Phenomenological Realism and the Moving Image of Experience

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In his appreciative yet sharply critical notice on The Sense of Space Andrew Bailey finds something innovative in my emphasis on the role of bodily movement in spatial perception, but worries that my account is at odds with scientific realism and leaves no room for experienced imagery. Rather than tackling all the details of his notice, I approach these problems through some underlying and difficult conceptual issues. Bailey’s worries, I think, stem from three interwoven presuppositions deeply embedded in the usual philosophical treatment of science and mind: that there is a sharp ontological division between subject and object; that mental images are kin to fully determinate and filled-in pictures that are wholly present in the subject and function as images independent of the world they depict; and that, correlative, the world depicted is to be conceptualized as having already constituted determinacies that are entirely ontologically independent of our relation to the world. The “phenomenological realism” I outline below challenges these presuppositions by taking a radically empirical (cf. Russon 2006) look at how we humans, including philosophers and scientists, actually access the world.
To head off misunderstandings and anticipate where I am going, the issue at stake hinges on two different senses of the “objective” and the “mind independent.” When people in my neighbourhood agree that our lawns are being eaten by grubs, we take it as objectively the case, independent of our individual minds, that grubs have invaded our lawns. This is because the world we access shows itself as objectively “grubby.” But suppose our thinking is invaded by a Cartesian scepticism that chews up the roots of knowledge. We would then seek an objectivity beyond the directly accessible world, beyond all taint of mind, for only such a mind-independent reality would escape scepticism. Ironically, the directly accessible world cannot give evidence of such reality, for any such evidence invites gnawing sceptical doubt, rather than protecting against it. This sort of mind-independent reality remains an idealized presupposition. As Kant would put it, it is a merely noumenal thing-in-itself that opens transcendental illusion. It is this sort of reality that I am contesting. The phenomenological realism I here advocate does not, however, deny an objective world about which we can all agree or disagree. Indeed, phenomenological realism urges that one’s experience does not consist of mental images entirely self-contained “in the head,” but of experienced imagery that plays out through one’s moving relation to the world. So, experience itself precisely exposes one to a way a world is in relation to oneself. Science simply refines this experience through procedures that aim to show there is a way the world is in relation to us all. But our way to science is from within our mindful and bodily relation to the world, such that the objectively determinate world we reach is not, ontologically speaking, sharply divided from us, but is correlative, in complex ways, to our evolved, moving relation to the world. There is a grubby, objective world—because we grub about in it, not because our minds can leap to a reality beyond our subjectivity and the world in which we live and move. In a way, Kant’s strategy of constituting the subject-object relation from within the phenomena is here transposed to the domain of living movement to show how the subject-object relation is constituted within movement.

Let me begin by emphasizing that The Sense of Space is rooted in the phenomenological tradition. Husserl initiated phenomenology with his call to “go back to the things themselves.” This is to say: do not begin philosophy with conceptual frameworks already dug in; instead bracket your assumptions and let the phenomena shape your concepts. Phenomenology is thus first of all descriptive: it begins by putting aside questions concerning causes and explanations of phenomena. (My claims about space are therefore in the first instance clearly about lived space, not “real space” [cf. Bailey, p. 558].) What is at issue in Bailey’s notice and below is, however, the point where phenomenological description would intersect with scientific explanation.
Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) is what most of all inspires my project. One of his crucial results is criticism of what he calls “the ready-made world.” Merleau-Ponty finds that empiricist and rationalist philosophy, and its counterparts in psychology, all share a deep underlying assumption: that the determinacies of perception are ultimately explained by something (whether it be an array of sensations or a roster of ideas or cognitive operations) already fully determined beyond, or in advance of, our interaction with the world that we perceptually access. Merleau-Ponty argues that perception itself gives no evidence of being based in such a ready-made world, that psychological experiments confirm this position, and that assuming that perception reconstructs, or is directly driven or explained by, a world whose determinacies are ready-made leads to conceptual difficulties, especially in accounts of perceptual learning. Merleau-Ponty’s position is resonant with Wilfrid Sellars’s attack on the myth of the given. Sellars (1997) and Kant (1987) before him urge that something counts as an instance of knowledge or of experience only if already mediated by a space of reasons or concepts, that knowledge and experience could not be based in immediate or pure givens with values already determined in advance of cognitive or experiential activity. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes this and adds that committing perception to a space of reasons or concepts already fixed beyond or independent of perception (as in a pure *a priori*) repeats the difficulties just identified.

