

The Body as Blind Spot: Towards Lived Experience and a Body-Specific Philosophy in Education

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Abstract

What do the philosophies of phenomenological scholars such as Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty tell us about education in South Africa? How can we use the philosophies of these scholars to develop the minds of our learners and students holistically? Drawing from Husserl's "lifeworld theory," Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* and Merleau-Ponty's "lived body theory," this paper argues for a shift towards a philosophy of "lived experience" in the classroom that views the "body," which is often dismissed in an educational setting, as an authentic, intelligible and privileged metaphysical object for learning. We argue that teaching should not promote a domain-specific epistemological ethos to open up new pathways to knowing and understanding the natural world, but instead should adopt a body-specific ethos that leads to a process of understanding our "true self," "true nature" or "true humanity." This means that education structured around preparing the masses for the corporate world should therefore not be our aim, but rather nurturing "body knowledge" that is already there.

Keywords: lived experience; body; lifeworld; *Dasein*; lived-body theory

Introduction

Over the last three decades in Africa and South Africa intensified globalisation has resulted in the cannibalisation of the indigenous, social and political spheres, which resulted in an explosion of Western frameworks of thinking. For many decades in South Africa these Western frameworks, ideologies and philosophies have dominated education. Consequently, teachers don't see their learners in their fullness as unique, living, subjective and epistemologically active beings who are constantly engaged with the



Education as Change

<https://upjournals.co.za/index.php/EAC>

Volume 22 | Number 3 | 2018 | #1880 | 16 pages

<https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/1880>

ISSN 1947-9417 (Online)

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physical world. Hall (1989, 190) vehemently critiques this disposition and reminds teachers of the importance of being engaged with a child's past and history in the teaching and learning space when he writes:

The past is not only a position from which to speak, but it is also an absolutely necessary resource in what one has to say ... Our relationship to the past is quite a complex one; we can't pluck it up out of where it was and simply restore it to ourselves.

In agreement with Hall, many African scholars have over the years shown the powerful impact of historical, social and cultural forces in the way that African learners think and view the world. How these forces culminate in our modes of education has encouraged these scholars to scrutinise the various curricula and teaching philosophies in Africa and South Africa carefully and critically not only for content, but also for the absence of effective pedagogies and theories of learning (for details, see Aikenhead 1996; Jegede 1999; Jegede and Okebukola 1991; Le Grange 2007; Ogunniyi 1987). Their research findings have shown that the main contributing factor to this dilemma is the canonical Western tradition that continues to dominate education. Aikenhead (1996) draws a distinction between Western frameworks of knowledge and indigenous or local knowledge frameworks. He points out that Western knowledge is associated with the term *episteme* or theoretical knowledge, which is often disconnected from the knower. He argues further that when Western knowledge dominates education, teachers dismiss ways of living or pluralist knowledge generated from personal engagement with the world through the body. In other words, lived experience that generates "body knowledge" becomes a blind spot in the teaching and learning process.

Internationally, curriculum scholars and theorists such as Maxine Green (2004), Ted Aoki (2005), William Pinar (2015) and Madeleine Grumet (Pinar and Grumet 1976), and Max Van Manen (1990) have voiced their concern over the dismissal of a lived-experience curriculum and approach to teaching and learning that embraces human subjectivity. This study wants to extend the work and plea of these scholars, which we are not going to discuss further in this paper, to also consider the importance of the human body in the teaching and learning process. To this end this study will draw from the work of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty.

Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty are often described as three of the greatest and most influential phenomenological scholars of the 20th century. In this paper the work of these scholars will be referenced not so much to advance an understanding of their work, but more to argue for an educational philosophy that embraces human "subjectivity" and "lived experience" in which the "body" becomes a cumulative body of knowledge—what we refer to as body-specific epistemologies. A related aim of this paper is to use the work of these scholars to argue for a philosophy of education that helps teachers to assist learners to understand their "true self," their "true nature" and what "true humanity" is all about. In what follows we first provide a succinct overview of Husserl's lifeworld theory and its relevance to "lived experience" philosophies. Second, we provide an overview of

Heidegger's discourse on *Dasein* to illuminate the importance of subjectivity of being in the world and why it is important to concentrate on the self. Third, we discuss Merleau-Ponty's lived body theory to argue for a body-specific epistemology and philosophy in education. Finally, we discuss how people learn in experience and its value to the teaching and learning process.

