

Cartesian Legacy and Different Critiques of Embodiment

Shipra

Descartes' idea that self is the composite of two distinct substances, the mind/soul, which is essentially me and the other body, which is mine but not me, is rejected by phenomenologists. Unlike Descartes, his heirs reject the idea that mind and body are distantly connected in a way that never be clearly focused. If we deliberately examine the claim that Cartesian legates developed their thought under the source, France, we will come to explore the ways by which these thinkers developed very different attitude regarding self. This article sketches out the picture that Descartes legacy lives in the work of Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir.

Phenomenological thinkers based their idea of bodily existence as certain by rejecting the Cartesian claim of certainty about his thought and existence. Descartes second Meditations reveal that he was looking for absolutely certain something, either about his bodily perceptions or about his mental states. Cottingham quoted from Descartes Meditation as,

I have convinced myself that there is absolutely nothing in the world, no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies. Does it now follow that I too do not exist? No: if I convinced myself of something then I certainly existed. But there is a deceiver of supreme power and cunning who is deliberately and constantly deceiving me; and let him deceive me as much as he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I think that I am something...I must finally conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, is necessary true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind.¹

Descartes claim about the certainty of his thought and existence is grounded in his famous dictum, I think, therefore, I am. By giving this dictum, Descartes "establishes that by which I am thinking is an immaterial substance with no bodily element."² Again, for Descartes,

there are only thoughts which are known prior to understanding of God. That means, for Descartes everything is uncertain except his thoughts. We can deduce by this the uncertainty of body and certainty of mind in Descartes philosophy. He writes in *Meditations*:

I knew I was a substance whose whole essence or nature is simply to think, and which does not require any place, or depend on any material thing, in order to exist. Accordingly, this 'I' - this is, the soul by which I am what I am - is entirely distinct from the body, and indeed is easier to know than the body, and would not fail to be whatever it is, even if the body did not exist.³

Descartes dualism thesis is based on his firm belief in the incorporeality of mind/soul which is distinct from that of corporal body. He says, "There is a real distinction between mind and body; in other words, the mind is a distinct and independent thing. The thinking thing that is me is really distinct from the body and can exist without it."⁴

Descartes thesis compelled us to think that self is something other than body. Cassam writes as for Descartes, "the self is a thinking and unextended thing. The body is an extended and unthinking thing."⁵ Since Descartes, philosophers have tremendously concentrated on one side of the so called division (mind-body). Much less has been written about the body, besides mind has studied vastly. Philosophy of body finds its place in the twentieth century existentialist thinkers. They adopted phenomenological method for the solution of mind-body problem. Phenomenology does not seek a metaphysical theory (what is the relation between a person and his body?), nor does it consist in an explanation of epistemological question (how the body interacts with mind). Rather, the first and foremost enquiry of the body is to understand to what extent our experience of the world, awareness of the self and experience of the others are shaped by and disposed by our embodiment.

For Husserl phenomenology is "the study of conscious experience or appearance as opposed to reality."⁶ Husserl, being in Cartesian legacy,

does not involve himself in Descartes dualism. “Husserl does address the issue of embodiment and bodily character of experience; his conclusions run directly counter to the claims that motivate Descartes’ view, namely the claims concerning the conceivability of the distinction between mind and body.”⁷ Husserl gives his thesis of embodiment in *Ideas II*. Body is neither internal to one’s consciousness, nor it is a thing in the environment as for Husserl. In *Ideas II*, he consequently uses alternatives to describe body as “a thing” inserted between the rest of the material world and the subjective sphere”⁸

Husserl’s phenomenology offers a philosophical way of understanding human body. He, instead of giving socio-biological explanation of different senses of body, gives the distinction between body as an object and lived-body. To understand the meaning of lived-body, we must come across the German words, *Leib* and *Korper*. The former term specifies the living body and in phenomenological term, an experienced body or body as lived. The term *Korper* is related to the English word corpse which signifies the body understood in material terms or a physical object of a particular kind.⁹ Husserl sharply focused on *Lebenswelt*, a term used for signifying life world which he expanded on the human body and its role in everyday actions, and on the social character of many things around us. As such these phenomena seem to be important and richly discussed in phenomenology.

Husserl signifies physical objects as table, chair, trees, books, etc., i.e., the objects which are spatio-temporal¹⁰ in nature. Physical body and living body can be contrasted. “My physical body’s moving in response to my willing, and the effects of that movement on the stairs or the pencil or the racket’s striking the ball. My volition is an event with a moment of intentionality, under the essence “consciousness”. By contrast, my physical body is an object that moves in space–time, under the essence nature. My living body, however, is a complex whole with moments including my volition and my physical body’s movement. Within my living body there are dependencies: my body’s movement is dependent

on, caused by, my volition, while my volition is dependent on, “supervenient” on, and neural events in my brain.”¹¹

To perceive these objects, self must be embodied. Unlike Descartes, Husserl claims, “the body is, in the first place, the medium of all perception; it is the organ of perception and is necessarily involved in all perceptions.”¹² Husserl has a clear vision of perceptual experience, when he says bodily existence is needed for perceptual experiences. He rejects Descartes thought of self, which is described as distinct from the body. Cartesian self is typically conceived as unmodified mental states which is self-sufficient and prior to man’s existence.