In effect, Merleau-Ponty argues that what gives reasons (he would speak of “motives”) for something counting as experience is our lived body as doing things within the world. If we ask what makes bodily doings yield the sense of an intelligible world, Merleau-Ponty (in his earlier work) turns us to what he calls the body schema. Where Kant has concepts and schemata, Merleau-Ponty has a schema in the flesh. But if we explain this schema by reducing it to a fixture of the body, will it not boil down to physiology or neurology with a determinative function fixed in advance of perception? Some Merleau-Ponty scholars have noted that the body schema would then repeat the difficulties of the ready-made world. As Bailey rightly emphasizes, avoiding this problem is one of my motives for showing how the body schema arises in movements that cross the boundaries of body and world (and that go back to our bodily development). The body schema is always mediated by the very world we access and in which we develop; it is thoroughly dynamic, always in motion, and is never a fully closed system. In fact, I argue in my book that we should replace the concept of the body schema with that of the “moving schema of perception” (pp. 36-44). This conceptual shift emphasizes that the structure in virtue of which something is constituted as experience is not a schema already possessed by the body; rather, it is a structuring arising within body-world movement. We might think here of the eye of a hurricane: its
circular structure is not specified in advance, it is not already “possessed” by water and air molecules; rather, dynamic and thermodynamic constraints on the way these molecules move in specific situations fall out as the circular structuring of the eye.

Robert Brandom (2002) gives a map of philosophical positions that helps tie Bailey’s worries to the above. Brandom writes that for modern philosophy the problem of knowledge (and intentionality) is ontological, for example, forging a bridge between a subject and object that are ontologically distinct substances (as in Descartes). With Kant, the problem undergoes a momentous transformation. It is now deontological: specifying (by internal critique of experience itself) endogenous norms crucial to constituting knowledge and the subject-object relation. Notably, Kant’s deontological shift neutralizes radical doubt and the ontological problem, since for Kant endogenous norms are independent of and forbid any knowledge claims about the thing-in-itself. But this leaves room for a new kind of scepticism. In Brandom’s map, figures such as Hegel, Heidegger, and the pragmatists undo this scepticism by arguing for a sociological view of knowledge. Scepticism as to whether our norms match those of the world is moot since norms are mediated by social activity already and inherently embedded in the world.

Merleau-Ponty’s critique of the ready-made world would place him in the deontological camp. What is novel and remarkable about his Phenomenology is its thoroughgoing argument that intentionality and perceptual, experiential, and even cognitive norms are rooted in the lived body’s interaction with the world. (In fact, since this interaction is embedded in the world, and because its norms are of an expressive, linguistic, and intersubjective body, Merleau-Ponty is in the sociological camp.) What Bailey finds innovative in my efforts to elaborate Merleau-Ponty is the view that these bodily norms are engendered in movement. But, as Bailey rightly notes, at places my efforts push against traditional scientific realism. In effect, I am pursuing the difficult and tendentious thought that the deontological and constitutive character of lived experience “goes all the way down” into nature—to wit, the movements of natural systems engender structurings that function as constraints on—norms for—their behaviour. The norms constitutive of lived experience are engendered from these natural constraints. And even at the level of nature we do not quite have a world of ready-made determinacies, for natural constraints are engendered in the course of self-organizing movement.

Bailey’s puzzle is twofold. I think he agrees that lived perceptual experience has its own norms and that it is not geared to reconstructing a subject-independent world or to bridging an ontological subject-object gap; he is intrigued by the thought that norms and intentional relations are constituted in movement; and, in general, he finds something insightful, helpful, and plausible in my points about the tight, moving interrelation between
subject and object with respect to lived space and experience. But, first, he does not see why the deontological character of lived experience should have any bearing on nature. Why can the deontological characteristic of experience not be explained via a traditional account of nature, on what Brandom would call an ontological level? Second, my effort to think about even nature as not having ready-made determinacies is too much at odds with scientific realism. Surely there is a body and a world given in advance of perceptual experience; and fixed, independent characteristics of each are what explain the norms of perceptual intentionality. The two puzzles overlap in the thought that the deontological level (where experience is constituted according to norms) must surely be explained on an already constituted ontological level that is free of anything like norms, for only such a level would grant the objectivity requisite to a scientific realism.

