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MERLEAU PONTY: SUBJECTIVITY AS THE FIELD OF BEING WITHIN BEINGS. AWARENESS AS EXISTINGNESS

MERLEAU PONTY: LA SUBJETIVIDAD COMO EL CAMPO DEL SER DENTRO DE LOS SERES. LA CONCIENCIA COMO EXISTENCIA

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Abstract

In his later life Maurice Merleau Ponty changed his understanding of how human beings know Being and how human beings know phenomena. His mature understanding went far beyond the early phenomenology of Husserl. His understanding and intellectual position about the subjectivity of mind alone with its corresponding subject object duality dissolved into a experience of non duality within appearance. His dualistic understanding about Being changed to the vast nondual awareness of Being as the source of both subjectivity and objectivity.

Resumen

En su vida posterior, Maurice Merleau Ponty cambió su comprensión de cómo los seres humanos conocen el Ser y cómo los seres humanos conocen los fenómenos. Su comprensión madura fue mucho más allá de la fenomenología temprana de Husserl. Su comprensión y posición intelectual, sobre la subjetividad de la mente solo con su

correspondiente dualidad de objeto sujeto se disolvió en una experiencia de no dualidad dentro de la apariencia. Su comprensión dualista acerca del Ser cambió a la vasta conciencia no dual del Ser como fuente de subjetividad y objetividad.

Keywords: Merleau Ponty; duality; non-duality; awareness; existence; tantra; Vajrayana Buddhism

Palabras Claves: Merleau Ponty; dualidad; no-dualidad; consciencia; existencia; tantra; budismo vajrayana

Introduction

Before his work on the Visible and the Invisible Merleau Ponty's thought was contained by equating subjectivity with mind alone and with object alone. His view was dualistic and the source of knowing was located in mind alone. Mind means the functions of thinking, feeling, sensation, memory and fantasy.

The unfinished text phenomenology of the Visible and the Invisible (Merleau-Ponty, 1968) presents his experiential non dualistic understanding. As his understanding unfolds, his awareness becomes clear that there is only one source of subjectivity and the objectivity. There is once source of awareness and circumstances. There is one source of awareness as subjectivity and awareness as phenomena as world. This one source is primordial awareness as Being. Being manifesting awareness as the world.

In his earlier works such as the Structure of Behavior and the Phenomenology of Perception (Merleau-Ponty, 2013) he made the intellectual equation of subjectivity with mind alone. In this reflective phenomenology his view was limited to reading ciphers about the nature of awareness. He used phenomenological reflection and language to conceptualize and represent the source of knowingness of self and world.

As his own experience of meditative awareness expanded, his direct perception as intuition became more pervasive and stable. His meditative awareness also opened up for him Heideggers deepened understanding of awareness as a field phenomena (Heidegger, 1988). Through the experience of field phenomena Merleau Ponty was able to go beyond duality into the realm of nonduality. He was able to move beyond the duality of self other and experience and articulate the indivisibility of

Being and beings, the indivisibility of awareness and phenomena, and the indivisibility of emptiness and phenomena.

It is of great interest to know that The *dzogchen* thinkers do not limit knowingness to mind alone. Merleau Ponty's study of unpublished text of Husserl at the University of Louvain assisted him in going beyond the contained the mind of the noetic and noematic frame where knowingness is contained in the subjectivity as mind alone (Zahavi, 2002). Merleau Ponty began to experience that beyond his mind as thinking, feeling, remembering, sensing, and fantasizing there was this foundational vast subjectivity of primordial awareness.

As a person shifted or suspended their mind via the *epoché* (Schutz, 1970), awareness remained. And with the second reduction a person could become aware of awareness itself. In this action primordial awareness becomes visible or experience able. Merleau Ponty experienced and understood that this primordial awareness in its pervasiveness was source of both subjectivity and otherness. Merleau Ponty began to both understand and experience the meanings of Heidegger's *da sein* both as being in the world and as the openness of awareness and the openness of the world. Merleau Ponty was confirmed in this understanding that awareness is ultimately a field vast and multidimensional (Christensen & Brumfield, 2010).

Our own awareness is an opening within this field of space and energy and light. Such understanding takes awareness beyond the solipsism of mind alone. In this dramatic praxis awareness and the ground of Being can be understood to be in oneness.

Tantric Buddhism: phenomenology of non-duality

It is of greatest interest that the phenomenology of *dzogchen* within the great Ati yoga tradition of Tibetan Buddhism as well as the Kashmiri Shavistic tradition within Hinduism presents similar views of mind being differentiated from awareness. Awareness is vast field, and there is oneness of awareness and ground of Being. There is the indivisibility of phenomena and spaceousness as primordial awareness (Wallace, 2011). And so both in *dzogchen*, Kashmiri shavism there is the manifestation of duality within non duality and non duality within duality. Or as the Dakini said to Dudjom Lingpa you and I are indivisible (Bauer, 2018).

