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## Rethinking the Female Body: A Phenomenological Account

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### Abstract:

*Throughout much of human history, the detachment of the mind from the body seems to be the conspicuous antagonism that permeates the Western philosophy. René Descartes's decisive premise « I think, therefore I am » usurped the body's role in rational thought, relegating it into a state where it has almost no relevance in philosophical discourse. As a result of this exclusion, women were seen as creatures of nature and emotion and therefore deterritorialized from the realm of the rational as their bodies are intrinsically associated with their identities which are much more likely to be marked by defectiveness. Because phenomenology is concerned with the lived experience of subjects, it serves as a major impetus for understanding subjective embodiment. In this vein, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a 20th century French philosopher, argues that the body is an essential agent in the world since it is the implied sine qua non for making any orientation when the subject perceives. In Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty dissects how embodiment is experienced by humans in a universal account assuming that the male body remains an asset of all types of embodiment. This paper juxtaposes Merleau-Ponty and philosophy's deliberate omission of the female body. I claim that the superiority of the mind/reason over the body/emotion is used as a pretext to separate men and women. Drawing on Iris Marion Young's feminist phenomenology, I contend that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological account is so problematic since he merely reversed the binary while still maintaining the privileged status of the male subject. I call attention to the essential need to interrogate the sexual difference when addressing the issue of embodiment. Because bringing back the body to the philosophical interest seems to offer "an Archimedean point of stability" in a cultural condition where, according to Sarah Coakly, no "universal 'grand narrative'" is plausible anymore, I reflect on the essential account of the liberating potential of the female body drawing on my moral convictions.*

**Keywords:** Embodiment, female body, subject, object, phenomenology

### 1. Introduction

Philosophy has always excelled at understanding who we are and what we know and because there is often hostility when dealing with the body in relation to the mind, the body has been categorised, throughout the history of philosophy, as inconsequential and trivial since it harbors itself within emotion that is regarded as a source of distraction and confusion to the mind. In Ancient Greece, Plato had a theory of forms and in this theory, he posited that there exist ideals for every concept, such as Truth, Beauty, Love, and the Good. For Plato, the forms (and truth) can be reasonably accessed through the mind, which must get away from the body in order to know. Drawing on Plato's theory, René Descartes, a late 16th- early 17th century philosopher, affirmed that the mind stands in stark contrast to the body when he presented the idea of the disembodied ego cogito with his famous statement, cogito ergo sum or, "I think, therefore I am." This strong premise stripped the body off its role in rational thought –usurped the body's role in rational thought, relegating it into a state where it has almost no relevance in philosophical discourse. As a result of this exclusion, women were seen as creatures of nature and emotion therefore excluded from the realm of the rational as the body is intrinsically associated with their identity which is much more likely to be characterised by defectiveness. Forthrightly, women's alienation from reason was not only an account of Descartes' work: in addition to reason/ emotion, several binary oppositions have emerged such as private/ public, and subject / object. The philosophical field calls attention to the need of understanding the issue of subjectivity. Basically, the meaning of subjectivity sheds light on who we are as separate from the external world. This disconnectedness is interrogated in a sense that the outside world does affect the individual subjectivity indeed. This suggests that if the subjectivity is, in a way or another, shaped by the external world; so too must our bodies. In fact, the body is the link to the outside world; here it becomes swiftly noticeable that subjectivity blends perfectly with objectivity. In this regard, the body cannot be outside the realms of ontology alongside epistemology. The cognitive process seems incomplete to construct who we are. Due to the fact that bodies cannot lose touch with the external realm, what is received by the human senses forms not only knowledge, but also being. If the very philosophical discourse, for a long time, lies at the heart of keeping the mind and the body in a mismatched state, a dimension of human person has been truly denied. It is the underestimation of the body by western metaphysics that provoked Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a 20th century French philosopher, to subvert all philosophical positions fraught with basic dichotomy between subject and object, Merleau-Ponty refutes Cartesian dualism, which places the human body in the same ontological category as the 'objects' of the physical sciences, and identifies the subjectivity of the human with its consciousness. He dissects how embodiment is experienced by humans in a universal account assuming that the male body remains an asset of all types of embodiment. This paper juxtaposes Merleau-Ponty and philosophy's deliberate

omission of the female body. I claim that the superiority of the mind/reason over the body/emotion is used as a pretext to separate men and women. Drawing on Iris Marison Young's feminist phenomenology, I contend that Merleau Ponty's phenomenological account is so problematic since he merely reversed the binary while still maintaining the privileged status of the male subject. Here, I call attention to the essential need to interrogate the sexual difference when addressing the issue of embodiment. Because bringing back the body to the philosophical interest seems to offer "an Archimedean point of stability" in a cultural condition where, according to Sarah Coakly, no "universal 'grand narrative'" is plausible anymore, I reflect on the essential account of the liberating potential of the female body drawing on my moral convictions.

