

Intercorporeality and the Transference Phenomenon: A Reading Through Merleau-Ponty

Josiane Cristina Bocchi

São Paulo State University - BR

Pedro Henrique Santos Decanini Marangoni

São Paulo State University - BR

Abstract

This article aims to propose elements to understand the role of corporeality in the transference phenomenon based on the articulation between psychoanalytic listening and two ideas from Merleau-Ponty's philosophy: the concepts of body schema and intercorporeality. The transference relationship is revisited through the lens of Merleau-Ponty's thesis that our relationships with others are based on a corporeal, unconscious, and libidinal infrastructure. We hope to present a possible reading and complementation tool to elucidate the intercorporeal substrate present in the transference neurosis revealed by Freud.

Keywords: Intercorporeality, transference, Merleau-Ponty, body schema

1. Introduction

We propose here to indicate and outline a movement of 'conversion of the gaze' on transference and intersubjective issues in the psychoanalytic clinic. This is an invitation to a reflective retreat that aims to resume the transference phenomenon based on the analysis of the apparently trivial fact that the clinical encounter is a colloquium

between two bodies. In this conversion of the gaze, we propose to revisit the problem of transference according to the thesis, developed by the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, that our relationships with others are based on a carnal, unconscious, and libidinal infrastructure.

The thesis of a libidinal and desirous texture of perception refers to the movement by which Merleau-Ponty, in the middle and final period of his work, goes from an individual characterization of the body schema to the demonstration of its relational, interpersonal, and osmotic nature. The relationship with others will be understood as the opening to a world whose emergence is a joint work configured by the affections and attitudes of others towards their bodies and ours. Intersubjectivity will be defined as intercorporeality, and the intertwining between perception and desire contributes, in our view, to expanding *the understanding of transference in psychoanalytic treatment*, especially when *the experience of spoken language is not enough* to understand the subject in the analysis process.

2. Formation and development of the concept of libidinal structure of the body schema

The concept of body schema occupies a privileged place within the reflections of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Since its first presentation, in *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2005), the notion of body schema has been used to unveil the carnal basis of the perceptual experience and is discussed among references from the fields of neurology and psychopathology. For Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 1976), perception must be thought of in relation to the existential character of the body schema, taken as a dynamic system of equivalences and sensorimotor adjustments between the body and the world. In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, this relationship, permeable with the space, is illustrated by the

discussion of habits and the incorporation of objects. In both cases, the issue revolves around the establishment of a type of 'knowledge' that is not representative or conceptual; on the contrary, it is indicative of the body's capacity to establish itself in a meaningful and engaged way in the world.

However, the intertwining between the themes of perception, corporeality, and intersubjectivity begins to occupy Merleau-Ponty's philosophy from the 1950s onward and implies an important inflection in the understanding of the body schema. This inflection is subsidized by Merleau-Ponty's frequent and constant discussion with Psychoanalysis¹, especially with Sigmund Freud and Paul Schilder, and can be illustrated as the emergence of a concern with conceptualizing the 'libidinal' or 'intercorporeal' dimension of the body schema (Merleau-Ponty 2011). In other words, throughout the 1950s, the reflection on the role that other body schemas play in our sensorimotor, perceptual, and affective configuration occupies a major place in the conceptualization of the body schema. This redimensioning of the treatment dispensed to the concept of body schema must be traced back to the movement through which Merleau-Ponty sees in psychoanalysis a project that, in general terms, would be convergent with phenomenology.

This project, which Merleau-Ponty views as the fundamental framework of Freud's and Husserl's legacies, consists of re-examining the structures of our openness to the world 'which a consciousness cannot sustain', in order to highlight 'our relationship with our origins and our models' (Merleau-Ponty 2000: 283). Psychoanalysis and Phenomenology 'address the same latency' (*Ib.*). Both theoretical

¹ In this text, we will specifically evaluate points in Merleau-Ponty's discussion with Lacan, Schilder and Freud. These dialogues do not exhaust the breadth of Merleau-Ponty's interlocution with psychoanalysis, but aim above all to offer general outlines of the formation and development of the notion of the libidinal structure of the body schema.

matrices perform a kind of archeology of existence, revealing the depth of our relationships with the world and with others beyond the current options of intellectualism, which would represent the world through thought, and objectivism, which would reduce the complexity of the subjective life to its natural or physiological elements. This 'depth' sought by both theoretical orders of phenomenology and psychoanalysis alludes to the instinctual (in the sense of the German word *Trieb*), invisible, or unconscious dimension that weaves the network of visible relationships concerning the appearance of the world to consciousness. This rapprochement between Psychoanalysis and Phenomenology is one of the features that characterize Merleau-Ponty's intermediate and final productions.

Next, we will discuss three moments in which the influence of Psychoanalysis is visible and impactful in the way Merleau-Ponty is inclined to articulate the relationships between corporeality, desire, and the experience of others, more specifically concerning the elaboration of the body schema concept. This is not intended to exhaust the importance of Psychoanalysis in the philosopher's work; we propose to highlight some important moments of dialogue with Psychoanalysis that configure nodal points for a change that involves moving from the conception of the body schema as a matrix of perceptual experience in direction to intercorporeity, a central figure that allows perception to be articulated in the field of desire and otherness.

