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Reconfiguring Phenomena of Presence

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Mediated interaction is on the rise; interactions that were predominantly embodied now occur more often through technological mediums. This additional dimension of interaction compounds means of action and interaction, allowing for multiplicity of presence. Technology fundamentally alters phenomenal interactions and evokes a recreation of embodiment in a new public arena. We literally recreate the public sphere through our recreations of language interaction; and with each recreation of the public, we recreate presence. Phenomenal activity and interaction develop our presence, which is sustained and extended through language. Communication that begins embodied, continues additionally through mediated techno-space. If it is our interaction phenomenally through communication that creates a conception of the personal, then how are these advancing mediated interactions changing notions of presence? Through language our presence extends atemporally into a greater public arena aided by emerging media. At the collective level through mediated communication, how does this currently available public affect our personal development? With the advent of virtual media, how will our embodied situation continue to inform our present notions of presence when technology has become so disembodied? Phenomenal interaction continues to inform our presence throughout the living experience (an interaction that is originally embodied); while language conceals the essential phenomenal factors of movement and touch that allow for a continual encounter as living beings. Haptic perception (our ability to explore the world through movement and touch) is an essential aspect of the embodied phenomenal interaction and critical for normal human functioning. With the rise of mediated interaction, phenomenal interactions have become increasingly telepresent. I will investigate the implications of the movement toward haptic and embodied technology; more particularly, how do these new media affect notions of presence?

A phenomenological investigation of human experience shows that touch and movement inform the individual fundamentally of presence. Then through language our presence extends beyond the body and into techno-space. More specifically presence is also always situated within a system of call and response. A system of call and response arranged through language abstraction and extension. I will illustrate how the condition for enduring presence is situated in body and environment; influenced by implications of touch and movement. Through an investigation of emergent haptic and embodied technology I will be analyzing: Section 1) notions of presence; section 2) how (haptics) inform a phenomenal composition of being; section 3) in what ways we inform presence through meaningful interaction; and section 4) how we are returning through technology to an embodied presence: from the theoretical perspectives of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and George Herbert Mead.

A new dilemma confronts us currently: the transition from embodied presence to tele-presence which reconfigures exactly how humans connect to the world; a reconfiguration in the material presence of our reality. It is clear that this departure will alter presence radically, but it will also alter our interactions. For us to continue we will need a new order for establishing presence and telepresence compatible with more natural extensions of human embodiment. I will illustrate how the condition for enduring presence is situated in body and environment; influenced by implications of touch and movement. Through an investigation of emergent haptic and embodied technology I will be analyzing: Section 1) notions of presence; section 2) how (haptics) inform a phenomenal composition of being; section 3) in what ways we inform presence through meaningful interaction; and section 4) how we are returning through technology to an embodied presence: from the theoretical perspectives of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and George Herbert Mead.

Section 1 Notions of Presence

When I refer to my self, to what am I referring? What is behind the 'I' that I mention? 'I' refers to my body, but it does not refer to my body *alone*. While it *feels* that my body is a container and vehicle, I disregard explanations of my self in which my body is not implicitly linked. I fully accept that 'I' likely begins somewhere around my birth or the formation of my body. Likely also 'I' ends somewhere around my body's demise. However 'I' seems to refer both to the lived-body and also to something more. I then am both lived-body and some thing other; and yet I am not dependent on any particular body, but rather the combined effect of bodies acting upon bodies. Or rather I do not wholly depend on *one* material body, but can depend on many or none at all. I am not controlled or determined by the lived-body alone.

Granted what we generally mean when we speak of bodies is the obvious organic relation to biological bodies: the body of a human being is the main area of the individual as distinguished from the limbs and head. In philosophy historically 'body' referred to the whole material individual. It came to be differentiated from what philosophers thought existed immaterially, in other words bodies were those things of material substance which could be seen and touched. The self was generally regarded as something more elusive and immaterial: something aside

from the body; something not part of the body. In as such the body of human beings is not necessarily the same as using body to refer more generally to physical substance. So then what do I mean when I say that the self is not dependent on any particular body, but rather the combined effect of bodies acting upon bodies? I am referring intentionally to the grey area between organic bodies of living beings and those bodies that include masses of matter distinct from other masses: bodies with mass that exist in space. I am making the distinction in order to understand how the self *becomes* in relation to phenomenal experience both with organic and non organic bodies: living bodies and nonliving bodies. This will further relate to the idea of presence.

Presence describes the effect experienced during interaction within environments. It is a phenomenal feeling as well as an abstract consideration. Generally it is accounted for by an intuition of what TB Sheridan calls “being there”. This “being there” intuition, is really an intuition of consisting in a spatiotemporal location within a larger environment. Presence may be “known” phenomenally as well as conceptually; it may be aware in a sense, or it may be reflexively aware. A rock has presence without awareness. A cat has presence with phenomenal awareness. Humans have an ability for reflexive presence: a presence which is aware, that it is present. This last presence is understood both phenomenally and conceptually; it is the presence which intuits itself. This will be the particular focus here: presence presented to itself - a presence which can know itself. Telepresence (Minsky 1980; Sheridan 1992) on the other hand is the conception describing how people experience technologically mediated or technologically generated environments (Sheridan, 1994). Telepresence describes how people interact through techno mediation; this phenomenon can be interpreted as an *extension* of human presence: an extension beyond embodiment and environment. Sherry Turkle describes this phenomenon writing: “Online experiences challenge what many people have traditionally called “identity” : a sense of self is recast in terms of multiple windows and parallel lives” (1997). The *extension* in this case is cast in terms of “pages” online composed of various portions of our presence played out through words and images. The extension can manifest however through many technological mediums.