## 2. Merleau Ponty's Examination of Schneider's Body Motility

For the purpose of eliciting the primordial importance of body subject, Merleau Ponty carried out an in-depth analysis of the case of Schneider, a brain-damaged veteran from the First World War. The neuropsychologists Gelb and Goldstein had already immersed in a detailed analysis of this case that had been injured by a shell-splinter. The latter which penetrated his occipital region of the cortex, normally regarded as the 'centre' of certain forms of visual processing. Yet, the resulting shortcomings were not exclusively visual, here comes Merleau-Ponty's focalization on Schneider's body motility. Basically, Schneider was capable of a large repertoire of normal bodily actions. As a job he was making wallets and could effectively handle the scissors, thread, needles and leather, with a production rate about seventy five percent of the standard one. Besides, he was able to successfully perform most daily activities, such as pulling a handkerchief from his pocket to blow his nose, walking to the shops, scratching his leg where a mosquito had just bitten him, eating, and so forth.

Nevertheless, there were many actions that he either could not perform or, more usually, could perform only with considerable difficulty and with the aid of idiosyncratic methods. For instance: he could not point to his nose unless he takes hold of it. When his leg was touched by a ruler, under medical examination, he does not only fail to point to the spot but also to verbally demarcate the place of sensation. In addition to this, Schneider was capable to describe the angle of his arm to the floor when it was placed in a horizontal position only in one case which manifests in carefully checking the various angles between arm, trunk, and floor. Again, in order to make a circular motion with his hand, he first goes through a set of movements until it becomes, as he noticed, circular, and then completed it carefully. When he is asked to give a military salute, it was necessary for him to adapt his whole body to an overall military bearing. Drawing on Gelb and Goldstein, Merleau-Ponty also names the types of actions that Schneider respectively could, and could not, perform, concrete and abstract movements. That is to say, concrete movements are specifically related to daily activity in response to actual and instant needs, whereas abstract movements are associated with placing one's body into simply 'possible' contexts where its movements are the 'object' (in the sense of 'aim') of actions

Understanding Schneider's ability to perform concrete movements and inability to perform abstract ones particularly necessitates answering the question as to whether the differentiation between the two movements can be made within a dualistic framework. When it comes to, Merleau Ponty admits, the physically describable behaviour involved, the muscular movements, and the external stimuli, there are in many (if not all) cases no significant differences between instances of the two types of movement. For example, attaining one's leg to scratch a mosquito-bite (concrete), and reaching to the point where a ruler has been pressed against one's leg (abstract), are meanwhile identical regarding stimulus, behaviour, and muscular use. This suggested similarity allows Schneider's body to perform both types of movements

It might be said that the drawing distinction between the two types of movements lies in the very absence and presence of considerable consciousness so that concrete movements are described as non-conscious automatic routines and abstract ones as requiring a conscious knowledge of the body and its space related parts. Merleau Ponty rejects this presumed differentiation between the two movements and he diligently assumes that Schneider's incapability to perform abstract movements is not related to the absence of the intellectual understanding on his part. Rather his problem is that he needs to make recourse to all what is to be done. The order that is given to him lacks the intellectual signification that is supposed to be translated into movements afterwards (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 128; 2012, 113)<sup>1</sup>In this vein Merleau-Ponty explains that:

What he [Schneider] lacks is neither motility nor thought [the two categories of dualism], and we are brought to the recognition of something between movement as a third person process [the movement of the 'scientific', object-like 'body'] and thought as a representation of movement [the Cartesian 'consciousness'] — something which is an anticipation of, or arrival at, the objective and is ensured by the body itself as a motor power, a 'motor project', a 'motor intentionality' in the absence of which the order [i.e. the request to perform various abstract movements] remains a dead letter. (p.110)

Instead of understanding concrete and abstract movement as physical motility (the motility of scientific subject) combined with consciousness, Merleau Ponty shifted the focus to the point of availability of what he calls 'motor intentionality' in which both types of movement are involved. What is very fundamental for analysing the differences between this movement is the distinction of the specific forms of intentionality that these movements entail: the different 'attitudes towards the world' and 'different worlds' since the 'world' is for the embodied subject. Regarding this kind of analysis, Merleau Ponty states that it consists in "correctly reading phenomena, in grasping their meaning, that is, in treating them as modalities and variations of the subject's total being" (p.108).