2.1. Sorbonne Courses on Child Psychology and Pedagogy (1949-1952): The Mirror Stage and the dialogue with Lacan

First, we will briefly expose an important discussion between Merleau-Ponty and Lacan, centered on the function of the *mirror stage* as the genesis of the experience of oneself in the relationship with others, in his courses in Sorbonne (Merleau-Ponty 2001) on Child Psychology and

Pedagogy². At this moment of the dialogue with Lacan, there are germinal or anticipatory elements of subsequent theoretical developments relating to the concept of intercorporeality. In Lacan, the mirror stage concept refers to the genetic moment of formation of the self (Lacan [1949] 1999). The 'I' is constituted by the child's identification and alienation from their image in the mirror. As *infans*, before inscription in the language register, the child's body is experienced as a fragmented body. The unification of one's own body, according to Lacan, is not a process of intellectual recognition, of cognitive integration between what one sees and what one feels; rather, it is the expression of the subject's entry into the field of imagination and visibility. Capturing the image is fundamental for the constitution of the self, as it provides the child with a symbolic matrix, a perceptual totality of the body distinct from that offered by sensations (Lacan [1949] 1999). The discussion regarding the mirror stage alludes to the superimposition of one's own body (the experiential self) by the body of the other seen from the outside (the external spectacle of the bodily form). To the self, as an imaginary instance, alienated from itself, a *visible* body begins to exist. The return of the mirror image operates as a system that unites the perception of the child's body, the perception of a behavior (that is, of others), and the revelation of a new world.

The reality of one's body, until then fragmented into diffuse sensations, acquires, for the child, a new visibility, which implies a new sense of spatiality. It means that the appropriation of a visual image (equivalent to a new function, the narcissistic one) elevates the child to the possibility of experiencing himself as a 'spectacle' of himself

² Sorbonne courses (Merleau-Ponty 2010) have a diverse spectrum of Psychoanalysis authors. This is not about giving a privileged spot to Lacan, but showing that, in the conceptual economy of Merleau-Ponty's work, the discussion about the mirror stage can be considered a precursor to later delineations on intercorporeality.

(Merleau-Ponty 2010). Merleau-Ponty (2010) highlights the conflict between the *self felt* and the *self seen* by the child himself or by others. The body removed from the ecstasy of a purely lived state is the body that acquires visibility. Merleau-Ponty (2010: 527), when referring to the importance of the mirror image, attests that 'the body is placed under the jurisdiction of the visible'.

2.2. Collège de France Courses (1953): Schilder's theory of the libidinal structure of the body schema

The grammar of visibility provides the tone through which Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the affective and interpersonal character of the body schema from his 1953 courses – *Le Monde Sensible et le Monde de l'expression* (Merleau-Ponty 2011). In these courses, we can see the emergence of a concern to highlight the permeability between body schemas. This theoretical novelty consists of the first allusion to the notion of 'libidinal structure of the body schema', borrowed from the work of the Austrian psychoanalyst Paul Schilder, entitled *The Image and Appearance of the human body* (Schilder [1950] 2007). The term 'libido', used by Schilder and taken up by Merleau-Ponty, designates the affective organization of the body image in relation to the 'animated' world, the world as a landscape and place of transit for other body images³.

The allusion to the libidinal structure of the body schema in these 1953 courses is made one time only, although it can be considered the germ of the late conception of intercorporeality. In these courses, in the section that mentions the libidinal structure, Merleau-Ponty (2011) declares that the body schema is also constituted by the images or

³ This use of the term libido is also found under the name "desire", although the handling and meaning given to this idea, both by Schilder and Merleau-Ponty, are fundamentally different from the Freudian *Wunsch* and the contribution of Lacan (Saint-Aubert 2013).

presentations that are obtained from the other's point of view. The example chosen by the author is the view of one's own face, a piece of data directly accessible only to another perspective that, however, has a central place in the affective dynamics, conscious and unconscious, of the subject in relation to himself⁴. The philosopher notices that 'there is an affective accentuation of the body schema that is, in reality, the installation in myself of a relationship with the other' (Merleau-Ponty 2011: 159). At this point, the reference to Schilder's work is notable. In *The Image and Appearance of the human body*, Schilder ([1950] 2007) mobilizes not only the physiological foundations that make up and condition the formation of the body image but also demonstrates the existence of a libidinal and sociological foundation that produces the experience of the self. One of his main theses is that 'the processes which construct the body-image not only go on in the field of perception but also have their parallels in the building-up in the libidinous and emotional field' (174).

Merleau-Ponty (2011) adopts the notion of 'libidinal structure' to show that our bodily experience, as engagement and openness to the sensible, is primarily configured by the affective presence of other bodily schemas. Let us note that the notion of the libidinal structure of the body schema exposes the relational and unconscious infrastructure of our openness to the world. The Schilderian contribution to the body image shows that our relationship with the space is not objective and prior to social exchanges; the fundamental thesis consists in stating that the social dimension, alongside the physiological and libidinal, is constitutive of the body image. In Schilder's words:

⁴ It does not seem fortuitous that the first mention of the libidinal structure of the body schema refers to the ambivalence of the perceptual experience: the reversible relationship between "seeing" and "being seen". Such reversibility was already in vogue in Merleau-Ponty's discussion with Lacan, regarding the mirror stage. However, with the introduction of the notion of libidinal structure of the body schema, in the 1953 courses, the theorization of the body schema will increasingly include the record of visibility and intercorporeality, that is, of permeability between body schemas.

The building-up of the postural model of the body takes place on the physiological level by continual contact with the outside world. On the libidinous level, it is built up not only by the interest we ourselves have in our body, but also by the interest other persons show in the different parts of our body. They may show their interest by actions or merely by words and attitudes. But what persons around us do with their own bodies is also of enormous importance. Here is the first hint that the body-image is built up by social contacts (Schilder [1950] 2007: 153).

