physiological and psychological (or psychologizing) concept of the body, which stand on the flaws and prejudices of the empiricist and intellectualist traditions of Western thought. Subsequently, the possible impacts of both phenomenological criticism and phenomenological concepts on the practice of body-oriented disciplines are discussed.

Methodology: This dissertation is a philosophical treatise. The first part is a philosophical interpretation of the key authors who contributed to the phenomenological notion of the body. When examples are used, it is only for the purpose of illustrating a certain principle or idea. The second part deals on a theoretical level with the possible implementation and projection of the presented philosophical ideas into the treatment of the body. This is achieved solely by fictitious examples of situations that could occur within these disciplines.

Results: In the light of phenomenological criticism and in relation to the phenomenological notion of the body, the physiological notion of the body and the evidence-based approach as its derivation (as well as the psychological notion) have been shown to be inappropriate. The objectification of the body, whether as a machine-like object or as a representation in the consciousness of its “owner”, fundamentally deviates from the immediate bodily experience in which the body is the subject, and which is our original manner of reaching the world. The commonly used objectifying techniques of treating the body are therefore only secondary, derivative and thus insufficient. Phenomenology offers some concepts that could challenge this situation. The concepts of body-schema and bodily intentionality draw the attention of the body-oriented experts to the body as an intentional subject, which differentiates, adapts and varies in order to achieve the intended practical task. The concept of bodily habit, unlike objectifying approaches, offers an entirely different basic element of working with the body, namely the meaningful core of the movement, which is not further divisible. The concepts of bodily empathy and bodily dialogue name phenomena that are common in practice but not explicitly developed precisely because they are not thematised, although they are from a phenomenological point of view more original and should therefore be the basis of treating of the body in the disciplines concerned.

Keywords: body, phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty, criticism of science, body-oriented disciplines