<sup>1</sup>For the purpose of a thorough understanding of Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of Schneider's case regarding the French philosopher's notion of motor intentionality, see Jensen 2009.

As it is assumed throughout the above-mentioned case of Schneider, concrete movements indicate that bodies are associated to the world as the locus of various immediate and habitual tasks, its objects presenting themselves as manipulanda (p.105), things to be acted upon, dealt with, for instance in work. Merleau-Ponty says that for Schneider "the [concrete] task to be performed elicits the necessary movements from him by a sort of remote attraction." Here, the body "surges towards objects to be grasped and perceives them" (p.106), whereas the body is pulled out from this sphere of action when it deals with abstract movements. This necessitates not only the potential of "projection ... whereby the subject of movement keeps in front of him an area of free space in which what does not naturally exist may take on a semblance of existence", but also the possibility to separate oneself from "that plenum of the world in which concrete movement took place", and secure "a zone of reflection and subjectivity" (p.111) Thus:

"... in order to be in possession of my body independently of any urgent task to be performed; in order to enjoy the use of it as my mood takes me, in order to describe in the air a movement formulated only verbally... I must reverse the natural relationship in which the body stands to its environment, and a human productive power must reveal itself through the density of being" (p.112).

The above mentioned 'productive power' is regarded as a notion of freedom and Merleau-Ponty assumed that "... all Schneider's troubles are reducible to a unity ...: he is 'tied' to actuality, he 'lacks liberty', that concrete liberty which comprises the general power of putting oneself into a situation" (p.135); importantly, his body serves him « as a means of ingress into a familiar surroundings, but not as the means of expression of a gratuitous and free spatial thought" (p.104). To be more precise and accurate, 'freedom' should not be understood as being attributed to thought or a conscious reflection separated from bodily actions. Rather, abstract movement is not decomposable in this manner: it remains a form of 'motor intentionality', distinct from that of concrete movement, but nonetheless an embodied way of being in the world. The 'detachment' from familiar surroundings is not a detachment from our bodies, but a different mode of their existence.

For the purpose of grasping this issue more, an example of the 'existential-phenomenological analysis of the body-subject' is going to be presented in the following section wherein the phenomena of Schneider's embodiment are tackled by Merleau Ponty in a way that refutes the dualism of body and consciousness and contradicts all kinds of (what he calls) 'scientific' or 'causal' thought.

### 3. The Body-Subject

Throughout his journey of analysis, Merleau-Ponty tackles some other examples of 'normal' bodily movements. In particular, he is keen on habitualized skills of performance, such as using a typewriter, driving a car, or playing a musical instrument. He concedes that none of these can be understood as automated sequences of physically specifiable movements, for the reasons already given in the case of Schneider's wallet-production. Nor do they constitute the application, either consciously or unconsciously, of some mental formula or principle: one can perform successfully without being able to articulate the 'principles' supposedly involved, and conversely articulating the principles do not necessarily need the ability of performing actions. A particular organist, as he argues, is able to 'transfer', by means of the familiarization process with his skills to the parts of a new instrument.

This process does not entail any mental indulgence so as the new positions are shaped rather, says Merleau Ponty, "He sits on the seat, works the pedals, pulls out the stops, gets the measure of the instrument with his body, incorporates within himself the relevant directions and dimensions, settles into the organ as one settles into a house." (p.145) Both in the case of specific performing skills, and in our everyday dealings with the world, says Merleau-Ponty, we cannot regard our bodies as the object-like instruments of a guiding, knowing, intending consciousness. He sees that it is actually our bodies themselves that are not only capable of understanding what and how to do things, but also own an intentionality that directs us towards the world.

