

網球經驗現象學

——透過梅露龐蒂論身體與世界辯證關係的反省

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摘 要

法國哲學家梅露龐蒂指稱，人以身體為基點，向世界開放，不斷與他人、別物、環境進行全面性實存意義的交流，是在一種開放的、動態的、共存的、循環的、以及不斷探問的辯證關係中進行的。本文依循梅露龐蒂的辯證觀點，進一步為人與世界之間的辯證交流，提出一個具體的「實存溝通」圖像說明，並據此進行網球經驗世界的現象學描繪，確認「實存溝通」恰可成為運動身體經驗反思的基點。

關鍵詞：梅露龐蒂、運動身體經驗、網球經驗世界、辯證關係、實存溝通

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Toward a Phenomenology of Tennis Embodiment: Reflections Following Merleau-Ponty's "Dialectical Look" of the Lived Body and the Lived World

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Abstract

The aim of this essay is to present, first, whether Maurice Merleau-Ponty's "dialectical look" of the lived body and the lived world offers an adequate setting for understanding sport embodiment; second, its implications for a phenomenological description of being-in-the-tennis-world in specific and sport embodiment in general. To do so, we draw on Merleau-Ponty's dialectical account and delineate four guiding clues for understanding the continuous exchange of existential meanings among the lived body, other bodies, the media, the things, the surrounding atmosphere, and the world. We propose this phenomenon as the "existential dialogue" between the lived body and the lived world. Then a thorough-going phenomenological description of being-in- the-tennis-world discloses an exemplar existential dialogue in sporting experience. We conclude that there is always an overall existential dialogue in progress as one of the fundamental modes of man's sport embodiment.

Keywords: being-in-the-tennis-world, dialectic relation, existential dialogue, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, sport embodiment

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I. Introduction

Throughout Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy,¹ the human body is never an individual body-subject void of the surrounding environment. For Merleau-Ponty, our body and the world as revealed in our lived experiences are first a lived body (a perceiving body, a body-subject, an existential body, or a phenomenal body) and the lived world (the perceived world, the existential world, or the phenomenal world). Man is not only a creature who can perceive a world but is also located in that world which he perceives. It is because we are our body, which is situated in the world that we can and we do take up our "point of view" toward the world. There is a continuous meanings exchange between the human body and the world which is the ground condition of man's being-in-the-world. It means, for Merleau-Ponty, an overall dialectic relationship does exist in everyday life in the lived body itself, and among the lived body, the surrounding atmosphere, the others and the things on the level of pre-reflective, pre-objective, and lived-through experience.

In regard to the dialectic relation between the lived body and the lived

¹ For example, among Merleau-Ponty's several major works in his life, *Phenomenology of Perception* (first published in French in 1945) and *The Visible and The Invisible* are two best known books. In both books, Merleau-Ponty started his reflection on the human body and the world from arguing against the objective approach which treated the relation between the body and the world as reciprocal exclusion. At the core of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is his re-vindication of the "dialectical"(in the former book) and "reversible"(in the latter book) relationship of the human body and the world. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Trans. Colin Smith) (New Jersey: The Humanities Press, 1962); Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *The Visible and The Invisible* (Trans. Alphonso Lingis) (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968.)

world, we see it as a dynamically, circularly, co-demandingly, and continuously developing event.² I am the lived body only by means of the dialectic relationship between my consciousness and my body (which is an incarnate consciousness). I am an embodied subject only by being in a dialectic relation with the world. I am in the world only through dialectic relation with others who themselves are also so many beings in the world. Inversely, the others exist for me only because I am dialectically linked to the world by a body which is inseparable from my existence. Things around me are meaningful only because they exist as my existential partners in the world. By taking up Merleau-Ponty's account of the dialectic relationship between the lived body and the lived world, we see there emerges from the lived body, other bodies, things, surrounding atmosphere, and the world, in their mutual referring back and forth, a continuous exchange of existential meanings. We propose this phenomenon as the "existential dialogue" between the lived body and the lived world.

