Editors' Introduction:
Concepts for a Phenomenology
of Gestures

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In recent years, gestures have moved into the centre stage of theoretical interest. Prepared by various forays in the field of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and linguistics, which led to an increased focus on non-verbal communication and situated interaction, the contemporary study of gestures mobilizes an impressive research effort. Under the label of *gesture studies*, it involves a variety of methods: from ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, to neurocognitive inquiries, psychology, linguistics and ethnographic study. Given that all these approaches share a special interest in microscopic detail, facilitated by the audio-visual recording of human behaviour as the preferred way of deeming it analysable to the smallest bit, the above-mentioned disciplines were also joined lately by film and media studies. If one follows certain contemporary philosophers, images themselves are nothing but reifications of gestures, preserving something of their dynamism, while the cinema returns the image to the "realm of gestures" and dance makes gesture visible as a "means without end" (Agamben 2000: 58). What is striking in these effervescent debates, however, is the almost total absence of phenomenology. Aside from the recent interest for intercorporeality in interactions studies, often highlighted as a "bodily turn" of the discipline, the phenomenological method is rarely conveyed to describe gestures. Why is this the case? Are gestures a limit-phenomenon of bodily movement that phenomenology has not yet clearly figured out for itself? Do they belong to a domain that is out of reach for the phenomenological method? Is this method unable to grasp their dynamic dimension and their specific temporality?

The absence of phenomenology from these debates is all the more surprising since phenomenology, on the contrary, seems to hold excellent promise for the study of gesture. For one, bodily interaction and expression play a key part within the phenomenological tradition, especially in its treatment of inter-subjectivity, which is one of its most persistent and fertile topics of interest.

By focusing on the intertwinement between the possibilities of my body and of the bodily other, and on situations of immediate face-to-face interaction as grounds for the further clarification of more complex forms of social relationships, the phenomenology of sociality seems particularly well-equipped for addressing the phenomenon of gesture. Moreover, phenomenological reflections on issues such as intercorporeality, or more recent accounts of the communicative relationship between human corporeality and the phenomenal world, not to mention the phenomenological analyses of language, expression, and bodily action, promise to advance fundamental insights into the phenomenon of gesture. Finally, genetic phenomenology, understood as a dynamic complement of static phenomenological analysis, allows for further investigations of the varied historicity of gestures. As such, it could help unearth their sedimented habitualities, cultural rituals and social imaginaries, which are not stable, but continuously evolving.

The 2022 issue of *Studia Phænomenologica* aims to begin to make up for the neglect of phenomenology in the contemporary study of gestures. In what follows, our introduction will try to sketch a brief catalogue of some of the conceptual resources that phenomenology, in our view, holds for the understanding of gesture. Presented here for the sake of clarity by way of an alphabetic dictionary, this list is by no means exhaustive, but sees itself rather as an invitation to also explore further possible paths into this phenomenon.

Adumbration

The concept of adumbration (*Abschattung*) is operational already in Husserl's earliest descriptions. The term brings forth a dimension of intentionality that has its counterpoint in the modality of its sensible fulfilment (*Erfüllung*), made possible through a series of partial moments that spatially "sketch" the intended object's unity. The same colour thus appears to us through an uninterrupted manifold of adumbrations of colour (Hua III/1: §41). In other words, instead of being considered as a "thing in itself" prior to any experience, the objective meaning of an intentional act unfolds spatially and temporally through a series of adumbrations that progressively reveal its unity, requiring subjective participation through anticipatory and retrospective takes. Adumbrations are the particular aspects or profiles through which something is given to our spatial perception. This consequently entails that: (1) Each unity of meaning is discovered through a diversity of sensible stages of appearing that come together. (2) There is always room for something we intend to appear otherwise than it was initially intended, creating situations of inadvertence or disappointment (*Enttäuschung*) where the conscious act has to be "crossed out" and reoriented (see Popa 2012). (3) There is a continuous expansion of the realm of noetic possibilities that accompany every effective perception, following the concordance of their effectuation (*Leistung*).

The study of adumbrations as core sensible and affective data will open a new path for phenomenological investigation: the path of "hyletic" phenomenology, that Husserl opposes to the initial formal outline of intentional analysis, which was concerned exclusively with the noetic sense-givenness (*Sinngebung*) that animates the sensible strata. Properly speaking, adumbrations are not intentional, as they belong to the rough fabric (*Stoff*) of experience that is further shaped by intentional sense. Henceforth, they will be understood by Husserl either as a presentative content (*Gehalt*) that is not yet formed by our "representations" or as a phenomenological residue (Hua III/1: §85). In Husserl's late works, the status of hyletic phenomenology will become the object of further clarification and analysis (see Hua XLIII), leading to the problem of a phenomenological unconscious (see Gyemant and Popa 2015).

The concept of "adumbration" seems particularly useful for investigating gestures, as the latter are defined from the onset as particular patterns of bodily movement that participate in specific modes of expression of meaning, which is stabilized progressively in its identity and is always subject to change. Thus, the different phases that make up the pattern of a gesture according to Kendon's seminal analysis (Kendon 2004)—the preparatory phase, the actual stroke and the post-stroke hold, as well as the recovery phase to the initial position of relaxation—can be seen as specific adumbrations that progressively complete a gesture's sense unity. However, the coherence of such a suite of adumbrations can only be understood against the background of the social horizon where they appear, including specific cultural conditions for gesture performance, observation and sense-sharing. In his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty will thus write that "the meaning of the gesture is not perceived as the colour of the carpet, for example, is perceived. If it were given to me as a thing, it is not clear why my understanding of gestures should for the most part be confined to human ones." (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 214).

