XIV*—A MERLEAU-PONTYIAN CRITIQUE OF HUSSERL'S AND SEARLE'S REPRESENTATIONALIST ACCOUNTS OF ACTION

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ABSTRACT Husserl and Searle agree that, for a bodily movement to be an action, it must be caused by a propositional representation. Husserl's representation is a *mental state* whose intentional content is what the agent is trying to do; Searle thinks of the representation as a *logical structure* expressing the action's conditions of satisfaction. Merleau-Ponty criticises both views by introducing a kind of activity he calls motor intentionality, in which the agent, rather than aiming at success, feels drawn to reduce a felt tension. I argue that Searle can account for Merleau-Ponty's kind of coping only by broadening his notion of propositional representation to include indexicals, but that, in so doing, he covers up the way representational intentionality depends upon motor intentionality.

I

Introduction. Edmund Husserl argues that, for there to be perceptual objects and for movements to count as actions, brute stuff must be given meaning by the representations of intentional content in transcendental consciousness.[1]. John searle makes what at first looks like a similar argument for the constitutive role of representations, but, for him, representations are not entities in transcendental consciousness but, rather, logical structures, and consequently constitution is not a transcendental activity. Indeed, according to Searle, the logical analysis of action reveals 'causal and logical structures... beyond the reach of phenomenological analysis'. Thus, logical analysis has to 'go far

1. For a clear statement of Husserl's representationalist account of intentionality, see Dagfinn Føllesdal's classic paper, 'Husserl's Notion of *Noema*', in *Husserl, Intentionality and Cognitive Science*, Hubert L. Dreyfus, editor (Cambridge Ma.: MIT Press. First edition out of print; second edition forthcoming).

2. John R. Searle, 'Neither Phenomenological Description nor Rational Reconstruction', *La Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, to appear in 2001.

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beyond phenomenology' and the results of phenomenology are 'rendered irrelevant'.[2]

I agree with Searle's critique of *transcendental* phenomenology, but in what follows, I will argue that Searle's logical analysis of the causal role of propositional representations fails to take seriously the distinction between absorbed coping and attentive action introduced by the *existential* phenomenologists. Granted that Searle can extend what he means by a propositional representation so as to cover the whole range of human activity, I will seek to show that, in so doing, he covers over an important phenomenological distinction between *context-independent* and *context-dependent* representations and that this distinction is crucial for understanding the causal role of intentionality. Understanding this causal role is an important advantage of Merleau-Pontyian existential phenomenology.

II

Husserl's and Searle's Accounts of Action. Husserl 'rejects the view that trying simply initiates and precedes movement. Rather, trying coexists with and causes movement, an achievement which is made possible by the fact that perception and volition accompany and steer one another'.[3] Similarly, Searle claims that for a series of bodily movements to be an action they must be caused by an intention in action—a propositional representation of the action's conditions of satisfaction—that accompanies the movements.

Searle begins his account with a phenomenological description showing that the experience of acting must include an experience of the causal connection between the agent's intention and his movement. He argues persuasively for this view using the work of Wilder Penfield. Penfield reports that, when he stimulates the brain of a patient in a way that makes the patient's arm go up, the patient feels that it was not he who performed the movement, but that Penfield 'pulled it out of him'. What is missing, Searle argues, is the patient's sense of effort, his experience that it was his intention to raise his arm that made his arm go up. Searle

3. Kevin Mulligan, 'Perception', in B. Smith and D. Woodruff Smith (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), footnote 54. Mulligan cites Hua XXVIII,A §§13–16.

concludes: 'Now this experience with its phenomenal and logical properties I am calling the experience of acting... That experience has an Intentional content'.[4] The experience of acting has the intentional content that the appropriate bodily movements are being caused by the intention to perform the action. Searle calls this intention an intention in action, and points out that, in normal everyday action, 'the experience of acting just is the intention in action'.[5] The intentional content of an intention in action, its conditions of satisfaction, are that I am causing this bodily movement by way of performing this intention in action.