Husserl writes in *Cartesian Meditations*:

The life of everyday action relates itself to the world. All the sciences are related to it: the sciences of matters of fact relate themselves to it immediately. More than anything else the being of the world is obvious. It is so very obvious that no one would think of asserting it expressly in a proposition. After all, we have our continuous experience in which this world incessantly stands before our eyes, as existing without question.¹³

Husserl’s phenomenology made life experience as the corner stone of philosophy. We experience touch by our hands, we see it with our eyes, we feel pain in our stomach, we feel bitterness or sweetness of the food on the tongue when we eat with our mouth, all these bodily perceptions or experience refer to embodied self or bodily existence.

It is known that Husserl introduced phenomenological methods of Epoche and Reduction. These methods taught us to bracket things or perceptual experience. “Even if we remain within the perspective of the phenomenological reduction, we must still remain faithful to the contours of our experience as experienced, and so even if we bracket the actual existence of our material bodies, our perceptual experience still refers to our bodies just as much as it refers to the various objects perceived.”¹⁴ We can perceive various material bodies or objects with

our mental eyes, it is a general idea. But Husserl has used this thought in his *Ideas II* where he says body as “Zero point of orientation”¹⁵. Suppose while writing these pages I refer to a particular book which was in the library, but not available here right now, still it takes much of my visual fields although it is at a distance from my eyes or hands. My perceptual experience of the book is always oriented, even when I just imagine reading it. Thus, one perceives objects in relation to his own body. Embodiment needs full bodily existence and orientation. Husserl noticed the role of body in perception, but he gives importance to the cognitive attitudes or mental states more than bodily skills or bodily existence. Intentionality, as known, is the cornerstone of Husserl’s phenomenology. Intentional gap between mind and world can be reduced through mental states; bodily presence is not required every time. This leaves a conclusion that problem of body is recognized by Husserl no doubt, but it could not have philosophical importance for Husserl as for his descendants.

Husserl does criticize Cartesian dualism, but he himself fails to give full description of the notion of body. We find subject-object divide in the form of noesis and noema. Again, the division of lived body and physical body is also there, as we have discussed in this chapter. It is to be noticed that “Husserl is not a metaphysical dualist; indeed, he takes no particular position on the mind-body problem as such. His aim is not to construct an explanatory theory he says, but merely to describe the things themselves.”¹⁶

It seems that Husserl tries to overcome the gap of Cartesian mind-body dualism by simply introducing the concrete unity of mind and body. Husserl writes, “What we have to set over against material nature as a second kind of reality is not the soul, but the concrete unity of body and soul, the human (or animal) subject.”¹⁷ Husserl gives the special importance to the sense of touch, in contrast to seeing and hearing, the sense of touch is confined or restricted to the body itself. When one touches something, he feels being touched. Thus, Husserl introduces the

notion of double-touch of the body. “Husserl places the special emphasis on the phenomenon of double-touch which signifies the fact that the body is something that touches things, that is, has localized tactile sensation and can itself be touched.”¹⁸ Husserl’s theory of double-touch proved as the foundation of bodily intentionality. In *Ideas I* he writes, “Whereas I do not locate tactile sensations in the parts of my body involved in touching things.”¹⁹ This passage clarifies Husserl’s understandings of materiality of the body and at the same time its distinctiveness with material objects. The embodiment thesis is based on lived-body according to Husserl. We can find his Cartesian rejection in the following passage written in *Ideas II*,

To say this Ego, or the soul, has a body does not merely mean that there exists a physical-material thing which would, through its material processes, present real pre-conditions for conscious events or even, conversely that in its processes there occur dependencies on conscious events within a “stream of consciousness”...soul and psychic ego have a Body; there exists a material thing of a certain nature, which is not merely a material thing but is a body, i.e. material thing which, as localization field for sensations and for stirrings of feelings, as complex of sense-organs, and as phenomenal partner and counterpart of all perceptions of things...makes up a fundamental component of the real givenness of the soul and the ego.²⁰

Body is the natural givenness for Husserl. He regards the actuality and existence of the world and the things within it. Unlike, subjectivism and empiricism, “that views private sensations as a raw material from which representations of the world are formed, Husserlian phenomenology would appear to give both the objective and the subjective their view by focussing upon lived-experience.”²¹

Sartre also attempts to provide similar description of body and his starting point is the phenomenological discussion of embodiment as he creatively interpreted it from his readings of Husserl. Sartre shows his

phenomenological engagements with Husserl in his essay, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, where he attacks transcendental ego as understood by Husserl. Unlike Husserl, Sartre's claim is that "the notion of the ego or self is not given in experience but is rather something outside of it."²² Sartre criticized Husserl for duplication of selves; transcendental I, the pure ego. He writes, "this psychical or psycho-physical me is sufficient. Why double it, as Husserl does."²³

Sartre's another claim against Husserl is about his theory of intentionality. Unlike Husserl, Sartre suggests that this theory gives us knowledge of essences as well as being of the phenomenon. It seems here that Sartre's central concern, while criticizing Descartes and Husserl, is to describe the relationship between consciousness and the world.