Husserl's Philosophy of Lived Experience

Philosophers such as Husserl (1967; 1970), Heidegger (1967) and Merleau-Ponty (1962) and various other phenomenological scholars devoted their life's work to trying to understand the preeminent significance of human consciousness. According to Husserl (1970), human consciousness represents a recollection of events that constitutes different experiences impressed in consciousness. The human mind has the creative ability to bring back into existence past events and experiences through a process of reflection. What makes Husserlian phenomenology different from all other schools of phenomenological thought is his lack of interest in the physical basis of consciousness. Husserl explains "consciousness" (in German *Bewußtsein*) as perception, remembering, imagining, judging, hoping, fearing and so forth. These are descriptive lenses that are all modes of consciousness that shape a person's "lifeworld." In other words, Husserlian phenomenology is more interested in describing human consciousness and its various modes with a specific focus on the question: What are the essences that make up human consciousness?

Essences in Husserl's view do not refer to facts, which is the customary focus of the way that education is structured in South Africa, but rather to the foundations of the essential structures of consciousness and its various modes (1967). These foundations include intuition (*Wesenserschauung*), which is processed by the eidetic variation. The eidetic variation is the ability to construct different mental images of various objects whether they are real or unreal. Intuition allows the individual's mind to reflect on all mental computations and projections. Husserl notes that reflection is not some superficial view of an object, but a deep engagement in which the observer carefully examines or dissects an object (1967). Reflection entails an evaluation of the attitudes of people, their ideas and their overall livelihood. In other words, when an individual experiences an event, he or she firstly experiences a state of awareness of the event, secondly, processes the event, and thirdly reflects on the event (*erlebst*). Reflection involves all modes of consciousness.

Another essential structure of essence is intentionality. Husserl (in Gerner 2001, 547) describes intentionality as follows:

every mental phenomenon includes something as an object within itself, although they do not always do so in the same way. In presentation (*vorstellung*) something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired, and so on.

This quotation draws attention to the directedness of human consciousness. In other words, love, hate, desire and so forth are all different modes of consciousness, which indicates that an individual is always conscious of something as a way of being directed towards something. Husserl alludes to these phenomena as intentional experiences that the mind is directed towards. Consequently, fearing, hating, desiring, perceiving, imagining, hoping are all examples of intentional experiences. Thus, intentional experience is a mental process or entity that exists in consciousness. Husserl emphasises that in most cases intentional experiences are directed towards entities that are not mental entities.

Intentionality is also the epistemological disposition equated with knowledge by means of “acquaintance,” “knowledge about,” “pure data” and “inferences,” “presentations” and “constructions,” the “given” and the “interpreted,” and so forth (Husserl 1967, xxvii). These conceptions relate to how experience is perceived because, according to Husserl (1967), experience is a complex matrix of events that have both an external and an inherent supposition. These suppositions provide the basis for a person’s understanding of the natural world in the Husserlian paradigm. Next, we shift our attention to Heidegger’s thinking to further refine an understanding of the internalisation of knowledge through experience.

Heidegger’s Philosophy of Lived Experience

While Husserlian phenomenology focused mainly on the intentional directedness of human consciousness or directed mental content, Heidegger was more interested in the “phenomenon of being.” According to Heidegger (1967), a person’s thinking or awareness is always directed towards some object in the world. Husserl’s work (1967; 1970; 1983) revolves around human consciousness, hence the phrase “returning to the things themselves,” which refers to awareness, intentionality and so forth. His endeavour is to isolate human consciousness from the body to describe or explain pure or absolute consciousness along with the phenomenological reduction. To do so, in his work he attempts to disembodiment (empty) the individual and transport him or her to a realm of pure consciousness. Heidegger’s discourse, on the other hand, was not interested in pure consciousness on understanding “transparent coping” (Heidegger 1967, 23) in a particular place and time. This is because he believed that the human condition consists of a combination of activities and experiences that entail a lot of “coping.” For example, most of the time a person retains no memory of some of the activities he or she was engaged in throughout the day—opening a door, driving a car, or switching on the television. A person does not think about how to turn the door handle, or how to shift between the gears of car, or how to use the remote of the television. In all these activities the process is so transparent that it does not become fixed in the person’s consciousness. In other words, the person’s activities are not characterised by conscious decisions or aware states of mind, but are rather a way of coping with the human condition. These aspects are central to Heidegger’s phenomenology and are subordinate to what he refers to as “fundamental ontology” (Cerbone 2006). Fundamental ontology hinges on the question of

being and what it means *to be*. In Heidegger's magnum opus *Being and Time* he attempts to rekindle the debate about "what it means to be" and "the human being's place in this world."

