

REPORT OF THE DISSERTATION OPPONENT

Charles University, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport

Thesis title: **Phenomenological notion of the body and its possible consequences for practice of body-oriented disciplines**

Author of the thesis: **Mgr. et Mgr. Mgr. Petr Kříž**

Opponent: **doc. PaedDr. Emanuel Hurych, Ph.D.**

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General characteristics of the thesis:

The author focuses on the phenomenological perception of the human body with regard to possible implications for practice. The thesis is philosophically oriented and presents a critical reflection on the contemporary perception of the body, which is at least to some extent connected with the context of Western medicine. From the outset, however, the author pays close attention to defining his position and the limits of his critique of the so-called contemporary conception of the body. According to him, it is impossible to determine what the current conception of the body is, and therefore he gives up "the ambition to justify or substantiate the dissatisfaction with the current state, and rather to stay at the level of pure philosophical speculation." Specifically, the author opts for a phenomenological discourse. He draws on some of the ideas of Descartes, works more explicitly with the work of Edmund Husserl, and then builds most of his work on the ideas of Merleau-Ponty. In the spirit of phenomenological thought, he works with the concepts of body-schema and bodily intentionality that draw the attention to the body as an intentional subject. In this respect, he criticizes the objectification of the body. For an approach to the human body, he offers, among others, the concepts of bodily habits, bodily empathy and bodily dialogues. The author also offers practical solutions for physiotherapy, many of which are indeed described in detail in the work. However, by choosing (and no doubt after careful consideration) to stay within the realm of philosophical speculation, the author has exposed certain limits with regard to the practical outcomes of his dissertation.

Orientation of the doctoral student in the given problem; analysis of the literature

The author uses more than 130 sources, which are very carefully selected. Sources of a philosophical nature predominate (in accordance with the author's declaration), and texts on medical topics are appropriately supplemented. There is a relatively strong representation of sources from the field of sport, which corresponds to some of the chapters in Part II.

The author is very well versed in all three key types of sources. In the area of philosophy, a deeper penetration into the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty is evident (there is a clear benefit from the collaboration with Jan Halák, also in the area of publishing). The orientation in the medical field is supported by the author's practical experience as a physiotherapist, which, after all, also applies to the orientation in sports medicine.

Although I consider the selection of sources to be very well chosen, I still find some authors slightly lacking. Completely absent from the whole thesis is any mention of Henri Bergson's contribution (his name is only mentioned in the title of the source Morris, 2000). Even more so, I miss at least some information on the work of Jean-Paul Sartre (in relation to Merleau-Ponty, at least a brief mention would have been useful, if only because of their relationship and because Sartre had much to say on the question of the subjectivized body).

In the pages 87–95, the source Halák & Kříž (2022) is referred to 22 times. Formally, we could probably speak of an excessive number of self-citations. What is more significant, however, is the

somewhat lacking triangulation of sources in this passage. The author is thus arguing for himself (however co-authored). However absent the work of other authors that would bring in relevant ideas, and thus explanations may exist, I feel it necessary to point this out.

Clarity and logical structure of the work

The logical structure of the thesis is of a good standard. In general, this is a theoretical work (specifically, a philosophically based work guided by phenomenological discourse, as the author himself points out) that does not contain classical empirical research. Nevertheless, some standard attributes can be largely assessed. We can conclude that the methodology of the thesis is well developed. It is based on a good logical structure and adequate work with sources. From a certain point of view, we can even speak of the thesis having a purely theoretical part (Part I) and a part that shows great overlap with practice. Personally, I would not directly label Part II as the practical part (and I think that the exact label does not matter so much here), but I consider the practical overlap of the thesis to be important and from my point of view it is a clear contribution of the thesis. The following remark is rather a personal speculation and therefore does not carry much weight from the point of view of the review. I believe that from the beginning of the thesis the author was faced with the fact that he had practical experience of working as a physiotherapist and that he wanted to incorporate this experience more fully into his work. At the same time, however, he made it clear that transferring from the realm of philosophical speculation to a purely practical plane in a straightforward way was not easy and in some cases not even feasible. Therefore, right at the beginning of the thesis he defined himself against the idea that the thesis should be a critique of existing systems. This was probably a wise choice, and I will mention its limits.