Given the above claims, one might well be tempted to think of an intention in action as the *experience* of my effort causing my bodily movement. But Searle is adamant that he wants to distinguish his account from the phenomenological view that Intentional states are *mental* representations. He points out that, in the case of unconscious actions, one's intention to perform a certain bodily movement can cause one to perform it without one's being aware of that intention. He therefore insists that 'representation is not an ontological category much less a phenomenological category, but a functional category'.[6]

Searle thus holds that *normally* when one acts one's bodily movements are caused by one's experience of acting, so he can use the *phenomenological* contrast between the Penfield case of my arm being made to go up and an experience of acting to get the reader to understand the *logical* conditions for a movement's being an action. But the upshot of his logical analysis, he claims, is that a representation of what one is trying to do must accompany and cause one's bodily movements whether one is aware of what one is trying to do or not. The minimal logical point is that a representation of an action's success conditions must play a causal role in bringing about that action's success

4. John R. Searle, *Intentionality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 90. Searle notes on page 5 that 'intending and intentions are just one form of Intentionality among others... [so]... to keep the distinction clear I will capitalize the technical sense of ''Intentional'' and ''Intentionality''.'

5. Ibid., 91. Searle distinguishes the intention in action from the prior intention which is an intention to act at a later time.

6. John R. Searle, 'The Limits of Phenomenology', *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, Volume Two (Cambridge Ma.: MIT Press, 2000).

conditions. Thus for Searle an intention in action must be causally self referential, and to speak of causal self-referentiality as he does, he writes, is to talk about the logical structure of intentional phenomena. So it should be clear that the phenomenology of the *experience* of acting was only an entering wedge, a ladder that has to be cast aside. Searle insists that, in the last analysis, it is the intentional content itself, not the experience of acting, that causes the appropriate bodily movements.

It is clear that Searle, unlike Husserl, is not attributing causal powers to a mental item, namely the experience of acting, but I find Searle's talk of a logical structure having causal powers, hard to understand. For Searle, 'the basic notion of causation is the notion of making something happen'.[7] Thus, when I do have the experience of raising my arm it is that very experience that makes my arm go up. So whenever I perform an action, even an unconscious one, one would think there must be *something* making my bodily movement happen. Indeed, Searle is emphatic on this point when he says, 'We are causal realists if we believe, as I do, that 'cause' names a real relation in the real world'.[8] And he goes on to say that: 'Actions... on my account are causal and intentional transactions between mind and world'.[9] But how can an abstract structure exist in the real world and make something happen?

Searle would no doubt reply that intentional content can act causally even though it is only a logical structure by being realized in a brain state that can act causally. But even if we grant Searle's mind/brain monism, it doesn't solve the present problem. Searle holds that brain states that are not correlated with a conscious experience cannot have intentionality. So, even if we grant that a *formal logical structure* could be realized in the brain as in a computer and thereby have causal power, it does not follow that an *intentional structure* such as an action's conditions of satisfaction could be realised in the brain apart from consciousness. What could at best be realised without consciousness would be a disposition to realise a conscious intentional state. As Searle says:

7. John R. Searle, *Intentionality*, 123.
8. Ibid., 120,121.
9. Ibid., 130.

> Unconscious intentional states, for example, unconscious beliefs, are really just brain states, but they can legitimately be considered mental states because they have the same neural structure as brain states which, if not blocked in some way, would be conscious. They have no intentionality as mere brain states, but they do have latent intentionality.[10]

This is a plausible account of how we can speak of unconscious beliefs, but this view has strange consequences when generalised to unconsciously motivated actions. How can a merely latent intention in action cause a bodily movement to be an action? Searle sees the problem and responds:

> Within our current nondualistic conception of reality no sense can be attached to the notion that aspectual shape can be both manifest as aspectual shape and yet totally unconscious. But since unconscious intentional states with aspectual shape exist when unconscious and cause behaviour when unconscious, what sense are we attaching to the notion of the unconscious in such cases? I have argued that we can attach to it the following perfectly adequate sense: The attribution of unconscious intentionality to the neurophysiology is the attribution of a capacity to cause that state in a conscious form. This point holds whether or not the unconscious intentionality causes an unconscious action without causing a conscious mental event.[11]

But this will not work. Suppose that at a family dinner Bill 'accidentally' spills a glass of water into his brother Bob's lap because, as Bill's therapist tells him later, he has an unconscious desire to annoy Bob. The explanation of this behaviour requires not just *latent* beliefs such as Bill's long-standing belief that Bob stole his mother's affection, but also actually occurring beliefs, such as that the accident will upset Bob, and actually occurring desires, such as the desire that Bob be upset. It also requires what Searle calls a 'prior intention'—to upset Bob by means of spilling the water—and *an* '*intention in action*' *which actually* '*governs*' *Bill's bodily movements*, so that these movements are a case of spilling water, not of moving H_2O around.