In an attempt to address these issues Heidegger (1967) avers that we need to start with the self and the relational space between the self and the world of objects. To understand the "self," Heidegger (1967) points out, is a question of *Dasein*. Cerbone (2006) notes that *Dasein* (in German, "existence") is a compound word consisting of "*da*" (which means "there" or "here") and "*sein*" (which means "being"). Heidegger uses the term *Dasein* as an "idiosyncratic interlocutor," which is translated as "being there/here," and as "earning your daily bread" to separate it from the everyday terminology as referring to man, human being and so forth. Thus conceived, if we want to get a fairly accurate description of the term *Dasein* we must therefore start by articulating or spelling out the pre-ontological description of what it means "to be" or "being there/here." This pre-ontological connectedness to the meaning of *Dasein* relates to being-in-the-world or the being's capacity for being in the world. The focus is therefore not so much on how people think or what they believe in, but on how they act. It is in the process of "being" or "acting" in the world that a person's mental processes are made explicit. This "unveiling of a person's thoughts" is what Heidegger refers to as the phenomenological reduction.

According to Heidegger (1967), *Dasein* has a threefold structure. Firstly, *Dasein* has disposition. This means that in everyday human activities or "being-in-the-world" all activities or events are classified as important or not so important. In this classification of events or activities humans have a general tendency to give more credence or prominence to issues and activities that need their urgent attention. This mental classification contributes to depth and rigour in the execution and performance of the activity/event/task. Another important aspect is the mood that prevails when a person enters the situation. Mood (emotional condition) is always present and can present as friendly or unfriendly, threatening or calm. Secondly, *Dasein* has a specific structure or discourse. This so called "structure" or "discourse" shapes the world for the individual based on the context of its significance. Human activities can be broken up into different structures. A carpenter, for example, can look at the hammer as an object with which he can hammer nails into timber, or it can also be used as a nail puller, or it can simply be seen as a basic object with a wooden handle and a steel head tied to the handle. This speaks to the referential totality of the object and the different ways in which the object can be described. Thirdly, *Dasein* is always pressing towards an objective. This means the central focus of every human activity is the completion of an activity for the sake of someone or something. In this context *Dasein* is viewed as an activity or "being-in-the-world" that involves pressing towards the future and can be viewed as representing the interrelatedness of the past, present and the future. For example, when a carpenter is busy putting on a roof of a house, his focus is on completing the project. This activity can be mapped out as having a past, a present moment and a future, which is when the task will be completed. This notion of *Dasein* as pressing towards the future invokes the concept of

time and connotes the carpenter as a “coping being” in time or as being immersed or embedded in time. This raises the question: How did Heidegger apply his own philosophy of *Dasein* in his teaching?

Heidegger’s (1967) students described his teaching style as nothing short of “electrifying” (Kruger-Ross 2015). He was renowned for his commanding presence both as a lecturer and public speaker. Instead of handing down “commodified” knowledge or predesigned knowledge, he would guide his students into the being of the phenomenon in question. His students, including Hans-Georg Gadamer, Karl Löwith, Walter Biemel and Hannah Arendt, describe his teaching approach as an ontological dissection of phenomena. He would start every lecture by laying out his thesis and taking the title of the announced lecture or course, sometimes word by word, and completely transforming the common sense meaning as a way to reveal new insights into thinking about “being,” or thinking and “being” (Kruger-Ross 2015; Magrini 2014). In this way the lecture became not a description of the work, but a source or a guideline for subjective inquiry. This approach did not only inspire his students to move away from old ideas, cold facts and descriptions of life, but encouraged them to take a step back and to reflect on their experiences and to carefully apply this reflection to their subjective lived worlds. Heidegger’s humanising philosophical approach inspired his students to search for truth, making the discovery of new ideas possible. In other words, his students had to use the information taught and to go beyond what they had learned. This approach helped them to break free from the confinement of the known to discover a new world, and new ways of thinking and looking at life. His teaching approach also assisted them to create and understand a common humanity. Heidegger’s (1967) approach to teaching or public speaking, as sketched by Kruger-Ross (2015), resonates well with his notion of *Dasein*—“being there” or “there being”—because to him the essence of our “being” is existence or living (Heidegger 1967, 207). By asking questions instead of conveying information, teachers connect with temporal structures that occur through various stages that learners go through in life. Vandenberg (2008) notes that after Heidegger published *Being and Time* in 1927, he immediately became famous. This encouraged many students from all over Europe to study with him. After moving on from Heidegger and his teachings, they formed “a first, second and third generation of existentialist phenomenologists” (253). This is because existentialists are more concerned with the question of being rather than being taught how to be. Next, we discuss Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of the lived body to illuminate the significance of the “body” in the teaching and learning environment.

Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Lived Experience

Merleau-Ponty’s “lived body theory” points to the importance of lived space in the teaching and learning environment; this is because the foundation of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological philosophy rests on two intertwined aspects, namely, (1) the “body” or “self,” and (2) the “world” (Merleau-Ponty 1962). In this tradition “body” (self) is viewed from a different perspective than that of phenomenologists such as Husserl and Heidegger. The reason for this is that Merleau-Ponty views the body as the first point of

contact with the material world and the development of “mental content from the world” (Rabil 1967, 25). Consequently, the body is seen as the centre of action and this action he describes as an expression of the “will,” which automatically gives the body intelligibility and privileged metaphysical status. This means the body has knowledge often referred to as “embodied knowledge” or “body knowledge” (Koopman 2018). Therefore, Merleau-Ponty argues that “we are our bodies” (Lilja 2013, 3). This means the body acts in the world by moving around, moving objects around in search of meaning, by observing different objects, and by directing the flow of information through action. However, a person cannot step outside his or her body to observe the body from the outside. So, it is through the body that the individual comes into contact with the world and gets to know the world. Within the teaching and learning environment the teacher is a body that is connected to other bodies, such as the learners, teachers, parents and so forth. The teacher is acting out in the school to observe and to see how learners behave and respond to learning. In other words, as the body acts upon images and events, it can be defined as the centre of action. The body, therefore, is the root of a person’s personality and individuality, and should be seen as the only referent of concrete philosophy (Rabil 1967, 27).

It is important to know that in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy the body has its own rules and laws that govern its perceptual power. Rabil (1967, 26) cites Schopenhauer and writes “I am my body” and therefore “I live my body.” Schopenhauer (in Rabil 1967) asserts that this is only true if no reflection takes place, because when a person reflects he or she gets lost in his or her thoughts causing the body to become an object of the mind. The body therefore is the root of the personality and individuality. Merleau-Ponty cited Sartre (in Merleau-Ponty 1962, 294) to explain the body as follows:

You capture my image, my appearance; I capture yours. You are not me, since you see me and I do not see myself. What I lack is this me that you see. And what you lack is the you that I see. And no matter how far we advance in our mutual understanding, as much as we reflect, so much will be different.

In the above quotation Merleau-Ponty makes a distinction between the “I” “in-itself” and the “I” “for-itself.” He apprehends the images that he captures with his eyes by seeing the other, but he cannot see the seeing that is taking place in his body. Another important point he alludes to is how the body with all its constituent parts reveals an aspect of the world, namely, “the other.” In other words, the body becomes the means through which the world with all its activities is revealed. Sartre ([1943] 1956) describes three ontological dimensions of the body. Firstly, the body is first and foremost “lived”—here the German word *leibz* applies, which means “a living body” or “being alive” and not *körps*, which means “corpse” or “dead body.” Hence “I live my body,” which implies that the body is immersed in the world and makes the world an object that can be studied. Secondly, the body is “for others.” This dimension has a twofold meaning; on the one hand, the body grasps the other as an object, while, on the other hand, the quantification of the body speaks of judgement or characterisation and focuses on differences between

objects in the world. Lastly, “the body” promotes alienation from the “self” when it encounters others. When the “other” observes the body, he or she makes the flaws of the body explicit and therefore makes the self more conscious of its own subjectivities, which results in alienating the self from the body. The next section illustrates how the above description of the body relates to a humanising philosophy.