Therefore, Merleau Ponty does not associate the body with an intentional consciousness; he rather makes the notions of meaning — of intention, aim, understanding, direction/directedness and significance literally applicable to the body. Instead of confining the concept of knowledge to cases entails reflective intellectual processes, the explicit articulation of beliefs, principles, theories, goals and so on, bodies properly possess knowledge. Thus:

Our bodily experience of movement is not a particular case of knowledge [i.e. intellectualist, theoretical 'knowledge']; it provides us with a way of access to the world and the object, with a 'praktognosia', which has to be recognized as original and perhaps as primary" (p.140).

Merleau Ponty sees praktognosia or "know-how" as the body's primary, somatic epistemology or perception of the world without discursive reasoning or logical thinking. Basically, 'knowing' is influenced by 'doing' which is a prior process. In some sense, this praktognostic body forms the basis for all other kinds of relationship between the human subject and the world. In Part Two of *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau Ponty makes steps further to assert that our bodies provide the basis of our perceptual relationship to the world, including, for instance, our perception of the spatial relationships between its various elements. We do not experience these relationships from an impersonal perspective but from the perspective of our own, action-oriented bodily organization. 'Up, down', 'on, under', 'near to, far from', and so on: these are the dimensions of a lived, 'phenomenal' spatiality, attaining their sense from our embodied intentionality.

Hence, the concept of the body-subject, as he argues, conversely suggests the human subject as a 'body' in the world that is automatically constituted as an object by and for it. For Merleau Ponty, the body allows "us clearly to understand motility as basic intentionality. Consciousness is in the first place not a matter of 'I think that' but of 'I can'" (p.137). In this light, Merleau Ponty considers the body as 'the potential source' that sustains familiar actions involving a field or scope grasped by the body. (105) So, the human body is itself, as Merleau Ponty argues, 'subject'. Straightforwardly, the human subject is necessarily embodied. It seems that Merleau Ponty's phenomenology of the body is original and

fruitful in its sense, yet; problematic in its content as it lacks the gender aspect of difference in terms of bodily motility that is going to be fully articulated in the following part.

#### 4. The Gendered Body within a Phenomenological Framework

Iris Marison Young's « Throwing Like a Girl » in *Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy* is an illuminating paper which stands as the very discourse that deconstructs the patriarchy's essentialist assumptions about the female body. It is a thorough and significant piece of work not only in feminism, but also in thinking about the way embodiment shapes subjectivity. With reference to Merleau Ponty's account of the body, Iris Marison Young engages in a rigorous analysis of various differences between feminine and masculine bodies. Young vividly depicts a noticeable difference between the throwing movements of girls and boys at an early age. While girls do not seem to be at ease to use their whole bodies, boys seem capable to do totally the opposite twisting the trunk and positioning one leg behind. The same absence of whole-body use is displayed in many other activities, such as lifting or pushing heavy weights, or opening bottles and jars; and these actions are often done with the girl imposed and anchored disbelief of her capacity to do them. With regard to various activities such as running, climbing, walking, playing games, and so forth, there is a characteristically feminine mode of bodily comportment as it is argued by Young.

Young draws attention to an intriguing point that distinguishes female experience of embodiment from that of male. It deals with the girls' emphasis on the objective of the actions rather than the bodily movements themselves. There is a form of self-consciousness about the body itself which is not only the result of the non-conscious use to accomplish a certain task but also the counterproductive concern with possible injury or harm. As an illustration of this point, when the girl wants to cross a stream; she is too preoccupied with her salient difficulty of putting her limbs in a safe position, instead of reaching the opposite side of the bank. Again, while playing games such as baseball, girls do not tend to view the ball as something towards which they are going to make a movement to redirect its motion rather, as something which is coming at them thereby waiting for its arrival.

Young argues that the possibility for transcendence described by Merleau Ponty is not as open at the feminine bodily experience as it is to the male bodily experience<sup>2</sup>. As a trigger for further discussions on the contentious argumentation of Merleau Ponty, Young outlines an existential-phenomenological analysis of these features of female bodily motility through indicating that "There is a world for a subject just insofar as the body has capacities by which it can approach, grasp and appropriate its surroundings in the direction of its intentions," (p.12) besides, this primary intentionality involves an 'I can' rather than an 'I think'. Young claims that it is the 'inhibited intentionality' that underlines the characteristics of feminine bodily movement as a matter of fact denoting an 'ambiguous transcendence', which itself entails the body's subjectivity being permanently undermined by a simultaneous objectivity. There is a strong sense of inhibition of intentionality for the feminine body to be up to the target of the action. An uninhibited intentionality "projects the aim to be accomplished and connects the body's motion towards that end in an unbroken directedness which organizes and unifies the body's activities" (p.14) In opposition to this, she states:

Feminine motion often severs this mutually conditioning relation between aim and enactment. In those motions which when properly performed require the coordination and directedness of the whole body upon some definite end, women frequently move in a contradictory way. Their bodies project the aim to be enacted, but at the same time stiffen against the performance of the task" (p.14).