Through Merleau-Ponty's "dialectical look", we are convinced that he

² From Merleau-Ponty's several works such as *Structure of Behavior*, *Phenomenology of Perception*, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, *In Praise of Philosophy*, and his article "Dialectical philosophy" in *Themes from the Lectures at the College de France 1952-1960*, he develops his own notion of dialectic which is different from Hegel's dialectic of "idea". Through his "dialectical look", we can see that the lived body and the lived world are related dialectically, contradictorily, subjectively, circularly, dynamically, co-demandingly, and perpetually interrogatively. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior* (Trans. Alden L. Fisher) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Trans. Colin Smith) (New Jersey: The Humanities Press, 1962); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic* (Trans. J. Bien) (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy* (Trans. John Wild and James Edie) (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1963); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Themes from the Lectures at the college de France 1952-1960* (Trans. John O'Neill) (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

develops a thorough-going description of existential dialogue which is very crucial in showing us a fundamental and original dimension of sport phenomenon. Consider, for example, the game of tennis playing, our body always engages in “dialogue” with the ball, the racket, the other body, the court, and the background (such as the sun, the wind, the backboard, the sky, the shadow, and the fence). Swinging my racket to the ball, I pass my “power” through the appropriated ball to my opponent player; moving to return a ball, I perceive the court and the background from different angle which always gives me different “meaning”; turning my eyes toward the spot where my opponent player is looking at, I pass what I see to him and he passes what he sees to me. In playing tennis, the sporting body is always already opened to and in dialogue with the sport world and vice versa.

Developing a plausible foundation for understanding sport embodiment requires taking Merleau-Ponty’s notion of dialectic relation (and hence existential dialogue) of the lived body and the lived world into account. However, Merleau-Ponty’s writings are often very theoretical, academic, and in a sense very “ambiguous”. What seems to be required is an additional interpretation to show how (or in what way) the lived body behaves in the dialectic with the lived world. We thus propose in this essay to delineate in an explicit and concrete way the continuous interchange of existential meanings between the lived body and the lived world which we will call “existential dialogue”. Then we will present a phenomenological description of being-in-the-tennis-world to confirm the existential dialogue between the lived body and the lived world in the concrete sporting world experience. Through Merleau-Ponty’s “dialectical look” of the enworldly corporeity, we hope to lay the groundwork for developing a thorough-going theory of sport embodiment.

II. The Existential Dialogue of Merleau-Ponty's Embodiment Philosophy

Merleau-Ponty's notion of dialectic is a "dialectic of existence" which is different from Hegel's dialectic of ideas. "The dialectic", Merleau-Ponty writes in *Phenomenology of Perception* is "not a relationship between contradictory and inseparable thoughts: it is the tending of an existence towards another existence which denies it, and yet without which it is not sustained". Thus in this essay when we say the lived body is related to the lived world dialectically, we are referring to Merleau-Ponty's existential dialectic which is different from the dialectic of thoughts. Here we should also be careful not to misunderstand Merleau-Ponty's dialectical relation with the causal relation.³ Rather, the lived body and the lived world are related dialectically in the way that they demand the existence of each other.

In this essay we prefer to use the term "existential dialogue" in stead of "existential dialectic" in two reasons: first, we feel "dialogue" can better express the existential interchange between the lived body and the lived world as an everyday experiencing affairs, rather than only a philosophical disclosure; second, we believe our proposed notion of "existential dialogue" can lead to an expanded and more original notion of dialogue than that which

³ A causal way of explaining the relation would be that, they both influence each other, but in such a way that one is not the co-cause of the other's influence. It means that the body will cause the world in some ways and the world will cause the body in some other ways. The process of causation between the two, strictly speaking, can be understood independently with each other.

we ordinary understanding of dialogue as the thought exchange within the interpersonal level through speaking or writing. Based on Merleau-Ponty's notion of the dialectic, we indeed see that there is an overall existential dialogue in the lived body itself, and among the lived body, the things and the surrounding atmosphere.