For Sartre, there is no transcendental point of reference. Man is always and only an embodied subject. The idea that the self is a soul/mind distinct from the body is not, however, the whole of Descartes' thesis of the self. There is another component of his theory of subjectivity: the idea that the body is a source of alienation. "Descartes' thesis is not simply that the body is not the self, but more complexly that the body claims to be the self and that we are tempted by this claim away from ourselves. It is from this more complex claim that the echoes of Descartes find a place in Sartre's thought."²⁴ Like Descartes, Sartre recognizes the unique and intimate relationship between perception and one's experience oneself as body. Sartre recognizes the subject as embodied and cannot take this relationship lightly. Thus, Sartre undertakes an extensive examination of the relationship between subjectivity and perceptual experience. Sartre writes,

For Sartre, to experience one's own body as his own is to understand how others see his body. Sartre says, "My body as it is for me does not appear to me in the midst of the world. Of course, during a radioscopy, I was able to see the picture of my vertebrae on a screen, but I was outside in the midst of the world. I was apprehending a wholly constituted object

as this among other thesis...it was much more my property than my being.²⁵

Sartre theorizes the phenomenological significance of how others see (and judge) my behaviour, aspect, presence and appearance. On this point, Sartre contributes his deeper insight on embodiment. Sartre talks about lived-body, and not the body as an object in the midst of the world, not the body, which others define by other's judgmental thoughts over it. Does it mean that we are compelled to recognize Sartre as Cartesian? However, he is not a Cartesian; he is only an heir of Descartes. Because he is not a Cartesian, he cannot separate the body from the subject. As Sartre is an heir or legatee of Descartes, he accepts the idea that the human body can be perceived as an object.

Sartre experiences the subjectivity of the other as the power of reducing oneself to a body object within an alien perceptual field. Perception draws the human figure as an object. Sartre sets many examples in his writing, about others perception of one's body. The concept of bad-faith and the concept of other's look towards one's body, allows oneself to apprehend oneself in relation to others. Practicing this, man reduces himself in the mode of being-in-itself. Bad-faith is also an exploration of nature of human reality as a kind of being-in-itself.

By the above description, we can say, in the place of epistemological enquiry of self, Sartre brings the seat of experience in the ontological enquiry of body. Sartre argues, consciousness can seize itself as conscious of something; it cannot seize itself as conscious exclusively of itself, without being grounded in some material objects of which it is conscious. We have imprints that the Cartesian dualism of mind and body is an accurate summary of human condition, but this impression is a misunderstanding for existential philosophers. For Cartesian legatees, understanding of ourselves is an empirical process of learning over time, not an inherent awareness.

Sartre insists that we have no essence; that consciousness is always consciousness of something. Man is free to make his essence. Sartre talks about ontological structure of being. "To talk about the ontological status of something is to talk about its modes of being, which in Sartre's phenomenological ontology is closely associated with its ways of appearing."²⁶ "Sartre proposes multi-dimensional ontological aspects of body in refusing epistemological approach of modern western thought. For Sartre, "Cartesian thinkers have inverted natural orders of knowing and being"²⁷.

Sartre discusses three modes of being in natural order. Foundation of his description of body is the discovery of distinction between material objects (Being-in-itself) and conscious being (Being-for-itself). "Material objects are complete, self-sufficient, full and inert; they need not sustain themselves to remain what they are; they simply are what they are."²⁸ Conscious beings are never complete, they are never self-sufficient. Being-for-itself represents consciousness whereas we have seen that Being-in-itself represents materiality. Being-for-itself is never complete, never self-sufficient. It is interchangeable with consciousness, thus it is empty and always transcends itself. To achieve self-identity is a task or project for human being. "At any point persons can break their past and define themselves anew."²⁹ Sartre holds the view that the entire notion of embodiment requires the analysis of lived body. In fact, re-evaluation of the structures of being demands a discussion over lived body. For him the role of other is essential feature of being.

From this point of view, Sartre placed three dimensions of bodily being. Sartre describes as, "I exist my body: this is the first dimension of being. My body known by the other: this is its second dimension. I exist for myself as a body known by the other. This is the third ontological dimension of my body."³⁰ In the first dimension, the body-for-itself, my body cannot be an object to me, precisely because I am my body, and which cannot be alienated from it. In this mode of being, Sartre says, the body is experienced as 'surpassed' or 'invisible' in that it is not regarded

as an object of perception when it is engaged intentionally with the environment around it. “Body’s nature-for-us is to be perpetually the surpassed”³¹ as a thing. Through the second dimension, man acquires a conceptual awareness of his body in an abstract way, as a knowing living being with certain objective traits (biological, physiological, cultural, etc.), in the world and in the midst of other bodies. The third dimension, for Sartre, arises in some sense through the interaction of other two. First “two modes of being, Sartre discusses before Being-for-others which allow consciousness to apprehend itself as a relation to an object which is in turn apprehended as independent.”³² The body has distinctive modes of appearances. The body shows itself inside one’s involvement in one way, and there is another entirely diverse experience of the body given from the point of view of the other. Sartre recognizes the body as it seems to be for me or for oneself (*pour-soi*) and the body as it might be for others or for the other (*pour-autrui*). David Cerbone writes about two aspects of human existence as “human existence is blend of two, a combination of what Sartre calls facticity and transcendence.”³³ These are the two properties of Being-for-itself.