Presence arises through interaction: meaning that it is not something given before experience but

rather is something established *through* experience. In this case it is both experience with other as other person but also will include non-human living *others* and non-living *others*. This idea presupposes the necessity of my biological body. However even embodied, I can be unaware of my own presence. Presence nevertheless is implicitly of human origin. It is a conception; but it is also a perspective. It does not deny that individuals inherently have presence, but that the ability to recognize self-presence is necessarily learned through phenomenal activity and language. From having or not having a self it does not follow that I would need to recognize that I have *presence*. Before the child is socialized she may recognize the mother as *other*, yet she will not fully understand that she also can be other - that she also has presence. Meaning that our ability to recognize our presence includes our ability to recognize other as other - and that I myself, may also be *other*. Recognizing my presence includes my recognizing that I am other than self, to another individual: or that I am 'me here' and not 'you there'. It is a kind of growing awareness of my own embodied and extended being: an ability to see *other* as concretion and abstraction.

What I mean by 'concretion' consists of everything outside of my being physically speaking. It is how I interact with other entities in the world on a more basic level. This interaction is non-linguistic and non-conceptual in content. It is other bodies, other life forms, and other objects. The concretion is everything other than myself, which I interact with on a physical level. Merleau-Ponty parallels Mead's psychological-development in this basic way: it is the identity we develop through embodied interaction with our environment. This environment to Merleau-Ponty, is not merely social. The environment around includes all 'things' and everything with which we interact with physically. From the table where I eat to the chair where I sit, all of these things make up my environment and are all separately concrete other(s). From the beginning of life we interact with things on a purely concrete level, distinguishing one object from another.

What I mean by 'abstraction' is the human other and the other being. This is the other we learn in an abstract sense when we learn to conceptualize other selves and their accompanying perspectives. This also includes however, our abilities to conceptualize other kinds of others. I am able to experience my cat on two levels: abstractedly and concretely as other. Abstractly I can conceptualize my cat, her wants and desire, her needs. I can imagine her having intentions all her own. The abstract other includes my ability to conceptualize socially, the perspectives

of other human beings. I know that my father for example would see certain actions of mine as unconventional or irresponsible. This ability keeps his perspective in my mind perhaps more than I like, perhaps even unconsciously, but it also shapes the kind of presence that I manifest. However it is not only his perspective that I abstract in my formation of presence. I also hold the ability to locate others' perspectives and locations; these can be strangers or they can be those I am very familiar with. The abstraction is an utterly conceptualized other that requires socialization, whereas concretion other does not. However, even after we develop the ability to conceptualize the abstract we interact with the concrete. With learned abstraction, concretion emulates qualities imbued by our abstractions; it is here that the line of difference between them blurs.

The process of living activity develops presence configured through language altered by our phenomenal experience. It has been our interaction through language that creates selves and subsequently the conceptions of presence. Through our language our presence extends beyond time and space, artefactually and symbolically. This extension is substantially aided now by emerging media technologies which bring language to the foreground of our embodied experience. Through these apparatuses our language interactions change evoking a recreation of embodied presence. We are essentially more connected and developed than ever before; and I maintain that this new media allows us to more fully realize the extent of the illusion in which we live. New media allow us new angles to view our distributed presence: the objectivity of mind extends again beyond the confines of the individual being; and the technology displays our presence as the processes for which they truly are.

Section 2 Haptics & the Phenomenal Composition

The haptic system ... is an apparatus by which the individual gets information about both his environment and his body. He feels an object relative to the body and the body relative to an object. It is the perceptual system by which animals and men are literally in touch with the environment. (Gibson, 1966: 98, original emphasis)

A phenomenological investigation of our experience shows that presence extends beyond the body and into the environment; more particularly our presence is also always situated within a

system *interacting* through haptic action. It is the presence of *someone* in relation to, *someone else*. It extends beyond the individual through the act of living; the extension of presence is facilitated through encounters of other bodies. Phenomenology is the survey of structures of experience pertaining to consciousness: the way we experience things as they appear to us phenomenally or rather (Smith 2008):

The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object. An experience is directed toward an object by virtue of its content or meaning [...] together with appropriate enabling conditions and has been traditionally defined by the subjective experience, including but not limited to perceptions, sensations, emotions, desires, thoughts, actions and imaginations to name a few.

From here we can examine not only sensations, but also bodies in the world, their meanings, and how our bodies interact with other bodies. Traditionally this is taken to account for human experience however I would like to suggest that phenomenological considerations can extend beyond the particular human experience and into *condition of presence*. In other words, to fully flush the presence from the restraints of the brain-body, I will show how phenomenology extends primitive views of experience to include the process or interaction of bodies with bodies[2].

Phenomenological investigations of our experience provide various grounds or enabling conditions for notions of presence — conditions of the possibility — of intentionality, including embodiment, motor function, cultural context, language and other social practices, social background, and contextual aspects of intentional activities. Thus, phenomenology leads from “conscious experience into conditions that help to give experience its intentionality” (Smith 2008). These conditions of possibility which accord experience intentionality, I suggest supervene upon our experience. However this is not something entirely original to humans; for example: I am fairly certain that my cat also has many of these conditions of possibility: she includes intentionality, is embodied, relies on bodily function and skill, has a species-dependent language and social practices, memory, and contextual aspects of intentional activity. I will put this aside for now, but want to keep in the background the ambiguity for a broader account of conscious presence. The kind of presence I will mainly be speaking for will depend on many

things uniquely human. While my cat may have presence, I wish to speak particularly for the presence which requires reflexive awareness.