An original development of hyletic phenomenology is to be found in Michel Henry's project of a "material phenomenology" (Henry 1990), that seeks to liberate the adumbrations from their relationship to noetic intentionality in order to reveal their purely affective core. For Henry, the sensible matter is ultimately exclusively auto-affective, being brought to appearance by intentional acts that distort its true essence (Henry 1963). While the project of material phenomenology tends to dissolve the concept of adumbration as it belongs to an external grasp of the essence of affectivity, it opens a new phenomenological path for investigating bodily gestures, which proceeds from within the living body instead of simply observing them from without. Examples of such analyses can be found in *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body* where Henry introduces the theory of the "three bodies" (Henry 1965): the subjective body, the organic body, and the objective body. Their unity is grounded in a transcendental movement, which acquires its evidence through the experience of effort and resistance. Husserl's late theory of passivity is thus expanded into a philosophy of auto-affective bodily movements, that are not primarily defined

by mere outer expression, but rather by internal self-feeling. When they are observed from outside, gestures thus present themselves as a coherent series of adumbrations that can unexpectedly shift orientation and constitute new, unexpected unities, whereas when they are described from within, gestures articulate a specific bodily "choreography" that reveals a complicity with the everyday situations in which we are immersed (Behnke 1997).

Furthermore, the concept or adumbration finds another interesting articulation in the concept of appresentation, used by Husserl to describe our restricted or privative access to the experience of others, where "*a certain mediacy of intentionality* must be present" (Hua I: 139 / Husserl 1960: 109) in order for the other's sphere of primordial consciousness to be distinguished from mine. In order to explain how appresentation works in intersubjective encounters, Husserl compares the perception of another human being with the perception of a physical thing. While the appresentation of the latter through multiple adumbrations is related to a "fulfilling presentation" (as for example when we turn an object around to see if from different concurring perspectives), the appresentation of another subject does not allow for a similar "verification": its original sphere of unity cannot be presented without collapsing into mine. Appresentation is thus seen as a modality of presence which maintains the otherness of the other while connecting it bodily to my primordial sphere. As Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Louis Chrétien will show in their phenomenological elaborations of bodily intersubjectivity, the gesture of touching the other cannot possibly capture its essence nor fully reveal its being (Levinas 1969, Chrétien 1990). However, it is plain to see that this line of inquiry can prove fruitful for the study of gestures in general, and not just in what concerns touch, in that it allows interpreting gestures in their full concrete ambivalence by taking into account both their necessarily partial presentation and their temporal unfolding.

Expression

According to Husserl, expression is a "remarkable form that can adapt to every 'sense' […] and elevate it into the realm of the 'Logos', the *conceptual* and, with that, the *universal*" (Hua III/1: 257 / Husserl 1982: 246). In the first *Logical Investigation*, expression was distinguished from indication, in order to highlight the specificity of signification as a privileged intentional modality. While indication passively associates a sign with an object, signification requires an intentional act that "animates" the sign in such a way that a generality is produced and understood. For Husserl, expression is to be found in this intentional "awakening" of signs that makes possible general knowledge and mutual comprehension. In a famous chapter of the first *Logical Investigation*, Husserl gives the example of the inner monologue that best captures the freedom of signification, which is thus cleared of the equivocity that is inherent

to intersubjective communication. Jacques Derrida (1967) has offered a thorough critique of this passage, questioning Husserl's reliance on the liveliness of conscious intentionality as being carried by a problematic "metaphysics of presence". Derrida's project, consequently, rehabilitates indication as it is invested, for example, in writing and other modes of transmission of meaning.

In Husserl's own subsequent trajectory, the phenomenological problem of expression has itself changed shape, shifting from a mere defence of the purity of signification towards a reflection concerning the conditions of emergence of expression from the field of experience. This new direction of research is anchored in "the pure—and, so to speak, still dumb—experience which now must be made to utter its own sense" (Hua I: 77 / Husserl 1960: 38–39). Merleau-Ponty will interpret this in the *Visible and the Invisible* as the task of "the reconversion of silence and speech into one another" (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 129), taking into view a wild meaning that emerges from the "expression of experience by experience" (1968: 155). In explicitly focusing on the equivocity of communication, which Husserl initially set aside in order to favour the purity of inner monologue, Maurice Merleau-Ponty has indeed shown that meaning cannot be separated from its expression through speech, because "our thought moves through language as a gesture goes beyond the individual points of its passage" (1968: 43). In Merleau-Ponty's perspective, meaning cannot be separated from the obscure background of experience, out of which it emerges and in which it collapses. However, gesture is not used here as a mere analogy, in order to highlight a random "gestural" quality of meaning that makes it harder to decipher or communicate. Rather, Merleau-Ponty proceeds to an original phenomenological analysis of gestures themselves, noticing that bodily gestures are coordinated following a "synthesis of one's own body":

> The various parts of my body, its visual, tactile and motor aspects are not simply co-ordinated. If I am sitting at my table and I want to reach the telephone, the movement of my hand towards it, the straightening of the upper part of the body, the tautening of the leg muscles are enveloped in each other. I desire a certain result and the relevant tasks are spontaneously distributed amongst the appropriate segments, the possible combinations being presented in advance as equivalent: I can continue leaning back in my chair provided that I stretch my arm further, or lean forward, or even partly stand up. All these movements are available to us in virtue of their common meaning. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 172)

At the same time, gestures, alongside accent, intonation and facial expression "no longer reveal the speaker's thoughts, but the source of his thoughts and his fundamental manner of being" (1962: 174). However, the meaning of gestures "is not given, but understood, that is, recaptured by an act on the spectator's part" (1962: 215). Husserl's theory of expression is thus expanded in the direction of bodily interaction and reversibility (see below), which allows

Merleau-Ponty to ground Husserl's own theory of adumbrations in the experience of a bodily human co-presence. Following this direction, Fuchs (2017) will understand expression as an affective intertwinement between my expression and the other's resonant impression thereof in a continuously unfolding, circular process of mutual incorporation. Fact is, in any case, that, if gestures are frequently defined as "expressive movements," the sophisticated views concerning "expression" which were developed within the phenomenological tradition are highly relevant for coming to terms with the most diverse modes of expressivity involved in gesturing.

