SHARING TIME IN WE-EXPERIENCES: A CRITICAL MERLEAU-PONTIAN RE-READING OF SCHÜTZ' TUNING-IN RELATIONSHIP

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Recent scholarship about group ontology and collective agency seeks to understand experiences of togetherness and why they are important to us. Work by Michael Bratman (2014), Raimo Tuomela (2013), John Searle (2010), and Margaret Gilbert (1990), among others, has sought to identify the conditions under which we each severally enter a distinct mode of togetherness that philosophers call the "we-experience." Much of this scholarship focuses the nature of shared plans and commitments thought to occur in such experiences. Other approaches take a different focus altogether, seeking to identify a more basic level of connectivity out of which shared agential structures such as plans could arise. Alfred Schütz (1976), for example, points to a "mutual tuning-in relationship" as the basis for all communication (161). For Schütz, this tuning-in relation is achieved through sharing time, or "sharing of the other's flux of experiences in inner time" (173). Such sharing of inner time not only prefaces the assumption of communicative or, by extension, agential structures, but is also constitutive of a new form of higher-order unity, the "we."[1]

A critical phenomenological approach to questions of social ontology and collective agency would seek to recognize how "quasi-transcendental social structures" and the "lived experience of power and oppression" inform the being of such a "we," to use Lisa Guenther's (2019) helpful terminology (12). One facet of identity-based social hierarchies is the exclusion or "othering" of targeted populations, and an adequate account of we-experiences must therefore grapple with the features of social reality that undermine we-experiences across intersectional power differentials.[2] Unlike the "planning" accounts noted above, Schütz's approach to we-experiences allows these salient features of social reality to be thematized. However, as I hope to demonstrate in this paper, this is only true if we give Schütz's account a Merleau-Pontian rendering by replacing the Husserlian notion

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[1] See also Schütz 1972, 219-20.

[2] "The white world, the only honorable one, barred me from all participation" (Fanon 2008, 86).

of temporality relied upon by Schütz with an account of body-schematic temporality from Merleau-Ponty.

In Schütz's account, music has a temporal structure that distinguishes it from other activities that can be done together, such as painting or bird watching, and thus offers a suitable microcosm for the analysis of shared temporality. Though music is not the only context where a tuning-in relationship is possible, it is the example he chooses for his analysis and readily accessible for most readers. Most of us have had we-experiences during musical activities, from intimate duets with caregivers in early life to evenings spent thrashing in the mosh pit as young adults (or older ones). The effects of such musical experiences on our sense of social belonging have been confirmed in clinical studies in psychology. Bronwyn Tarr et al (2016) have found that musical activities such as dancing help to "establish and maintain group cohesion" by facilitating "interpersonal cooperation and feelings of social closeness" (343). Kathleen Marie Higgins (2012) articulates this feeling as "ontological security" (146):

> the person senses that he or she occupies the same order of being as other people and shares the encountered world with them . . . On the basis of this conviction, the person feels confident of living in a shared world. (150)

Notable in her characterisation of the we-experience is "world-sharing" and "self-belonging." Dan Zahavi's (2019) definition of we-experiences emphasizes the positionality of the subject *within* the group: "The we, the first-person *plural*, is not an entity observed from without, but rather something experienced from within in virtue of . . . participation in a certain group" (256). I will take it as granted, then, that we-experiences occur and that they often occur in music. What we need to know more about, however, is *how* they occur: how do we enter a we-experience from a starting position as a unitary individual?[3]

My point of departure for addressing this question will be Schütz' (1976) account of "sharing time" as the means by which a unitary individual enters a tuning-in relationship constitutive of a we-experience. When music, in his words, "evokes in the stream of consciousness participating in it an interplay of recollections, retentions, protentions, and anticipations" (170), then "the performer partakes in the stream of consciousness of the composer as well as of the listener" (174). There is something intuitively right about this characterization, but it runs into trouble in its evocation of Husserl's (1964) account of time from *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*. After explicating some of the tensions that arise for Schütz by basing his account of sharing time in an account that makes time effectively *unshareable*, I suggest that we can better understand sharing time through Merleau-Ponty's (1962) theory of embodied temporality found in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, and the related ideas contained in the notes from his lectures delivered at the Sorbonne between 1949 and 1952, especially "The Child's Relation with Others."

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[3] Intersubjectivity is a basic structure of consciousness and the fulfilled we-experience is not reduceable to it: we-experiences are not equivalent to intersubjectivity. This point is the theme of Zahavi's (2019) criticism of Heidegger in the following quotation: "Any plausible account of intersubjectivity has to factor in the embodied face-to-face relationship. It is not permissible to denigrate it to a mere ontic manifestation of some supposedly more basic ontological structure" (258).

My argument proceeds by characterizing the temporality endogenous to what Merleau-Ponty (1964) calls the body schema, and then showing how the body schema is something that can be shared. I infer that the body schema's endogenous temporality can thus also be shared. I then proceed to address a concern stemming from disability theory that the body-schematic basis for this account of sharing time contains assimilationist tendencies. If conforming to the relevant body schematic patterning is a condition for inclusion in a particular we-experience, then we should be worried that we-experiences are thereby made impossible for those incapable of such body schematic conformity. I argue that in comparison with the more common paradigm of synchronization, *improvisation* provides a more viable model for understanding how it is possible to share a body schema while respecting bodily difference. The example of collective free improvisation shows how a shared body schema grounded in the inherent motilities of participant body schemas can be interactively generated, rather than externally imposed in what Mariusz Kozak (2020) calls "a forced time compliance" (119). Comprehending that body schemas are assumed in a bi-directional fashion whereby the individual takes on the schema and the schema adapts to the individual allows us to see how it is possible to share a schema between diverse temporal bodies. Only when we see body schematic assumption as a unidirectional application of a pre-established pattern do we encounter the problematic requirement of bodily sameness to participate in we-experiences through sharing time together. Therefore, so long as we accept the Merleau-Pontian re-formulation offered here, I argue that we should continue to regard Schütz' account of the tuning-in relationship as an important and viable account of group ontology and collective agency.