“Facticity refers to the ways in which human existence has some measure of objective determination and accumulated history, and transcendence registers the ways in which human existence is always not fully determined, and so ahead of itself.”³⁴ Thus, facticity refers to the first dimension of the body. Sartre defines facticity in *Being and Nothingness* as:

The for-itself is, in so far as it appears in a condition which it has not chosen...it is in so far as it is thrown into a world and abandoned in a ‘situation’; it is as pure contingency inasmuch as for it... the original questions can be posited: ‘why is this being exactly such and not otherwise? It is as far as there is in it something of which it is not the foundation – its presence to the world.’³⁵

For Sartre, human reality is always being in situation. Dimensions given in every situation, its resistance and limitations is denoted by facticity. These facticities are contingent facts, “This contingency is what we shall call the facticity of the for-itself. It is this facticity which permits us to say that the for-itself is, that it exists, although we can never realize the facticity, and although we always apprehend it through the for-itself.”³⁶ Human being is free, according to Sartre but it is their facticities or limitations, which refer to the ways where man has some measure determinations and developed history. Sartre described several types of facticities, these are, as quoted by Felicity Joseph in Sartre’s words, “facticity is that set of past and present facts about my body, my behavior, my character and my social and physical situation, as they present themselves to a third- person point of view.”³⁷ These are the given situations where man is thrown. He does not choose these obstacles, but he can choose his essence according to his determinations and his choices.

Transcendence is future directedness of human existence. However, man cannot keep apart from his facticities, he can take the charge of his future through transcendence. Again, man universally desires transcendence. Human existence being in immanence can achieve his goals by transcendence. Thus, man has unlimited possibilities and endless choices. Being in a given situation, he can choose and achieve his goals. Here, it can be point out that however, Sartre talks about man’s situation and limitations of his freedom, and still, he lacks understanding of sexuality. He never sees his freedom or choices as different from that of a woman.

Further, situation is clearer version of the term ‘facticity’. Sartre says, “the facticity of the for-itself which he now calls, “the facticity of freedom” gets its meaning from the way in which it is being transcended: what we have called the facticity of freedom is the given which it has to be and which it illuminates by it.”³⁸ For Sartre human freedom is contingent and situated. At many places, Sartre is trying to give his

investment to locate his anti-Cartesian position. But in many cases Sartre shows by his writings that body is other than consciousness. Like, in *Being and Nothingness* he writes, “Either it is a thing among other things or else it is that by which things are revealed to me. But it cannot be both at the same time.”³⁹ It seems that Sartre is hesitating in reconcile them. For him subject and object are irreducible to each other. Further, these aspects of the body Sartre claims incommunicable and beyond reconciliation. Sartre states in *Being and Nothingness*,

Since these two aspects of the body are on different and incommunicable levels of being, they cannot be reduced to one another. Being-for-itself must be wholly body and it must be wholly consciousness; it can be united with a body. Similarly, being-for-others is wholly body; there are no “psychic phenomena” there to be united with the body. There is nothing behind the body. But the body is wholly psychic.⁴⁰

Being-for-itself is nothing when separated from in-itself. “The for-itself is the foundation of all negativities and of all relation. The for-itself is relation.”⁴¹ Again, the third mode, the Other cannot be viewed basically as another object (being-in-itself) in the world as in actuality they are a subject (being-for-itself) which has the capacity through ‘the look’ to judge and ultimately reduce one into an object in their own world. Therefore, the idea of being-for-others involves a compound relationship of objectivity and subjectivity; as a result, Sartre's critical assumption is that our primary relationship with others is based on conflict. For Sartre, “the upsurge of the other touches the for-itself in its very heart.”⁴²

The other is accessible to the being through other’s conduct, which demonstrates different intrinsic emotions like anger, love, hate, desire, anxiety, and happiness through one’s corporeal body. We can examine these concrete relations with for-itself to others. As the world where there are others, represent different approach of for-itself. For Sartre, “Each relation in its own way presents the bilateral relation: for-itself-for-others, in-itself.”⁴³ Therefore, the other is noticeable to the being in its

very natural attitude. Such relationship cultivates the feeling of alienation towards oneself as well as others. The 'Look' is one of the strongest causes of the feeling of alienation. The 'look' of the other not only objectifies the being but also imposes itself as another equivalent claimant of the same world. Sartre's examples of look, desire and love focus on the issue of other. Thus, to understand his account of embodied being, we need to study the correlation to the other through the look. Sartre says, man has a particular nature of his own, which is not inside but outside there in the world. He gives the example of shame and writes, "Shame, like pride, is the apprehension of myself as a nature although that very nature escapes me and is unknowable as such."⁴⁴ For Sartre the two beings exist in conflict relation because the other is a surge as another freedom in the world in which being is situated.