Intercorporeality

The concept of *intercorporeality*[1] was coined by Merleau-Ponty as part of his attempt to further expand Husserl's understanding of the relationship between intersubjectivity and bodily experience. Thus, in his 1959 essay *The Philosopher and his Shadow*, Merleau-Ponty sets out to unearth some of the hidden implications in Husserl's account of this subject matter and arrives at a striking parallel between an individual subject's experience of touching their own two hands and shaking hands with another subject:

> The reason why I have evidence of the other man's being there when I shake his hand is that his hand is substituted for my left hand, and my body annexes the body of another person in that "sort of reflection" it is paradoxically the seat of. My two hands "coexist" or are "compresent" because they are one single body's hands. The other person appears through an extension of that compresence; he and I are like organs of one single intercorporeality. (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 168)

However, intercorporeality is not reducible to the experience of oneself touching oneself and the other. In the *Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty will describe it as the broader experience of actions and their passions that "fit together exactly" and landscapes that interweave (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 142), extending to "an intercorporeal being, a presumptive domain of the visible and the tangible, which extends further than the things I touch and see at present" (1968: 143).

Recently, the term was also adopted by empirical interaction scholars leading to an impressive body of case studies, which tackle the most diverse phenomena: hugging, motor coordination in various workplace environments, object mediated interactions with children or primates, cultural specificities in mutual touch and gesturing behaviour, or bodily attunement in team sports. While these materials are no doubt rich in attentive observations, one cannot help notice that, in referring to different aspects of intercorporeal experience, they ultimately involve divergent understandings of intercorporeality and miss

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[1] A more detailed version of this entry has been developed in Ferencz-Flatz 2022c.

a more synthetic view to bring some comprehensive order into this diversity. This is precisely what a more thorough engagement with the phenomenological accounts of intercorporeality beyond the *Phenomenology of Perception* can provide.

If Merleau-Ponty thus originally sketched out his conception of intercorporeality as an overinterpretation of Husserl, one can already use Husserl's own multifaceted account of bodily experience for expanding and structuring Merleau-Ponty's suggestions regarding intercorporeality as well, a concept which the interaction scholars following Merleau-Ponty's early works initially seem to restrict solely to the sphere of direct bodily contact, that is: mutual touch. In his *Ideas II*, Husserl thus develops a threefold account of bodily experience. He first discusses the body "aesthesiologically," as the locus of sensations, the sentient body, which integrates the various sensuous fields of sight, hearing, touch, olfaction etc. (Hua IV: 144 *sq*. / Husserl 1989: 152 *sq*.). Secondly, he addresses the body as the "immediate organ of the will," a system of kinaesthetic possibilities of movement and action (Hua IV: 151 *sq*. / Husserl 1989: 159 *sq*.). And finally, he describes the body as the main perspectival frame of reference, the point zero of orientation (Hua IV: 158 *sq*. / Husserl 1989: 165 *sq*.), whereas this also co-determines both the subject's range of kinaesthetic possibilities and the organization of their sensuous fields. In brief: Husserl's account covers the various aspects which structure bodily experience, in a way that also takes into consideration their systematic interconnection, and while he does not explicitly apply this theoretical framework to the interpretation of bodily grounded intersubjectivity, it can nonetheless prove useful for organizing the various forms of intercorporeality touched upon in contemporary research on bodily interaction.

In taking such a path, one can similarly specify a threefold concept of intercorporeality. Thus, one would first have to outline an *aesthesiological intercorporeality*, which includes all phenomena pertaining to the sphere of shared sensorial fields. To be sure, Merleau-Ponty's own famous discussion of mutual touch while shaking hands as an extension of intrasubjective tactility would refer to precisely this mode of intercorporeality. It is this same acceptation, which is at play both in recent research on "haptic sociality" (see Goodwin 2017 or Cekaite & Mondada 2021), outlining the shared bodily experience of mutual touch, as well as in an extended version, which includes emotions among bodily sensations, in Thomas Fuchs' concepts of "interbodily resonance" and "interaffectivity" (Fuchs 2017). Secondly, one can speak about a *praxeological intercorporeality*, which deals with the intercorporeal aspect of joint action and joint movement, also termed as "interkinaesthesia" (see especially Behnke 1997 and 2008). The phenomena at play here involve intersubjective practical possibilities, ranging all the way from coordinated movement and responsive postures to body mirroring. Thirdly, one can also understand intercorporeality as a *social modification of perspectival orientation*. In this regard, the *alter-ego* doesn't only bring into play, in addition to the ego's own point-zero

of orientation, a further similar point zero, but instead the second perspective transforms the ego's own perspectival experience in the first place (Hua I: 153 / Husserl 1960: 124; see also Ferencz-Flatz 2018).

Of course, these three forms of intercorporeality and their corresponding manifestations are interrelated. Moreover, gestures are a perfect example for illustrating this, as they ostensibly engage all three aforementioned categories. For one, gestures are *expressive* in Fuchs' broad understanding of interbodily sensing: they presuppose an affective intertwinement between my expression and the other's resonant impression in a continuously unfolding, circular process of mutual incorporation. Regarding intercorporeally, my gesture, expressive of my affective state, induces an affective state to the other, that finds its immediate expression in the other's posture, gaze, gesture or facial mimic, which in turn triggers my affective response in a "circular interplay of expressions and reactions running in split seconds and constantly modifying each partner's bodily state" (Fuchs 2017: 8). Secondly, gestures are, within such cycles of mutually unfolding interbodily feedback, *interkinaesthetic* phenomena. Insofar as they are intercorporeal expressive *movements*, they are performed in sequences of reciprocally attuned bodily behaviours, wherein each interlocutor's changes of posture, glance, and bodily expression precipitates some general choreography within the social interaction. It suffices to think about how speakers use pauses in speech to attract the attentive gaze of the addressee (Goodwin 1980), or how moments of mutual gaze are supported, claimed and avoided during conversation. In brief, gestures in this broad sense are never just isolated movements within a social context, but part of a communicative flow, wherein each element responds to other social behaviours, eliciting further motor activity in return. As such, gestures are not just fulfilments of the intentional activity of an ego plain and simple, but primarily a product of inter-motor engagement, that is: part of a social continuum of bodily movements. Finally, gestures are bodily movements, which make sense only in a social context of multiple orientations. A gesture is not defined in relation to one's own "point zero of orientation," but instead it is from the outset "recipient designed" (see especially Sacks & Schegloff 2009: 16 *sq.*). A wave, a pointing gesture, or an iconic display are performed by their subject in being addressed, turned towards the other in specific ways, positioned in the multi-perspectival, open field of mutual interaction. Gestures are, in other words, from the onset objects constructed to work within a plurality of perspectives, in relation to multiple points zero of orientation. They are not the ego's perspectival object and then simply also the object of an *alter ego*, but instead they are originally constituted for and within a multi-focal situation of social interaction, being thus intercorporeal in this third sense of the term as well.