PROBLEMS WITH HUSSERL'S INNER TIME FOR SCHÜTZ'S TUNING-IN RELATIONSHIP

Before laying out my positive account, let me clear some ground and provide a motivation for my interest in finding an alternate conceptualization of shared time. I will do this by analyzing the Husserlian underpinnings of Schütz' account. As noted above, Schütz (1976) posits a *tuning-in relationship* that founds the experience of a "we." This mutual tuning-in relationship "is the means by which 'I' and the 'Thou' are experienced by both participants as a 'We' in vivid presence" (161). The tuning-in relationship is said to occur through sharing time, specifically "sharing of the other's flux of experiences in inner time" (170).[4] While Schütz draws from both Bergson and Husserl (1964) in characterizing his concept of "inner time," the example he provides of such musical sharing of inner time emphasizes the Husserlian framework:

> The flux of tones unrolling in inner time is an arrangement meaningful to
> both the composer and the beholder, because and in so far as it evokes in

[4] "A 'we,' originates," Schütz (1976) adds, "in the possibility of living together simultaneously in specific dimensions of time" (162).

the stream of consciousness participating in it an interplay of recollections, retentions, protentions, and anticipations which interrelate the successive elements. (Schütz 1976, 170)

The unrolling of tones is meaningful for participants because of how the unrolling evokes in participants "an interplay of recollections, retentions, protentions, and anticipations."[5] Sharing the same flux of inner time,[6] in some sense, then, would appear to be the way the tuning-in relationship, constitutive of the "we" experience, seems to be explained in Schütz' account.

The means by which Schütz claims we will enter this shared flux of inner time, however, reveals a deeper problem with the very suggestion of sharing Husserlian inner time in the way apparently suggested. Schütz says we enter shared inner time through a specific act of consciousness which Husserl calls an active polythetic synthesis (to be contrasted with an active *monothetic* synthesis).[7] This jargony terminology drawn from Husserl's *Ideas I* boils down to a distinction between understanding something in a step-by-step temporal sequence (polythetic), or grasping something all at once in a single moment of insight (monothetic).[8] Schütz is saying that he thinks an understanding of music is of the first kind: it happens in a step-by-step way. However, what I am drawing attention to is the *active* quality of *both* forms of synthesis. Schütz seems to be saying both that musical experience is a *passive* unfolding of inner time, and that this passive unfolding is synthesized in an *active* manner, in an active polythetic synthesis. It is hard to see how an *active* synthesis of any sort can instigate operations of a *passive* nature, such as those involved in the flux of inner time.[9]

The more concerning problem, however, is not that this or that way of entering a shared flow of time is untenable: it is the worry that Husserl's inner flow of time is, as such, unshareable. Husserl (1964) holds that "two different times can never be conjoint" and

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[5] For further explication of the concepts from Husserl's *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* used in this essay, see Lohmar and Yamaguchi 2010 and Kortoons 2011.

[6] Schütz (1976) distinguishes between inner time and outer time in the following illuminating passage: "to make clear why we consider inner time the very medium within which the musical flow occurs, let us imagine that the slow and the fast movement of a symphony each fill a twelve-inch record. Our watches show that the playing of either record takes about three and a half minutes. This is a fact which might possibly interest the program maker of a broadcasting station. To the beholder it means nothing. To him it is not true that the time he lived through while listening to the slow movement was of 'equal length' with that which he dedicated to the fast one. While listening he lives in a dimension of time incomparable with that which can be subdivided into homogeneous parts. The outer time is measurable; there are pieces of equal length; there are minutes and hours and the length of the groove to be traversed by the needle of the record player. There is no such yardstick for the dimension of inner time the listener lives in" (89).

[7] Schütz (1976) writes: "The meaning of a musical work, however, is essentially of a polythetical structure. It cannot be grasped monothetically. It consists in the articulated step-by-step occurrence in inner time, in the very polythetic constitutional process itself" (172). And also: "the musical content itself, its very meaning, can be grasped merely by reimmersing oneself in the ongoing flux, by reproducing thus the articulated musical occurrence as it unfolds in polythetic steps in inner time" (173).

[8] See Husserl 1982, §118- §120.

[9] Husserl (1982) writes that time-consciousness is "not to be thought of as an active and discrete synthesis" (283).

"their relation is a non-simultaneous one" (29). These statements suggest that one flow of time can never enter into another, making the notion of sharing of time itself implausible. As we will see below, commentators seem to agree that at best, for Husserl, two discreet flows of inner time can interlock, but never interpenetrate.

For example, the unshareablility of Husserlian inner time has been noted by Lucia Angelino (2020) in an essay on collective free improvisation. Angelino, like Schütz, has turned to music for insight into the constitution of groups in real-time. However, despite Angelino's stated intention of going beyond "the original Husserlian frame" (60), she nevertheless reasserts the intractability of individuality in inner time:

> Instead of looking at the dynamic loop between backward-looking retention and forward-looking protention (Husserl) as something which is confined purely to each individual consciousness, we apply it to understand the interlocking of streams of consciousness that takes place among players [in collective free improvisations] . . . it must be added, however, that in performing this process the stream of consciousness of each player flows alongside, but never into the internal-time consciousness of another, even though it is constantly coloured and challenged by the others' ideas, moods and feelings in the process. (60–61)