For Sartre, we perceive the other in our fundamental relation to the other in everyday life. Claudia Card writes, "This relation, in which the other must be given to me directly as a subject although in connection with me, is the fundamental relation, the very type of my being for others."⁴⁵ For Sartre, being is the object for other, and in reverse, the other is also objecting for the being. Finally, for Sartre, it is the being that produces the other. Being has certain qualities by which he constitutes the certain relation with the world. For Sartre, it is up to being whether he bothers the existence of the other or make himself alienated, in reverse, he is free to accept other in its very being and not be objectified by him. Sartre writes, "This relation can be simple quality of the world that I create and it in no way obliges me to accept the real existence of other I's."⁴⁶ Sartre, no doubt, rejects Cartesian mind-body dualism along with Husserl's as unnecessary duplication of selves. Although, Sartre provides sufficient philosophical reasons for his Cartesian rejection, he himself caught in the subject-object duality. Sartre writes in *The Transcendence of Ego*, "It is sufficient for me to be contemporary with the world and for the subject-object duality, which is purely logical."⁴⁷

As far as there are discussions over the notion of embodiment, his close contemporary within the French legacy (Cartesian legacy), Maurice Merleau-Ponty can set-off against Sartre. Merleau-Ponty is very crucial figure of Cartesian legacy to understand body in its phenomenological terms and against Sartre's idea of body.

Merleau-Ponty departs from Husserl's phenomenology which initially inspired him. This separation is within phenomenological movement and can't be overlooked while talking of the critics of Cartesian dualism and idea of embodiment. No doubt, Merleau-Ponty is known as the philosopher of embodiment for his contribution in the philosophy of body and rejection of Cartesian dualism, in a manner different from Husserl and Sartre. Merleau-Ponty draws an original idea of embodiment after his rejection of traditional theories of the body's role in perception. Descartes never used the terms physiology and psychology, rather "he undertook extensive work that he called the study of the functions of the body and which we may reasonably term as 'physiological'. Similarly, although he did not use the term 'psychology' at all, he discussed sensory perception and other psychological phenomena in ways that should be distinguished from his purely mechanistic physiology on the one hand and from his concern with the status of sensory knowledge on the other."⁴⁸ Descartes integrates sensory perception with psychology and other bodily phenomena as purely physiological. Merleau-Ponty rejects this Cartesian distinction. Thereafter, he describes his own account of body as body schema and motor-intentionality. Central idea of his phenomenology is perception. Carman writes, "Perception manifests itself instead as an aspect of our bodily being in the world...for perception is both intentional and bodily, both sensory and motor, and so neither merely subjective nor objective, inner nor outer, spiritual nor mechanical."⁴⁹

Merleau-Ponty seems to be correct while objecting Sartre's distinction of being-in-itself and being-for-itself that does not fit in the framework to describe experience of the world and being, as per its claim. However,

“he [Merleau-Ponty] rapidly concludes that as far as he is concerned, Sartre’s philosophy is another insidious form of rationalism.”⁵⁰ Merleau-Ponty had already described the conclusion of the pact that perception effects between man and the world. Being-in-the world is not neutral for Merleau-Ponty. In this category, one is not only open to the world, but also promised with his situation or for Sartre facticity. Thus, one’s body proves itself as a mediator between the world and his being. Merleau-Ponty recognised that Sartre’s notion of embodiment is the relation between freedom and facticity, and “it is through the body as body that I am in the world.”⁵¹ For Merleau-Ponty, the subject(being-for-itself) is not first detached from the world and the world where he is thrown or in which he finds himself, is not the objective and material world. Rather, the subject is always, from the very birth of his body, finds himself already in the world. Here, Merleau-Ponty rejects Cartesian view along with he shows his differences with Husserl and Sartre. In the *Phenomenology of Perception* he writes, “When I return to myself from an excursion into the realm of dogmatic common sense or of science, I find, not a source of intrinsic truth, but a subject destined to the world.”⁵² Here, Merleau-Ponty shows his resolution with the Husserl regarding method of reduction. The return to perceptual experience never destroys the worldly character of our existence. We have already discussed that Husserl’s phenomenology of bodily experience can be broken up with Merleau-Ponty’s notion of embodiment, although it is developing and deepening Husserl’s insights.

Merleau-Ponty objects to the claim that body as mere machine. He writes, “The phenomenal field is not an inner-world, the phenomenon is not a ‘state of consciousness or a psychic fact, and the experience of phenomena is not an act of introspection or an intuition.”⁵³ Here, Merleau-Ponty objects Cartesian notion of ‘body as a machine’. He writes “The body is in the first instance not an object of knowledge, but the part of the normative structure of intentionality: our body is not the objects of an “I think”: it is an ensemble of lived meanings that finds its

equilibrium.”⁵⁴ Further he denies the Cartesian dualism while taking the issue of sexual being in *Phenomenology of Perception*. He “takes issue with such accounts of bodily experience and claims that the body is an historical idea rather than a natural species.”⁵⁵

Merleau-Ponty rejected Descartes articulation that life is a mechanical phenomenon. Likewise, death is a mechanical failure of the body, it occurs due to the absence of soul.⁵⁶ He further argues, against the Cartesian idea of embodiment, by saying that “the body becomes the highly polished machine that the ambiguous concept of behaviour compartment nearly made us forget.”⁵⁷ Merleau-Ponty attacks on Cartesian dualism, meanwhile devaluation of body in comparison to soul/mind is very much open. He tries to find out the common ground where “psychic determining factors and the physiological conditions gear into each other.”⁵⁸ For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenal facts or bodily experience, are not states of consciousness, neither are they an act of introspection, we can say experience are not simply inside or outside the world.