Following Merleau-Ponty's description of embodiment, we are able to interpret the existential dialogue between the lived body and the lived world from four perspectives. They are: (1) the existential dialogue between the intersensory body and the intersensible things; (2) the existential dialogue and the perceived media; (3) the intercorporeal dialogue as existential dialogue; and (4) the existential dialogue in the utensil world.

A. The Existential Dialogue between the Intersensory Body and the Intersensible Things

Everyday opinion divides the human body into five specialized senses: visual sense, tactile sense, auditory sense, olfactory sense, and the gustatory sense. We often suppose that each sense can only perceive the sensible specific to it. According to Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception*, these five special senses in our lived experience are actually “pregnant one with the other”. The lived body is “a ready-made system of equivalents and transposition from one sense to another. The senses are mutually comprehensible without the intervention of any idea”. Following Herder's words, Merleau-Ponty claims that the body itself is a “common sensorium”.⁴

Thus, we have seen that there is an intercommunication among senses, the visual sense can perceive not only the sensibles specific to the visual sense,

⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 235.

but also the special tactile sensibles, and the rest. According to Merleau-Ponty, we can see not only “the weight of a block of cast iron which sinks in the sand, the fluidity of water and viscosity of syrup”, but in the same way can also “hear the hardness and unevenness of cobbles in the rattle of a carriage”, and “speak appropriately of a ‘soft’, ‘dull’, or ‘sharp’ sound.”⁵

Corresponding to the intercommunication among senses in our body, the thing we sense through the common sensorium is an intersensible thing. A tennis ball, that we can see, touch, hear and smell, is visual, tactile, auditory, and olfactory. The thing is a common sensible thing. Thus, when we say we see the greenness of the ball, we are actually seeing the greenness through the common sensible ball. More than the greenness of the ball, we also “see” the properties of the ball as tactile, auditory, olfactory and gustatory. Within the common sensible thing, the vision, tangibility, auditories, olfactories intercommunicate among one another. The lived body communicates with the things when the communication in the body corresponds with the communication in the things.

B. The Existential Dialogue and the Perceived Media

A further consideration of the relation between the body and the things, we find we never face the things across a void. Rather, we always perceive them through a surrounding atmosphere. Lighting guides our gaze, air guides our breath, motion (e.g., the movement of the sun, air, trees, grass, sands, wind, cars, men, balls) guides our vision and tangibility. They ordinarily remain in the background with or without figure represented. Lighting, air and motion are

⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 230.

invisible phenomena which make the world visible and sensible. We experience a thing's colors, sizes, shapes through lighting, experience speed, weight, or our body through motion, and experience the lighting and the motion through the air. We situate ourselves in the world through a surrounding atmosphere, and this world expresses our lived body. Through the sensory media, my sensory-motor body intercommunicates with the world.

Light, color, size, shape, air and motion express a sort of “level” (or degree) in the intercommunication between the body and the world. Thus we have light color or heavy color, small size or big size, “intense” air between two persons, powerful gesture (e.g., a raising fist) or weak gesture (e.g., a shrinking shoulder), fast runner or slow runner. All these levels refer to our existential situation of the lived body. For example, the size of a thing is related to my feeling of it; the shape of an object influences my “degree” of touch; the speed of a runner becomes a project which my body is oriented to; the colors within the visual field are distributed around a certain lighting level which is related to my bodily movement; and the overall motion of my body (e.g., the movement of my two eyes, ears, my hands, feet, my voice or my breath) influences the level of lighting, air, motion, colors, sizes, shapes as seen or felt. There is a continuous interchange between the lived body and the lived world in our lived experience which express our existential situation. The lived body requires a lived world with which it already dwells in, and “makes dialogue with”.