According to Schilder ([1950] 2007), the body image does not exist as an inert and finished structure, but in the form of 'structuralization', that is, a continuous process of remodeling that implies both the destruction and incorporation of new affective tendencies arising from other images or body schemas. Body image is dynamically configured and is, therefore, malleable and open; sometimes parts or the whole of other body images are incorporated, and sometimes the body image itself is reconfigured in such a way as to reject or exclude certain symbolizations or affective cores. Thus, by the libidinal structure of the body schema we must understand the idea that the 'Body-images of human beings communicate with each other either in parts or as wholes' (154). This intercommunicating constitution of the body image implies supporting the thesis that our body schema is marked by gaps, voids, and points of direct contact with others. Our clothing, as well as the objects we incorporate in our practical tasks, are incorporated into the body schema in the same way that the gestures and attitudes of others are emblematic of how certain bodily areas gain prominence in singular existences.

The spectrum of Psychoanalytic authors, such as Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Paul Schilder and also Melanie Klein, becomes fundamental in Merleau-Ponty's theorization about the symbolic character of the body. Since his courses in Sorbonne (Merleau-Ponty 2001), Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that the corporeal symbolism addressed by Freudian theory implies understanding that our organs are not limited to the prescription of biological functions, but are magnetized and mobilized in an existential dimension of openness to others. This symbolism of the body, asserts Merleau-Ponty (2010), concerns both the possibility that bodily functions are transposed, accentuated, or suppressed for the subject, as well as the fact that our organs, gestures, and posture are modulated by the touch, by the looks and attitudes of others towards our bodies. This thesis is found to be central in the elaboration of the libidinal structure of the body schema as developed by Schilder. According to the Psychoanalyst: 'The touch of others, the interest others take in different parts of our body, will be of an enormous importance in the development of the postural model of the body' (Schilder [1950] 2007: 126). Corporeal symbolism therefore refers to the affective transposition continually in vogue in the body image. In Schilder's words:

What goes on in one part of the body may be transposed to another part of the body [...] there is said to be a transposition of one part of the body to another part of the body. One part may be symbolic of the other. The symbolic interchange of organs by transposition may occur in the so-called purely psychic sphere; it may be only a change in the mental attitude. But there is no psychic experience which is not reflected in the motility and in the vasomotor functions of the body (170).

The observation of an intercommunication of body images by Schilder in addition to the reflections on the symbolic character of the body highlighted by Freudian Psychoanalysis has profound effects on how Merleau-Ponty begins to elaborate the concept of the body schema⁵. This intermediate figure of his work, the libidinal structure of the body schema, presents itself as a central conceptual means for the subsequent formulation of the notion of intercorporeality, especially as outlined at the end of his life (Merleau-Ponty 2003).

2.3. 'La Nature' (1956-1960): Perception as a form of desire

Merleau-Ponty's courses, offered at the *Collège de France* between 1956 and 1960, gathered under the title *Nature* (Merleau-Ponty 2003), demonstrate a significant advance in the delimitation of this libidinal structure of the body schema that had only been introduced at the beginning of the 1950s. Reflections on the body schema mainly occupy the 1959-1960 course entitled *Nature and Logos: The Human Body*. As we move from the 1953 courses to the final period of Merleau-Ponty's work, especially the course on *Nature*, we move towards the formulation of the body schema as an interbody scheme, which means giving more precise contours to the idea of symbolism and the nature of the relationship between desire (a term that will replace the concept of libido) and perception.

In these courses, the philosopher revisits the notion of symbolism and demonstrates its intimate correlation with the qualification of the sensible as a circuit formed between the body, the world, and the other. To illustrate this conceptual transition, let us begin by elucidating the nature of the relationship between body and world, as explained in

⁵ It is in this sense that Merleau-Ponty points out, in unpublished notes from the end of the 1950s, that the phases of libidinal development in Freud are stages of structuring the body schema (Saint-Aubert 2013).

these courses. Merleau-Ponty reopens the question of the symbolism of the body in an analysis that, at first, is presented in two ways: the esthesiological and the libidinal. Subsequently, the philosopher will try to conceive the intertwining between these two records of the experience.

The specific symbolism of feeling, of aesthesiology, is characterized by the idea of a circuit formed between body and world. According to Merleau-Ponty, incarnated existence is, ontologically, characterized by feeling. This means that the body's sensitivity only opens to the world once it is woven into the world itself; in Barbaras' words, sensitivity is 'different from the world but, at the same time, included in it' (Barbaras 2011: 79). 'I am open to the world because I am *within* my body', writes Merleau-Ponty (2003: 217). This constitution of the circuit is possible thanks to the opening itself, the carnal reversibility, which constitutes the corporeal experience as in the emblematic example of the hands touching each other. The hand that occupies the active position touching another hand is not, for Merleau-Ponty, excluded from the passive position. Touch, the active act, already inspires a certain passivity, that is, the body is inhabited by an interior that is already presented as a possibility of exteriority – touching one's own hand is also being touched, and the same applies to feeling in general. Therefore, 'there is a sort of identity of touching and touched, in that the hand that touches finds in the other its similar; that is, it senses that this could in its turn become the active hand, and itself the passive hand' (223). The philosopher continues: 'There are two 'sides' of an experience, conjugated and impossible, but complementary' (*Ib.*). It is from the duplicity or reversibility of the experience of feeling that Merleau-Ponty formulates the articulation between body and world. What characterizes this duplicity is its circuit configuration, a unity that combines different positions or starting points: activity and passivity that are not made as oppositions but as

complementary traits of what it means to be in the field of sensitivity and visibility. It is under this figure of the circuit that the corporal schema can be defined: 'This circuit is what the corporal schema means: it is schema, organization, not an informed mass, because it is a relation to the world, and this because it is relation to the self in generality' (*Ib.*). The term 'circuit' therefore designates the logic of crossing and promiscuity of the body in relation to the world.