In *Ideas I* (Book One 1913) German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) introduced two Greek words to capture his idea of the distinction between the subjective and the objective: *noesis* and *noema*. The intentional process of conscious thought is called *noesis*, while the object or content of thought is called *noema* (Smith 2008). It is unclear exactly what Husserl meant by *noesis* and *noema*; this is only one interpretation. Yet this distinction seems to evince ideas similar of representational theories of experience. Representations in these traditional theories are described as ‘information bearing structures’ consisting in environmental signals, symbols, and operations, which carry information about the experienced world. This represented information allows the organism to anticipate behaviorally relevant states of the world (Gallistel 2008).

Representations supposedly inform the organism and reduce uncertainty about the environment. Representations however preclude direct experience of the world environment. Instead our experiences are mediated through representations of the content within them. Representationalism also presupposes a version of the mind as internal thinking thing; we never directly interact with our environments, yet always within our minds we interact instead with our representations of our experience. This line of thought further establishes dualist tendencies of the inner versus the outer world, which I will deny and add, that our experience is not mediated in this way, but rather is a combination of various relations of representations; representations of presence are included. However if our experience is directly related and deeply intertwined with our world (the gesture we draw from the phenomenological tools) how is it that we can separate the subjective (conscious) and the objective (non conscious) world when both consist in parts of each other? This question I shall leave to another phenomenologist, one much influenced by Husserlian analysis. However with his view of a more direct relation, I shall in the end seek a compromise: the Husserl was on to something, we do interact with conceptual representation of the world, but we also have a window of direct relation. In other words I will propose that the conceptual and physical can serve as content-bearing representations equally as meaningful to our successful navigation and experience of our embedded environments.

French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) maintained that experience necessarily includes conscious and non-conscious worlds. In the *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (PP) the *horizon* he maintained “[...] is what guarantees the identity of the object throughout the exploration [...]” (PP 78). It contains the surroundings and the phenomenal environment in which observers mix. This world environment acts as a background and allows for our observation of more specific points in space. This is regarded as the *horizon* (the backdrop) against which we explore smaller bodies. The horizon consists not only of physical bodies of matter (concretion), but also includes the social meaning-laden community (abstraction). The object body acts in assistance to our conceptions of temporality, in an unusual kind of correspondence to our conceptions of truth and historicity: “[...] experience believes that it extracts all its own teaching from the object. [...] It is this *ek-tase* (transcendence of the subject into relation to the world) of experience which causes all perception to be perception of something” (PP 81). Individuals are enticed through being with *objects* and *things*—that we subsequently believe the observer is as well a *thing*. Yet it is the action itself which is taken for granted. We forget the fundamental nature of the perception as an aspect of the relation from observer to observed. The confusion remains exacerbated by the fact that the point of observation seems to begin in the material body. This materiality blurs the sense of relation. Mistaken and unaware of the necessity of relational interaction, our experience is easily dismissed as something occurring inside our heads.

Consequently, upon determining the object we lose focus of the process. In the act of universalizing the world, our focus is turned from consciousness to concentration: away from reality (concretion) toward (abstraction). In other words according to Merleau-Ponty we lose the body as the locus of experience. We fail to understand the first object we come to disregard in order to understand and universalize other objects. As we are the object otherwise known as the lived body; and yet objectifying the lived body in this way relinquishes the multitudinous effects we have with lived body and world. To further compartmentalize subject and object we also distinguish between apparatus of perception—to fully capture a sense of understanding lived body (perceiver) and object body (perceived). In no other way are we able to experience the world: “I cannot understand the function of the living body except by enacting it myself, and

except in so far as I am a body which rises towards the world” (PP 87). Conscious experience is a consistent sampling from the environment: extending our coordinates as bodies to continually reestablish a sense of identity. An identity which is in process always. A process based on a call and response not merely intellectual (abstraction), but fervently physically present (concretion): it is a combination, an amalgamation of traditionally separate substances. Moreover, this conscious experiencing as physically present is also continually shifting as our exteriority changes through mediation in technospace. We are the relation between our experience and its content; and the content is equally shaped by our experience. Here we shall see where aspects of French phenomenology are easily interpreted through notions of presence. The only thing now still constraining us, is our stronghold on the lived body.

According to Merleau-Ponty we may never fully objectify the lived body, for the reason that we may never entirely separate ourselves from it: “it is neither tangible nor visible in so far as it is that which sees and touches. The body therefore is not one more among external objects, with the peculiarity of always being there” (PP 105). The body never leaves us; we cannot conceive of it entirely as object body: for this (objectification) it would need the properties of being wholly visible and tangible. Yet *my* body can only be visible to me if I step in front of a mirror or perhaps if I happen to be recorded on camera—only then am I able to *see* my body (to an extent). However, I cannot fully see *my* body as I would other object bodies. I cannot change position and view alternate angles of my body within space or time. Conversely I am unable to touch my body as I do other object bodies: I can touch portions of my body, however I touch my body with my body—not at all like I would grasp a pen or feel the softness of a leaf. Similarly, I cannot touch the tip of my index finger with that same index finger, cannot taste my own tongue, and cannot bite my own teeth. The lived body is always the actor in the experience - never separate from the experience; and thus:

not only is the permanence of my body not a particular case of the permanence of external objects in the world, but the second cannot be understood except through the first: not only is the perspective of my body not a peculiar case of that of objects, but furthermore the presentation of objects in perspective cannot be understood except through the resistance of my body to all variation of perspective (PP 106).