10. John R. Searle, 'Consciousness, Explanatory Inversion, and Cognitive Science', *Behavior and Brain Sciences* (1990) 13:4, 603, 604.

11. Ibid., 634.

According to Searle, unconscious brain states cannot determine aspectual shape, and yet my example requires that the intention in action that causes the appropriate bodily movements have an actual, not just a potential aspectual shape. Otherwise, one cannot say what Bill is doing or, indeed, that he is doing anything at all. It seems that, for the movements that make up an action to be caused by an intention in action, the intention in action must be more than a logical structure; it must be a mental state. If so, Searle's view is not as far from Husserl's as he claims.

To sum up, Searle begins his account of action by pointing out that the conditions of satisfaction involved in acting are normally both logical and phenomenological. Later, however, he tries to take away the phenomenology. But it turns out that one can't simply take away the phenomenology and still maintain that a representation of the conditions of satisfaction must cause the bodily movements that make up an action.

But even if we grant that intentional content, merely as a logical structure not instantiated in a mental representation, can have causal power, we face a new problem. Since each movement involved in an action does not have its own conditions of satisfaction, it should not have intentionality, yet, as Searle points out, each subsidiary movement is done intentionally. Searle's solution is that, to count as intentional, each subsidiary movement of an action must be *governed* by the relevant intention in action. As Searle puts it:

> *Intentionality reaches down to the bottom level of voluntary actions.* Thus, for example, the skillful skier has his Intentionality at the level of getting down the mountain. But each subsidiary movement is none the less an intentional movement. Each movement is governed by the Intentionality of the flow....[12]

Searle adds that 'the only cause in question could be the fact that I am actually *doing it* intentionally as opposed to passively experiencing it.'[13] Only in this way, according to Searle, can we explain how all the subsidiary movements involved in an action are intentional, even though only the overall action has conditions of satisfaction. But this analysis leaves unclear just how

12. John R. Searle, 'Response: The Background of Intentionality and Action', in *John Searle and his Critics*, 293.

13. Ibid., 294.

intentionality is supposed to be passed along, from an intention in action that represents only the action's overall conditions of satisfaction, to every movement of the flow.

Merleau-Ponty takes up precisely this problem. He introduces a kind of comportment[14] he calls *motor intentionality*, and claims that it is a basic form of intentionality, missed by those like Husserl (and Searle) who suppose that in all comportment the agent's movements must be governed by what the agent (consciously or unconsciously) is trying to achieve.

Merleau-Ponty argues that what we might call absorbed coping does not require that the agent's movements be governed by an intention in action that represents the action's success conditions, i.e. what the agent is trying to achieve. Rather, in absorbed coping the agent's body is led to move so as to reduce a sense of deviation from a satisfactory gestalt without the agent knowing what that satisfactory gestalt will be like in advance of achieving it. Thus, in absorbed coping, rather than a sense of *trying to achieve success*, one has a sense of *being drawn towards an equilibrium*. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

> [T]o move one's body is to aim at things through it; it is *to allow oneself to respond to their call*, which is made upon it independently of any representation.[15]

To get the phenomenon of absorbed coping in focus, consider a tennis stroke. If one is a beginner or is off one's form, one might find oneself making an effort to keep one's eye on the ball, keep the racket perpendicular to the court, hit the ball squarely, and so forth. Even if one is an expert, under the pressure of the game, one might well be *trying* to win the point or at least to return the ball to the opponent's court. But, if one is expert at the game, not bothered by the pressure to win, and things are going so well that one is absorbed in the flow, then, if one feels anything at all, one feels that one's current activity is caused *by*

14. Since I need a term that will cover every sort of directed activity, I can't use 'movement', which is not intentional at all, nor 'action', which is usually understood to involve an explicit intention. I will, therefore, use Merleau-Ponty's term, 'comportment'.

15. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Humanities Press, 1979), 139. (My italics.)

the perceived conditions not by one's *volition*.[16] Without trying, one experiences one's arm shooting out and its being drawn to the optimal position, the racket forming the optimal angle with the court—an angle one need not even be aware of—all this, so as to complete the gestalt made up of the court, one's running opponent, and the oncoming ball.[17]

Thus, according to Merleau-Ponty, in absorbed coping the body of the performer is solicited by the situation to perform a series of movements that feel *appropriate* without the agent needing in any way to anticipate what would count as *success*. To see that normally these two kinds of satisfaction—appropriateness and success—can be separated, we need only note that, in my tennis example, I could make a return that felt just right and the ball fail to land in the opponent's court due to an unexpected gust of wind and, conversely, I could make a return that felt awkward and yet the ball, none the less, land in the court. Whatever makes the absorbed coping feel satisfactory, then, must be independent of the success achieved.

In the case of an *appropriate* tennis stroke, unlike the case of a *successful* return, there is no way to specify success in advance. Rather, my absorbed response must lower a tension without my knowing in advance how to reach equilibrium and what it would feel like to be there. Thus, besides Searle's success conditions, the phenomenologist is led to introduce what one might call *conditions of improvement*.

Once the phenomenon is clear, it becomes clear too, that the intention in action need not reach down and *directly* govern the flow. Rather than a representation of the action's *success conditions* directly governing the agent's subsidiary movements, a sense of the *conditions of improvement* could take over the job.

16. There is a long Zen tradition that says one must get over trying or 'efforting' and just respond. This is also familiar coaching advice. The latest version is Obi Wan Kenobi's advice to the tense and straining Luke Skywalker, 'Use the force, Luke'.

17. One's arm shooting out in this case feels different from what one would presumably feel if one's arm was being caused to shoot out by Penfield's electrodes. One feels in the tennis case that one's motion is relieving the tension of a deviation from an optimal gestalt, and one also feels that one could at any moment move ones arm some other way if one desired.

This phenomenon of one's arm shooting out did not seem strange to Homer who avoided treating people as agents or as objects by using the middle voice to describe how the suitor's 'arms went out' to the food and drink placed in front of them.

The intention in action would then be merely an *occasion* that triggered the motor intentionality of the bodily movements.

Searle, however, insists that absorbed coping is not itself a kind of intentionality but rather that 'intentionality rises to the level of background abilities'.[18] That is, the agent must have in mind (or at least be able to have in mind) what he is trying to do, and everything else involved in carrying out the action must be understood as nonrepresentational background capacities that cause subsidiary movements that do not themselves have conditions of satisfaction. But denying motor intentionality leaves unexplained why the subsidiary movements themselves have intentionality.

To understand motor intentionality and its kind of causality, we can begin by considering a game in which one player guides the other's search for some hidden object by saying 'hot' or 'cold'. In that case, the performer is led by the clues without knowing where they are leading. Of course, in the hot/cold game, the player giving the clues needs to know where the hidden object is, and Merleau-Ponty admits that it seems impossible that an agent could intentionally move towards satisfaction without sensing what would count as success. Since he was clear that no account of brain function conceivable in his day could account for this phenomenon, Merleau-Ponty called it magical.[19]

Fortunately, Walter Freeman, a neuroscientist at Berkeley, has worked out a model of learning that can be adapted to show how the brain, operating as a dynamical system, could cause a movement that achieves satisfaction without the brain in any way representing the movement's success conditions.[20] It helps to

18. *John Searle and his Critics*, 293.

19. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 103. It's important to note that Merleau-Ponty uses 'magical' in two ways. In discussing how the mind can control movement he says, 'We still need to understand by what magical process the representation of a movement causes precisely that movement to be made by the body.' And he adds, 'The problem can be solved provided that we cease to draw a distinction between the body as a mechanism in itself and consciousness as being for itself'. (139) Here he is using the term magical pejoratively to mean that a causal claim is based on an ontology that makes it impossible to account for how it could be implemented.