Body and Space and the Body-in-the-World

Before we discuss the interconnection between the body and the world, we will first discuss the concept of space. Space can be explained from different perspectives, such as physical space, geometrical space and perceived space. What we are interested in is perceived space. Perceived space does not only belong to objects or subjects, but to both. Perceived space, Rabil (1967) points out, is existential space, such as our environment, or the immediate space that surrounds us. Space is thus oriented towards the body and the body perceives space irrespective of the body being conscious or unconscious of its orientations. The first connection of the body with this space takes place unconsciously, that is, when a person is born. From that time onwards, the body starts to make sense of the various orientations of space such as depth, height, verticality, horizontality, length, breadth and so forth. This is an extremely complex phase of existence in space as we try to comprehend the perceptual field of space. As we become older and learn to understand the dimensions of space and anchor ourselves in this spatial world, our understanding deepens and we learn to connect with all the objects in time and space. All of this is living space and we learn to experience the world through our bodies. We also learn that meaning is always present. For example, when we enter our homes, it triggers memories of happiness, joy or anxiety and tension, to name a few. The next section expands on the body in space and explains the synthesis of meaning in space.

To Merleau-Ponty (1962) the body is always acting and behaving in the world. The world then becomes the space that the body inhabits. In this space humans connect with other humans and objects. Because space has intelligibility and meaning, for example, emotions, fear, anxiety, calmness, it has, according to Merleau-Ponty (1962, 196), a direct bearing or impact on the body. He notes: “The experience of our body teaches us to embed space in time” (1962, 196). Consequently, the space (or environment) a person occupies has the potential to enter the body and affects the way a person feels. When this happens, the person becomes the space that he or she occupies. For example, if the atmosphere in a school is not conducive to learning, the possibility arises that teachers and children entering that space might feel the same way that other teachers and children feel, and subsequently behave in the same way by following them. This is congruent with Heidegger’s (1967) view that people cannot stand distance. People are not eager to deviate from the norm. The reason is that the body becomes socialised into a dominant practice. This dominant practice, in Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) view, can be described as the perceptual space that drives the person (teacher or learner) to become the space within which he or she is placed. This notion of space and its influence on the body has been

corroborated by empirical studies conducted by Alerby (2009), Koopman, Le Grange and De Mink (2016) and Lilja (2013).

Merleau-Ponty (1962) emphasises how the body *inhabits* the world it is in. By so doing, the body as subject (that is, the living body) is intricately engaged in the world in the same way as objects such as tables and chairs are immersed in it. Therefore, any body of knowledge bereft of experience is at best described as mythical. This is because lived experience is a precondition for learning and language is used to conceptualise and articulate every moment. This brings Merleau-Ponty to the realisation that it is only through experience that a person can discover the world which possesses him or her more than the experience itself.

The above implies that the nature of experience philosophically has to be the mediating principle in which learning must be rooted. Experience in the teaching and learning process forms the ultimate poles of subject and object. From this perspective Langan (1966, 22) writes:

The practical orientation of commonsense experience towards clear consciousness tends to polarise our attention, noetically, towards the most willful active principle—the subjective Ego as doer, grasped as intellect and will—and, noematically, toward the most structured object—the finished product of our praxis-centred daily concerns, the intellectually fixed, objectivised thing. While both the voluntary ego and objective thing implicitly depend on the actual body's living in the world and making an experience possible in the first place, the bodily synthesis nevertheless goes about its task so silently, so fundamentally, that its transcendental contribution is no more noticed than the light which illumines and thus makes possible every visible spectacle.

In other words, apart from using our experiences to describe the world, when lived experience becomes the philosophical approach to teaching and learning, it has the potential to transport an individual (learner/student) beyond the narrow bounds of the technical and method towards an illuminating new realm of existence. In this realm the learner transcends his or her old ways of knowing and doing to discover new worlds of ideas and thinking in which a person sees the world afresh from different perspectives. In other words, subjects like mathematics, science and history should not be presented or seen as bodies of knowledge to be learned that lead to mythical understandings or virtual realities, but as coming to grips with the world and its content. This will allow teachers to start a subject like mathematics, science or history with questions about the learners' perceptions of the content, as opposed to teaching as the delivery of ready-made knowledge. The fact that individuals have different experiences in the world allows them to bring different perspectives to learning subjects like mathematics and science. These different experiences and perspectives bring with them opportunities for new dialogues about the world and the usefulness of subjects such as mathematics, science or history. When a learner or student can apply the knowledge that emerges from these subjects, he or she can look at events in the world in new ways to understand each moment pre-

reflexively. When this happens, experiences of the same events are no longer routinely or consistently viewed as if the world controls the body involuntarily, but the individual learns to take more control of his or her world. Thus, when the teaching of mathematics and science is rooted in experience, it allows the individual to discover the world as a “world-founding principle.” This way of learning makes a phenomenon under discussion or analysis more transparent, thereby revealing more than one way to resolve an inquiry.