Angelino attempts to use notions from Husserl's (1964) *Internal Time-Consciousness* to articulate group processes that transcend "each individual consciousness" (60). She does so by describing an "interlocking" of stream of consciousness among players, adding that such streams of consciousness "flow alongside, *but never into* the internal-time consciousness of another" (60; emphasis added). This notion of "interlocking" comes from Dan Zahavi's (2014) way of understanding how Schütz might be envisioning the unity produced through sharing time that nevertheless respects the stricture against sharing Husserl's inner time:

> Rather than entailing metaphysical fusion, what Schütz has in mind here is the fact that our respective streams of consciousness in such situations are *interlocked* to such an extent that each of our respective experiences are colored by our mutual involvement. (245–46)

Zahavi's suggestion that "sharing time," for Schütz, is not to be thought as a "metaphysical fusion" would make the problem of shared time disappear by making it superfluous to the tuning-in experience. The tuning-in experience, Zahavi seems to be suggesting, can be achieved by merely *interlocking* our "fluxes of experiences in inner time," rather than sharing them.[10] This solution permits discussion of we-experiences while continuing to rely on a conception of temporality that does not permit sharing as such. However, as we saw earlier, Schütz' language does not entirely support Zahavi's "interlocking" interpretation of the time shared to form the tuning-in relationship.

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[10] This is a paraphrase of Schütz' (1976) definition of a tuning-in relationship, quoted above: "sharing of the other's flux of experiences in inner time" (170).

Schütz describes the tuning-in relationship using language that suggests greater coalescence than the mutually external arrangement implied in Zahavi's solution. We can see this by bringing our attention to the terms chosen to describe the relationship between the parties of a we-experience in Schütz' (1976) text: "living together simultaneously" (162), "participates in" (170), "participates with" (171), "living through a vivid present in common" (173). While mounting a full critique of Zahavi's interpretation of Schütz is beyond the scope of this paper, I will resist his "interlocking" interpretation to leave open the possibility that a more zygotic temporality could underlie the tuning-in relationship constitutive of the we-experience.

One worry about the interlocking view of shared time would be that such hermetically individuated streams of inner time, no matter how intertwining they might be, might fail to establish anything other than what Brandon Polite (2019) calls *parallel experiences*: "separate, but similar, activities occurring in each other's company" (429). If we are looking to understand we-experiences that occur in music as a product of shared time between participants, individual temporal streams bearing external relationships to one another does not seem to be a satisfactory account. For while a rope may be comprised of many strands of twine or a chain of many interlocking links, the whole that is the rope or chain is only perceived externally, not by each strand of twine or individual link. Names and concepts that unify material things cannot provide a paradigm for what it is to share subjective temporality: what it is to be in a "we" as a human subject is to have a perceptual (or pre-perceptual) grasp of that *we* from within.

If, then, instead of settling the interpretive question about whether Schütz understood shared time to be fused or interlocked, we retain only his more general clue about a possible basis for we-experiences found in music, then, accepting that Husserl's flow of inner time is largely unshareable, searching for an alternative account of temporality might help us to further our inquiry into the basis of such "we" experiences.

MERLEAU-PONTY'S TRANSITION SYNTHESIS: THE TEMPORALITY OF THE BODY SCHEMA

If individual flows of Husserlian inner time cannot be shared but only run parallel to one another, then we might turn elsewhere for an account of temporality that would allow us to understand the tuning-in relationship as a sort of sharing time together. In the "Temporality" chapter of *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty (1962) distinguishes his account of temporality from that of Husserl in a way that would seem to offer resources for our inquiry:

> It is true that the other will never exist for us as we exist ourselves; he is always a lesser figure, and we never feel in him as we do in ourselves the thrust of temporalization. But two temporalities are not mutually exclusive as are two consciousnesses, because each one knows itself only

> by projecting itself into the present where they can interweave. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 433)

Merleau-Ponty thus preserves Husserl's individual flow of inner time—the thrust of one's *own* temporalization—while also positing a level of temporal non-exclusivity: "two temporalities are not mutually exclusive" (433). While the final image of this quotation, that of *interweaving*, might initially seem to advocate the "interlocking" model of shared time I rejected above, I would suggest we interpret the role of this image differently. The term "to interweave," *se enlacer* in the French,[11] is not, I offer, meant to be describing what it is to share time in a "we" experience, but is rather used to illustrate the weaker condition of what it simply means for two temporalities *not* to be mutually exclusive. The grammar of the sentence suggests that the second half of the phrase is supposed to be supplying the evidence for the first half: we know that two temporalities are not mutually exclusive *because* (*parce que*) they, among other things, can intertwine (*peuvent s'y enlacer*). The notion that two temporalities *may* (*peuvent*) interweave is a much looser condition than what is suggested by the vocabulary of "interlocking," and we should take it to be highlighting *the quality of having an interactive capacity,* rather than a description of the "we" that might occur after a tuning-in relationship has been achieved. Let us, then, look more closely at this "non-exclusivity" with an eye to better characterising the kind of temporality the sharing of which could underlie the tuning-in relationship constitutive of "we" experiences.[12]

THE TEMPORALITY OF THE BODY SCHEMA

Merleau-Ponty's (1962) account in the "Temporality" chapter of the *Phenomenology of Perception* stems from his account of embodied intentionality developed earlier in the book. This account of embodied intentionality, in turn, critically pivots around the notion of the *body schema*, and its sedimented cousin the *habit body*.[13] The body schema is, paradoxically, an acquired *a priori* intentional structure paraphrased by Shaun Gallagher (2005) as a "system

[11] "*Mais deux temporalités ne s'excluent pas comme deux consciences, parce que chacune ne se sait qu'en se projetant dans le présent et qu'elles peuvent s'y enlacer*" (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 495).