With respect to the second puzzle, let me emphasize that the thought that the determinacies of nature are not ready-made does not in my view mean that the natural world is not mind-independent. (Bailey’s quotations from me [pp. 558-59] regarding the ready-made world unfortunately misconstrue my point and take it out of context.) The world moves its own way independent of us. It is just that the determinate characteristics and behaviours of this movement emerge in movement, in time. We have to wait (to use a Bergsonian phrasing) for nature to show us its laws. That we can describe and predict the world in terms of laws does not directly entail that there is a world with ready-made determinacies, just that the world (including us in our relation to it) happens to keep moving in ways that organize it as lawful. As Hume might put it, in observing and predicting the regularities of nature, we are not grasping hidden springs of nature, fixed behind the scenes: we are going on custom. But C. S. Peirce is more apt here in thinking of law as a kind of habit of nature. Nature itself is normative, and dynamically so.

To think about nature in this way I begin to develop (drawing on Bergson and dynamic-systems theory) an ontology of constraints wherein systems limit their movement from within, and constraints can become more complex in function when a constrained system’s movement leads to further internal limitations (pp. 54-72). Nature’s activity, its movement, is what engenders or enacts its norms. Nature as normative and active thus has characteristics that bring it far closer to the deontological, constitutive character of subjectivity: it anticipates the characteristics that enactivists find in cognition and intentionality. The strategy here is to avoid traditional dualisms by linking deontological and ontological levels, not by reducing the former to the latter, but rather by “inflating” the latter, by considering nature as already part of the deontological. To put it in terms of recent debates in phenomenology, the strategy is to naturalize phenomenology by “phenomenologizing” nature (cf. Barbaras 1999; Thompson...
Dialogue 2004; Zahavi 2004). So, speaking to the first puzzle, the reason for considering the deontological characteristic as “going all the way down” to nature is not merely (as suggested by Bailey) to avoid repeating problems of the ready-made world, but because doing so might help undo classical problems of dualism (of which more at the end).

Of course, the price of this strategy is pressing into novel territory. Bringing nature closer to subjectivity threatens the traditional and deeply entrenched dualism between the subject and the object and the closely related dualism of secondary and primary qualities. (The two dualisms are related, and also linked to the theme of images because the latter dualism entails a subject having mental images [of secondary qualities] that are entirely unlike primary qualities of objects in themselves [cf. King 2007; Matson 1966].) This breach of the subject-object divide, I think, is deep in the background of Bailey’s worries, for it threatens the very possibility of the sort of objectivity at stake in traditional scientific realism.

What I need to emphasize here, in response, is that my approach allows for a different, phenomenological realism that does not do away with the subject-object distinction, but rather conceives it as a relation constituted within movement. When I argue in The Sense of Space (taking up results from dynamic-systems theory in psychology) that our experience of the felt-length of a tennis racket does not itself refer to its objective, geometrical length as the scientist would conceive it, but to the sorts of movement characteristics it has when taken in hand, its “wieldiness” (the ease of moving it about), I am in effect pointing out how living perception resists the usual primary versus secondary quality distinction, and resists drawing clear lines between the perceived object and the perceiving subject. For example, the sense of the subject over against the object is constituted, in this case, within different kinds of movement norms of the body-racket system: shaking the racket is intrinsic to constituting our sense of it as a lengthy object over against a subject versus swinging it as constituting our sense of a racket-extended body-subject. In this account the wieldiness of the racket is not a merely subjective, secondary overlay on something primary and objective; it is a property of the racket, yet a property encountered only in our perceptual doings and crucial to constituting the sense of things. It is not as if perception’s task is to escape subjective appearance to get to real, naked properties beyond, to an object in itself devoid of its involvement in perceptual life. Right within itself perception opens to what really matters, and the realm of perceptual appearances is not a subjective veil screening off the objective; it is a realm in which we can constitute the appearance of things as they are. (If this were not so then illusions would not appear illusory. It is because illusions themselves fall flat and cannot be constituted as the appearance of real things, because they fail to point within themselves to things that sustain themselves as real in our explorations of them, that they appear illusory. If there were a sharp divide
between a veil of appearance and its object, if appearances were ontologically autonomous vis-à-vis their objects, then illusory and real appearances would be equally sustainable perceptual phenomena, and illusions would not manifest the sort of strangeness that puzzles us in the first place.) My claim is that movement and interaction are key to engendering and encountering norms that let us constitute the sense of things as real. Our way to things is thus limited by what we can access with our moving, perceiving bodies. Handling the racket gives a wieldiness felt as length, but the felt-length that subjects report can diverge from its objective geometrical length. To expose its geometrical length we have to change our perceptual relation to it—we cannot just size it up by wielding it, but have to manipulate things in the world (rulers and so on) to set up standards against which we measure it. But in doing so we do not escape perception altogether. We get to the objective world measured by the scientist through the world of perception, by further grubbing within the perceived world.