I understand *my* permanence in that everything around me is ascertained through comparison. Through the formation and then dissolution of comparisons such as subject and object we orient as active, interactive body. Our ability for locomotion and sensation locates individual bodies as lived bodies in a world environment. These phenomenal factors form the foundation for our understanding and knowledge. They provide a most basic arena for communication and thought - for navigating the environment. When lived bodies begin in the world environment the sense abilities are limited, cognitive faculties underdeveloped, and identity obscured and unknown. In a most basic way our faculties of sense and movement reinforce our relation with an environment; fundamentally such sensations provide our understandings of conscious experience, navigating the world through the material composition. According to Merleau-Ponty our lived situation in environments is consummately subsumed and never extricable. For this reason body objects inform our sensations which inform our perceptions which inform our reflection and vice versa—our reflection thereafter informs our perceptions which inform body objects in the world. Consequently this movement is neither linear in its progression nor static in its being. It is a continual process of action that we are impression-ably entwined with. In other words the call and response interaction enables the development of and makes up the conscious experience. This experience is simultaneously surrounding us and transcendental: the concretion of matter and the abstraction of mind.

But matter and mind need not compete; for Merleau-Ponty suggested that through action they exist as one. Here too memory and the role it plays in perception and the sociocultural background should no longer be dismissed. The perceptions provide phenomenal structure which then is interpreted through memory in a spatiotemporal reality. This memory however is neither post-reflective nor purely mental. Memory to Merleau-Ponty interprets *before* reflection and acts as a *condition* of perception. There remains an element of sensation; and from this the perception gains ground through memory of previous experience. This grounding is constantly embedded, inextricable from culture or history. However the grounding is itself extended beyond the lived body. It is this framework which he calls the *horizon*: that from which I make all judgments. For this reason there is no purely empirical nor objective position of perception. We perceive things before us and without question take them for matter of fact. But how is it that these things come about to us? It is both sensation / perception *and* their relation to a more primordial

understanding of reality that comes to us *through* our interaction: *through* our experience. Merleau-Ponty refers to this as an unspoken or silent language—the silent non-symbolic reality that we find in lived activity. Doing as *process* aligns more fundamentally with the whole (bodies within bodies) which is entirely process. For this reason there are never object bodies, only object bodies of interpretation and interrelated meaning. What we make of things and how we perceive them when we speak of meaning is a construction. All ideas and conceptions behind processes we name, as things are complete interpretive elements. This allows for the social development and influence of ideas and meanings. Consequently all bodies are constructions of presence: lived bodies and object bodies interrelate cohesively creating presence(s).

Amid space and time, amid consciousness, we come about as individuals with a *body image*: “From the point of view of my body I never see as equal the six sides of the cube, even if it is made of glass, and yet the word ‘cube’ has a meaning” (PP 236). From the ability of my body to move around space I translate other object bodies—including lived bodies. Merleau-Ponty calls this a “psychological circumstance of perception” which allows for the conceptual piecing together of many subjective ‘instances of perception’ into a larger broader world environment. The lived bodies and object bodies of my perception through agential spatiality and motility, combine to form a ‘system’ of interpretations that is entirely based on experience. Merleau-Ponty writes: “one emerges from blind, symbolic thought only by perceiving the particular spatial entity which bears these predicates all together” (PP 236). Individuals are able to conceptually arrange thought because of and depending upon, the prior embodied-experience that provided the sensory basis for thought. These portions of sensation then combine together as thought-objects. From this sequencing we are able to conceive and portray reality both subjectively and then objectively, as an intermingling of relatedness. However there is a disconnect between what is presented to us and how we present those object bodies conceptually with symbolic thought. We are never able all at once to perceive more than one field at a time. In this way our symbolic thought begins to construct perceptions filling in the holes between one sensory field to another. Sympathetically through our imaginative reconstruction we begin to see the object more subjectively—regarding our experience or interpretation of it. The object body becomes a kind of thought extension. Like a second perspective, the object body inherits - through imagination, the subjectivity we generally reserve for lived body experiences; and

it is through the interplay of action and interaction where we create information crucial to our presence.

Action and touch are described as our ability to know ourselves; by this I mean a knowing which is our ability to sense the boundaries (or limits) of our presence. For example you are in the grocery comparing oranges: you have in one hand a generously sized ripe navel orange; in the other hand a thick-skinned Kara Kara orange. They look the same to you except for the fact that the Kara Kara is three times the price of the navel. For four dollars a pound you attempt unknowingly to infer the difference in weight of the two pieces of fruit: how do you do this? With one in each hand you begin 'bobbing' each hand up and down as if weighing the fruit on a scale. From the action produced in our hands we seem to have an easier time comparing presence than if simply looking or tasting.