Needless to say that all three aspects play into one another in each and every moment of live mutual interaction, such that the concept of intercorporeality ultimately proves an extremely rich resource for addressing the most diverse philosophical implications of gesture, as it is obvious at the same time that

these sketches can be far enriched by also taking into consideration the works of Bernhard Waldenfels or Erwin Strauss, interested in exploring interbodily experience as a sphere of pre-personal, anonymous occurrences.

Kinaesthesia

The concept of kinaesthesia designates the main junction between bodily movement and perception. As such, it proves relevant not only for a more concrete epistemological discussion of perceptual experience, but also for the phenomenological theory of action, which is, ever since Husserl, primarily centred on a discussion of the body. In this context, the body appears, as shown earlier, not only as the point zero of orientation and as a sensorial medium, but mainly as the sole immediate vehicle of the will. This determination of the body receives a more elaborate interpretation with Husserl's theory of kinaesthesia (see Ferencz-Flatz 2014), which leads to two important consequences. On the one hand, this theory describes bodily mobility as the ultimate basis for human practice in its functional correlation with the perception of the surrounding environment. Insofar as the latter varies accordingly with every bodily movement, action is fundamentally conceived as *situated* experience. On the other hand, the analysis of kinaesthesia opens the field for the question of unconscious or involuntary action, addressed by Husserl especially in *Experience and Judgment* under the label of reflex or instinctive movement. Thus, in his later reflections, Husserl is indeed led to consider kinaesthesia and bodily action in general as a form of pre-voluntary activity, that is: as a mere bodily expression of perceptive tendencies prior to conscious awareness and explicit intentionality. It is precisely in this respect that the phenomenological approach can set the stage for a theory of gesture as practice, which is still lacking in contemporary phenomenology and which should be contrasted to both the standard understanding of gesture in gesture studies and their regular interpretation in contemporary theories of dramatic acting and performance.

In gesture studies, first of all, gestures are indeed most frequently addressed, with a special emphasis on the co-verbal gestures of the hand, under the encompassing label of "non-verbal communication." This becomes obvious when considering the most important taxonomies in the field. Kendon (2004), for instance, distinguishes gesticulation in a narrow sense from three other forms of expressive bodily movement: emblems, pantomime, and sign languages, whereas McNeill's taxonomy (1992) is only concerned with sub-dividing co-verbal gestures into iconic, metaphoric, rhythmic, and deictic gestures. As subtle and useful as these distinctions may be, it is nonetheless clear that a phenomenological approach to these issues presents a threefold advantage against the bulk of gesture studies today: (a.) It allows *extending* the concept of gesture, which is no longer seen as a mere epiphenomenon of communication.

Instead, it is interpreted as a key phenomenon for a *theory of bodily movement*, which defines gesture as the physiognomic element of expression pertaining to all forms of human behaviour. (b.) It broadens the scope of its analysis by including not only non-co-verbal gestures but also the expressive movements of all body parts and the body as a whole, as well as their relationship to adjacent and inter-facticially connected objects. (c.) Finally, it offers a genetic-phenomenological account of the historic sedimentations of gestures, pointing to structures of meaning and language, intersubjective practices or objectives contexts (for instance gender, class, or race discrimination) that imprint on them.

Secondly, a phenomenology of gesture could also help overcome the main theoretical framework, which still determines contemporary theories of dramatic acting especially in the Stanislavskian tradition of method acting (*cf.* for instance Krasner 2000). As is well known, the latter places an important emphasis on using action to give bodily expression to emotions, while explicitly considering gesture as a necessary intermediary stage for attaining an emotionally authentic scenic utterance (Stanislavski 1981, 2001; Ferencz-Flatz 2022b). In this regard, gestures are seen from the onset as objects of a performative technique, which can be rehearsed and staged at will, and it is in this perspective that they are also discussed marginally in contemporary phenomenological research on dance (Hagedoorn 2012, Merritt 2015, Popa 2019b). In contrast to this—and also to the dominant tendency in gesture studies to regard gestures as mere voluntary movements with a communicative intention—a phenomenological theory of gesture should perhaps not focus on this or that particular gesture, which may be voluntarily staged as such. Instead, it could direct attention towards the bulk of involuntary or pre-voluntary gesticulations, which are strictly speaking non-communicative in scope (see, for instance, the striking example of gesturing on the phone), in order to show how this "gestural unconscious" is grounded in the passivities of bodily experience. In all these regards, phenomenology obviously brings into play resources for fruitfully expanding our understanding of gestures from the most various perspectives.