[12] I agree with Michael Kelly's (2015) reading of Merleau-Ponty's (1968) "Temporality" chapter, which resists Merleau-Ponty's own later assessment of it in *The Visible and the Invisible* as too much on the side of Husserl's theory of consciousness. Kelly argues instead that the chapter "foretells Merleau-Ponty's philosophical ontology from 1961, which reformulates intentional consciousness as a product of a 'wild being' . . . 'the time-thing, time-being.'" Merleau-Ponty presages this reformulation in the "Temporality" chapter, according to Kelly, specifically through embracing Heidegger's (1990) formulation of time, which explains "how time's affecting of itself constitutes consciousness and its awareness of time and spatiotemporal objects" (199). I mean what I say here to be consistent with Kelly's interpretation.

[13] While I understand the habit body as a body schema sedimented through repetition, Maren Wehrle (2020) offers a contrasting interpretation of their relationship: "the body schema mediates constantly between the currently performing body . . . and the habitual body, which determines the practical possibilities of this very body" (508-09). David Morris (2018) adds: "The body schema is a key concept in the *Phenomenology*. Basically, it names the deeper dynamic through which the body structures itself as expressive, habitual, and capable of organizing itself in a sense-making way" (94).

of processes that constantly regulate posture and movement . . . that function without reflective awareness or the necessity of perceptual monitoring" (37-38).[14] The temporality endemic to the body schema is described by Merleau-Ponty (1962) as neither a line or an unalterable directional flow, but "a network of intentionalities" (417). Merleau-Ponty describes the "network of intentionalities" constitutive of this body-schematic temporality as a "transition synthesis" (419): "my world is carried forward by lines of intentionality which trace out in advance at least the style of what is to come" (416). In other words, what is given to me in presence and what is portended on the horizon are connected by one continuous through line. This through line is a transition from what is here and what is to come, a transition whose steps are mapped out for us in the body schema, if not in vivid detail (for the protentional horizon is *open*) at least in *style*. Positioning himself with respect to Husserl, Merleau-Ponty elaborates on the origin of this network of intentionalities:

> Husserl uses the terms protentions and retentions for the intentionalities which anchor me to an environment. They do not run from a central I, but from my perceptual field itself, so to speak, which draws along in its wake its own horizon of retentions, and bites into the future with its protentions. (416).

For Husserl, Lanei Rodemeyer (2006) explains, "presencing consciousness includes what is called a *retention* of experiences just-passed and a *protention* toward experiences that are just coming" (9–10). Retention and protention are what frame our immediate experience of a present, what Husserl calls "*Urimpression*, or primordial impression" (Rodemeyer 2006, 10). For Merleau-Ponty, by contrast, such temporal framing of the present comes not from a central constituting consciousness but from my perceptual field itself, that is, from the intentionality of the body schema and the habit body.[15] The body schema and habit body are geared into the world, not projected onto it. Therefore, the temporality endemic to them is likewise geared into the world and not something superimposed upon it. Rather, temporality emerges from the spontaneous sequence of interactions between subject and world.[16]

Once we see that there is a temporality sustained by the body schema and habit body, an avenue for understanding sharing time presents itself. For Merleau-Ponty contends that

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[14] Merleau-Ponty (1962) describes the body schema as "neither the mere copy nor even the global awareness of the existing parts of the body . . . its active integration of these latter only in proportion to their value to the organism's projects" (100).

[15] Following David Morris (2018), I understand the body schema not as "simply a matter of the body projecting its schema, one-way, onto the world" but rather "that schema is itself gathered out of the world in a two-way junctural relation between body and world" (84). See also Morris 2004.

[16] Mariusz Kozak's (2020) description of this dynamic in the smelling of a new perfume is illuminating: "As you press on the plunger, aerosolized droplets rush out and form a cloud that hangs in the air in front of you. In order to catch a whiff, you move your head, maybe even your whole body, this way and that. You create a fan-like motion with your hands in order to direct the fragrant air toward your nose . . . the reciprocal relationship between the aerosolized droplets and the human subject gives both spatial and temporal structure to this encounter" (5).

the body schema is itself *shareable*. In the lectures that comprise "The Child's Relations with Others," Merleau-Ponty (1971) maintains that subjective experience is not a purely private matter but is rather "a relation to the world." In terms of other people, he continues, the "other's consciousness is chiefly a certain way of comporting himself toward the world." Understood as conduct, other minds are not inaccessible to us but are plain to observe.[17] But not only can we observe others through their behaviour, the schema issuing from such behaviour can be taken on as our own. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, the "'postural,' or 'corporeal, schema'" of another person "speaks directly to my own unique motility" as "themes of possible activity for my own body" (117). While not every body schema offers a *near* possibility for my own body—I may, with practice, be able to perform the gymnastic sequence I observe before me but at present it is not a near possibility for me—it nevertheless offers a guide for my body; I clap and cheer along with the twists, leaps, and landings I witness. Much more will be said below, however, about what is undoubtedly an implicit assumption on Merleau-Ponty's part: the postural schema of another can only suggest themes of activity for my body if it does, in fact, speak directly to *my own* motility. In many cases, the body schema of another will *not* speak to my own motility.

Emphasizing that this shareable schema is identical to the ordering principle of my own experience (embodied intentionality), Merleau-Ponty (1971) writes:

> To the extent that I can elaborate and extend my corporal schema . . . to
> that very extent will my consciousness of my own body cease being a chaos
> in which I am submerged and lend itself to a transfer to others. (118)

Conceiving of experience as comportment towards the world, as the body schema, enables, as it were, its "transfer" between individuals. The term "transfer" here needs some elaboration. In the French, the passage above reads:

> *Si mon corps n'est plus seulement connu par une masse de sensations strictement
> individuelles, mais comme un objet organisé par rapport à l'entourage, il en résulte
> que la perception de mon corps peut être transférée à autrui et l'image d'autrui peut
> être immédiatement « interprétée » par mon schéma corporel.* (Merleau-Ponty
> 1988, 311)