Section 3 Presence & Meaning

The activity of experience also evinces a presence which extends beyond the lived body and into the environment; more particularly it depicts a system situated within an environment of sensory calls and behavioral responses. A pragmatic investigation of experience encourages the tools of empirical analysis: that what can be known best is demonstrated to us by means of our senses and body through our experience. Upon examination of experience pragmatically, we can immediately find many correlations to the previously mentioned phenomenological perspectives: nothing is given a priori (prior to experience); and meaning as well as conceptual content arise contingent upon the continuous character of experience. What follows is that the continuous character of experience supervenes on individual presence, which is situated within a wide environment. That presence is extended into the environment and is also a situated aspect of (it) means that individuals are continually in relation and in the act of relating. We may come equipped with a partial presence bestowed upon us through our physical nature; however if deprived of an environment to realize this in, we are left with little more than an account of the automaton (self-operating machine esp. made to resemble organic action). Presence is an awareness of ourselves and all that is present (because of us).

In part three of the book *Mind, Self, & Society* (MSS) George Herbert Mead gives an account of the development of the human mind and awareness. He maintains that mind arises through a behavioral process of social communication, constructed from the attitudes of the social order reflected in our environments. What truly marks humans apart from animals is not an innate biological capacity, but rather the fact that we behave socially in groups with abstract interrelations. Mead states: “[...] if the mind is socially constituted, then the field or locus of any given individual mind must extend as far as the social activity or apparatus of social relations which constitutes its extends, hence the field cannot be bound by the skin of the individual organism to which it belongs” (1934 § 29). In other words, the mind is composed through behavioral processes and extends to the boundary of the social interaction. It is through this extension for which individuals become objects to themselves. This ability of objective abstraction and extension leads developments of presence. But what exactly does it mean to become an object to oneself?

Generally speaking we objectify things that can also be seen as something other than objective. An objectification is an ultimate (abstraction): a conceptualization. For Mead we objectify ourselves at the point in which we can step away from our subjective inner thought (that stream of consciousness). It is the ignorance of any particular details and the conceptualization of person *as presence*. This objectification occurs only through and in virtue of, the symbolic behaviors that constitute each individual. Meaning that initially we have basic consciousness and behavioral activity, yet without the action having a symbolic dimension (the interactive and communicative), our inner objectification may never arise. Without the symbolic interaction our conceptual abstractions never emerge. More particularly it is the aspect of linguistic communication which drives the emergence of presence awareness.[3] Mead states:

The importance of what we term “communication” lies in the fact that it provided a form of behavior in which the organism of the individual may become an object to himself. [...] Communication in the sense of the significant symbols, communication which is directed not only toward others but also to the individual himself (138-139).

In other words, through the behavior of communicating (specifically symbolically) the individual develops the ability to objectify through abstraction. It is this phenomenon of symbolic

objectification and extension which initiates the social presence. While language communication began prelinguistically, a conceptual capacity does not arise until the species evolves the ability to interact abstractly; this occurs through the *gesture*:

[...] the relation of the gesture of one organism to the adjustive response made to it by another organism, in its indicative capacity as pointing to the completion or resultant of the act it initiates (the meaning of the gesture being thus the response of the second organism to it as such, or as a gesture); [...] Such a response is its meaning, or gives it its meaning (145).

Meaning then, is constructed and revised through the call and response gesture, continually adjusting itself. By repeatedly addressing others socially, we are engaging in a process of verifying meanings. When we successfully communicate, our meanings are instantiated. When the process fails we begin a revision to correct the misinterpretation: "Thinking always implies a symbol which will call out the same response in another that it calls out in the thinker. Such a symbol is a universal of discourse; it is universal in its character" (147). As such meaning is not *out* in the environment. Our world carries no definition until we relate some meaning to it. Consequently, meaning is constructed socially. The abstractions we assign to things then establish the universality of our meanings. For example, if you and I want to discuss the redness of an apple, we both must already have the symbolization and understanding of the meaning of both "redness" and "apple." We may not have either immediately in front of us, but with our conceptual communication we may entertain the idea of the ripe redness of a Red Delicious apple. Not only do we need a concept of both "redness" and "apple" but we also must correspond in our symbolization. It is the "universalization" of meanings, which allows us to communicate abstractly. Taking this further we both must correspond in our symbolization, if we would like to talk about the rich goodness of a baked apple pie. Not only will we need to understand concepts such as "apple" and "pie" but we also will need to conceptualize our sensory experiences. In this way when I tell you that pies are sweet you will not only understand what I mean, you will be able to follow your understanding with a corresponding abstraction of what the experience of sweetness is like.

This process of meaning actualization is not happenstance; it is completely determined by

the organism and its environment. So meaning is established through social interaction based in language and subsequently the individual presence arises conceptually. However without symbolic interaction, the individual fails to become reflexively aware. Our minds actually lose the ability for reflexive awareness. This phenomenon truly illustrates the impact that environment and language have on human development. It has been shown that the very young deprived of human relations lack the necessary development of language and meaning. This relation for Mead is created through such early activity; it is the composition of mind and extended presence. Historically the mind and awareness presupposed the social interaction and language as *a native endowment*. It existed prior to social organization. Moreover rational thought was believed to be an innate human quality, after which develop social relations; “sociological discussions have conventionally sought to understand the notion of the person in terms of an agency that claims ontological priority to the various roles and functions through which it assumes social visibility and meaning” (Butler, p22). Beforehand mind was maintained as a static entity—we now understand that the mind and its development is a process of awareness. The mind however here, is neither prior to nor inherent biologically or naturally within the individual. Instead it develops secondarily to experience. The mind awareness then acts upon the environment following its formation in a cyclical manner, developing other mind awareness through interaction dialogically—a continual process of generation and renewal.