Normality

The concept of "normality" is originally used by Husserl to analyse how the subject's sensory perception is conditioned by the physiological state of their sense organs and their body in general. In this context, he contrasts "orthoaesthetic" perception, whereby the subject's sense organs function concordantly, to perceiving with an abnormally functioning organ. Later on, this model of synaesthetic coherence also serves as a paradigm for understanding the more complex processes of intersubjective experiential coordination, which leads to a wider use of the term "normality". Following the aforementioned analogy between the synaesthetic and the intersubjective concordance and

discordance of experience, Husserl often illustrates the question of normality and anomaly by addressing the intersubjective status of sensory dysfunctions like colour-blindness, which can at times even be mutually established without explicit verbal communication by means of sheer bodily interaction. Thus, he frequently claims that "normality" primarily refers to an "optimal" standard of intersubjective experience and not to the mere contingencies of a statistically average standard, but several of his later writings challenge this clear-cut acceptation of the term, sketching out a far less neutral interpretation. Thus, in a notation from 1931, Husserl explicitly defines normality as "averageness," while in another text he even regards it as a voluntarily accepted "norm," defining a corresponding "normal lifestyle," which is not simply accepted as fact, but embraced as a normative value. Of course, this normative character is not grounded by a rationally motivated ethical choice, but rather by passive social habituation, but in being defined as such it obviously involves far more than the harmless fact of matching sensory perceptions, in obviously also extending to bodily movements and behaviours, and thus to gestures proper within the broad realm of bodily interaction. Husserl's later notations make this abundantly clear in frequently equating normality with social predictability plain and simple, while this in itself—our tacit expectations for others to behave in certain anticipated, "normal" ways—is seen as key for ensuring that we can generally empathize with one another and thus get a sense of a shared, common life-world. The late descriptions of these issues, addressing the shared life-world explicitly as "the world of normal citizens," for instance, are thus obviously prone to a political interpretation, all the more when they outline the corresponding acceptations of social anomaly (Hua XXXIX: 198). It is this reading of the term, in particular, that opens the path for a political-phenomenological approach to gestures as well.

Of course, Husserl is not really interested in giving such a political reading to these issues. However, beyond the limited scope of his own reflections, several scholars have recently also attempted to pursue a more astute political interpretation of his conception of normality, by drawing parallels to authors like Michel Foucault. Thus, in Peter Gylenhammer's view, for instance, Foucault's work points out the "dark side" of Husserl's conception of what is normal and abnormal in showing how disciplinary societies produce "normality" as a sanctioned regime of bodily behaviours by incriminating and flashing out others as deviant and abnormal (Gyllenhammer 2009). Similarly, Maren Wehrle describes Husserl and Foucault as two possible and complementary approaches to the question of normality, one "internal," focused on the description of lived normality, the other "external," critically focused on the problematic genealogies of normalization. While the former can obviously enrich the latter with thick experiential analyses, the latter can also impede on the former, given that, for instance, "lived normality can be made impossible when one's body is externally defined as not normal, such as not white, not cisgender, not heterosexual, not healthy, thin, young or male" (Wehrle 2022: 211).

Thus, in Wehrle's view, phenomenology can be aided by such critical readings like Foucault's to acknowledge how politically problematic normative social frameworks can impact on both one's relationship to one's own body and the practical relationships one entertains with the world. And this is, of course, a perspective that more recent critical phenomenologists have followed through by engaging in consistent lived accounts of said abnormal experiences, ranging all the way from explorations of animal experience, madness and disease to gendered and queer experience. Despite their wide-ranging differences, all such endeavours generally share the fact that they oppose reductive social prejudice by digging out discrete, subtle, subterranean forms of experience, which should be described and acknowledged in their own right, while they usually risk being levelled down by the prevailing optics of normality.

Such a perspective can obviously also be made fertile for the study of gestures and more particular: of gestures with a specific political import. This could be easily demonstrated, for instance, with regard to a perspicuous example like that of provocative gestures. Indeed, provocative gestures are highly interesting in that they pose the question of abnormal behaviour in an entirely different perspective: not as an involuntary way of being, which can't be helped, and should be acknowledged as such in its own right instead of being reductively normalized, but rather as deliberate actions. Interpreted as such, provocative gestures are not just unusual in the sense of un-habitual, as they contradict the patterns of our regular behavioural expectations, or transgressive, in that they violate our usual social norms, but they are performed demonstratively or ostensibly by a subject in order to overtly expresses dissent with and disregard of the established ways of normal behaviour. In other words: they are abnormal in order to make a point against normality. Thus, provocative behaviours deliberately play themselves out against a pre-given normality, and if it is generally true that it is only by experiencing anomalies that we can not only "define normality" in general, but also become aware of its limitations and ultimately expand its scope—as Maren Wehrle argues, for instance—then provocative gestures, which basically turn anomaly into a wilful performance and display, engender a sort of "experimental critique" of normality, and thus function as political gestures. As such, they could provide the perfect case in point for a political phenomenology of gestures, which can take the concept of "normality," as well as other similar phenomenological concepts and their various complications as its main guiding thread.

Pairing

The concept of "pairing" (*Paarung*) designates a grounding moment of social experience, which is first highlighted by Husserl, but plays a decisive role for later phenomenologists as well (Ciocan 2019). Indeed, in all its manifold versions, the phenomenological account of intersubjectivity presents two

invariant features. On the one hand, it focuses on situations of immediate face-to-face interaction, which are used as grounds for further clarification of more complex forms of sociality. On the other hand, it sees the body, and more precisely the intertwinement between the possibilities of my own body and that of the bodily other, as the main key for interpreting those situations of face-to-face interaction. This latter point is key for Husserl's understanding of "pairing". Thus, according to Husserl, in our encounter with another living body, its resemblance to our own body determines us to passively relate our two bodies through an associative synthesis, apperceiving them in correspondence and resonance with each other (Popa 2013, Ferencz-Flatz 2014b, Ciocan 2017). As a consequence, the lived body of the other appearing in my perceptive field constitutes an apperceptive counterpart to my own body, entailing an inter-relation of their different perspectives, which can be seen either as a fundamental solidarity or as a latent conflict (Sartre 1943).