On the other hand, an excerpt like 'Freud: to sense is already to be human' (225) encourages us to expand the characterization of the body-world circuit, demonstrating that it is not complete if we remain in a restricted definition of bodily aesthesiology, that is, one that does not incorporate or address the register of desire and drive⁶. According to the author, desire is inherent to the structure of manifestation of the world in such a way that the aesthesiology of the body already involves a libidinal or affective dimension: 'the body would pass in the world and the world in the body. Feeling or pleasure, because the body is mobile, that is, the power to be elsewhere, are the [means of the] unveiling of *something*' (211).

In this sense, the philosopher considers that bodily aesthesiology – feeling – should not be thought of in parallel to the dimension of desire and openness to others. It is important to note that, at this time, Merleau-Ponty had resumed reading Schiller (Saint-Aubert 2013). This consideration is important because the author tries to show, in the psychoanalyst's way, that the body schema is not limited to a meaningful transit only with things: 'My corporal schema is a normal means of knowing other bodies and know my body. Universal-lateral of the co-perception of the world' (Merleau-Ponty 2003: 218). The esthesiological body, opened by feeling, is inherently open not only to itself and the world but to other bodily schemas: this is the meaning of

⁶ The most common translation of Freudian "Trieb" in English is "drive".

the notion of intercorporeality. This modulation of oneself by others requires that the subject-world circuit, until then defined by perceptual openness, be thought of in new ways, which means supporting the perceptual experience in its carnal and interpersonal dimension, that is, desiring. Hence Merleau-Ponty's important observation:

My corporal schema is projected in the others and is also introjected, has relations of being with them, seeks identifications, appears and undivided among them, desires them. Desire considered from the transcendental point of view = common framework of my world as carnal and of the world of the other. [...] Schilder: the corporal schema has a libidinal structure. and sociological (225).

Desire taken 'from a transcendental point of view' is the desire considered as the original dimension of phenomenalization, defined in these terms not only as 'world's appearing', as perceptual opening, but as the emergence of a world that is, from the beginning, constituted through experience and exchanges with others. From this comes one of the most emblematic statements of the courses on *Nature*, namely, the idea that 'perception [is] a mode of desire, a relation of being and not of knowledge' (210). Desire is, therefore, the fundamental component of perception. Feeling is written in a 'tacit language', an architecture based on desire – what I see is a deviation or variation in relation to a certain human level. Recognizing the appearance of guilt in others does not mean searching for a hidden meaning to transpose into someone else's gestures. It is tacitly that someone else's perception reveals to me a certain island of existence, whose expression in someone else's features is never entirely enumerable. Guilt would not, to that extent, be prior to its expression; guilt, as expressed, is a type of 'guilty expression'. Our openness to the world

is not primordial in relation to the domain of libidinal exchanges with others. Feeling is incorporated by Merleau-Ponty in the semantics of desire – perceiving is entering the world of exchanges, identifications, projections, and introjections with other bodies, and not with other ‘consciousnesses’. Therefore, if, in his 1945 work, the body was defined as ‘the subject of perception’, in the final stage of his thought, the plot that weaves the perceptual experience is of the order of desire and this, in turn, is conceived as an original opening concerning ‘*il y a*’ (there is). Therefore, the central question here is ‘What is the I of desire?’ and the answer offered by Merleau-Ponty is accurate: ‘It is obviously the body’ (*Ib.*).

3. Transference and intercorporeity in psychoanalysis

Given the complexity of the transfer theme, as well as the difficulties inherent in the entanglement between different theories, we present the possibility of interpreting the transference mechanisms, projection and identification, as libidinal investments of the patient’s body image in their analyst. We can conjecture, as a preliminary hypothesis, that the basis of the transference process, in all its fantasy tonality, consists in the investment of the body image of the patient in the figure of the analyst.

Next, we will present two theses on the relationship between the transference phenomenon and the libidinal structure of the body schema. Firstly, we present transference as a phenomenon that has its genesis and development within the libidinal structure of the body schema, in a similar sense to what we find and present in Merleau-Ponty. This means giving transference an ontological status, showing that its condition of possibility is given by the libidinal character of the body image. Secondly, we shall begin by detailing some excerpts from Freud’s *On the dynamics of transference* (1912), in order to elucidate the insistent movement of resistance and unconscious compulsive

repetitions. The analytical process is characterized as an inter-relational field for two (and, as we will see, for many), in which there are polarities in action, an affective and libidinal tone, with erotic or aggressive investments, mobilized from those two subjects who meet regularly, see each other, hear each other and, eventually, touch each other.

Freud concludes his 1912 work, *On the Dynamics of Transference*, in an auspicious and impressively incomplete way from a metapsychological point of view. We would say that this is a limited article for such a surprising discovery, developed in a few pages on the theory of technique, which would become a fundamental technical apparatus of psychoanalytic clinical practice, in addition to the fundamental rule of free association and floating attention. Freud thus ends that work that formally introduces the theme of transference [*Übertragung*]:

it is precisely they [transference difficulties] that provide us with the invaluable service of making manifest and current the hidden and forgotten love movements of patients, because, after all, no one can be shot down *in absentia* or *in effigie* (Freud [1912] 2019: 118).

Freud refers here to the nature and destination of the patient's investments and clichés in the transference process. The transference addresses the person of the analyst, his real figure and his psychic figure at the same time since they will be included without distinction as part of the field established from the transference relationship – 'it is completely normal and understandable that the libidinal investment [*Libidobesetzung*] of a partially dissatisfied person, loaded with a lot of expectations, also turns to the figure of the doctor' (109) and includes

it in one of the psychic 'sequences' that the patient has formed up to that moment.