In the case just cited, however, Merleau-Ponty uses 'magical' to mean that there is no *currently conceivable* way to cash out the causal claim that absorbed coping is directed towards a goal without representing that goal.

20. Walter J. Freeman, 'The Physiology of Perception', *Scientific American*, 264: 78–85, 1991a; and W. J. Freeman and K. A. Grajski, 'Relation of olfactory EEG to behavior: Factor Analysis', *Behavioral Neuroscience*, 101: 766–777, 1987.

have Freeman's model in mind when describing and defending Merleau-Ponty's surprising view that, although absorbed coping has conditions of satisfaction, these are conditions of improvement that consist in moving so as to lower a tension, not so as to achieve an already-represented success, and that, since such conditions of satisfaction cannot be known by the agent in advance of his feeling satisfied, they cannot be represented as a future state of success that governs or guides the agent's current movements.

According to Freeman's model of learning, after an animal has repeatedly encountered a situation in which a particular response has produced results that are useful or harmful to the animal, it forms neuron connections which, when the animal encounters stimuli from a similar situation, causes the neurons to produce a burst of global neuronal activity whose energy state occupies a point in an energy landscape. A point in an energy landscape is the amount of energy it takes the whole configuration to be in that state, and the points around that point require more or less energy. A minimal energy state is called a basin of attraction, or an attractor. In Freeman's model of learning, the animal's brain forms a new attractor each time the animal learns to respond to a new type of situation.

Applying Freeman's model to action, we can suppose that, through exposure to satisfactions and frustrations brought about by specific actions in a number of similar situations, the sensory-motor system forms an attractor landscape that is shaped by the possibilities for successful comportment in that type of situation. When a specific sensory input moves the system-state into the vicinity of a specific attractor, the organism moves so as to bring the system-state closer to the bottom of that basin of attraction. The tennis player's experience, in my example, of a tension drawing him to move towards a satisfactory gestalt would, on this account, be correlated with the tendency of his sensory-motor system to relax into a specific minimum energy state.[21]

21. It is important to bear in mind that this account is only supposed to cover skilful coping in flow; not cases of deliberate action. But even thinking of all absorbed coping as moving so as to reduce a felt tension and so *reach equilibrium* is obviously an oversimplification. Some absorbed coping, like carrying on a conversation, does not seem to be governed by a tendency to reduce tension. The Freeman/Merleau-Ponty model applies best to the basic skills we have for getting around in the world. And, even when one is being drawn to reduce a tension and so is tending towards equilibrium, one usually finds oneself in a new situation before one arrives at stasis,

At any given moment, the system, like the player in the 'hot' and 'cold' game, is in a state that is near or far from the bottom of some specific basin. But, if that were all that was going on in the person's brain, the person would be like a player who could only guess where to look next, and so at best could find what he was seeking by trial and error.

Happily, the energy landscape gives more information than just 'hot' or 'cold'. In our hypothetical case, as soon as the experienced tennis player's perception of the situation brings his sensory-motor system under the pull of a specific attractor, his brain's relaxing into a basin of attraction is correlated with his sense of which direction of movement would make him hotter without his knowing where the hottest point is. The system thus underlies the player's tendency to be drawn to make those movements that result in his feeling a lowering of tension—the same movements that result in his brain-state approaching the lowest accessible point in its current energy landscape, without the brain representing the lowest energy state in advance and without the player's needing to represent to himself what the final equilibrium state would be like or how to get there. As Merleau-Ponty already pictured it, the brain would simply be moving to lower a tension, like a soap bubble relaxing into a spherical shape without in any way representing the spherical shape toward which it was tending, and the player would simply feel drawn to complete a gestalt without knowing the shape of that gestalt in advance.

The correlation can be carried further to capture the basic difference between Merleau-Ponty's and Searle's understanding of the causal role of an act of volition. An interesting feature of Freeman's model of perception is that the brain does not form conditioned responses to specific stimuli but, on the basis of experience, it produces its own attractors which are evoked and modified on the basis of further experience. Once the stimulus from the current situation has triggered a burst of neuronal activity that forms a specific attractor landscape, the attractor landscape takes over and draws the system to relax into a specific attractor. Thus, once the sensory input has put the system into a specific attractor landscape, it has no further job and so can

and so one is drawn towards a new equilibrium before the first equilibrium is actually reached. Thus, the agent is continually drawn towards some equilibrium state or other but seldom arrives at any.

be, as Freeman puts it, 'thrown away', as the attractor produced by the system takes over the job of categorising the sensory input.