This description is essential for the phenomenology of the social world. While Alfred Schütz (2004) sees it as the grounding intuition for the entire spectrum of phenomenological sociology, Merleau-Ponty allows for a more radical take on its meaning, by pushing Husserl's position further in two regards. First of all, he generalizes the reflexivity and reversibility of the sensorial experience of the body—simultaneously touching and being touched—by applying it to the entire intersubjective sphere. Since the social sphere is thus eminently shaped by inter-corporeality, the body is no longer understood as an individual object, but rather as a medium for our relationship to others, a mode of expression, and a language (Merleau-Ponty 1945). Secondly, this relationship is extended to the communication between human corporeality and the phenomenal world, described by Marc Richir in terms of "transcendental inter-facticity" (Richir 2004; 2006). These reflections offer abundant resources for a theory of gesture capable of entering dialogue with contemporary gesture studies, while overcoming its often-limited understanding of gesture as a mere individual corporeal act, by conceiving gestures on the contrary as inter-corporeal and inter-factial phenomena.

To be sure, such a more subtle perspective on gesture is already partially entailed in contemporary microsociology, particularly in ethnomethodology. Ethnomethodology and its derivatives like conversation analysis are often seen as an attempt to expand Alfred Schutz's phenomenological sociology with the tools of empirical research (Psathas 1999, 2009 and 2012, or Hammerslay 2019). Like phenomenology itself, they aim to clarify the experiential structures of the life-world by focusing on mutual understanding in concrete situations of interaction. Similarly, the ethnomethodological approach regards the social tissue from the onset as fundamentally constituted by gestures, movements, and social actions, which are mutually recognizable, coherent and intelligible for their participants. As such, they aim to penetrate the micro-dynamics of this reciprocally intelligible interaction and to describe how local participants at a given situation are *ad hoc* creating the orderliness of that situation. The standard

example brought up in this context is that of queuing, which shows a local form of social order spontaneously established by means of inter-corporeal exchange. Thus, queuers use gestures and corporeal postures to display to each other the order of service, thus making clear who is in the queue and who isn't, where the line starts and where it ends, which direction it runs, etc. As these details of communication do not simply supervene the queue as an external addition, but rather constitute it from within, the ethnomethodological approach shows that they are key to a genuine sociological interpretation of both everyday and workplace sociality, opening the path for a wide-ranging functional analysis of gestures in the most diverse situations of interaction. This analysis is highly relevant for social phenomenology (Popa 2018) not only in that it materializes a phenomenological program of researching intersubjectivity (*cf.* Garfinkel 2007), or in that it eventually uses video recordings in a manner which could bring new impulses to the methodological practices of classic phenomenology as well, but especially in that it pinpoints an interactive *reflexivity* of subjective behaviour, which can ultimately only be clarified philosophically by an in depth account of inter-corporeality and inter-facticity, in brief: by an extended engagement with the problems of bodily pairing. Indeed, one might claim, the grounding assumption of interbodily pairing is best illustrated by an analysis of inter-active and inter-reactive gestures, which (a.) aim at being intelligible and display intelligibility by their intersubjective orientation; (b.) point at each other in sequence, and (c.) explicitly account for themselves. Thus, the scattered intuitions of empirical research lend themselves for a wider-ranging philosophical reflection on bodily pairing, which understands gestures from the outset as part of an *intergestural* ensemble, grounding them in the situational flow of inter-corporeal and inter-factial exchange, while also keeping track of the concrete historicity sedimented in those interactions by means of genetic phenomenology.

Pre-predicative

The concept of the "pre-predicative" is one of the essential discoveries of phenomenological research, which could bring a significant contribution to contemporary gesture scholars' explorations of the relationship between gesture and language. As is well known, the phenomenological theory of language is centrally defined by its recourse to a sphere of pre-linguistic intentionality. This perspective grounds Husserl's entire project of genetic phenomenology, which, most notably in *Experience and Judgement*, draws a "genealogy of logic" by deriving it from "pre-predicative" experience. Like Husserl, Heidegger (2006) also constantly uses linguistic concepts in a broader sense to designate layers of pre-linguistic experience (existential "discourse" or praxeological "significance"), which are deemed capable of also accounting for language itself. Similar ideas can be found in Merleau-Ponty. In his view, the correlation between the

forms of language and the phenomena of pre-predicative experience is not just indicative of an abstract genealogical relationship. It also concretely points at the process by which every act of language as such transposes motivations, impressions, and connections initiated pre-linguistically, in mute experience. Given this core perspective of the phenomenological approach to language, one can readily show how a phenomenological analysis could prove fruitful for contemporary gesture studies.

The importance of gestures for a phenomenological approach to language becomes obvious, first of all, if one considers the relationship between pre-linguistic experience and its articulation in language. Thus, gesture studies have revealed, in contrast to earlier theories regarding gestures solely as an accompaniment to verbal communication, or as a mere atavism which would eventually atrophy with the development of language, that language is not a substitute for gesture, just as gesture is not a substitute for language, but that the two are rather co-expressive (Gullberg 2013), sharing a common origin in the subjects' effort of articulation, that is: in their pre-linguistic experience. This is, instead, precisely the point where a dialogue between contemporary gesture studies and the phenomenological tradition proves necessary. For, while contemporary cognitivist researchers merely contend to speak vaguely of the "images," which are intended by the subject prior to verbalization (McNeill 2017) and which are also expressed through gestures, empirical research can obviously benefit from the far more nuanced conceptual tools put forth by phenomenology, which has its traditional field of expertise in pre-predicative experience. At the same time, it is no doubt clear that phenomenology can use the rich insights of empirical research as a resource for its own analyses. In considering striking case studies like, for instance, the example of diverging gestures accompanying confused explanations, phenomenological reflection can be led to discover for itself that gestures offer an alternative route to pre-predicative experience aside language.