James Strachey uses the expression 'external object of fantasy' (Caper 2002: 34), which will become the external object of fantasy in the transference, to refer to the dubious character in which the psychoanalyst finds himself in the treatment. The latter is not an internal object, nor a pure external object, but it becomes a strongly accentuated object to the point of influencing the conduct of psychic processes, based on the quality of the bond and the fantasies experienced within the framework of the treatment:

What the patient unconsciously sees in the analyst is a mixture of external reality with projected parts of his internal reality; the difference between the two is not clearly distinguished in the patient's concept. A very common example of this occurs when the patient projects his omnipotence onto the analyst, so that the latter becomes, in the patient's eyes, someone who magically heals (42).

For Freud, if no one can be abated in a state of absence (*in absentia*), it is because one must have someone to confront (the other about whom one complains, the other who is the analyst, the parental imagos and their ideal models). In this way, there are images and other types of dreamlike figurations to be attacked or reinvested erotically, thus allowing the patient to re-present their amorous expectations and unconscious libidinal motions in the current interpersonal relationship, whose forces will be led by the bodily presences of one, and the other of the relationship experienced by two in the present time.

The notion that the projective process would involve a 'mixture of external reality with projected parts of its internal reality' (*Ib.*), and this leads to reflect on the relationships between psychic reality and

external reality. The grammar of 'mixing' or 'promiscuity' between different dimensions of experience is characteristic of the Merleau-Pontyan way of addressing the corporeality theme, especially from the inclusion of the notion of libidinal structure of the body scheme. It is possible to think that the (a) analyst taken as an object of identification and projection of the fantasies and parental images, targeted by affective accentuations specific to the history of the analyzer, is reinvested by the history of the libidinal dynamics of the body image of the subject under analysis. According to Merleau-Ponty (1995), as for Schilder, the projective and identifying character of relations with others, including the analyst, are not representational processes disconnected from our corporeal existence. Such mechanisms of transference dynamics are fundamentally related to an investment field that orbits around the body image of the analyzer. In this sense, it is possible to work with the hypothesis that the condition of possibility of the transference clinical phenomenon derives from the interchangeable and libidinal character of the body scheme.

Certainly, this idea isn't meant to cover the entire extent of the phenomenon. In *On the Dynamics of Transference* (1912), Freud did not discuss the problem of the body in the transference context, he only talked about the figure of the doctor, the analysand, the imago, and the dynamics of latent psychic mechanisms (introversion of the libido, introjection, resistance, acts, memories, inhibitions). In other Freudian technical texts in which the transference phenomenon is addressed, the body is also not part of the scope of development of the concept of transference. Everything happens as if corporeality did not participate in the economic regulation of the transference field, and even less so that the phenomenon of transference was co-extensive with this field circumstantiated by unconscious objects and their images. At the end of the 1912 essay, however, Freud states that

transference can never occur in the abstract, which implies that corporeal and intersubjective experience can offer formats and means of execution for the changes resulting from psychoanalytic treatment.

From this perspective, returning to Freud, it is noted that this transferential interaction gains two important connotations in the Brazilian translations of the text:

This struggle between the doctor and the patient, between intellect and instinctual life, between understanding and *seeking to embody*, is played out almost exclusively in the phenomena of transference. It is on that field that victory must be reached (Freud [1912] 2019: 146, and emphasis)⁷.

In the version of the *Standard Edition* (Imago, 1996), 'This struggle between the doctor and the patient, between intellect and instinctual life, between understanding and the *search for action* is engaged, almost exclusively, in the phenomena of transference' ([1912] 2019: 119, and emphasis). Finally, in the version adopted in our work, 'This struggle between the doctor and the patient, between intellect and instinctual life, between recognizing and *wanting to act*, happens almost exclusively in the phenomena of transference' (118, and emphasis).

We want to draw attention to the character of an interaction and communication that has its contours between action ('wanting to act', 'embody', 'search for action') and an attitude of understanding or meaning (*Erkennen*, translated as recognizing, identifying, discern, see). In the original German, the expression 'embody' corresponds to the verb *agieren* (to act, operate, perform, interact). The second aspect

⁷ Beautiful translation by Paulo César De Souza – Companhia das Letras, Freud – Obras Completas, Volume 10, 1911-1913.

observed is that the result of the obstacle or clash between the attitudes of recognition and *agieren*, whatever it may be, will necessarily be developed in the field of events in the relationship between the two and how it responds to the motivations and unconscious forces latent to such connection, such as resistance and the compulsion to repeat [*Zwang zur Wiederholung*]. In that period, Freud had not yet formulated the death drives, so *Zwang zur Wiederholung* supplants repression, as a tendency to act in replacement of memories and is not necessarily driven by the reliving of painful or traumatic situations.

Also, in another work on the technique, *Remembering, Repeating and Working-through* (1914), Freud highlights that

The stronger the resistance, the more frequently remembering will be replaced by acting [*agieren*] (repeating) [...] From then on, it is the resistance that will define the sequence of what is to be repeated. It is in the arsenal of the past that the patient seeks the weapons to defend himself from continuing treatment and that we need to take piece by piece from him (Freud [1914] 2019: 156).

Transference and the force of repetition interpenetrate – transference being ‘just a part of repetition, and repetition is the transference of the forgotten past, not only for the doctor but for all aspects of the present situation’ (155). We can assume that repetition and resistance, both regulated by the tone of a certain performance in front of the analyst, are processes that aggregate the most important aspects of the subject’s relations with others; and these aspects are updated in the transfer. However, these significant relational aspects would be represented by characteristic features of the history of libidinal relations and their fixation in the body.

Regarding this, Freud is emphatic, the illness is not only a historical event, it has the power of a current experience. The disassembly 'Piece by piece of this being sick will now be placed on the horizon and within the radius of influence of the treatment, and as long as the patient *experiences this as something real and current*, we begin the therapeutic work' (156–157, and emphasis).