The formal, linguistic and stylistic level of the work

The linguistic and stylistic level is, in my opinion, high. I remind you that I cannot judge the work from the position of a native speaker, and therefore this assessment has its limits.

If the APA 7th edition citation standard is compulsory for dissertations at FTVS, the reference list does not fully meet this standard.

The formulation of objectives and the degree to which they are met

The formulation of objectives is always more extensive and vivid in a thesis of a given type than in an exact research assignment. It is necessary to read the objectives between the lines and in the appropriate context. If one reads the whole context, it appears to me that the objectives are well defined. In principle, I believe that the objectives have been met; I will add a brief comment on this matter in the next section.

Overall assessment and comments on the thesis

I consider the thesis to be of very high quality and useful. I would like to acknowledge the fact that the author has taken an unexplored path and in a way a path against the mainstream.

I consider the first part of the work, devoted to philosophical reflection, to be very successful.

Already the quotations of Descartes (p. 13) or Husserl (p. 20) are very sensitively chosen and well related to the topic. This is even truer of the whole work of Merleau-Ponty. I will cite a single example, the case of the organist who can play an unfamiliar organ (p. 66). Here it is presented a very well conducted parallel that provides a comprehensible clue to the author's conception of thought.

The second part is handled eruditely and the author's practical experience is evident. In the context of a sort of mainstream trend in the field of medicine and physiotherapy, perhaps it would be good if such voices were even louder and more forceful. However, the author himself has set certain limits to the practical impact on practice. In my view, these limits are two.

The first is the philosophical nature of his work. It inherently contains many ideas that are difficult to understand and has a vocabulary that may not be sufficiently clear to many practitioners. Thus, they may be dismissive of some ideas and not let them in at all.

I see the second limitation as the fact that the author has deliberately chosen to remain at the level of philosophical speculation. This in a way strengthens the quality of the work itself. On the other hand, to some extent it reduces the possibility of descending into the practical plane and the space for a larger and more differentiated confrontation with, for example, modern/Western evidence-based medicine.

In this context, I believe that there is no doubt that evidence-based medicine helps in many specific situations, that the results of instrumental examinations and their benefits cannot be ignored, and that it is difficult to argue against the general benefits of X-rays, magnetic resonance imaging or sophisticated surgical procedures (heart surgery, major joint surgery or transplantation), etc.

It does not descend into a more precise practical confrontation and a more precise definition of the meeting of two different approaches to work. The author has deliberately renounced this goal. Nevertheless, in my opinion and for this reason, the work represents a very important step for a change in the understanding of the human body in medicine and physiotherapy. However, for everything to have a significant impact on practice, further steps will probably be needed.

Conclusions:

1. The author **has demonstrated in his dissertation the ability to work independently in the field.**
2. **I recommend** the thesis for defence.

Předepsaná formulace v češtině:

1. Autor ve své disertační práci **prokázal** schopnost samostatní tvůrčí práce v daném oboru.
2. Práci **doporučuji** k obhajobě.


Questions for the defense:

Main question:

1) If you had the opportunity to enhance the practical impact of your dissertation, would you try? If so, what route would you take? If you would not want to link this impact directly to the dissertation, do you see such scope within other publications? How should they be focused?

Sub-questions (rather minor ones):

- 2) How do you view the possibilities of using the ideas of Bergson and especially Sartre? Is there any reason (e.g. personal) why you have not included these authors?
- 3) Would you find any way to deal with the large number of self-citations on pages 87-95?



Brno, 28th January 2024

doc. PaedDr. Emanuel Hurych, Ph.D.