How Do We Learn in Experience?

In the light of Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) lived body theory, we do not only perceive a real event or experience with our eyes, our minds or any other bodily organ—we perceive things with the sum total of all the parts of the body. The being (the self) and being (in the world) form the two poles of Merleau-Ponty’s thought. Indeed, Rabil (1967, viii) concurs with Merleau-Ponty (1962) when he writes:

neither the subjectivity of the “self” nor the objectivity of the world, but the relationship between them ... continuously renders the self more than subjective and the world less than objective.

The mind therefore becomes subordinate to the body as the senses help the body search for a new understanding on the basis of previous events and experiences of a particular phenomenon. Therefore, to Merleau-Ponty (1962) learning cannot be treated as the assimilation of propositional content and inferences drawn from it by a person who is wholly detached from events or the experiences of others. Instead, he argues that for learning to be meaningful, an incoming stimulus must be received by the sense organs of a person who is connected to a particular object or experience in the world. He (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 7) writes:

The objective world being given, it is assumed that it passes on to the sense-organs messages which must be registered, then deciphered in such a way as to produce in us the original text. Hence we have in principle a point-by-point correspondence and constant connection between the stimulus and the elementary perception.

At a physiological level an incoming stimulus causes innumerable afferent neurons to transport the received stimulation to the central nervous system (CNS). An incalculable number of motor neurons then conduct the stimulus from the CNS to the effectors (a muscle or gland), resulting in a reaction. These sensations and reactions are transferred through the various neurons which connect the nervous tissue. Information is then sent through a series of excitation points through motor mechanisms. In other words, the body activates receptor apparatus that in turn activates a number of autonomous circuits. According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), this represents a coordinated action between the *sum total of parts of the body* connected to objects in space. In other words, the body is not viewed as a passive agent that reacts and adjusts itself to external stimuli which act as causes, but is actively engaged (body) in the learning process. This is not the case with

the way material is pedagogically delivered to learners in South Africa. Instead it is presented pedagogically in a Western tradition as a set of facts linked only to predetermined internal mental representations which disregard the body as an experiential entity.

Each person born into this world experiences a plurality of phenomena. In search of meaning and understanding, a person uses their human faculties such as their sensory and mental apparatus. Merleau-Ponty's (1962) analysis and account explain in fine detail how phenomena are perceived in the world through the senses. He points out that in search of meaning people decipher events to search for consistency and repetition in their world. For example, consistencies refer to properties of objects such colour, shape, size and various other features. Other consistencies include gestures, movements, expressions and so forth. These properties can only be found in the comportment of the body in the world and the body's connectedness to objects in the world. The search for consistencies is important for human mental faculties, because people use them to construct routines or generic protocols to give structure to their lives. Consistency, also referred to as "constancy," makes the body intentional, since it is always on the lookout for a consistent world to harmonise an experience as perceived by the senses with every other moment it has experienced. Merleau-Ponty (1962) avers that this search for consistency explains Husserl's (1983) *Urdoxa* ("first" or "primary" doctrine) of intentionality. To Merleau-Ponty the prime effect of "intentionality" should be viewed from the perspective of the body's place in the world. He holds that the "intentional body" manifests itself as a spontaneous presumptuous unity of consistency. This raises the following question: Does every person experience the world of phenomena in the same way?

Conversely, what a person experiences in the world is not necessarily what is out there in the world, but depends on the nature of a person's sensory organs. For example, when tasting red wine a person depends on his or her sensory organs of sight, smell and taste. Sight is used to identify the colour and texture of the wine, smell to identify the tannins and bouquet of the wine, and taste to decipher all the ingredients such as its oral sensations and fruity flavours. However, oral sensations are complex and depend on various factors such as ethnicity, age, gender and overall health in addition to other physiological factors (Pickering et al. 2010). Physiological factors, such as sensitivity to 6-n-propylthiouracil (PROP) and bitterness, cause some individuals to perceive the taste and tactile sensations of drinking red wine more intensely than others. These factors make the description of wine based on oral sensations even more challenging. In other words, the nature of our experiences, as with our sensory faculties, are subject dependent. Thus reality is divided into two parts:

1. There are things as they are in themselves, which is independent from their being experienced. We have no means of accessing such things;

2. There are things as they appear to us in the world of appearances—that is, as things present themselves to us through experience. Things can also be presented as a science which gives deeper understanding to objects.