In the Visible and the Invisible as well as the text Eye and Mind Merleau Ponty (1961) overcomes and goes beyond his earlier phenomenological idealistic philosophy of being mind alone wherein the very intentionality of mind creates the co constitution of meaning. Merleau Ponty also makes the great step of going beyond conceptual, and reflective representational thinking into non conceptual dimension of prereflective awareness. This prereflective awareness becomes apparent when one is able to suspend the mind, and focus awareness within awareness itself. The differentiation of mind from awareness, opens awareness to become aware of awareness as subjectivity that is not bound by the mind alone and is the self expression of Being itself. To say this another way the subjectivity of awareness is an opening of Being into time and space. Subjectivity is the opening of Being itself within the mind body continuum. The continuum Merleau Ponty calls the medium of the flesh.

And so the opening of personal awareness is the manifestation of primordial awareness itself. To use the language of subjectivity, primordial subjectivity is embodied in person as their own unfolding

experience of primordial subjectivity manifesting within personal subjectivity.

I will use some selections of his wording from the *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 2013).

«There is an anonymous life an amorphous existence which precedes my own history. I am an embodied being. I am borne into a personal existence by a time that I do not constitute. My personal life must be the resumption of a prepersonal tradition. There is therefore, another subject beneath me, for whom the world exist before I am here, and who marks out my place in it. This captive or natural spirit is my body. Beneath the personal is a prepersonal dimension, an anonymous and generalized existence. This way of being in the world that is not yet structured according to the conditions of subject and object, a preobject level of existence».

The praxis of becoming aware of awareness opens the person to direct perception of appearance of phenomena. This direct vision of appearance of phenomena allows the person to experience the indivisibility between phenomena and awareness. This direct vision goes beyond subjectivity as mind. The experience of the nonduality of Being within both subjectivity and otherness as phenomena allows Merleau Ponty to go beyond the extremes of realism and idealism. For Merleau Ponty realism is a mechanical concrete operation view of both subjectivity as object and indeed all phenomena as concrete objects. Realism is the experience of the world as mechanical object in a vacuum. The experience of non duality of awareness and appearance of phenomena allows him to go beyond idealism. In idealism both subjectivity and otherness as phenomena are simply the ideation of the mind. Subjectivity as idea and the world as idea.

Like Heidegger Merleau Ponty creates a topology of being as place. For Merleau Ponty The Being in beings is glimpsed through the manifestation of appearance. This manifestation of appearance takes place within the place of our being. You and I are a place of Being manifesting as awareness. In the Visible and the Invisible Merleau Ponty expresses that being and phenomena are indivisible. He expresses that being and appearing are indivisible. And he expresses being and the world is indivisible. Phenomena is not simply the effect of Being but the manifestation of Being itself. Being for Merleau- Ponty is both the source and the manifestation of the Being of beings. Being is both the manifesting and manifested.

His experience of the multidimensionality of Being is at times limited when compared to the eastern phenomenology. The *mahayana* and *vajrayana* tradition's opens the three dimensions of awareness as Being's manifestation of multidimensionality. Merleau Ponty does describe the multidimensionality of being in terms of latency, depth and breath. He does not think Being as pure being. He is preoccupied with the meaning of the worlds being or to use the language of *dzogchen* the *nirmanakaya* dimension. His work is much less focused on the apparitional dimension of *sambogakaya* realm and the pure formless dimension of pure being as *dharmakaya*.

In the earlier Phenomenology of Perception Merleau Ponty defined the world as a correlate of the existential bodily projects of the subject. In the Visible and the Invisible the subject is defined or understood in relation to the world of which the subject is the self realization of the world. The Being of the world manifest itself as beings. The world is no longer the visible world of the phenomenology but nature itself, cosmos itself. The Being of the Invisible/Visible is not the same as being of the phenomenology of perception. Being is neither limited to subject nor

object but is the source of subjectivity as well unfolding world of circumstance and situation.

The flesh

This Being is the single flesh from which and in which everything is the one flesh, the single fabric of which they are differentiations. These differentiations within being bring forth the duality differentiation manifest. Through differentiation singularity happens. Through differentiation duality happens. A me and a you takes place from within the non dual field. Duality is as necessary as non duality. Duality arises out of the creativity of nondual wholeness. In *dzogchen* this dimension of differentiation is called *nirmanakaya* dimension. There are three dimensions or *kayas* of primordial awareness.

The flesh is the formative medium through which both subject and object are formed. The flesh is the single stuff out of which body and things are made. Subject and object are co emergent and both arise from the same Being. The sentient body and sentient thing are parts of the same total. Subjectivity and objects are indivisible and inseparable as they are from the same Being and manifestations of the Being. This Being or space is the source of both subject and object. The activity of noesis or noema arise from Being manifesting as mind. Being or the space of Being is the ultimate foundation of phenomena, the foundation of the being of the world. Being is not something behind beings, beings are not simply the result of Being. Beings are the manifestation of Being itself. Being is totally beyond and within the variations and infinite differences. Being is the fabric of which things are the manifestation. The articulation of Being is not in front of the subject but pervades him and surrounds him and pervades him and manifest him. The world is not an object meaning a

project of the subject. The flesh of the world is the being of Being being seen. The dimension of flesh is the appearing of Being as beings.