C. The Intercorporeal Dialogue as Existential Dialogue

Our discussion of the existential dialogue between the lived body and the lived world should also include the intercorporeal dialogue. The lived body opens the world not only as a world of things and sensory media, but as an intercorporeal world as well. The existence of my body has already disclosed an existential meaning connected with the presence of other's body. There is an intercommunication among my five senses, between my body and the intersensible things, my body and the surrounding atmosphere of the world. In the same way, there is an intercommunication between the perceptual experience of my body and other's body. 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."⁶

The lived body thus escapes in a fashion from the realm of ego-centric subject and acknowledges the other body as a co-existing subject of the world. When my gaze meets another gaze, I see another body's seeing. Two gazes are making a dialogue and co-existing with each other. When my gaze follows the other's gaze toward the seen thing, I enter his look and see what he sees. What he sees passes into me. I do not wonder whether the other's body sees what I see. Before any form of intellectual reflection, my body has already entered into an intercorporeal dialogue. Thus, we might say that the eyes of others are a mirror of what we are or what the thing is. For example, through my coach's eyes, I know what I have done in my tennis serve practice. For the tennis player in a match, the eyes of the audience are a mirror of how good his performance is. The intercorporeal dialogue expresses man's existential

⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 354.

situation and is hence an existential dialogue.

Not only can I prolong my body into other's body through gaze, but I can do so through my hands, my face, my body gesture, and my whole body. For example, before a free throw in a basketball game, I let my hand be clasped by my teammate, so that his bodily motion can penetrate my arm, and my bodily motion passes into his body. My hand in a sense becomes "grounded" by the motion of "clasped hands". My hand is "grounded" because it is clasped with my teammate's body. It is not an accident that in sport world, we can see the phenomena of "clasped hands" exist everywhere in every different type of sports events. For "clasped hands" is an intercorporeal dialogue which is rooted in our existential situation.

D. The Existential Dialogue in the Utensil World

It is by virtue of the perceptual experiences of my body or the other's body that human beings are exposed to the world which is made available as experienced. We extend our touch and gaze into the external world when we prolong our bodily movement into the things which we touch or see. By touch or gaze, we make our body, the other's body, or the external things become "utensils" for us to use or manipulate.

"Utensil" here is meant by us not as a physical object which is detached from us and is for us to reflect on, use or own, but as an existential partner in which we involve ourselves in it to fulfill our (existential) project. Our notion of "utensil" has characterized by its existential significance and is one of the basic modes of the body's being in the world. In the world of (existential) utensil, the thing is not only a physical-thing-in-itself, but it always has an existential meaning in it for me; my body is not only a body-subject, but is

also an utensil lived by me; the other is not only my intercorporeal partner co-existing with me, but also my utensil partner in the world.

For example, the tennis player “touches” his opponent player with the flying ball through the manipulating of his racket as an “utensil”. When he holds the tennis racket tie with his swinging hand and hits the ball, the tennis player feels the vibration of his hand and the racket’s face, and no longer feels the racket’s handle against his palm. The racket is a perceptual “utensil”. And through the “utensil” the body appropriates the things and makes dialogue with the world.

Not only can we appropriate the external thing as an “utensil” for fulfilling our incarnate project, but also we live our body or other’s body as an “utensil”. For example, in the basketball game, the players often pre-reflectively make their “gazes” as “utensils” to “mis-guide” their opponent players. After the game, they will let their bodies as “utensils” to congratulate or celebrate by embracing or shaking hands with each other. They extend their bodies toward the other’s body by appropriating their own bodies as “existential utensils”. By manipulating the world as utensil and immersing itself in the world of utensil, the lived body projects itself toward the world and is itself the project of the world. Within the level of perceptual experience, the lived body and the lived world are always opened to, and making dialogue with each other.

From the discussion of the existential dialogue between the lived body and the lived world above we can thus sum up our findings as following: we find the lived body is intersensory and is hence a common sensory body. The thing is intersensible and is hence a common sensible thing. The lived body and the thing are actually corresponding to and demanding the existence of

each other. Around the body and the things, we also see the sensory media which often remains in the background and keeps in intercommunication with everything else in the world. Among the lived body, other's body, the media, the things, we find a continuously existential dialogue. Through the perceptual experience, my body is exposed to the world and hence is existing in the dialogue. As the dialogical partners, my body, the other's body, the things can be appropriated as "utensils". The world of "utensils" is my incarnate project toward the world. Immersed in the world of "utensils", the lived body refers back to itself as the perceiving subject and as the enworldly utensil. The lived body is hence also "a project of the world".⁷ Thus, we can conclude that the lived body and the lived world exist and have meaning only because they are opened to, and are making dialogue with each other.