In other words, our senses play an important role in our perception of the world and hence they (the senses) constitute information. For this reason, MacMurray (2012) states that acquiring high knowledge and high skills in order to be adequately prepared for the world of work does not constitute a holistic education. In his view, this is not even the most important task of education; as he puts it: “It is rather the minimum that an industrial society must demand for efficiency’s sake” (2012, 773). This is because this type of education does not add value to an individual’s true self and true humanity; instead it marginalises the individual from being conscious of the self. He suggests a type of learning that harnesses the full use of the senses, but in a contemplative and disciplined way (MacMurray 2012). He contends that to be contemplative about sense experiences involves leading a creative life as opposed to a dull life of intellect dominated by concepts and definitions. He claims that applying the senses is another way of learning to be authentically human, which stimulates creativity. It is a child’s birthright to be creative, so as to allow the imaginative capability to stimulate the child’s intellectual faculties. To be creative and imaginative requires a deeper connectedness to the senses, which requires a person to see, hear, feel, smell and taste. These sense experience activities root the individual in the present, allowing him or her to tap into a deep connectedness with his or her surroundings. In other words, knowledge becomes a way of life that flows from the outside to the inside, allowing the body to become an extension of the mind (Merleau-Ponty 1962). When this happens, MacMurray argues, the person can unlock the intrinsic worth of the individual. This helps the person to move beyond rigidity, inflexibility and factual content into the realm of life that gives them a deeper sense of purpose through which they can discover their “true self,” “true nature” and “true humanity.”

Conclusion

In this article we attempted to evoke the significance of human consciousness and the “body” as an important starting point in the teaching and learning process. For the authors, human consciousness encompasses an individual’s totality of experiences with the world. Therefore lived experience should form the fundamental basis of teaching as a way to illuminate a person’s active-passive participation in the world. We have argued that to ask our learners and students to learn and think in a disembodied context creates no interest in dialogue. But when individual and world are in dialogue, we learn to see and understand how each adjusts to the other under the impulsion of the situation. Such a dialogue is what education should be about as opposed to acquiring concepts and facts. The so-called “high knowledge and high skills” approach, one of the seven principles that form the basis of South Africa’s Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, cannot give texture and structure to the body, or teach how to learn to connect with the mind. Instead, it brings greater separation between body and mind, which we have argued forms the basis of Western frameworks of thinking. Such a paradox serves the interests of

multinational business and the corporate world with a strong focus on consumerist market-driven knowledge.

In conclusion, we want to draw from the work of Hannah Arendt, who was a student of Martin Heidegger. To Hannah Arendt (1998) successful people are not judged by what they have produced, but by who they are. In her view a true artist becomes his/her work and sees him/herself as a mirror image of the work. She often draws from the world of the craftsman to illustrate all activities involved in creating the final product. Consider the carpenter and his activities. First there is the vision, that is, the mental model of the product that he works towards. Second, there are the various activities (work) in producing the product, for example, a table or a chair. Then there is the “body,” which cannot finish the product without intelligibility and the required skill. All activities towards finishing the product are dependent on “body-knowledge” obtained through and in experience. Most activities are directed towards finishing the product. But then there are times when he has to buy materials, clean his working area—for example, when he has to pick up the sawdust, clean and/or sharpen his tools and clean out his truck. During all these menial activities the carpenter’s actions may seem to be counterproductive. One can say that these days are his off-days; however, this is all necessary in realising the vision (product). Just as the carpenter takes a day or more off to do some clean-up work, teachers at times need to shift their focus away from the planned curricular activities and administrative duties, and turn their attention towards the child as a living body. When this happens the teacher learns to see the child in his or her fullness as a unique and epistemological subject with a deep sense of sensitivity and thoughtfulness. Seeing another as a living being should not be viewed as a sacrifice but as part of the teacher’s duties in the teaching and learning process. Just as the carpenter at times admires his product by feeling the smoothness of the surface, and so develops an internal appreciation for his own work, in the same way teachers need to embrace the experiences and “body-knowledge” of the learner. Simply focusing on transferring knowledge as an end in itself would be living an impoverished life as a teacher. It is perhaps unfortunate that in South Africa good teachers are identified on the basis of good results in tests and examinations, thus encouraging them to promote high knowledge and high skills as advocated in the curriculum. In order to achieve this goal successfully, the teacher is not expected to see the learners as persons, but as useful bodies that serve the agenda of the state.

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