The laborious interpretation of resistances in the transference is the most important part of the analytical work and also the one that poses the most serious difficulties, according to Freud (1910; 1914; 1915). But it is this confrontation that differentiates the psychoanalytic technique from the use of hypnosis and suggestion, or even from the problem of the practice of psychoanalysis by those who are not psychoanalysts, what Freud (1910) called wild psychoanalysis, when the individual's unconscious simply communicates, incurring greater suffering.

Freud insists on the artisanal character and patience that is necessary for the analytical process, since naming resistance does not end it; it is necessary to get involved in its plot; it is necessary to give the patient time so that he can face the resistance now known to elaborate it, to overcome it, continuing the work despite it. At this point, Freud emphasizes that it is about giving time to time – to wait and let things follow a course that cannot be avoided, nor can it always be accelerated.

Thus, the success of psychoanalytic treatment is related to the contingency of the analytical situation that 'provokes' (Freud 1915 [1914]) and enhances the transference (loving or hostile) and the consequent horizon of intercommunication exchanges that it provides, through the indefinite series of exchanges, substitutions, and recompositions between intrapsychic objects and the intersubjective elements that emerge from the current connection. These aspects seems to be a connection point with the conception of Merleau-Ponty

about the body scheme as a libidinal instance of 'incorporation' and 'insertion of imaginary bodies', explained in passages of the course *The Concept of Nature - Nature and logos: the human body* (Merleau-Ponty 1959: 451)⁸. The body is 'the normal means of knowing other bodies and of them knowing my body', because of reciprocity: 'my body is also made of their corporeality' (359). Here is 'an ejection-introjection relation, an incorporation relation. It can extend to things (clothing and body scheme), it can expel a part of the body. It can extend to things, therefore it is not made of certain parts, but is a lacunar being (the body scheme is empty inside)' (451). The Freudian notion of erogenous body finds in Merleau-Pontyan estheticology, especially by the privilege of vision (to see implies the possibility to see oneself), of the world's desirous experience, in which capture is already a mode of recognition.

Initially, the analytical situation involves the real person of the analyst and a lack of knowledge that will be incited by the device of speech and by the patient's search for truth (of the symptom, of the anguish, of what is unknown). The analyst will soon become the substitute for feelings or emotions directed at figures and images from the past in the patient's life, especially thanks to the compulsion to repeat and the dreamlike material present in expressive language (that is, its openness to the mechanisms of figurability, condensation, displacement, overlaps).

Here we ask about the element of corporeality that inseparably accompanies the transference relationship. In addition to the obvious fact that we have a body, from a metapsychological point of view, sexual drives are contingent on our real body: 'By the source of the drive, we understand the somatic process that occurs in an organ or a

⁸ Check the following pages of this last course taught by the philosopher at the Collège de France (1959-1960): 359, 451, 453, 499, 500.

part of the body and from which a stimulus, represented in psychic life by the drive, derives' (Freud [1915b] 2004: 149).

In that sense, Schilder observes that 'Conflicts choose for their expressions organs which have to do with the functions involved in the conflict' (Schilder [1950] 2007: 137). In his book, the psychoanalyst exposes a series of changes in the body image, arising from clinical issues such as hypochondria, neurasthenia, and depersonalization. In hypochondria, for example, there is an excessive accentuation of a certain part of the body, to the point where it can even be said that 'the hypochondriac organ behaves like an independent body' (142). This 'isolation' of the organ in relation to the rest of the body image is directly linked to the tension or libido concentrated there; it is to preserve the body image of this libidinal overload that the hypochondriac organ appears as 'foreign' to the image of the body.

The narcissistic investments in certain parts of the body are not unrelated to the transference relationship. For example, the fantasies involving the analyst can be conceived as ways of reinvesting certain nuclei or pressing conflicts in body image. In other words, the narcissistic projection, in Schilder's expression, can appear in the transfer through fantasies that impress on the analyst feelings and emotions linked to certain parts of the body of the analyzer. Schilder reports that his patient, whose history of libidinal investments involved the figure of the foot and anal passivity, fantasized that the analyst had problems with defecation and that he would be ashamed if he had to show his foot to other people. That is why, when dealing with transference projection, Schilder writes: 'The patient projects his own difficulties and all his body image on the analyst.'

Thus, the efforts to reflect on the intercorporeal bases of transfer do not imply that the imagery itself of analysis is reduced to the issue of intercommunication of body images. The main issue, we think, is that the Merleau-Pontyan conception of body scheme, driven by

psychoanalysis, allows to place the foundation of transference dynamics in the relational structure of body image. As we have seen, the body image is in a continuous process of rearticulation; certain crystallized emotional nuclei in the body may come to dissolve and other libidinal formations may be incorporated. This is the existential character of psychoanalysis pointed out by Merleau-Ponty, namely, the consideration of the body as an emblem of life in its symbolic and libidinal constitution. The body is invested with meaning. For example, the mouth is not just the organ of nutrition or chewing. It is the symbol of openness to the field of language and communication; its cannibalization dimension is representative of our continuous reception of others. In a reading that underlines the existential character of the body, it can be said that to speak is to introduce the other in my radius of conduct. As an emblem of reception, the mouth and the gastrointestinal tract, are representative of our incorporation of others. According to Schilder, erotic relationships are interactions between two bodies, which means that they are permeated by attitudes towards our bodies and the bodies of other people.

This symbolic composition of the body is visible in the Freudian discussion on the role of erogenous zones in childhood sexuality for the constitution of the narcissistic image and for the acquisition of a notion of the subject's own body. The image of the face⁹ plays a fundamental role for Freud in the formation of judgment and the activity of thinking, from which the baby seeks to reach satisfaction again. In this search, when he sees the images of his mother's face, he finds them in his own

⁹ Not only the vision of another's face integrates our libidinal composition, but also is included in the construction of the body image the point of view of another on our face (Merleau-Ponty, 2011). Hence the importance of thinking that the possible reactions of the analyst are also integrated and fantasized by the subject based on the story of how, libidinally, his body image was built around the vision of others about himself.

bodily sensations; more than that, Freud says that perceptions of the object are traced back to sensations already known by the child:

The perceptual complexes arising from the like will be in part new and incomparable, their features in the visual domain, but other visual perceptions, for example, the movements of their hand, will coincide in the subject with the recollection of their own visual impressions (Freud [1895] 1950: 376–377)¹⁰.