Once again, my critique of the ready-made world does not deny a world moving its own way independent of us; it just emphasizes that our sense of this world as having objective determinacies is constituted within movement. It strikes me that for Bailey and traditional scientific realism the demand for something objective in the sense of being dynamically invariant and independent of varying individual points of view ultimately turns into the demand for something independent of subjectivity and experience altogether—deontological norms of constitution must be explained on an already constituted ontological level. In his recent book, Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind (2007), Evan Thompson (by way of Merleau-Ponty’s The Structure of Behaviour [1965]) helpfully labels the position I am criticizing as “objectivism”: “Objectivism tries to purge nature of subjectivity and then reconstitute subjectivity out of nature thus purged” (2007, p. 86), it “takes things for granted, without asking how they are disclosable to human experience and knowledge, or how they come to be disclosed with the meaning or significance they have” (ibid., p. 164). Objectivism cashes out objective experience in an ontological coin so purified of subjective taint that we cannot get our teeth into it to test whether it is counterfeit (albeit the counterfeit may have pragmatic use in our knowledge economy). Here philosophy should take a cue from working scientists who worry when their currency becomes so mind-independent as to leave no experiential residue. For example, physicist Lee Smolin (2006) is deeply troubled by string theory, because its myriad solutions cannot be empirically tested. (Oddly, in a moment worthy of Kantian dialectic, the reality posited by the string theorist as being objectively independent of the mind converts into something purely thinkable insofar as it is not subject to empirical verification—in Kantian parlance, strings are ideas, not concepts.)
Here we can turn to the question of imagery, for the Cartesian conception of mental imagery and the correlate doctrine of representation is precisely geared to resolving—and enabling—the Cartesian problem of how an object can be present to a subject ontologically split from it. Representationalism and the subject-object split infiltrate traditional analyses of perception. A notorious instance is the question whether perceived colour is objective or subjective. Merleau-Ponty and other phenomenologists insist it is neither: the question is badly put because perceptual experience testifies against the subject-object division it presupposes. Sean Kelly gives an enlightening articulation of Merleau-Ponty's subtle position. Looking at white paper in the shade, one sees it as shadowed with gray, yet sees that its real colour is white. “Where” is that real colour? In the paper out there—in the object? Or in one's processing of sensory data—in the subject? Kelly's answer is that “each presentation of the color in a given lighting context necessarily makes an implicit reference to a more completely presented real color, the color as it would be better revealed if the lighting context were changed in the direction of the norm” (2005, p. 87).

Three things are crucial. First, the need for changing the light to better reveal colour is experienced “in a direct, bodily manner as a deviation from a norm” (ibid., p. 86). That perception has an inborn norm (i.e., is deontological) is what undermines the notion of a ready-made world, objectivism, or the claim that perception boils down to pure givens. Second, the norm, and thence the real colour, is neither in oneself nor in things, but in one's bodily relation to things in the lit world. This undermines subject-object divisions. Third, changing the lighting in the direction of the norm requires bodily or worldly movements. So, one's normative experience of the paper as really being white not only depends on body-world movement (as Bailey might grant), but internally implicates or involves movement. One's experienced image of the paper as really white is inseparable from the “it doesn't quite look right, I need to move to get a better view of it as really white” bodily feeling—from a “movement norm”—that is constitutive background of the experience. In contrived, illusory situations, where there is no final constitution of a thing's “real” colour or size, this bodily feeling can be a quite palpable unease that affects, and is felt in terms of, bodily movement. (Readers might want to experiment with James Turrell's artworks, which play on these experiences of light and colour.) Here I am responding to Bailey's concerns about conceiving (say) colour perception as a kind of movement and his concerns about phenomenal sensations. In arguing that movement is the stuff of perception I am not denying that we have phenomenal sensations of things. The latter just are the way our complex moving responses to things are felt. What I am urging is that these felt contents, our “occurrent mental images” as Bailey would put it (p. 565), not only depend upon but internally implicate body-world movement. The real colour is what I would see
were I to move the paper into better light; my experienced image of this angular mass as a stalactite is what I would see were I to step back so that I could get it full in view and really catch how it hangs from the ceiling in moving around it. Experienced imagery engages “movement norms” that bind us in a moving relation with the world.