For Merleau-Ponty, having a body is to have an ordinary understanding of ourselves as a perceiver. Body should be perceived as unreflective, skilful bodily activity. He further defines mental and practical space or spatiality of the body as, “my body appears to me as an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task. And, indeed its spatiality is not... a spatiality of position, but a spatiality of situation.”⁵⁹ Thus, it is inner necessity for the being to integrate its existence with intentional activities that essentially involve our bodily, situational activities. He criticised Sartre by saying, “what allows us to link to each other the ‘physiological’ and the ‘psychic’, is the fact that, when we integrated into existence, they are no longer distinguishable respectively as the order of the in-itself, and that of the for-itself, and that they are both directed towards an intentional pole or towards a world.”⁶⁰ At this point where, Merleau-Ponty develops his understandings of bodily space, physiology

and psychic phenomena, we can deduce easily the reason for distancing himself with other phenomenologists, like Husserl and Sartre.

Here Merleau-Ponty coins the term, Motor-Intentionality to integrate intentional activities with bodily understanding. Motor-intentionality is the kind of intentionality in which perception is grounded in the body, in other words our phenomenal field is constituted by the body-schema. Term used by Merleau-Ponty can be understood as “the way of stating that my body is in-the-world. Body schema is dynamic. This term means that my body appears to me as an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task.”⁶¹ These attitudes are mental or intentional in nature. These intentional activities necessarily involved our understanding through bodily and in the given situation Body-schema is fixed in our perception, which is always given in space and special features. As Merleau-Ponty writes, “my body appears to me as an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task. And, indeed its spatiality is not...a spatiality of position, but a spatiality of situation.”⁶² It seems a necessary feature of body-schema, as understood by Merleau-Ponty that they are set of skills balanced and ready to look forward to the world prior to the concepts, judgements and thoughts. These skills are readiness that sketch out and forge ahead to structure our awareness of objects. These bodily skills are habits. For instance, if mosquito is biting on the leg during a seminar or conversation, one will suddenly raise his hand to slap on his own leg to hit that mosquito. It doesn't need any preconception or judgement or any discussion or else's permission over it. We are habituated in doing so; Merleau-Ponty calls “habit”, a kind of non-cognitive, pre-conceptual “Motor-Intentionality”.⁶³ Habits are shaped on the perception of objects which is structured by one's body and it is body which senses what it can do or what it cannot. This is what Merleau-Ponty insists,

In the action of hand which is raised towards an object is contained a reference to the object, not as an object represented, but as that highly

specific thing towards which we project ourselves, near which we are, in anticipation, and which we haunt.⁶⁴

Thus, in Motor-Intentionality, bodily activity is directed towards the given object in all its uniqueness and individuality. It is important to note that it is not the understanding of bodily activity while grasping of object, rather it is the understanding of the object with respect to the way in which bodily activity is understood. There is no particular way of understanding the object in Motor-Intentional activity. Rather, it is a kind of behaviour, and our bodily activity is itself a way of understanding it. Thus “the theory of body-schema is implicitly the theory of perception”⁶⁵ Again, for Merleau-Ponty, body is not a transparent object, as for Husserl. Rather “it is an expressive unity that we can learn to know only by actively taking it up.”⁶⁶ Distancing himself from Husserl on the theory of intentionality, but close to him on the theory of double-touch of sensation Merleau-Ponty writes,

My body is recognized by its power to give me ‘double sensation’: when I touch my right hand with my left, my right hand, as an object, has the strange property of being able to feel too...when I press my two hands together as one perceives two objects placed side by side but of an ambiguous set-up in which both hands can alternate the roles of touching and being touched.⁶⁷

We have discussed earlier in this paper about touch-sensation and privileges given to it by Husserl. Merleau-Ponty agreed to it, but he insists on this duality of sense-experience against Husserl. As Husserl maintains that when we see, eyes do not appear visually, the ear is there but sense-tone is not localized in the ear.⁶⁸ We find that the sense of touch for touch is entirely different from that of seeing and hearing or other bodily activity. We find differences between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty in spite of the undeniable influence of Husserl’s writings exercised on Merleau-Ponty on the role of body, intentionality and subjectivity. Body cannot be defined as Husserl does. Husserl includes sensations in

touch.”⁶⁹ For Merleau-Ponty, “the shift in attitude from an embodied sense of agency to a perception of my body as a mere ‘bearer of sensations’ amounts instead to a kind of privative modification of our prior bodily self-understanding.”⁷⁰ Body forms permanent background for intentionality as it is a primordial foundation for perceptual awareness. Just as ‘I’ is the foundation of self in its most primordial sense, as for Cartesian notions, perceptual capacity is rooted in body as such. Merleau-Ponty claims, consciousness is not at first ‘I think’ but it is ‘I can’, which is the basic point of motor-intentionality. Also, it suggests Cartesian rejection in Merleau-Ponty’s account of all forms of intentionality. Merleau-Ponty further speaks, “To be a body, is to be tied to a certain world, as we have seen; our body is not primarily in space: it is of it.”⁷¹ As embodied being we are a necessarily component of perceptible world or the space of our perception. We are not just residing in the world, but of it. This is the notion of embodiment precisely given by Merleau-Ponty. In order to get his view on body we can refer to David Cerbone, “To be conscious, to be embodied, and to be “at grips with the world” are not three separate or separable notions for Merleau-Ponty, but are three overlapping, interconnected, internally related aspects of our existence... Merleau-Ponty calls this unity the ‘Intentional arc’, which informs every aspects of our experience.”⁷²