If we again extend Freeman's model to comportment, we find it not only corresponds to Merleau-Ponty's tension-reduction account of motor intentionality; it would also solve Searle's problem of explaining why the intention in action rises to the level of skill, and how, none the less, the subsidiary bodily movements can be intentional even though they don't have conditions of satisfaction.

The brain correlate of an act of volition would put the system into a specific attractor landscape. After that, the brain correlate of the volition would no longer be casually active, but would, as it were, be thrown away as the dynamics of the attractor landscape took over as the brain correlate of the agent's movements. Thus, rather than having to suppose with Searle that an intention in action has to reach down and directly govern each subsidiary movement, thereby, in some mysterious way, passing its representational intentionality on to each, on Merleau-Ponty's and Freeman's account, the intention in action would trigger the absorbed coping whose movements would have motor rather than representational intentionality.[22]

One then has a radically different account of the intentionality of absorbed coping. For Searle, intentionality raises to the level of skill, that is, a representation of an action's success conditions somehow activates and governs intentionless background skills and capacities. To take Searle's example, an expert skier's intention in action to ski down a mountain, activates and governs his background capacities as he performs the unrepresented, but none the less intentional, activity of shifting his weight from ski to ski, etc. On the Freeman/Merleau-Ponty account, once the volition has initiated the action, absorbed coping, with its own kind of intentionality, correlated with the causal properties of the brain as a dynamical system, takes over and carries out the task. This cashes out the metaphor of the intention in action reaching down and governing the bodily movements, and explains how

22. On this view, in the phenomenological account of absorbed coping, the distinction between a prior intention and an intention in action would be unnecessary since an act of volition would, like a prior intention, cause but not accompany absorbed coping.

each bodily movement, although not directly caused by a volition, is, none the less, intentional.

In response to my phenomenological and neurological account of the intentionality of absorbed coping, Searle has clarified his understanding of the nature and role of propositional representations in the logic of action and of absorbed coping. He continues to stress the difference between his approach and Husserl's. For Husserl, actions are caused by volitions which are actual mental events. For Searle, however, what might seem to be a phenomenological claim concerning the causal role of *mental* representations of what the agent is trying to achieve, is actually a logical analysis of the causal role of *propositional* representations of an action's conditions of satisfaction, where a propositional representation is broadly defined as any structure that can be stated in a proposition. It is not immediately clear what success and failure mean when one can only sense an improvement, but I presume that for Searle the conditions of satisfaction in a case of absorbed coping would be that *this* movement lower *this* tension. Searle can then grant that in absorbed coping the agent need not have a representation of the end-state he is being drawn towards—that the agent may find out what a final equilibrium feels like only when he gets there. As he puts it, 'On my account [both kinds of intentionality] are forms of intentionality in the sense that they can succeed or fail.'[23]

Thus, to preserve the generality of his logical analysis of action, Searle is ready to extend his notion of the propositional representation of an action's conditions of satisfaction to cover both a general description of what one is trying to achieve and a demonstrative reference to whatever the agent will sense as a reduction of tension.

Here I will not go into the question whether the notion of propositional representation can successfully be extended, as Searle claims, to cover the sense of tension reduction required by absorbed coping. Rather, I will argue that, even if Searle *is* successful in defining an extended sense of propositional representation that covers all forms of comportment, such a logical analysis will necessarily miss the special character and causal priority of absorbed coping.

23. *John Searle and his Critics*, 294.

There are three separate issues here: (1) Whether, in the case of actions initiated by an intention in action, the intention in action need be the direct cause of the bodily movements; (2) Whether there could be absorbed coping not initiated by an intention in action; and (3) Whether all action is dependent on a background of absorbed coping.