This antagonistic mode of movement can be considered as simultaneously expressing both an 'I can' and an 'I cannot'; or rather, perhaps, a 'one can' but 'I cannot': The action is 'performable', but not (altogether) 'by me'. Hence, the intentionality is impeded by a forced disbelief in the faculty to attain the objective, and debilitated by the distracting focus upon the processes of bodily movement themselves. Therefore, the feminine body is beset by an inescapable 'immanence', going back to the status of objects as a matter of fact accomplishing only an ambiguous transcendence instead of being a fully transcendent subject, projecting itself wholeheartedly towards the world of objects to be acted upon

For further elicitations to account for these feminine bodily features, Young tended to refer back to the historically and socially specific nature of bodily existence mode. The movement is confined, Young confirms, due to the societal restrictions placed upon girls as they grow up and mature. The utilization of the entire body for the task has nothing to do with anatomical or biological "limitations," but the whole social, political and aesthetic history of how females come to learn to "be" their bodies in space and time. Young states:

The experience of female embodiment in sexist society closes space, time and the imagined future possibilities of becoming and achievement. It is a closure not just of the body, but of the mind and will. Feminine existence experiences the body as a mere thing — a fragile thing, which must be picked up and coaxed into movement, a thing that exists as looked at and acted upon.

Apparently, Young seems mainly to explore the ways in which the female child, in a particular cultural context, 'learns' to use and regard her body. She concedes that girls are disheartened by the fact that they are rarely indulged in some activities that would enhance the bodily 'skills' mentioned above: for instance, being asked to "perform tasks demanding physical effort and strength", and the kinds of play regards them as typically more sedentary and "enclosed." (p.22) Additionally, girls tend obviously to identify their bodies primarily as 'objects', rather than as sources of outer-oriented activity. Their bodies are regarded as both the object of the male's sexual gaze and the object of various forms of physical invasion. Young believes that because of the feeling of self-consciousness, the girl's body becomes the fountainhead of the male consumption that is further generated through the female preparation for the gaze of others.

<sup>2</sup>See Iris Marison Young, « Throwing Like a Girl » in *Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy*, (Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1989) 59

Meanwhile, when the girl becomes conscious of the male's perception of her body, she develops defending mechanisms to protect herself from the outer space, yet in doing so; a mismatched relationship is generated between the body and external objects.

I think that Young's paper involves a slight lacuna regarding the way women perform actions that requires 'whole body mobilization'. I mean it might be said that they are misleadingly built on a gender-biased sample since there are some cases in which women manage -par excellence- to be better at utilizing their bodies such as carrying a child. In addition, there are some cases in which men's bodies can be depicted as objects of admiration for their strength and utility. Obviously, this conceptualization of 'subject' and 'object' fails to give a clear-cut judgement about gendered body as this terminology seem to be blurred in terms of expressing these different types of objectivity. (I will reflect on this point of subject object in the last part of this paper).

Merleau Ponty's phenomenology of the lived body does not only provide the seeds for Iris Marison Young to stumble across the difference of the female experience of embodiment from that of male, but also triggers Judith Butler to offer a theoretical framework with regard to his assessment of sexuality in the Phenomenology of Perception.

## 5. Re-acknowledging the Sexual Difference

Judith Butler supports Merleau- Ponty's theory of sexuality by virtue of its political utility for feminism as long as his account of sexuality treats human sexuality not within a biological context, rather within a socio-historical context and point of origin. In an article from *The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy* titled, "Sexual Ideology and Phenomenological Description: A Feminist Critique of Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception," Butler states:

Theories of sexuality which seems to attribute natural ends to sexual desire are very often part of a more general discourse on the legitimate locations of gender and desire within a given social context. The appeal to a natural desire and, as a corollary, a natural form of human sexual relationships is thus invariably normative, for those forms of desire and sexuality which fall outside the parameters of the natural model are understood as unnatural and, hence, without the legitimation that a natural and normative model confers. (Butler 85)

Here, Butler pinpoints to the importance of engaging other sexual orientations instead of establishing a singular sexual norm. Because she sees that it is those who are considered as abnormally outsiders to the heterosexist culture that will enable an additional cardinal principle of embodiment. Butler scrutinizes the chapter of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception entitled, "The Body in Its Sexual Being" from the perspective that sexuality is coincidental with existence in that is "referential" and not "solipsistic" (Butler 87) Butler concedes that human sexuality is not a process taking place solely within us but it is shaped in reference to other beings.