Simone de Beauvoir was among the leaders of the existential movement; along with her were Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Embodiment for the existentialists, particularly Simone de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty, is the body in a lived situation. de Beauvoir especially worked on women’s everydayness which was unnoticed. de Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex*,

Some aspects of woman’s lived experience such as domestic labour are hardly mentioned though they had been extensively debated by feminists, woman reformers and socialists, and de Beauvoir makes only passing references to how children are to be cared for. Mothering did not adapt itself easily to her theoretical approach.⁷³

In *The Second Sex* Simone de Beauvoir takes up the themes of subjectivity and the body with specific attention to the issue of woman. In moving from the concepts of philosophy to the historical situation of woman, de Beauvoir's notion of body is also starts with the rejection of Cartesian dualism. Sartre's undeveloped thought that the body-object is a socially constructed reality rather than an immediately experienced one is carefully pursued. It is not woman's immediately experienced body that closes her off from subjectivity, but the ways in which her perceived body has been given the meaning of the other. Here the strength of Descartes legacy loses some but not all of its power. The link between the body and its status as a pre-given object is weakened. However, connection between the body and the alienation of the subject, however, remains. In *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir pursues two questions: How did it happen that in the struggle for subjectivity one sex, the male, came to permanently occupy the position of the subject, while the other sex, the female, came to permanently occupy the position of the other, the object? De Beauvoir claims, "Man has set himself as master over woman; man's project is not to repeat himself in time...Male activity, creating values, has constituted existence itself as a value; it has prevailed over the indistinct forces of life; and it has subjugated nature and woman. We must now see how this situation has continued and evolved through the centuries. What place has humanity allotted to this part of itself that has been defined in its core as other?"⁷⁴ The second question directly addresses the issue of Cartesian legacy. de Beauvoir begins by defining subjectivity as transcendence. She then ties transcendence to a specific relationship to the body. Briefly, for de Beauvoir subjectivity is an achievement of an adult human being. The triumph is an affirmation of transcendence. To be human is to refuse to accept the world as given. The authority of the other to define and situate woman within the world must be rejected if she has to occupy the place of the subject, the one who exists as the freedom of self-definition. Because woman is a human subject, an embodied subject, my affirmation of subjectivity must engage

the body. Whether she is describing nomadic and agricultural communities or the situation of the contemporary adolescent, de Beauvoir insists that the challenge to authority that establishes the subject must be bodily. Body expresses itself in dangerous acts accordingly, which are not the rules of survival. Thus, de Beauvoir speaks of warrior acts as humanizing, of the violence of male adolescents as humanizing, of risk taking as humanizing, and of freely allowing oneself to become vulnerable as humanizing. In each of these acts, the perceived body lives in ways that elude objectification.

Cartesian dualism was seen in the new light through de Beauvoir's philosophy of the body. For Descartes or his forefathers, man is the absolute subject, man identifies with mind or consciousness whereas "female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities."⁷⁵ Female is identified with the body. "She is thus called the sex, meaning that the males see her essentially as a sexed being. For him she is sex."⁷⁶ Becoming a subject always requires bodily risk. Within the current structure of patriarchy, it also requires violence. The theme of "the look," that the body is the site of intersubjective violence, is brought to bear on the issue of patriarchy. The weakness and childbearing nature of the woman's body somehow makes it vulnerable to structure- objectification. The woman becomes the body that is acted upon and that submits to what happens to it. De Beauvoir insists, "Why do woman not contest male sovereignty?"⁷⁷ The man becomes the active body, the subject. de Beauvoir does not reject the patriarchal link between bodily risk, self-affirmation and violence. Her argument is with the ways in which the structures of patriarchy engage men but bar women from doing constructive projects, risk-taking, self-affirmative, transcendent activities. de Beauvoir seems to evade Descartes view when she says, "No subject posits itself spontaneously and at once as the inessential from the outset; it is not the other who defining itself as other, defines the one, other is posited as other by the one positing itself as one." The body is now more than a source of alienation; it is also a site of self-

affirmation. Body identifies with self thus duality of mind body is turned into the duality of sexes, which starts with conflicts like all other duality. For de Beauvoir, alienation with one's body is historical and not ontological. In rejecting ontological dimensions of the body, de Beauvoir tries to distance from Sartre. Body is defined as an historical idea by Merleau-Ponty, which de Beauvoir asserts, and shows her closeness with the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. de Beauvoir's analyses do not reject the Cartesian thought of the body as alienating. They do, however point to a way of understanding the body as other than alienating.

To conclude, it can be said that Husserl, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty attempted in their own ways to solve the problem of mind-body dualism, which is strongly propounded in the philosophy of Descartes. It has been discussed that the phenomenological movement of twentieth century which dwells under the umbrella of Cartesian movement, rejects Descartes notion of self. They give central importance to human body, exploration of the world and to human being. While giving central importance to the body, they missed very important point which defines body called sexuality, which finds its place in de Beauvoir's idea of embodiment. It is not explained in detail, yet it is discussed how de Beauvoir started her idea of embodiment to gender embodiment.