Here, in my translation, the second half of this complex phrase seems to read more literally as follows: "the perception of my body can be transferred to another, and the image of the other can be immediately interpreted by my body schema." The first thing to note here is the ambiguity in the expression "the perception of my body": this could mean either (loosely) the perspective my body gives me of the world, or the perspective of another as they behold my body (311). This ambiguity could be intentional: the body schema is particular in serving both of these roles. But what precisely it means to *transfer* such "perceptions of one's body" remains somewhat opaque. This notion is illuminated, however, in a passage a few pages earlier in the collected *Sorbonne Lectures 1949–1952*, in the text that comes

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[17] See also Krueger 2012.

immediately prior to "The Child's Relation with Others," a lecture titled "Child Psycho-Sociology (1950-1951)." There Merleau-Ponty (2010) characterizes transfer as the general character of *habit*:

> a habit always has a general, relative character. What is acquired by habit is not a series of determined movements, but a possibility, an aptitude to invent a valuable solution to a situation . . . This general character of habit is found in the phenomenon of habit transfer: for example, a habit acquired by the right hand is partially transferred to the left. Therefore a relative independence of habit from the motor apparatus exists. (196)

We can read this passage to indicate the way Merleau-Ponty is using the term "transfer" in his thinking around this time. "Transfer" indicates, in the first instance, the ability of a habit to be generated in one context and applied in another (the organist plays in several different cathedrals). In the second instance, "transfer" indicates the intra-corporeal movement of a localized habit, as exemplified in learning to write with one's nondominant hand.[18] In the third instance, that expressed by our original quotation taken from "The Child's Relation with Others," "transfer" indicates the *inter*-corporeal movement of a habit (or schema) between different individuals.

Returning to "The Child's Relation with Others," Merleau-Ponty (1971) elaborates on the notion of schematic transfer, suggesting that such "alienation" facilitates my grasp of other subjectivities:

> It is this transfer of my intentions to the other's body and of his intentions to my own, my alienation of the other and his alienation of me, that makes possible the perception of others. (118)

On this view, then, the inner life of another is not inaccessible: the body schema of another speaks directly to my own as a set of embodied possibilities. In other words, the schema of the other is available to me to use as *my* schema; the schema is shareable.

There is, then, for Merleau-Ponty, a temporality not reducible to Husserl's inner time, one that emits from the body schema. Furthermore, this schema is shareable.[19] Before concluding that sharing a body schema is equivalent to the sharing of time in a tuning-in relationship, however, I want to consider two possible objections. The first can be met, while the second will lead to a more nuanced and precise account. The first objection revolves around a potential *reductio ad absurdum*. If the body schema is shareable, and, as Merleau-Ponty asserts, when we perceive another person we perceive their body schema,

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[18] Merleau-Ponty (2010) claims knowing how to write with one's dominant hand makes it easier to learn to write with one's nondominant hand: "we find that learning is much faster if one has already learned with the right hand (habit transference)" (212).

[19] Scholars are currently investigating whether such schema sharing must occur in a face-to-face, in-person manner, or whether it can occur, for example, online. This issue cannot be addressed here, but I would refer interested readers to the following sources: Fuchs 2014, Osler 2020, Osler and Krueger 2021, Kim 2001.

then one might think that the tuning-in relation is trivially obtained in *any* person-to-person encounter.

This objection would overlook the difference between *observing* a body schema (but not *sharing* a body schema) and *using* a body schema (and thereby sharing it), as well as other distinctions that would allow us to grasp the body schema of another person without partaking in it. We can allow the possibility of recognizing the body schema of another person without participating in it ourselves. The difference between noticing and using a body schema might be appreciated by reflecting on the difference between watching a ballet as an audience member and participating in a parade during Latin American *Carnival.* In the former case, we observe the pattern of movements the dancer makes without altering our own motility reciprocally: observing the dancer's body schema without using it. In the latter case, by contrast, dancers in the parade demonstrate steps to the onlookers by grabbing their bodies and moving their limbs, using eye contact, facial expression, and gesture to transfer their schema to the onlooker who then joins in the procession: using the dancer's body schema as one's own.[20] Over-attributing the tuning-in relationship to any interpersonal situation whatsoever is not required if we maintain that it is possible to distinguish between ways of encountering the body schemas of others in ways that do not amount to sharing it. Respecting a distinction of this nature circumvents the *reductio.*

However, maintaining a distinction of this nature may not be viable for Merleau-Ponty.[21] If not, it would make my attempt to map the tuning-in relationship onto the sharing of a body schema (in Merleau-Ponty's sense) rather tenuous, because of the looming *reductio.* Is there a distinction in Merleau-Ponty between *noticing* or *recognizing* another person through their body schema and *sharing* that body schema? Consider a passage from the *Phenomenology of Perception* which begins with a description of another person coming into view (the other is noticed or recognized) and ends with the characterization of that other as "a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions," a description which implies a shared body schema:

> No sooner has my gaze fallen upon a living body in process of acting than the objects surrounding it immediately take on a fresh layer of significance . . . it is precisely my body which perceives the body of another, and discovers in that other body a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions, a familiar way of dealing with the world. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 353–54)

Does this not suggest that for Merleau-Ponty, as soon as another person comes into view, we immediately find ourselves sharing a body schema with that person? I do not think so. For what goes on in between the beginning and the end of the paragraph can be characterized precisely as a description of the very process of *tuning-in* whereby a heretofore un-shared (but noticed) schema becomes shared.

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[20] This description comes from my experience of Carnival in Cuba in 2016.

[21] I appreciate the anonymous reviewer who helped me develop my thinking by challenging this point, and for the suggestion to consider the passage below.