Instead, gestures are important not only in view of the aforementioned transition from pre-predicative experience to predication and expression, but also in view of the reverse process, which leads from linguistic expression back to intuitive experience. As is well known, this process of "intentional fulfilment," as Husserl calls it, by which an object first intended only verbally comes to materialize in intuition (be it perception, recollection, fantasy or image consciousness) plays a key part within the phenomenological project. In this regard, gestures again prove relevant not only because they can import flashes of plasticity to purely signitive or symbolic intentions in schematically evoking details of an account with iconic gestures, or by activating metaphors with the suggestion of their literal meaning (Müller 2008), but because of the important role they play in understanding "occasional" expressions (see Ferencz-Flatz 2022a). In Husserl's view, occasionality designates a particular feature of certain expressions (like "I," "here," "this," but also the tenses of the verb and many more), which only acquire meaning for the listeners when they

consider the speaker and their particular circumstances of utterance, in brief: their situation. On the contrary, when the listeners are unable to ascertain that situation, they only attain a purely signitive or empty understanding—and it is precisely in this effort to anchor the expressions within the given situation that gestures play an indispensable part, such that expressions like "here" or "over there" would in fact be meaningless without some gestural support to orient the listener. Moreover, if authors like Charles Goodwin (2007) have extensively documented the process, by which gestures and occasional expressions pass the attention of the interlocutor from one another within all forms of (everyday and professional) interaction for establishing a mutual understanding of one's immediate circumstances, both phenomenology and gesture studies could benefit from further pursuing this dialogue.

If contemporary research in conversation analysis, for instance, brings into play important suggestions for a phenomenology of situations, as this was formerly developed by Husserl and by Anders (1924) (see also Ferencz-Flatz 2011) with a special emphasis on the indexical features of language, phenomenological reflection is bound to pick up on such intuitions and draw out their philosophical implications. To be more precise, phenomenology can interpret the dynamic inter-relation between gesture and language thus outlined as an indispensable element for the constitution of what we might term co-occasionality: the real-time organization of a shared situation, seen as the basic frame of reference for mutual understanding. Furthermore, in using the instruments of genetic phenomenology, a phenomenological approach could also analyse the historic index of the relationship that pertains between language and gesture today by, for instance, tackling the various forms of medial hybridization that ensue between them: from the interpretation of silent film as a micro-physiognomic "writing in images" to the gestural language practices involved in contemporary forms of online writing like emoticons or gif chat, and to the complex modifications of gesturing entailed by videoconferencing (Ferencz-Flatz 2022c).

Reversibility

Merleau-Ponty's concept of reversibility fruitfully pushes further the conceptual problems of adumbration, expression, intercorporeality, and pairing that we have already pointed out. The guiding intuition nurturing this conceptual revolution accomplished in the *Visible and the Invisible* is to be found in the *Phenomenology of Perception*: "The communication or comprehension of gestures comes about through the reciprocity of my intentions and the gestures of others, of my gestures and intentions discernible in the conduct of other people. It is as if the other person's intention inhabited my body and mine his" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 215). The reversibility at work between my body and the body of the other will be further developed in the *Visible and the Invisible*

in connection to five significant forms of reflexivity, which can be only briefly sketched here:

(1) The reflexivity that characterizes the relationship my body has with itself, inasmuch as it suffers from a "fundamental narcissism" of being looked at by things, which pushes it "not to see in the outside, as the others see it, the contour of a body one inhabits, but especially to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced" (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 139).

(2) The reflexivity involved in the relationship the visible has with itself, resting in itself, "coiling over" (1968: 140) in "an intimacy as close as between the sea and the strand" (1968: 130–131), which also means that "the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen" (1968: 139).

(3) The reflexivity at play in the multi-layered experience of touch, that comprises "a touching of the sleek and of the rough, a touching of the things—a passive sentiment of the body and of its space—and finally a veritable touching of the touch, when my right hand touches my left hand while it is palpating the things, where the "touching subject" passes over to the rank of the touched" (1968: 133–134); to which the reflexivity of other senses can be added, such as hearing, given the fact that "I hear my own vibrations from within" (1968: 144).

(4) The reflexivity which defines the relationship between seeing and touch, since "hands do not suffice for touch" (1968: 137) and "every movement of my eyes—even more, every displacement of my body—has its place in the same visible universe that I itemize and explore with them, as, conversely, every vision takes place somewhere in the tactile space" (1968: 134), in such a way that "every visible is cut out in the tangible, every tactile being in some manner promised to visibility, and that there is encroachment, infringement, not only between the touched and the touching, but also between the tangible and the visible" (1968: 134).

(5) The reflexivity which pertains to the more encompassing relationship between the visible and the invisible, making the visible appear as "the surface of an inexhaustible depth" (1968: 134).

Merleau-Ponty thus sketches a broad theory of sensible reflexivity based upon a closed-bound system of relationships of the flesh (*la chair*) understood "as the locus of an inscription of truth" (1968: 131, footnote) and of the body which is "the sole means I have to go unto the heart of the things, by making myself a world and by making them flesh" (1968: 135). Among the five types of relationship mentioned above, the one between the seeing and the touch deserves a particular attention. Merleau-Ponty describes it as a mutual encroachment (*empiètement*), given the fact that "the visible is not a tangible zero, the tangible is not a zero of visibility" (1968: 135, footnote), and notices that "[t]here is double and crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and of the tangible in the visible; the two maps are complete, and yet they do not merge into one. The two parts are total parts and yet

are not superposable." (1968: 134) This double-crossed situation without superposition describes reversibility as a dynamic relationship of "reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other" (1968: 138). This relationship is always imminent and never realized, because flesh is not a homogenous milieu, involving a hidden hiatus around which partial sensible experiences pivot (1968: 138).

One can argue that the reversibility of the flesh finds in gestures its historical realization, that not only allows different bodies to communicate in the present, but also connects past and future senses and forms of life. Gestures emerge indeed within this complex "ramification" of my body, which creates "a correspondence between its inside and my outside, between my inside and its outside" (1968: 138, footnote). When "the creative innervation is exactly proportioned to receptive innervation" (Benjamin 1999: 204), gestures acquire an educative dimension, thanks to which future meanings find a first inscription in the present and past meanings are sedimented (see *Sedimentation*), in order to be rediscovered again. Gestures thus become factors of reversibility that challenge the already instituted meanings at play in our social behaviours and orient our intercorporeal encounters toward a process of meaning-making whose core is bodily kinaesthetic before becoming consciously significant.