Awareness for Mead arises from the dialogical relation between the *I* (self as subject) and the *me* (self as object). This internalized dialogue constitutes the thinking process of self-consciousness that is deeply entwined with our existence as social beings. Individuals first develop an idea of the *I* that is subjective and perceptive; they later gain the ability for self-reflexive activity through symbolic language; turning the *I* inward to become the *me*, is the ability gained through social interaction to *observe myself* and *my presence*. The *I* becomes reflexive and creates the *me*: an ability to think about my thinking. In other words, my existence as an individual presupposes my interactions, which establish my reflexive capabilities. Thus awareness arises when the individual becomes an object to themselves, symbolically. Mead maintains that we are objects first to other people, and secondarily we become objects to ourselves by taking the perspective of other people; in other words through language we become “other” to ourselves (Gillespie, 2006). In this way we learn to recognize aspects of ourselves through interactions

with others; it is this ability that also facilitates formation of memory and mind. However, this becoming of awareness and reflexive presence does not end after its development: rather it is continually restructuring depending on interaction: interaction facilitated by the media apparatus which translates our language relations. By extension these new methods of symbolical translation develop new methods of interaction and means of awareness.

Mead states: “the field of mind, then is the larger environment which the activity of the organism calls for but which transcends the present [...] the field of mind is the temporal extension of the environment of the organism” (1932 p25). Upon self-objectification and the establishment of memory, our awareness forms through abstract reflexion. Subsequently we think (a dialogical process) and our thoughts as such are directly relational to the environment and interaction surrounding us. Awareness not only constitutes the present moment of our thought, but also encapsulates the meaning of our actions and relations past and present. Moreover, this distinction blurs the ontological separation of body and environment, giving way to a life world that is made of process. This environment is that of our presence and our surroundings—all processes: a complete Darwinian reinterpretation that negates the inner presence as ontologically prior to and distinct from the outer experience.

We transcend our immediate environment through our actions of reflexivity through language. I learn the meaning of a word; I speak the word to others and incorporate it into sentences socially. With language I am able to enter into a dialogue with my environment, drawing my thoughts into a reservoir of anticipations. However it is not only the linguistic that I internalize, but also the whole embodied experience of communicative interaction: communication through sight, sound and touch that involves the transfer of presence indirectly. The interaction continues informally through the apparatus of social relations, lacking temporal or spatial constraints, and into environment. The body in which we live no longer binds our presence; it is no longer trapped in *a* location. In a metaphorical sense, our presence extends beyond time through the action transcribed by the language abstraction through the media apparatus (the written word in books, texts and online information, as well as visual media like photography, graphic design and film). Awareness is only a single aspect of our embodiment, and through the plasticity (adaptability) of our organs in action we continually extend our presence beyond the material. I

am not speaking particularly of a locus of our presence, but rather an embodied awareness which considers our whole compilation of cells including the environment in which we navigate. It is a constant reevaluation with the active interaction and the technological apparatus. The continuing development of our reflexive awareness and presence depend on such spatiotemporal extension encouraged through new media.

Section 4 Technology to an Embodied Presence

But lo! Men have become the tools of their tools. (Henry David Thoreau, Walden)

How are we returning through technology to an embodied presence? When presence compounds a relation between the self and the other, it affects the internalization of objectivity. This occurs when our presences overlap. They can overlap depending roughly on how our lives intertwine: objects of technology can have meaning for more than one; and they can come into existence through coordinated activity. Once this occurs my presence collides with the presence of others: we are both extensions of our embodied presence, yet we interact in a similar fashion. We determine each other's objectification based on past interactions and as well. The extension actually aids our objectification of others; it also facilitates an increasing objectification of ourselves. An example would include the very real development of sexual identity during puberty. Our families first establish our sexual identity through the social relation; "in other words, the "coherence" and "continuity" of "the person" are not logical or analytic features of person hood, but rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility" (Butler, p23). Through reinforcing cultural gender norms we grow into a sexed presence. When we reach puberty we then learn the disturbing truth of being grossly inadequate, by other teens who also feel grossly inadequate. From adulthood on we continue to interact in the manner we reflect dialogically from social interactions. As I walk down the sidewalk, I walk as woman. Aware of the calls of passing men, aware of the danger that at any point I may find myself. I reflect a kind of male gaze from my past, which conditions my presence as I walk; this *representation* predicts my awareness and determines my presence as object. Moreover in this scenario, it is not only man, but also the particular man I have passed on the street before. At the mall or the grocery store I do not generally meet *these* men, and so I am more or less unaware of my self as woman;

I shop as subject. In the arena of men. It is the intricacies of each social relation that determine how I will respond. Thanks to emerging trends in media consumption, my interaction can go beyond my immediate physically-bound reality and into a growing field of mediated extension.

Implications following from this view include the illusion of the unified presence. According to Michel Haar, any implication of inherent meaning simplifies as *illusory* - the subject becomes a categorical error based grammatically in a misinterpretation of *embodiment*:

All psychological categories (the ego, the individual, the person) derive from the illusion of substantial identity [...] The subject, the self, the individual, are just so many false concepts, since they transform fictitious unities that have at the start only a linguistic reality into substances [...] a multiplicity of impulses with an arbitrarily coherent and substantial center. [...] Philosophy has never ceased showing disdain for the body; it has not wished to recognize that it is the body that whispers thoughts to the “soul,” and that the consciousness is only a superficial and terminal phenomenon (16).