Within duality is non duality... and within non duality is duality. There is a deconstruction of objectivistic ontology and subjectivistic ontology. Objectivistic thought is either idealistic or materialistic as realism. Both Heidegger and Merleau Ponty go beyond idealism or realism. Experiencing Being as field goes beyond this framing. Experiencing Knowingness as field awareness dissolves these frames of realism and idealism.

Naturalism is also expressed through the metaphor of earth that Husserl used. The earth is the ground of all experience. The source from which all objects are engendered. The earth is source to all experience and encompasses all potentiality of experience. The earth is the originating, the base and the ground of all experience. The earth is not an object but a preobject. The earth is not contained in space but is the potential space as space of openness. The earth is the root of our spaciality. In this languaging of the metaphor of earth we can hear Merleau Ponty approaching the metaphor of the *dzogchen dharmakaya*.

Phenomenology of Meditation

Through meditation we learn the being of the ground as nothingness. And out of this no thingness all beings arises. The forgetfulness of the originating source leaves us with a split view and the mechanical view of nature. Nature is not the object of consciousness but rather primordial Being which is not yet subject being or object being. Nature is the potentiality of this world. We can not make Being a thing just as we can not make God a thing. When we separate phenomena from Being, then Being becomes a thing.

Merleau Ponty begins to utilize the language of ontological difference which was developed by Heidegger and later elaborated by Deleuze. There is a difference within ontological continuum but a non essential difference. There is a distinction between Being and beings. Being is not a being, Being manifest beings as Being.

The Ontological Difference within the Field of Being

The ontological difference is elaborated within the field of Being in the language of latency, depth, range, invisibility, and dimensionality. Heidegger's understanding of ontological difference greatly influence Merleau Ponty. Heidegger's understanding of the ontological difference was the wording for the complete inseparability of Nouema and Phenomena, Reality and Appearance, and the understanding that the absolute reality as the natural realm of phenomenal appearance. In *dzogchen* language there is indivisibility of form/emptiness, of samsara and nirvana, of dharma and dharmadhatu, of phenomena and emptiness, of phenomena and space, of phenomena and openness (Gómez, 2017).

Being is the world's latency. The relation between world and Being is between the visible and the invisible. Being is the invisible of the visible. This is like the figure background in Gestalt psychology. Every visible involves a ground which is invisible. Just as the figure is visible. The invisible is the depth of the visible. The invisible pervades the visible, penetrates the visible, surrounds the visible, manifest as the visible. Being is the flesh of things, and is present in them as them.

The essence of the visible is to have a lining of the invisible. Invisibility in a certain sense makes the visible visible. The world is the visible of the invisible (Being). The world is the manifest presence of the unmanifest

reality. The world is the actual presence of Being, and Being is virtual latency of the world. Being can be known directly through awareness, the no thingness of awareness experiences the no thingness of being. Awareness and Being are inseparable. The infinite openness is not something... it is no thing from which anything and everything arises. This infinity is the very openness of Being and the very openness of the world is the manifestation of Being. Being is open as the ground of the world, and so the very ground of the world is openness. Awareness itself is openness. To become aware of awareness is to be open to the openness.

Conclusion

The dimensionality of Being arises as Merleau Ponty articulates the infinity of the openness of Being. Being is the dimensionality of the world and the dimensionality of all dimensions. Being is dimensionality itself. All particular things and all singular phenomena are integrated into the universal dimensionality which is Being. Being as dimensionality refers back multidimensional manifestations of Being. Being is the matrix of mystery which is the infinity of possibilities. Each singular thing is a particular manifestation or expression of Being. The manifestation of Being is the very actuality of the world, and the actual includes its own possibility. The actual includes the virtual and the virtual includes the actual. Being is both the potential and actuality of the world.

A person should not separate Being and the world, and neither separate Being and particular phenomena. Being is not static and Being manifest as movement. Being is both stillness and movement. Being is luminous radiance manifesting as dynamic energy. The world is Being manifesting itself, and Being is self manifestation. The unconcealment of Being is the infinite process of manifesting of bringing forth, ceaselessly

and relentlessly. All phenomena are the rays or the radiance of Being. The essence of Being is shining forth. This shining forth is both as appearance and apparitional dimensions of phenomena. This dynamic sense of being is expressed by pure there is as Being burst forth.

Being is pure there isness and manifest various dimensions or modes of there is ness...There is the there isness of flesh, there is the there isness of archetypical energy, and there is ness of pure potentiality. The flesh is the sensible world of nature.

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