The first phase of the interaction described in the passage above begins when the gaze has come upon a "living body in the process of acting" (353). As part of noticing this body in action, Merleau-Ponty (1962) recounts, the worldly objects involved in that action take on a meaning relative to it: "they are what this other pattern of behaviour is about to make of them" (316). What is happening in this stage of the interaction is the noticing of a body schema—a body schema includes the very pattern of worldly comportment by which these objects become meaningful in the ways described, and the objects themselves are part of the schema. Recognizing that the objects have taken on a fresh significance, one relative to the actions of the living body, Merleau-Ponty then begins to regard that body in a different way, one that serves as a midway stop along the route to the sharing of the body schema rather than merely noticing it. For we cannot yet say at this point that the schema is shared: there is no particular sense dawning for how Merleau-Ponty might interact with this other schema. All Merleau-Ponty is aware of at this stage is that the objects that heretofore had primarily significance relative to his own body schema have now been "sucked in" by the activity of the other: "Someone is making use of my familiar objects. But who can it be?" (353). Up until this point, it has only become clear *that* another body is acting in a space previously occupied only by Merleau-Ponty: the fact of another body schema has been registered, but what that body schema is doing and how Merleau-Ponty might interreact with it have yet to be appreciated and thus the schema is not shared in the relevant sense.

Turning toward the other, Merleau-Ponty (1962) then comes to recognize this living body in the process of using his things as "a second self," which he says he knows through the recognition of similitude: "I know this in the first place because this living body has the same structure as mine." But what structure does he mean? He describes the structure which both he and the other share as "the power of adopting certain forms of behaviour and a certain world" (353–54). That is, he recognizes both in himself and in the other the power to behaviourally create a meaningful situation. This is a general recognition of the other as a schema-adopting being but does not yet constitute the sharing of a schema since the specificities of the schema are still not in view.

The next step is where the schema begins to be shared. Merleau-Ponty (1962) begins to detect the particular body schema of the other using his own body schema: "it is precisely my body which perceives the body of another." This step is distinct form the earlier one where the simple fact that his objects were, as he puts it, "no longer merely mine" was registered. There the description was of his own world being "sucked in" by the other: initially, it sounds like there is a question about the compatibility of the two schemas vis-à-vis the significance of their common objects, his things. In this step, the compatibility of the two distinct schemas towards their shared objects is negotiated. This is the tuning-in relationship after which point the schema should be thought of as shared. Merleau-Ponty (1962) writes: "it is precisely my body which perceives the body of another, and discovers in that other body a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions, a familiar way of dealing with the world" (354). By tuning into the body schema of the other with his own body schema, he "discovers" a "miraculous" and "familiar" way of dealing with the world. The choice of words here emphasizes the degree of surprise with which Merleau-Ponty (1962)

registers that the two schemas are in fact compatible.[22] The other's schema is a "familiar" way of dealing with the world and the discovery of this is not something that can be taken for granted: it is "miraculous" (354). Breaking down the sequence of stages presented in this passage, starting from the noticing of a body schema to the sharing of it, it is possible to see more clearly that a tuning-in relationship that entails a shared body schema is not something we must, on Merleau-Ponty's account, invariably attribute to any case of body schematic interaction whatsoever. Here we see that a schema is initially observed and then, as a later step, becomes shared.

The second objection I want to consider similarly stems from attention to matters related to just when and how body schematic assumption, or "transfer," can occur, and compels us to question the conditions under which it happens. This objection can be grasped through a critique that Gail Weiss (2011) makes of Schütz:

> Although Schütz doesn't say this explicitly, his implication is that because human bodies share basic physiological similarities despite their manifest differences of age, sex, skin, hair, eye color, height, weight, and so on, there will be corresponding structural similarities in our temporal experiences. However, recent work by disability theorists has challenged even this rudimentary assumption. (172)

Weiss highlights the "question of incommensurable durées" (173) between what she, following disability theorist Rosemarie Garland Thomson, calls "normates," on the one hand, and those with disabilities who are not "able to draw upon the same basic motor capacities [as normates]" (172), on the other. The objection can also be framed, as it has been by Joshua St. Pierre (2015), as an issue concerning the "idealization of 'bodily time' by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Alfred Schütz" (49). St. Pierre vividly depicts the experience of a disabled person forced to express himself within a temporal structure unsuited to the possibilities of his own embodied temporality: "[he] experiences a violent and persistent temporal decentering as he is folded into uncomfortable communicative rhythms and tempos woven around the bodily time of his interlocutors" (St. Pierre 2015, 49–50). If the tuning-in relationship characteristic of the "we" only obtains by sharing a body schema, is there no "we" possible for those who cannot inhabit the dominant we-engendering body schema? If this were true, then we would not be able to correctly say that it is any tuning-in relationship that engenders we-experiences, but only those that obtain within conditions of bodily sameness. The result that we-experiences could only occur through bodily sameness would be concerning. Therefore, we must try to meet this second objection that comes from disability theory.

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[22] The passage in the French reads: "*c'est justement mon corps qui perçoit le corps d'autrui et il y trouve comme un prolongement miraculeux de ses propres intentions, une manière familière de traiter le monde*" (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 406).

DIFFERENCE IN BODY-SCHEMATIC TEMPORALITY: CONTINGENT EXCLUSION

The nature of the exclusionary tendencies contained in body-schematic tuning-in relationships can be clarified through the example of synchronization, on the one hand, and improvisation, on the other. I want to argue that it is not the notion of sharing a body schema *as such* that entails exclusion of bodily difference; the problem lies in the specifics of the schemas themselves, how they are generated, and how they are assumed. Through the example of synchronization, which I discuss as a mechanicalized synchronization, we will see how schemas that demand strict conformity, are pre-patterned (composed), and are assumed unidirectionally tend toward exclusion, while flexible schemas permitting deviance or variation, which are co-created in live-time (emergent), and which are assumed in a bidirectional fashion enable diverse bodies to enter a tuning-in relationship by sharing a single body schema. This is a way of showing that the Merleau-Pontian tuning-in relationship does not require bodily sameness nor is it exclusionary in principle. Merleau-Pontian body schemas, on my view, are capable of both synchronization and improvisation. I am contrasting synchronization and improvisation for the purpose of highlighting the features of particular body schemas that can tend towards exclusion and bodily conformity. The distinction between synchronization and improvisation, in general, is not absolute and they are not mutually exclusive as ways of enacting a Merleau-Pontian tuning-in relationship.