In other words, my presence is not a given: I may call it ego or individual, mind or thought, awareness of consciousness. I can call it person or body. But all these things are only varieties of explanations for what can be called *presence*. I am born and I exude presence, but thus presence is only so in the awareness of others. I initially have as little awareness of my presence as might a coma patient. As I grow my presential awareness resembles more or less that of my pet: I have phenomenal presence, or otherwise embodied presence. At this point however, I am yet to exhibit extended and abstracted presence, like that of most normal adult humans. However former and later versions of presence: concretions and abstractions, may still be lost in the sea of grammatical instances of each. If it touches a feeling of mine, I will say it brushed my ego. If you sit in my recliner, I may think you have stolen *my* chair. If you ask me out for steak and potatoes, I may respond telling you that I am more of the salad and hot soup kind of *individual*. These yet are all instances of the multiplicity of meaning, like Haar says “arbitrarily coherent and substantial”. Our presence however encompasses all of these means of psychological *extension*. It only gives the *representation* of a multitude, when in fact our presence can account and accept each, whether consistent or contradictory.

Another implication of the “extension construction” thesis includes the extended awareness interaction through the media apparatus. Our scope of “interaction” is no longer defined in purely embodied encounters with embodied others. Today we facilitate interactions through machines over varied distances: technicians from earth easily control rovers on the moon, surgeons can operate through robotic appendages; an easier example is driving a car. We need to consider our growing relation with the non-embodied mediated through technology. Those immediately present to us no longer bind our development. Currently the extension of presence reflects those whom we confront through media: both in abstraction and concretion. My presence is now as affected by the Internet, television, film and art, as well as the mediated others that I have encountered in my past, which must include even the *model* of the interaction. The mere possibility of the interaction can be enough to evoke reflexive awareness and I maintain that these mediated exchanges constitute the extended act. The very same act that we originally base embodied interaction. Left feral in the woods, we would have little need or use for any distinction(s) of *awareness*. Although it seems to neither be distinctly embodied or solely situated thought: we learn situated in interactive activity as embodied beings. Not only with our brains are we aware, but also with our entire bodies occurring in relation to other bodies and other non bodies.

Interactions are embedded and left for reinterpretation in awareness, yet there are still areas of embodied communication that respond regardless of situation: provoked instead by emotion and memory. What was once situated - the smell of grandmother’s vanilla pound cake baking in the oven, overtime becomes an internalized abstraction and sensation. Later when we smell a similar delicious dessert of velveteen lemon and vanilla essence wafting through our nostrils, we relive the experience of our memory (the internalization of a simultaneously embodied and situated event). Even the simple *thought* of her pound cake elicits a similar reaction and what was once situated temporally now constitutes the internal presence. This action and interaction (call and response) now extends from my awareness into the ether of emerging media; my presence extends into space and time. When I see a photograph of my grandmother and her delectable pound cake, whether it is a photograph or a rendition on my liquid crystal display, I still conceptualize the initial situated encounter. My senses relive the embodied experience of sight and smell, while my awareness extends to the limits of our relation. My awareness is

simultaneously a product of my embodiment, as well as the interaction in abstraction.

Our extension of presence now carries on through technologically extended interactions. My awareness acts in response to the more ever present relations produced through media. Each new situated apparatus can be thought of as social interaction, a concretion of the social call and response. The magazine I read is one such act, the online education is another, the television show I am so overly devoted to, yet another. Each of us is now entirely surrounded by media relations as well as living. All are examples of interaction(s). Our technological extension comes to be known through a social process: the act of embodied relation and the emerging environment of the media apparatus:

All media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new forms. The spoken word was the first technology by which man was able to let go of his environment in order to grasp it in new ways. Words are a kind of information retrieval that can range over the total environment and experience at high speed. Words are complex systems of metaphors and symbols that translate experience into our uttered or outered senses. They are a technology of explicitness. By means of translation of immediate sense experience into vocal symbols the entire world can be evoked and retrieved at any instant (McLuhan, 1964 56).

Life through a screen—be it the illumination of our televisions, computers or hand held devices—constitutes the new illumination of our modernity, an era of increasing extensions. What was originally established through anticipatory promises of *connectivity* and *interactivity* now remains the largest extension of human presence; it has ultimately recreated our relationship of *being* in every means imaginable. The question now remains: how does relating to *the world* through technology affect our overall sense of presence? Heidegger proposed to develop a new understanding of presence by taking the primordial human condition, (the being-in-the-world) and subjecting this given to what he called the existential analysis (9). To further this critique we shall employ three consequential aspects of contemporary technology. It is as such the consequences of implementation of the technologically disembodied: resulting in the extension of time and space through virtual worlds; the extension of human presence; and how we are returning through technology to embodied presence.

Our desire for the disembodied (extension) has prolonged abstractions of space and time. We no longer search for material environments; and we no longer need the ground outside on which to plant our feet. Such material “grounds” have been replaced with virtual “grounds”. Through our extension we no longer need *time* per se. Our work days online can begin at any hour, prolonging well into our evenings and weekends; with the extension of the Internet now made mobile, we are left with an absolute connection—manipulated through the extension of space and time. And:

[O]f all the ways, in which modern technology has brought about a transformation in the world and our experience of it, it is in our relation to space—and thereby time—that its effects have been most striking and pervasive. Moreover, many of the technologies that have been most significant in their impact on everyday life have been those that enable the overcoming of distance through new forms, not only transportation, but of communication as well (Heidegger 1 pg 205).