This is worth noting here since a normative description of sexuality that Merleau-Ponty speaks of only refers to a male perspective. He does not consider a female point of reference for sexuality; this becomes particularly obvious when he contends that motility and spatiality bear a universal aspect. Taking into account clear sexual difference, it sounds unusual to blind them within the same reference. Accordingly, Butler claims that, "Not only does Merleau-Ponty fail to acknowledge the extent to which sexuality is culturally constructed... his descriptions of the universal features of sexuality reproduce certain cultural constructions of sexual normalcy" (Butler 92). She points out to Merleau-Ponty's depiction of Schneider's sexuality and sexual interest as abnormal due to Schneider's disinterest in the opposite sex. This elicits, as she contends, Merleau-Ponty's slippage into a normative view of sexuality. In "The Body in Its Sexual Being," Merleau-Ponty's description of Schneider's sexual incapability lies in his apathetic attitude towards the sexual object – the female form. In this regard, Butler writes:

Central to Merleau-Ponty's assessment of Schneider's sexuality as abnormal is the presumption that the decontextualized female body, the body alluded to in conversation, the anonymous body which passes by on the street, exudes a natural attraction. This is a body rendered unreal, the focus of solipsistic fantasy and projection; indeed, this is a body that does not live, but a frozen image which does not resist or interrupt the course of masculine desire through an unexpected assertion of life (Butler 92-93)

When dissecting Merleau Ponty's examination of sexuality, the acknowledgement of sexual difference is Butler's main concern. Butler argues that Merleau Ponty's omission of this significant aspect brings about a contradictory account of the nature of sexuality. Referring back to the series of tests performed upon Schneider namely the one that targeted his reaction regarding sexual interests and prescribing normality by means of showing him blatant eroticism, she reports that Merleau Ponty falls into the problematic of identifying the norm as solely heterosexual. She criticises Merleau-Ponty's claim of the norm of sexuality because of his depiction of the "masculine subject as a strangely disembodied voyeur whose sexuality is strangely non-corporeal" (Butler 1989, 93). Therefore, in her essay mainly the part entitled "Misogyny as an Intrinsic Structure of Perception" (92), she pinpoints to the norm of heterosexuality as the solely normal sexual practice where the woman is the object of male desire<sup>3</sup>.

While Merleau Ponty relegates the female sexuality into a mere object to be acted upon, he paradoxically assumes a point of convergence of all aspects of male and female embodiment regarding the body's spatiality and motility. In a conscious effort to acknowledge the sexual difference thereby healing the social situation generated by Merleau Ponty, Butler ponders a phenomenology of feminism. She states, "For a concrete description of lived experience, it seems crucial

<sup>3</sup>Butler's paper has been tackled by Elizabeth Grosz who thinks she carries out "a most convincing case" against the neutrality of Merleau-Ponty's ideas on sexuality (Grosz 1993, 58; 1994, 221); by Linda Martin Alcoff, according to whom the analysis shows that his "account of sexuality is patriarchal heterosexuality, and ... naturalizes current gender relations" (Alcoff 2000b, 50); and by Stoller, who is less convinced by Butler's Anna Petronella Foutier 779 reading, although her aim is mainly to show the general compatibility between phenomenology and poststructural feminism: therefore, she gives no detailed assessment of the arguments (Stoller 2010).

to ask whose sexuality and whose bodies are being described..." (98). This philosophical enquiry is significant as it addresses the root of the sexual difference problematic. If a man is discussing a body, it is necessary to identify whose body of which he speaks because his frame of reference stems from his experience of spatiality as a male. In addition to the awareness of sexual difference while questioning the nature of the body, other accounts of embodiment such as sexual orientation and race should be equally taken into consideration. For instance, an African-American and Caucasian women will not bear the same experience of embodiment in terms of the x world and spatiality. Though Butler endorses Merleau Ponty's declaration of human sexuality as a historical and social construction, she draws attention to the negligent aspect of sexual difference and therefore stresses the need for constant vigilance in order to consider a feminist phenomenology of body.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1. *Thinking a Sublime Combination of the Differences*