III. The Embodiment of Being-in-the-tennis-world

Drawing our findings about the existential dialogue together, it is now appropriate to present a phenomenological description of the lived body's existential dialogue with the lived world in sport phenomena. To do so, we will use the body's being-in-the-tennis-world as our example. Our objectives are two: first of all, to disclose that the sport experience at the living through level is existentially dialogical, that is, prior to the conceptualized knowledge of the body and the world; and second, to demonstrate that the existential dialogue is present all over the sport experience in a very systematic way, and

⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty *Phenomenology of Perception*, 430

is therefore meaningful.

Being in playing tennis, I see the tennis court with its net, baselines, sidelines and service lines; I see myself in the court; I see the court looking at me; I see myself looked at in the court; I see myself looking at myself in the court; I see the court with a background; the court appears always against a background; the court is backgrounded with my playmate, the audience, the wind, lighting, the fence by the court, the cloud flying in the sky, etc. I find I am in a total dialogue with the tennis world.

In playing tennis, I find every tennis court has its own “personality”.⁸ While the measurements of courts never change, the environments of the courts can vary drastically,--it might be set up on asphalt, clay, grass or carpet, indoor or outdoor, with or without stand, fence, or backboard. Playing indoors, I see the ball with the indoor background and lob the ball following the ceiling. Playing on the unpredictable grass, I get to the net and catch every ball in the air. Playing on clay, I stay back patiently waiting for the bounces of the ball. Playing on a hard court, I often simply block the ball back. When a shadow sneaks in and splits the court into two, I watch and play the ball in and out of the shadow.

Objective knowledge tells me that every tennis court is measured a 78 by 36 feet rectangle playing area blocked by net, three feet “low” in the middle. However, in my living through the court and the net, I have never perceived the court as a rectangle and the net as only three feet “low”. At the moment I stand on the center mark of the baseline, I envision the court as a gigantic expanse with plenty of following through area. Running toward the

⁸ On the “personality” of the tennis courts, readers are suggested to refer to Robert Lamarche, “Flushing Meadow’s Court Personalities: How They Affect the Pros’ Play,” *Tennis Magazine*, 22.5 (September, 1986): 151-152.

baseline/sideline corners, I see the court expanse keeps changing and the passing through area has narrowed down. Statistics tell me that the three feet net is far lower than my body, not to mention my extended arm and the racket. However, when I stand on my baseline, I really never see the ball land on the opponent's court without seeing it through the hole of the net.⁹ People love to talk about the low net. But my perception (and hence other people's perception should) has respect for the high barrier which stops so many shots. In playing tennis, my body is constantly engaged in a pre-reflective dialogue with the tennis court.

Besides the court, the sun and the wind are also my dialogical allies. On the day with a bright, high sun, I alter my toss on my serve or adjust my gaze on my overhead smash. Playing tennis against a "flat sun" in the front, I always play with the shadow of the ball with the bright side of the ball kept "invisible" to me. Playing tennis with the "flat sun" in my back, I am always playing with the extended, ever-moving shadows of my racket, my arms, my body, and the ball in my front on the ground. The sun affects on my vision just like the wind affects on my racket swing. When I hit into and against the wind, I hit the heck out of the ball and it won't go out. While the wind is in my back, I become hesitant in hitting the ball hard. However, a side wind allows me to hit the ball into or away from my opponent and hence makes me play tennis like a "king in the wind!"¹⁰

⁹ With regard to the ordinary "concept" of the "low" net, Vic Braden said that: "...in terms of hitting a tennis ball on a horizontal plane, the net is actually very high. When you stand at the baseline you must be least 6'7" tall in order to look over the net and see your opponent's baseline. This means that 99 percent of us never see our opponent's court when playing from the baseline." See Vic Braden, *Vic Braden's Tennis for the Future* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 15.