Through the extension of space—and thereafter time, we have also extended our own presence to any particular given. Freeing our experience and our subjectivity; we also free our experience of other. In other words, we alter the subject / object duality, while in the meantime extending our presence in the world. We are thus reduced to presential 'occurrence' in the techno-real; the subject and object are translated symbolically to wording and imagery. Through techno space online we create place - where our connection is symbolically orchestrated through hyperlinks and emoticons. However we are no longer only an embodied presence; our relationships are now constantly *framed* by the screens of our technological innovations. Yet however remotely connected we may be the *presence* of extension surpasses our spatiotemporal location. It is the embodied presence however which accounts for our conceptions of the real—as opposed to the virtual real which predisposes our illusions of *no-space* and *no-time*. We correspond with *presence* in slightly different ways—while realistically *presence* is composed of awareness and interactivity; it need not be simply embodied presence. Meaning that our body may actually initiate our experience of the real however delusional our mind may be of the actuality of our *presence*, yet our bodies are not a necessary condition: only a starting point.

It is also precisely through this wave of reconfiguring and freeing presence in which our

underlying experience is extended; Heidegger holds a particularly dismal conception of this occurrence writing: "The public ... eats up all individuality's relativity and concreteness" (6 pg 62). The public now is the new online interface: the technological 'horizon'. However, it is not a public as originally embodied and temporally present—it is now the public of extension. We are left simultaneously connected while disconnected from our location and time. Our embodied concerns so pervade our world that we do not notice that our body enables us to make sense of it (reality).

With each new manifestation of technological innovation a portion of our embodiment extends—a mark of a species devoted to loosening all remnants of its own finitude; we now are in the process of developing *reanimation* techniques to re-enliven the dead. Though is this reanimation really necessary in the artificial presence of our mobile planet? Will we choose to forgo reanimation experimentation for a future extended presence which is entirely virtual? The “futurists” claim that in only several short decades humanity will outlive their mortality through science and technology, yet it must be wondered: why do the futurists believe we will need bodies in the future? Coinciding with the extension of presence, we collectively objectify—through technology like electronic mailing, text messaging, medical imaging, digital avatars; even the advent and popularity of the automobile—these have all contributed to our extensions of presence. It is this manipulation, which counters our sense of embodiment. In our attempt to systematize innovation and invention, we will ultimately modify the status of presence indeterminably: “[...]not only are we transformed by the way we use our tools; we are not aware of how we are being transformed...” writes Hubert Dreyfus in regard to the Internet (2 pg 102). It should be clear that the technologies we produce will always affect users in innumerable ways—most of which are not fully considered; at this point I believe it is time to re-consider our extended presence.

Conclusion

Mediated interaction is on the rise; interactions predominantly embodied now occur more often through technological mediums. This additional dimension of interaction compounds means of action and interaction, allowing for multiplicity of *presence*. Technology fundamentally alters

phenomenal interactions and evokes a recreation of embodiment in a new public arena. Through language our presence extends atemporally into a greater public arena aided by emerging media. Haptic perception (our ability to explore the world through movement and touch) is an essential aspect of the embodied phenomenal interaction and critical for normal human functioning. With the rise of mediated interaction, phenomenal interactions have become increasingly telepresent. A phenomenological investigation of human experience shows that touch and movement inform the individual fundamentally of presence. This presence extends beyond the body and into the techno-space environment. More specifically this presence is also always situated within a system of phenomenal and conceptual call and response, arranged through language abstraction and extension.

Notes

[1] Mead addresses the fact that the immediate and generalized other does not *need* to be person, let alone animate; however he maintains the necessity of socializing the self, before we can relate to other *others* in a social meaning-laden manner. This implies that significant social interaction does *not* need to be linguistically or abstractly mediated: he states, “It is possible for inanimate objects, no less than for other human organisms, to form parts of the generalized and organized—the completely socialized—other for any given human individual, in so far as he responds to such objects socially or in a social fashion (by means of the mechanism of thought the internalized conversation of gestures). And further states:

Any thing—any object or set of objects, whether animate or inanimate, human or animal, or merely physical—toward which he acts, or to which he responds, socially, is an element in what for him is the generalized other; by taking the attitudes of which toward himself he becomes conscious of himself as an object or individual, and this develops a self or personality. [...] in this way the environment becomes part of the total generalized other for each of the individual members of the given social group or community.

[2] It should be kept in mind that unless referring explicitly to the *lived body* or to the *object body / body object* when I use the word “body” -- I am referring intentionally to the grey area between organic bodies of living beings and those bodies that include masses of mater distinct from other masses: bodies with mass that exist in space: “body” shall represent the more ambiguously known version of either the former or the latter.

[3] This phenomenon is also exemplified according to Julian Jaynes (*The Origins of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976) which Daniel Dennett adapts as something like, “in the beginning [...] were speakers, our ancestors, who weren’t really conscious. They spoke, but they just sort of blurted things out, more or less the ways bees do bee dances [...] When these ancestors had problems they would sometimes “ask” for help [...] and sometimes there would be somebody around to hear them. So they got into the habit of asking for assistance and particularly, asking questions. Whenever they couldn’t figure out how to solve some problem, they would ask a question, addressed to no one in particular, and sometimes whoever was standing around could answer them. [...] Then one day one of our ancestors asked a question in what was apparently an inappropriate circumstance: there was nobody around to be an audience. Strangely enough he had heard his own question, and this stimulated him, cooperatively to think of an answer [...] what developed was a habit of subvocalization, and this in turn could be streamlined into conscious, verbal thought” (1992 6-7).

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