4. Fragments of a brief transfer

The particularities of the Dora case, in *Fragments from the Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* ([1901] 1905), and its abrupt interruption, impressed Freud. We refer to the case for two reasons. First, to highlight the analyst's position, who thought he was unable to manage the transfer. Secondly, because the symptoms of Dora illustrate the body's tacit symbolism and its openness to meanings. The body symbolism designates the fact that our organs point to fundamental structures of our relationship with others and receive specific meanings in the history of the subject, as shown by the hysterical conversion of Dora.

At the beginning of treatment, Freud states that Dora *acted out* essential parts of her memories, rather than simply reporting them. She returned to see Freud two years after the interruption due to neuralgia on the right side of her face: 'Her alleged facial neuralgia was thus a self-punishment – remorse at having once given Herr K a slap, and at having transferred her feelings of revenge on to me' (Freud 1905: 116). We see here that sexual motions assume two possible

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion, see Simanke's excellent work *Identidade, significação e intercorporeidade na obra Inicial de Freud* (2016).

destinations of the drive: 'the redirection against the person himself', in this case her body, and 'the transformation into its opposite', of love into hate, and vice versa. Due to repression and the conversion mechanisms of hysteria, the image of the slap on the face (of Mr. K in the lake trip scene) is replaced by the painful sensation on the patient's own face, on the date she reads a newspaper article about Freud's nomination to public office. It is worth noting that the transformation into the opposite affects the *goals* of the drive. An activity: torturing, looking, is replaced by the passive goal: being looked at, tortured.

The *redirection against the person himself* becomes more plausible if we consider, after all, that masochism is a sadism directed against the Self and that the exhibition includes the contemplation of one's own body. The analytical observation also shows that the masochist shares the sexual enjoyment [*mitigeniesst*] implied in the aggression against his own person and that the exhibitionist takes pleasure in his own nakedness (Freud [1915b] 2004: 152).

It is not about placing Dora in perverse positions, but of indicating that the essential thing is the exchange of objects in the transference relationship, between Mr. K and Freud and perhaps even between Freud and the female figures of Dora's sexual discoveries (her cold mother, Mr. K's wife). This man makes a loving invitation to Dora, who slaps him on the face, but Dora's symptom presents itself as easy pain, similar to someone receiving a (passive) action.

But, if in its origins, the slap was a defensive reaction, why does Freud speak of the woman's regret? Another question remains, whether the remorse was due to herself having given up on the treatment or due to Freud not having satisfied her libidinal desires, as Dora was very involved in the consensual plot between Mr. K, Mrs. K,

and Dora's father. This other man had a relationship with his friend's wife, with whom Dora had also become fond.

Freud reports this outcome with a mix of joy and spite, which seems like a countertransference: 'I do not know what kind of help she wanted to ask me for, but I promised to forgive her for depriving me of the satisfaction of freeing her much more radically from her sufferings' (Freud 1905: 116).

However, in *Observations on transference-love* ([1914] 1915), Freud addresses the problem of the analyst's countertransference in relation to the patient's desire movements [*Wunschregungen*], elucidating what he understands to be the greatest impasse in the psychoanalytic treatment, as it entails the risk of dissolution or reinforcement of the repression. Here, Freud points out why transference is revealed and intensified by the treatment, but never generated by it. It is not created by resistance. It has always been there, in the love chains, tender or hostile, as in each person's capacity to love, widely addressed in psychoanalysis as sexuality: 'We use the word 'sexuality' in the same broad sense as in the German language [*lieben*]' (Freud [1910] 2019: 83).

The work of analysis of transference can be raised to a privileged level, as an optical, acoustic, and specular device¹¹. These are the empty spaces and points of direct contact – meetings and disagreements – that emerge between the patient and this other (analyst) and can forge new identifications and, eventually, review previous patterns of emotional connection, in which part of the libido was retained (libido introversion). According to Merleau-Ponty, Freud is essential to think of the endoperception that interconnects one body to

¹¹ An expression coined by this author: "the analyst's qualified listening acts as an 'optical and acoustic device'" (Le Poulichet [1994] 1996: 127, our translation). The transferential device, thought of in this way, is also specular and leads to "a new apprehension of the body anchored in presence" (Le Poulichet 2010: 267, our translation).

another. The transfer in psychoanalysis is fundamentally an experience of emotional bond. In it, corporeality is a primordial bonding structure through which meaning and psychic time become present to one another.

The analytical process has an essential key to the development of the healing work (when possible), namely, the fact that the transference manifests itself as an apparent dissolution of the symptoms, derived from the formation of a new symptom that is the transference itself, 'an intermediate zone between illness and life, where the transition from the first to the second takes place [the transference neurosis]' (Freud [1914] 2019: 160). According to the author, the symptoms of the illness acquire a new meaning, *transference symptoms*: 'all libido is withdrawn from the symptoms and placed in the transference, being concentrated there', giving rise to a second phase, when 'the struggle for the new object takes place and the libido is freed from it' (Freud 1917: 455).

5. Final considerations

This article has an exploratory nature and is part of research to be carried out in the coming years. It was not about proposing a conclusive articulation or conducting a crystalline overlap, through which we would force the scope of philosophical concepts seeking their applicability or aiming to extract a certain technical essence that would resonate in the clinical practice. Our purpose was to provide general indications that could encourage subsequent and more specific articulations between the fields of psychoanalysis and phenomenology concerning the notion of transference and its relationship with the interpersonal dimension of body image.