¹⁰ A detailed discussion of the effects of the wind and the sun on playing tennis is offered by Peter Burwash and John Tullius, *Peter Burwash's Tennis for Life* (New York: Times

In playing tennis, I do not only make dialogue with the world outside, but also the world inside me. The environment which I see over there radiates rhythmically along its appearances toward me. However, I always perceive the things from a “here” somewhere outside the things. My body is a lived body which is a perceiving “home” of the world. Extending my arm, I grasp the handle of my tennis racket, take the racket firmly in hand, and use this tool for driving a ball. As I hit the ball, I look with my visual equipment at the spot where I want to hit; I feel the ball through the racket’s handle which prolongs my arm through the striking surface, so that the surface on the racket’s head becomes the outside of my arm. The racket is now inside my body, and the ball is the hither-sided surface of my bodily home, when the racket’s head makes contact; the ball is the outside of the world over there which I do not yet inhabit.

My bodily extension (by handling a racket) is a personal appropriation of the impersonal externals; the impersonal properties of the material thing become my personal properties. I hit a tennis ball with the racket, and the instrument with which I play becomes my “own” bodily prolongation. When I lay the racket down on the ground, my tool becomes again something separate from my body; but I am still (operatively) intentional to my racket. The racket which I lay down does not “die”; the unused tool (in the sense of my existential partner) remains my “own”, much as my exhausted body remains mine when I lay it down to rest. In resting I keep the hand tool within reach (of intention), so that I can use it when my task calls for it. I may indeed put the racket out of reach, but the racket remains reachable somewhere on the wall in my house.

In playing tennis, when I take the racket in hand, my instrument becomes a “detachable organ”.¹¹ The tennis player and his tool always grow together; we cannot remove his “artificial arm” without “maiming” the man. Where the musician uses a violin the tennis player uses a racket and ball to create a sport world. The tennis player may lay down his racket, but he never lays down his living with the racket, likewise he never lays down his hands which have wedded with his tool. When he is empty-handed, a “phantom racket” is at work, playing the game which the real racket could play. The phantom racket gestures toward a ghostly intermediary always hang between the lived body and the sport world.

I incorporate the racket through my playing tennis. The handle of the racket becomes invisible when I take the racket in hand; when I grasp the racket and drive the ball, the surface of the handle disappears inside my body, the racket turns outside in; the outer surface of the handle turns in toward my outer surface; my outside touch becomes transparent as my palm prolong itself to the racket and toward the ball. Thus the ball is appropriated by my personal appropriation of my racket.

However, more than one human body can prolong itself into the same impersonal external (e.g., the ball). Personal properties become common property through the impersonal properties in the thing, when the thing is jointly appropriated by another person and myself. The tennis ball is something which can pass from racket to racket (i.e., from hand to hand) among persons who are handy with their rackets. The ball is one of the media which we pass back and forth; within the interpersonal field, the ball can

¹¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 178.

become a cause of anger or a token of friendship. When I appropriate my racket to appropriate the ball through the air toward the other person's court, I see my bodily extension (the ball) available yonder for another hand. When my opponent returns the ball to me, I see my bodily sphere overlap with his; my property becomes his property ("my" hitting ball becomes "his" returning ball); my own body joins with his body proper, as he "re-turns" the ball and hence turns my outer surface in toward his hither depth.

My hand is a hand in general, because the other person has a hand like mine which appropriates a racket and makes the ball common property. When my hitting ball passes from my hand (through my racket) into another hand, the other body proper assumes the same surface that mine has and appropriates the same ball into his "own" hitting ball. While the other and I myself play with the same ball, he and I "clasp hands". My hand touches (though the common property) and is touched by his hand, and vice versa.

Bodily motion is the tactile medium through which my living body moves from "here" into the world: when I grasp a racket handle and swing its head to the ball, my body moves along this arm motion into the racket to the ball; from "here" I inhibit my living body toward "there", so that my experience radiate from that center along with the worldly appearances; the racket (and the ball) becomes my apparition of my living body. When I smash a ball, I let my hand (with the racket) be smashed, so that I can smash my opponent partner's hand (and his racket); through our "clasped hands", my bodily motion passes into his body and his motion passes into mine.