Music theorist Mariusz Kozak (2020) describes the experience of drumming to a metronome as "a forced time compliance" (119). When a drummer tries to synchronize with the rigid and inflexible temporal schema of a metronome, it does not allow for a two-way negotiation of temporality, a feature that in Kozak's view characterizes synchronization between humans. While Kozak contrasts mechanical synchronization with what he calls "human synchronization," I am going to draw attention to the ways that mechanical synchronization can also be found in human relationships. What Kozak calls "human synchronization" displays the bidirectional structure that I will, somewhat confusingly, associate with what is typical of improvisation. For Kozak, unlike mechanistical timing devices, human synchronization is a two-way negotiation between different bodily tempos (120). As we will see more fully below, two-way negotiation allows for the inherent bodily tempos of each party to shape the schema that both will share for a single collective musical act. Contrastingly, the rigid, pre-patterned, and unidirectional nature of the metronomic schema institutes a "forced time compliance" (119) that excludes bodies incapable of complying with its demands.

To see how the mechanical synchronization of the metronome can be reproduced in human synchronization, consider British monarch Queen Elizabeth's funeral procession from Westminster Abbey to Wellington Arch in London in September of 2022. Members of the cortege walked in step with the casket for what seemed like hours. They synchronized with a steady drumbeat, accented with timed bell chimes and gunshots, as well as with one another: marchers swayed left and right in concert as their synchronized footfalls matched a steady downbeat. In this scenario, individuals had little room to impact the

shared schema of the whole. A "forced time compliance" (Kozak 2020, 119) was in effect because the options available to any individual participant were limited to conformity or exclusion. One could finding a way of arranging oneself such that one would be in sync with the temporality of the shared schema; one could fall out of sync by expressing one's own bodily rhythms and tempos; or one could leave the cortege. There was no real possibility of individual temporal patterns shaping the operative temporality of the shared body schema. The schema used in the cortege demanded conformity, was pre-planned, and was unidirectionally assumed.

Contrastingly, collectively improvised music can be understood as a form of music whose schema emerges flexibly from the very act of playing itself, through the contributions of each player, in a bi-directional fashion. Kozak (2020) calls the way players participate in improvised schemas "complimentarity," which he contrasts with the demands of synchronization, dubbed "concurrence." "In contrast to concurrence," Kozak writes, "complementarity is a dynamic spatiotemporal network within which each participating body . . . is able to account for some, but not all, of the resulting structure" (120). Complementarity makes sense as an orientation for participation in collective free improvisations since such musicking invites contributions that participants find suitable in the moment, rather than those pre-planned in the interest of determinate aesthetic goals. Collective improvisation institutes "structures of behaviour," as Matthias Solli and Thomas Netland (2021) have recently noted, which are "embedded in how musicians listen to each other and how they distribute initiatives within a musical collective" (497). A brief look at the origins of collective free improvisation will serve to illuminate how the practice exemplifies the use of flexible, emergent, and bidirectionally assumed body schemas.

Contemporary practices are influenced by two lineages of improvisatory playing, the European avant-guard tradition and the African-American jazz tradition.[23] In the former case, practitioners wished "to envision improvisation, particularly in its freer manifestations, as emerging from nowhere, a tabula rasa" (Borgo 2022, 77). But beyond a mere collection of individual sound emissions, free improvisation aims at matters of collective structure, as musician Ann Farber explains:

> Our aim is to play together with the greatest possible freedom—which, far from meaning without constraint, actually means to play together with sufficient skill and communication to be able to select proper constraints *in the course of the piece*, rather than being dependent on precisely chosen ones. (Borgo 2002, 167)

Free improvisation in this sense may attempt to *start* from a position free of conventions in some respects, but it does not operate in the absence of a schema altogether: in fact, they are in the process of being made and used within the play itself.

Lucia Angelino (2019) has recently described how the form of collective free improvisation emerges through "a free proliferation of actions and their subsequent

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[23] See Lewis 1996.

pruning" (204). Referring to the piano improviser Keith Jarrett, Angelino (2019) articulates this process in a step-by-step fashion:

> The first step consists in just acting and generating multiple options to begin with. The second step consists in selecting among possibilities previously produced at random, then assessing the results and seizing significant structures of action. The third step consists in seizing the developing situation as a framework that narrows down the options for action with regard to what is relevant and what is not. The fourth and final step consists in continuing intentionally what is already started. (220)

While this articulation of the process of improvisation in some ways seems too abstracted and linear to be convincing as a description of the lived experience of improvising, it nevertheless reiterates that free improvisation begins without a shared schema, and proceeds interactively to create one that is used for the duration of the piece. My experience improvising on the flute in a collective free improvisation at the bi-yearly Sound Symposium Festival in St. John's Newfoundland reinforces this view as well.

At the Sound Symposium, our improvising proceeded by gathering and positioning ourselves optimally for seeing and hearing one another on stage.[24] We cultivated a silence that lasted until someone made a sound and another person responded to it. The rest of us observed this interaction between the two initial sounds and took note of the pattern between them: what did the second tone emphasize in the first? Tone colour? Rhythm? Tonality? Volume? Others join in by contributing to this initial interaction: they might *heighten* it harmonically, *recognize* it through contrast, they might build a rhythm, or make space for others. Watching and listening, offering and responding was how the flexible, adaptive, and bidirectionally assumed shared schema was created and used.