*Indian Institute of Information Technology
Hyderabad*

Endnotes and Reference

1. Cottingham, 1992: 140.
2. Ibid., p. 142.
3. Ibid., p. 143.
4. Ibid., p. 236.
5. Cassam, 2013: 01.
6. Carman, 2008: 232.
7. Cerbone, 2006: 99.
8. Husserl, 1989: 161.
9. Ibid: 101.
10. Ibid: 100.
11. Husserl, 1996: 198.
12. Ibid., p. 18.
13. Husserl, 1950: 17.
14. Cerbone, 2006: 101.
15. Husserl, 1989: 18.
16. Carman, 1999: pp. 205-226.
17. Husserl, 1989: 139.
18. Cerbone, 2006: 104.
19. Husserl, 1989: 37.
20. Ibid., p. 40.
21. Joseph, 2011: 44.
22. Ibid., p. 22.
23. Sartre, 2004: xiii.
24. Reisman, 2003: 29.
25. Sartre, 1956: 402.
26. Reisman, 2007: 57.
27. Sartre speaks variously of the order of being (BN 305; 367), orders of reality (BN, 304; 366), and ontological levels (BN, 305; 367).
28. Sartre, 1956: xii.
29. Williams, 1984: 175.
30. Sartre, 1956: 460.
31. Ibid., p. 326.
32. Reisman, 2007: 75.
33. Ibid.
34. Cerbone, 2006: 90.
35. Sartre, 1956: 127.
36. Ibid., p. 131.
37. Joseph, 2011: 236.
38. Reisman, 2007: 80.
39. Sartre, 1956: 402.
40. Sartre., 1956: 404.
41. Ibid., p. 472.
42. Ibid., p. 473.
43. Sartre. 1956: 471.
44. Sartre. 1956: 352
45. Card, 2003: 277
46. Sartre, 2004: 50
47. Ibid., p. 51
48. Cottingham, 1992: 340.
49. Carman, 2008: 78.
50. Whitford, 1979: pp 305-318.
51. Ibid.

52. Smith, 1962: xi.
53. Smith, 1962: pp. 66-70.
54. Carman, 2008: 108.
55. Butler, 1988: pp. 519-531.
56. Carman, 2008: 84.
57. Ibid.
58. Mearleu-Ponty, 1962: 89.
59. Ibid., p. 100.
60. Mearleu-Ponty, 1962: 101.
61. Ibid., pp. 114-115.
62. Ibid., p. 100.
63. Ibid., p. 110.
64. Mearleu-Ponty, 1962: 138.
65. Ibid., p. 206.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid., p. 106.
68. Husserl, 1989: 149.
69. Ibid., p. 151.
70. Carman, 1999: pp. 205-226.
71. Mearleu-Ponty, 1962: 171.
72. Cerbone, 2006: 132.
73. Beauvoir, 2010: xvi.
74. Beauvoir, 2010: 77.
75. Ibid., p. 05.
76. Ibid., p. 06.
77. Beauvoir, 2010: 07.
78. Ibid

_____. *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Translated by Dorion Cairns. Boston and London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982.

_____. *Being and Nothingness*. Translated by Hazel E. Bernes. New York and London: Washington Square Press, 1956.

_____. *Ideas II*. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and Andre Schuwer. Boston and London: Kluwer Academics Publications, 1989.

_____. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology (1913)*. Translated by F. Kersten. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982.

_____. *Sartre and His Predecessors: The Self and The Others*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.

Aquila, Richard E. "Intentionality, Content and Primitive Mental Directedness." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 94, 1989: 583-604.

Beauvoir, Simone-de. "Merleau-Ponty and Pseudo- Sartreanism." *International studies in Philosophy*. Vol.21, no.3. 1989:3-48.

Butler, Judith. "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex," *Yale French Studies*, no. 72, Simone de Beauvoir. Witness to a century. 1986: 35-49. Accessed on 23/11/2013.

- Card, Claudia. (Ed). *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Carman, Taylor. *The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty*. Barnard College Columbia: University Press, 1999.
- Cottingham, John. (ed). *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes*. United States of America: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Mark A. Wrathall, eds. *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.
- Dufrene, Mikel and John Stewart. "Sartre and Merleau-Ponty" The Debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Vol. 33, 1979: 279-289.
- Gurwitsch, Aron. "Review of Phenomenologie De La Perception." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. Vol 10, 1950: 442-445.
- Howells, Christina (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian Meditations (1950)*. Translated by Dorian Cairns. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954.
- Maurice, Merleau-Ponty. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Colin Smith. New York: Routledge Publications, 2005.
- Moran, Dermot. *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005.
- Morris, Katherine J. *Sartre*. UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.
- Rutenberg, Claudia W. "Philosophy and Lived Experience: A Phenomenological Revival?" *Philosophy of Education*, 2012: 11-14.
- Sartre, Jean Paul. *Transcendence of the Ego*. Translated by Routledge and Introduction by Sarah Richmond. London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2012.
- Schroeder, William R. *Continental Philosophy: A Critical Approach*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005.
- Solomon, Robert C. and David Sherman, eds. *The Blackwell guide to Continental Philosophy*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003.
- Whiteford, Margaret. An Interpretative Account of Merleau-Ponty: Critique of Sartre. *French Studies*. Vol. 33, 1979: 305-318.