(1) Searle's logical analysis convincingly shows, that the bodily movements that make up an action must be caused by an intention in action. But there is an important difference between Searle's logical conclusions and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ones. Searle assumes that there is only one kind of intentional causality, and that therefore the intention in action that causes the bodily movements must reach down and govern them directly, whereas Merleau-Ponty would contend that the intention in action is only an occasional cause that merely initiates the absorbed coping that carries out the action. The bodily movements that make up an *action* must, indeed, be initiated by an intention in action with its success conditions, but carrying out such actions normally depends on the contribution of *absorbed coping* with its conditions of improvement. It thus turns out that, where action is concerned, each form of intentionality needs the other.

(2) Once we see that the role of an intention in action is simply to trigger absorbed coping, the question arises whether one always needs an intention in action to initiate absorbed coping. Phenomenology then reveals that there are many comportments that do not have success conditions but only conditions of improvement. For example, the distance one stands from one's fellows in any particular culture depends on being socialised into what feels appropriate. Sometimes, this sense of getting the appropriate distance is a part of an action with success conditions, as when someone trying to have a conversation stands the appropriate distance so as to have one, but sometimes, as when several people find themselves together in an elevator and each simply moves to the distance from the others that feels comfortable, no intention in action seems to be required to initiate the bodily movements involved. In general, we don't have intentions to comport ourselves in socially acceptable ways.

Freeman's and Merleau-Ponty's accounts might seem to leave unexplained how such cases of coping can take place without

being initiated by an intention in action. But each has a suggestion as to what might be going on. As we have noted, Merleau-Ponty notes that motor intentionality is continuously in play so that the flow of coping is only rarely initiated from scratch. Freeman has a similar idea. For him, the brain is continually tending towards equilibrium but, before it can arrive at a stable state, some new movement is required, and the body falls under the sway of another attractor.

(3) In general, when intentional action occurs, it is only possible on the background of on-going absorbed coping—what Wittgenstein calls finding one's way about in the world. Indeed, as Heidegger argues at length in *Being and Time*, absorbed coping produces the intelligibility and familiarity on the basis of which intentional action is possible.[24] Thus, in the last phenomenological analysis, absorbed coping, as the background condition of the possibility of all forms of comportment, is basic.

This dependency of intentional action upon absorbed coping is covered up when the notion of propositional representation, used by Husserl in his transcendental phenomenology to give a phenomenological analysis of action, and by Searle to give a logical analysis, is stretched to cover the phenomenon of absorbed coping. Only existential phenomenology can reveal the two different types of comportment and that, of the two, absorbed coping is causally more basic.

III

Conclusion: An Alternative Ontology. We have seen that Searle can extend the usual characterisation of propositional representations so as to give an account of *all* forms of comportment. In so doing, however, he covers over an important logical and phenomenological distinction—the distinction between actions that are caused by a representation of their *context-free* conditions of success, and the absorbed coping caused by the *context-dependent* conditions of improvement.

This distinction may not be important if one is simply interested in a general logical analysis of the role of all forms of representation, but it becomes crucial if one is interested, as Searle

24. For the detailed argument, see Chapter 5 of Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge Ma.: MIT Press, 1991).

is, in the causal powers of the mind. Then logical analysis, by covering up the distinction between absorbed coping and action, covers up the way the former underlies the latter.

Existential phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty claim that, to do justice to the unique character of absorbed coping and its primacy, we must adopt a richer ontology than the one assumed by Husserl and Searle of minds containing intentional content, on the one hand, and meaningless bodily movements, on the other. According to Merleau-Ponty, the motor intentionality that underlies action is not best understood as a bodily movement caused by an intention in action, whether this intention is taken to be a mental event or a logical structure. Rather, motor intentionality has what he calls a third kind of being—a kind of being that is not a combination of the physical and the mental, but rather a direct way of responding appropriately to the solicitations of the environment in which the agent is inextricably embedded.[25]

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25. I would like to thank Jerry Wakefield for first formulating Merleau-Ponty's account of action in terms of tension reduction. See our paper, 'Intentionality and the Phenomenology of Action', in *John Searle and his Critics*, E. Lepore & R. Van Gulick, eds., (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), and Mark Wrathall for his helpful comments. I also want especially to thank Sean Kelly, whose criticisms and suggestions in response to many drafts of this paper have transformed and improved it so much that it now barely resembles the original version.