What makes these actions an act of schematic creation and use can be seen in Matthieu Saladin's (2012) description of improvisatory listening:

> the improviser is not simply listening to the present situation, but through it, in collective improvisation, he/she is also listening to the listening of partners and the audience . . . the improviser is not only listening to the music that the other improvisers are producing with him/her on stage, not simply paying attention to their gestures which become sound, but . . . he/she is also listening to their listening. (Saladin 2012, 46)

Saladin is highlighting that the improvisers in the circle are listening to the listening of others, which in Merleau-Pontian terms means *paying attention to their individual body schemas*. Listening to the listening means paying attention to the body schemas of each participant with the specific purpose of including that schema in the play: it is using that individual body schema, in part, to influence the pattern of sounding, generating a shared

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[24] This performance occurred in the summer of 2014; the performers were students in the Summer School of the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation.

schema such that "each participating body . . . is able to account for some, but not all, of the resulting structure," to reiterate Kozak's (2020, 120) definition of complementarity. Solli and Netland (2021) likewise note the foundational role of mutual listening in schematic emergence occurring in jazz improvisation: "the temporal organization emerges *in-between* subjects listening to each other in joint musical attention" (493).[25]

Jazz improvisation is the other ancestor of contemporary improvisational practices and derives from the African American jazz tradition (arguably the better-known lineage of improvisation in music). In this tradition, improvisation traditionally *does* start from "standards" and idiomatic American and European music but does not merely *follow* those patterns: they are permutated and experimented with in ways that highlight the two-way mode of schematic adoption characteristic of improvisation. Schemas are not assumed in a unidirectional fashion, nor are they strictly adhered without deviation:

> if too many references to traditional musical idioms creep into a performance or an underlying harmonic character or tempo lingers for too long, many improvisers will immediately begin to search for more uncharted and uncertain musical terrain. (Borgo 2022, 127)

This quotation underscores the point that improvised schemas permit deviance or variation, and seek it, even after a schema has been created (emergently) and assumed (bidirectionally).[26]

Through these vignettes of collective free improvisation in music, a paradigm for shared body schemas has been offered that would seem to meet the demand from disability theory that we account for bodily difference. The objection that sharing time through sharing a body schema assumes bodily sameness, then, primarily applies to body schemas that are rigid, pre-planned, and unidirectionally assumed (only bodies with an existing habituation to that particular schema will be able to participate in any we-experience that comes from sharing it). By contrast, schemas permitting deviance or variation, which are co-created in live-time (emergent), and which are assumed in a bidirectional fashion, permit all who participated in its creation to share in it and its endogenous temporality. With this qualification in mind, then, we can conclude that Merleau-Ponty's body-schematic temporality provides a suitable alternative to Husserl's notion of inner time for the purposes of conceptualizing the basis of we-experiences in shared time.

I hope in this section to have shown that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy does not assume bodily sameness, and to have provided an explanation for why it may nevertheless appear to do so: schemas that are rigid, pre-planned, and unidirectionally assumed tend to demand bodily sameness. St. Pierre's (2015) critique of Merleau-Ponty, in my view, is valuable

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[25] It should be noted that Solli and Netland (2021) insist on a distinction between amateur and expert musicians, a distinction I am not committed to in this paper. For them, expert jazz musicians "explicitly train to be sensitive to *pluralisms* of interrelated temporal organizations unfolding *together* in real-time polyphonic communication" (496).

[26] While it cannot be explored here, it would be an interesting area of future research to consider Merleau-Ponty's theory of expression vis-à-vis collective free improvisation. I thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

for highlighting the perils of using rigid, pre-planned, and unidirectionally assumed body schemas, but does not establish the impossibility of sharing time across bodily difference for Merleau-Ponty. Similarly, an ambiguous passage from Merleau-Ponty himself, although appearing to demand bodily sameness, should be read otherwise. In the passage I analyzed earlier where Merleau-Ponty (1962) claims to recognize the other as "a second self" in so far as "this living body has the same structure as mine," the structure in question is not the body-at-this moment nor even the body schema as such: it is the general structure of being an intentional creature with "the power of adopting certain forms of behaviour and a certain world" that is recognized as the same (353–54). This power is not reducible to any specific body configuration (nor, of course, independent of them) and can be itself recognized while at the same time bodily difference appreciated. Therefore, despite there being reason to suspect Merleau-Ponty of assuming bodily sameness, this suspicion is not, finally, definitive.

CONCLUSION

One of the quasi-transcendental structures conditioned by systemic intersectional oppressions shaping our experienced reality is the body schema, and its entrenched derivative, the habit body. In this paper, I have developed an account of we-experiences that explicitly accounts for such structures unlike what would be possible without a Merleau-Pontian re-reading of Schütz's (1972) tuning-in relationship. Schütz's account otherwise relies too heavily on Husserl's fully transcendental and individualistic notion of an unshareable inner-time consciousness. If we follow Schütz's general intention to ground we-experiences in a shared temporality while relying on Merleau-Ponty's (1962) body schematic notion of temporality as a "network of intentionalities" to permit such sharing, we bring these intersectional quasi-transcendental structures into the very heart of our account of the we-experience (417). Doing so forces us to grapple with challenging questions about power, embodiment, diversity, and collectivity that do not arise if we fail take such structures into account. I have drawn on the example of collective free improvisation in an attempt to illustrate how the conception of shared time that I am putting forward might work if we do not assume bodily sameness, and instead seek to create flexible, emergent, bidirectional schemas that reduce the exclusionary tendencies observed in, for example, extreme versions of synchronization. The schemas emergent in collective free improvisation are not the only instances of shared body schemas that permit of diverse bodily motilities, however, and there can be little doubt that bringing other such instances into focus would deepen our appreciation for progressive, diverse, and inclusive modes in which to have we-experiences.

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