Sedimentation

First introduced by Husserl, the concept of "sedimentation" gives an account of the way in which meaning is instituted, maintained and rediscovered, attesting to the firm orientation of phenomenological research towards history and historicity. Husserl's early analysis of the temporality of consciousness has opened the possibility of considering sedimentation as a core phenomenological concept. Husserl's discovery is that temporality is not only intentionally constituted, but also somehow deposited progressively in the limbs of consciousness, from where our memory can always awaken past meanings. The temporal object whose sense is intentionally constituted in the present is not only maintained as retention: there is also a "retentional sedimentation" (Hua XI: 113 / Husserl 2001: 159) that pushes it slowly toward the past. Sedimentation thus describes the passage from the active synthesis of identification to the passive synthesis of association, regulated by different rules and priorities than the ones that reign over actual consciousness. Here, Husserl discovers that objects cannot be isolated from each other, belonging to "the living constitutive nexus" (Hua XI: 183 / Husserl 2001: 233) in which they are continuously transformed.

The concept of sedimentation becomes prominent in Husserl's later work, in the light of the new methodology that he experiments with in his work on passivity. The backward-looking question (*Rückfrage*) and the reactivation (*Reaktivation*) of meaning are the main new methodological instruments,

famously put at work in the manuscript on the "Origin of Geometry," in order to reveal "sedimentations of a truth-meaning that can be made originally self-evident" (Hua VI: 377 / Husserl 1970: 367). In this text, Husserl reflects on the way in which sedimented meanings are first instituted and then rediscovered, being thus potentially transmitted further. From this perspective, sedimentation is a continuous process that operates at multiple layers that are not all perfectly aligned with each other. Discordance, contrasts and tensions are to be noticed between these different layers of sedimentation, making the process of reactivation of meaning discontinuous (Hua XI: 194 / Husserl 2001: 245). Marc Richir (1992) will introduce the idea of a tectonics of phenomenalization in order to analyse the gaps and the intervals opened between the different layers of sedimentation.

In the Husserlian framework, the passive concept of sedimentation cannot be understood without its active correlate, which is the act of "awakening" that can be either immediate or mediate (Hua XI: 283 / Husserl 2001: 417–418). Along the same lines, Husserl will explain in the *Cartesian Meditations* that behind each institution of meaning in the present there is an original institution (*Urstiftung*), illustrated by basic gestures we learn from others and that we continuously reactivate, such as the gesture of using a pair of scissors (Hua I: 141 / Husserl 1960: 111). Describing the way in which meaning is sedimented thus suggests that gestures precede the actual conscious grasp of meanings and allow them to be transmitted passively, thus reversing the priority of activity over passivity, and opening the problem of the phenomenological unconscious as a domain of gesture and gestation of a shared sense of experience.

In the *Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty will understand sedimentation as a latent intentionality, describing it "as an interlocking of the pasts in one another plus a consciousness of this interlocking as a law" (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 173). Sedimentation is thus a structure of both a givenness and a transmission of meaning: the "sole mode of being of ideality" (1968: 235) and a "retrograde movement of the true" understood as "that phenomenon that one can no longer undo oneself from what has once been thought, that one finds it again in the materials themselves" (1968: 189). Pushing Husserl's idea of institution further, Merleau-Ponty brings forth a "simultaneous *Urstiftung* of time and space which makes there be a historical landscape and a quasi-geographical inscription of history" (1968: 259). This quasi-geographic inscription finds an interesting illustration in Elisabeth Behnke's investigation of the "ghost gestures" (Behnke 1997) that compose the tacit "choreography" of our everyday life. Gestures appear to be the expression of the deeply sedimented process of body-making, reflecting both one's past history and the social shaping thereof. Not only do gestures reactivate past institutions of sense. They also entail sedimented micromovements that are "likely to become 'trapped' in the body, migrating all too readily from one body part to another, haunting us far beyond the original occasions eliciting the bodily comportment in question and becoming instead a sedimented style of response in general" (Behnke 1997: 191).

In experiences of mourning, fright, desire, or despair, gestures thus bring in the present an "antiquity" necessarily ignored by our mind (Didi-Huberman 2005: 39), moving from survival to the opening of future possibilities.

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This list is, as already mentioned, certainly not exhaustive. Similar analyses could be sketched out with regard to concepts like horizon, orientation, style, typification, availableness (*Zuhandenheit*) and many more. Instead, our small choice of terms above rather reflects our desire to show how vastly ramified the directions are, in which one is inevitably led to venture when engaging the question of gestures phenomenologically. Of course, gestures are primarily rooted in bodily experience, but as such they open the path for reflecting on the most various issues: from expression, language and generality, to perception, presentation and temporal constitution, and even political, or historical concerns. In fact, one may even go as far as claiming that a full-blown phenomenology of gestures would bring into play all the main foci of contemporary phenomenological research. The studies selected in this special issue attempt to partly make good on this intention. Several of these essays tackle specific phenomenological problems concerning the question of gestures in authors like Husserl, Merleau-Ponty or Levinas and outline their philosophical implications (Byrne, Gomez, Kaushik, Pazienti, Olcèse). Others apply the tools of phenomenology in order to account for very specific workings of gesture, for instance in the field of musical performance (Safatle). And yet others, reflect on the potentialities of phenomenological inquiry in dialogue with various disciplines, like psychoanalysis (Brudzińska), empirical sociology (Knoblauch & Steets) or evolutionary biology (Sheets-Johnstone). Invariably, some important topics and authors have remained uncovered, so we can't but hope that our effort will stimulate further work on the subject matter[2].

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