In playing tennis, the other body (or bodies) always works together with mine; when he turns his eyes toward the spot where I direct my hitting ball, his body and my body work as one through our "gazes"; when we drive the

ball with each other, his racket and hands over there reflect my hands and racket over here. My body and the other's body radiate "our" intersensory experiences and intersensible bodies into each other, while the landscape radiates its intersensible appearances into us. We stand on the landscape and "clasp hands" with each other and the world by playing tennis.

In pursuing the tennis ball, I experience as stationary the place which I have already reached, and the place which I have not yet reached; and I experience myself as moving between these two places, unless I reach toward my reaching, the rest in my movement; then the place which I have not yet reached appears as moving toward me, while the place which I have already reached appears as moving away. Or I may rest at the place which I have already reached. But resting can be an activity; rest may require that I actively direct my body through time, so that I remain in the same interrelation with baselines, sidelines, the net and the whole court. But time too can stop, so that I passively rest in space without directing my self toward a future. If we consider our body together with the things in playing tennis, we can say that there is an "overall" movement and rest which shifts within the whole field. Sometimes the overall movement is centered in my body, so that I experience my self moving with the whole. And sometimes the overall movement is centered outside my body, so that I experience myself moving against the whole. Or perhaps I experience myself at rest on something which moves with the whole, or against it.

If my body prolongs itself into the moving ball, I experience myself as no longer at rest. Between absolute motion and absolute rest there are levels, and these levels are relative absolutes. I experience in myself the shift from one level to another, while I experience also a shift in the things (e.g., lighting,

wind, ground, net), and in the whole field. Perhaps I experience myself as moving, but when a flying ball goes past me so quickly that I experience myself as standing still, and then I experience myself and the ball which passes me as moving past everything else in the perceptual field. Motion and rest shift over the court, while my body and the things undergo a shift from motion to rest, and back again. My bodily situation is the place where I rest, but I am not always situated; the background shifts, or I shift my background. Thus Merleau-Ponty says that rest and movement appear between the thing and my body, shifting from the thing to my body and back. Both the thing and my body can be experienced as either moving or resting.¹²

The player's footwork is a certain response to a "lack" felt by him in the court, a lack which he will remedy by his moving. But it is as this lack comes from the relation among the ball, baselines, sidelines, net, wind, lighting and he himself, the relation of these "things" sends itself to the player's vision so that through his movement the lack will be fulfilled. That is the player is always pre-reflectively making dialogue with the sport world; he "questions" the field as to what it lacks and tries to remedy this lack. An all-out applause from the audience is often a result of a perfect accomplishment of the lack in the field.

There is a "system of exchange"¹³ between the lived body and the sport world. The style of playing tennis which stirs in our lived body joins with the style along which the world appears. Across this juncture, the things and other body pass meanings into my body, and my body into the things and other body, as my bodily style prolongs itself into the world. The exchange is

¹² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 279.

¹³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 164.

systematic, and therefore meaningful. This exchange does occur on the pre-conceptual level, we thus call it the existential dialogue between the lived body and the lived world.

IV. Conclusion

This essay lays the groundwork for clarifying whether Merleau-Ponty's "dialectical look" of the lived body and the lived world offer an adequate setting for understanding sport embodiment. We thus first follow Merleau-Ponty in tracing his notion of the dialectical relation between the lived body and the lived world. By taking up his account, we see there emerges from the lived body, other bodies, things, surrounding atmosphere, and the world, in their mutual referring back and forth, a continuous exchange of existential meanings. We propose this phenomenon as the "existential dialogue" between the lived body and the lived world. We thereby present four guiding clues for an overall understanding of existential dialogue. Then a thorough-going phenomenological description of being-in-the-tennis-world discloses an exemplar existentially dialogue in sporting experience. We can conclude, therefore, that an overall existential dialogue has always been in progress as one of the fundamental modes of man's sport embodiment.

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