The theme of corporeality in transference is vast, it involves not only technical texts but an entire metapsychological contribution, impossible to be addressed in this article – such as the detailing of the

concept of drive [*Trieb*], the exploration of the theory of libido and the theory of infantile sexuality and its nuclear complexes. Thus, we defend that the issue of the body image, as developed by Merleau-Ponty during his visits to the psychoanalytic field, can serve as a reading and complementing tool to accentuate the intercorporeal substrate present in the transference relationship. We hope to have shown that the philosopher's reflections on intercorporeality provide us with a useful repertoire to follow up on Freud's observation that transference does not occur in the abstract.

We privileged Freudian works from the 1910s and hope to have discussed how the analytical situation, especially from an energetic and dynamic point of view, opens up a field polarized by affections and immediate presences, populated by representations of things and representations of words, current and from childhood's past, which will unfold at different levels in the succession of interpolations between object images, repressed thoughts, somatic sensations, and other elements before the establishment of language, such as visual and acoustic traces. In our view, these sensorial and bodily formations build the primordial experiences of the construction of our unconscious body image to be recurrently invested by the narcissistic libido (libido of the Self).

Finally, presenting a reflection on the intercorporeal foundations of transference involved showing how the experience of speech in the analytical meeting is established on an expressive ecosystem that vivifies and animates the transference phenomenon, composed of rhythm, sound, place occupied by silences, hesitations, the position of the analysand on the couch and his gestures. The discussions carried out by Merleau-Ponty about the experience of others, especially at the end of his life, aim to support the thesis that the opening to the sensitive world provided by perception is also openness to other corporeality and, to that extent, can be considered a form of desire.

We saw that in Merleau-Ponty, perception is not an act of representative or intellectual content, nor a passive route about sensitive data, it benefits from a work already done, from a general synthesis. Roughly speaking, a similar meaning applies to transference and its foundations. Freud says that it is not enough to communicate resistance nor directly interpret love or hate in transference. Transference presents itself as deviations and movements concerning what has always been there, the soil for cultivating relationships with oneself and with others, structuring and restructuring thanks to the possibility of seeing oneself in perspectives, sometimes different, sometimes similar, through the eyes of the other, the other in you and you in the other.

References

Barbaras, R. (2011). *Investigações fenomenológicas: em direção a uma fenomenologia da vida*. Curitiba: UFPR.

Caper, R. (2002) Psicanálise e sugestão: Reflexões sobre 'A natureza da ação terapêutica da psicanálise' In, *Tendo Mente Própria, uma visão kleiniana do self e do objeto*. Rio de Janeiro: Imago.

Lacan, J. ([1949] 1999). Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je telle quelle nous est révélée dans l'expérience psychanalytique. In J. Lacan. *Écrits I*: 92-99. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Le Poulichet, S. ([1994] 1996). *O tempo na psicanálise*. Trans. by Lucy Magalhães. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar.

Le Poulichet, S. (2010). Champ du regard et surgissement de la présence dans les processus créateurs. *Cliniques méditerranéenne*, 1: 259–270.

Freud, S. ([1905] 1996). Fragmento da análise de um caso de histeria. (Abreu, J. O. A., & Oiticica, C. M., Trads.). In J. Salomão (Org.), *Edição standard brasileira das obras psicológicas completas de Sigmund Freud*. (Rio de Janeiro) Imago, 7: 15–116.

Freud, S. ([1910] 2019). Sobre psicanálise 'selvagem'. Fundamentos da clínica psicanalítica. In *Obras incompletas de Sigmund Freud*. Trans. by C. Dornbusch. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora, 2nd ed.

Freud, S. ([1912] 2019). A dinâmica da transferência. Fundamentos da clínica psicanalítica. In *Obras incompletas de Sigmund Freud*. Trans. by C. Dornbusch. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora, 2nd ed.

Freud, S. ([1914] 2019). Lembrar, repetir e perlaborar. Fundamentos da Clínica Psicanalítica. In *Obras Incompletas de Sigmund Freud*. Trans. by C. Dornbusch. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora.

Freud, S. ([1915] 2019). Observações sobre o amor transferencial. In *Obras Incompletas de Sigmund Freud*. Trans. by C. Dornbusch. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora.

Freud, S. (1915 [1914]). Fundamentos da Clínica Psicanalítica. In *Obras Incompletas de Sigmund Freud*. Trans. by C. Dornbusch. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora.

Freud, S. (1915b). Pulsões e destinos da pulsão. In *Escritos sobre a psicologia do inconsciente (1911-1915)*. Trans. by L. A. Hanns. Rio de Janeiro: Imago, 2004. (Obras psicológicas de Sigmund Freud), vol. I, pp. 133–174.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2000) *Parcours deux 1951-1961*. Lagrasse: Verdier.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2003). *Nature: Courses, notes from Collège de France*. Trans. by R. Vallier. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. ([1945] 2005) *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. by Colin Smith. London: Routledge.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2010). *Child Psychology and Pedagogy: The Sorbonne Lectures, 1949–1952*. Trans. by T. Welsh. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2011). *Le monde sensible et le monde de l'expression cours au Collège de France, notes*. Genève: Metispresses.

- Saint-aubert, E. (2013). *Être et Chair I: du corps au désir*. Paris: Vrin.
- Schilder, P. ([1950] 2007). *The Image and Appearance of the human body*. London: Routledge.
- Simanke, R. (2016). Identidade, significação e intercorporeidade na obra inicial de Freud. *Palavras*, (2): 87–119.