Flimsy pretexts about the body enshrined basically in the core of western metaphysics is thoroughly opposed by Merleau Ponty whose meditations on embodiment in *Phenomenology of Perception* is a push factor for the feminists to criticize his privileged masculine heterosexual standpoint. It goes without saying that Merleau Ponty's account of the lived body is salient in subverting the philosophical discourse in terms of its constant glorifying of consciousness. Yet, his arguments contain glaring omission of the specific experience of embodiment when it comes to the feminine styles of comportment. This makes the political philosophical thinker, Iris Young Marison to provisionally expose some of the basic modalities of feminine body comportment, ways of moving, and relation in space, thereby offering phenomenological interpretations regarding the assimilation of the subordination of women. Regardless of Merleau Ponty's declaration of human sexuality as a historical and social construction, Butler, in her turn, points to the significance of considering sexual difference in order to clearly draw a feminist phenomenology of the body

I see rethinking the female body as requiring the engagement in a moderate analysis of the sexual difference in which the entire smash of the oppositional categories subject/object that is endemic among the majority of thinkers is necessary for averting any aspect of obfuscation. An authentic account of gendered bodies entails a dynamic relationship set up to differently serve men and women in a mediated way in which concepts are remained completely intact. To make it more explicit, they are to be perceived as acting autonomously from one another yet a complementary function is altruistically played out. Prospecting for a dialectical relationship positively imposes non-priority and non-similarity between men or women. To clear up grey areas, I assert that the yawning chasm between these two different bodies in some aspects does not necessary imply inequality. Calling to everything that men are distinguished with, ostensibly usurps the woman's body from its feminine aspect thereby harbouring a tacit bias towards masculinity.

I seek to affiliate the feminine body with the masculine as a single entity, yet contrapuntal bodies to form a sublime combination. This combination cannot be appealing unless the human conscious works accurately to uphold the social and the moral acumen when it comes to the operation of perceiving matters of gender, namely the experience of embodiment. What is more interesting to be mentioned is that the human conscious should, in a way or another, be resuscitated among institutions within patriarchal societies. The change is going to be rewarding only if every individual assumes the ethical responsibility to sanctify their own sense of the self. It is the lack of the moral edifice that makes males to be particularly prone to primitive comportment that showed much disposition of stigmatizing and sexualizing the female body. The prevailing awkward mindset is inclined to bring about cultural stagnation among Arab societies namely Morocco. These societies that are supposed to be stoically questing for change. This change must emanate first from ordinary people who do not hold any power but proactive enough to act correlatively with their own moral and ethical values for changing perceptions about the woman's body. This is very essential as the question of women is not an individual based matter but it concerns the whole society. The human conscious is to guide matters of sex and gender.

Having admitted the dismantling of the categorical opposition's subject/object, men's and woman's conscious are supposed to be relational in their dimensions. This should be done in an endeavour to attain new perspective on the most intimate of social environment. The more attachment to one's own conscious, the better detachment from their immoral inhibited impulses. Apparently, these immoral impulses entail the very idea of being subjective towards the other sex.

It is my idea that a possible result of extremism, will certainly affect how a woman will conduct herself in the future. In Morocco or Arab countries in general the account of the female body holds almost the same connotations of western thought; I mean the female body is either stigmatised or perceived as a mere sexual medium for men. When it comes to the female body it's not about the society's power enacted or exercised upon women; rather about what should be considered as privileged to the essence of what it means to be a woman. Her motility and spatiality should be shaped within reasonable limits and framework so that no negative attention is triggered. This conscious effort should go hand in hand with the male's endeavour to change their mindset about the female body that is supposed to be sacred not bedevilled as it is apparent since ancient times to date. All in all, it's a matter of perception and male's sane and objective interpretation in general to reinforce the prospect of their comportment towards women.

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<sup>4</sup> My choice of the word 'male' has a significant importance in my analysis of the arab and western mindset towards the female body. Whereas males are much more geared towards stigmatizing and sexualising the female body, men hold a humanist and moderate vision towards women in general as human being. They re the one's who stand up for women.

## 7. References

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