This point can be deepened. In recent years, phenomenologically influenced philosophers Alva Noë (2004, 2007), Kevin O’Regan (O’Regan and Noë 2001a,b), and Evan Thompson (2007, chap. 10) have argued that philosophers have been terribly mistaken in their claims about mental images. I am now seeing my office, filled with book-lined shelves, where each book has a sharply outlined shape, a fully spelled-out title, and so on. A philosopher might therefore say that I am seeing this because I possess a mental image in which all these details are filled in, in the way that all details of photographic snapshots are filled in. But this view of mental images is another philosophical counterfeit. I experience the books as sharply outlined and having fully spelled-out titles not because I have in me a mental image that makes these details present all at once (optically I cannot have this, because I only look at part of the room, I have blind spots, I can pick up full detail only in the foveated region, etc.), but because my way of being in the room keeps my eyes and body moving around and looking to fill in details as needed. I experience what I see as approximating to something photograph-like not because of any mental image fully present in me, but because I am present in my office, and because something exceeding what is presently given me is limned and adumbrated in every moment of perception. In other words, the experience of what we tend to call images of the world is inherently the experience of the possibility of movement. This means that experienced images are not self-sufficient mental contents entirely present within us, since each such experienced image inherently points to something further that is not contained within us at this moment.¹ This begins to undo scepticism and subject-object dualism (by inherently linking experienced imagery to something beyond us), and correlative it begins to undo the need for supposing a reality with ontologically mind-independent determinacies that would be counterpart to mental images that are supposedly entirely present within the subject. When we speak of or say we are experiencing occurrent mental images, in the sense of self-contained contents, we are in fact slicing through transitional patterns in a moving relation that binds us with the world. What “images” in experienced imagery is like what resolves in the crashing chords that end a symphony; what resolves in the chord cannot be reduced to static notes presented on their own, since it arcs into the next moment and back into previous ones. It is when images resolve or arc into nothing that we experience illusions—the unfinished symphonies of perception.

Someone might worry that the claim that experienced images inherently arise within our moving relation to the world and that they are incomplete
inevitably taints them with the limitations of our subjective positions and thus undermines the sort of realism science requires. But, for phenomenological realism, the reverse is the case: the fact that they are incomplete is what keeps us going back to the world for checks, and allows us to do so, and allows us to catch the invariant yet dynamic symphony that is our reality. For example, the real colour of the paper is not “ready-made,” it cannot be grasped by an objectivism that “purges nature of subjectivity,” since the real colour is constituted through perceptual dynamics. But it is not therefore merely subjective, in the sense of being up to me as an individual. In fact, it is precisely because real colour empirically presents itself as shifting and complex, as incomplete and dynamic from within our individual subjective viewpoints, that we are driven to seek its invariant, normative structure and thence collectively leverage our perceptual limitations into a scientific view of the perceived world. (Real colours are what can look different in different lights. Unreal colours, hallucinations, illusions—say, an after-image in its short perceptual life, a phosphene emission, or the gray line of a “floater” in the visual field—are what look the same in all lighting situations.)

I have outlined my project so as to show how it can answer some of Bailey’s worries and open a new approach to resolving dualism. But still a tension remains between the descriptive project of phenomenology and the explanatory project of natural science and scientific realism. On my side, the problem is one broached in my book (pp. 98-100): how to get from movement to sense or meaning? I do not have an adequate resolution to this problem, but think it should be approached by thinking about an ontology of expression. On Bailey’s side, the very bottom of the problem, I think, lies in my insistence that phenomenological description does not leave scientific realism untouched, that phenomenology’s results demand of us a renewal of the sort of critical project inaugurated by Kant—only what now drives criticism of dogmatic concepts (of subject-object dualism, mental images, representation, etc.) is not purely analytical reflection on our concepts but the empirical testimony of experience. Here we run into a passing deep issue of basic philosophical policy. What right, we might ask, does experience have to testify for or against our concepts—should this not be the preserve of a pure analysis that rises above subjective experience? This question was broached above in asking why the deontological level cannot be explained in terms of an ontological level on which the subject-object distinction holds as per usual. One answer: I have just sketched a view that opens a phenomenological realism without requiring an already constituted ontological subject-object distinction. Another is to reverse the stakes and note that holding onto this distinction precisely engenders the hard problems of *qualia*, representation, symbol grounding, and so on. Why not criticize this underlying distinction? Another answer is methodological. Just what is the justification
for the subject-object distinction? Its felt obviousness, which Descartes so powerfully brought out in his *Meditations* (and which right away led to dualism)? But phenomenology’s careful critique of the *cogito* puts the distinction into question. More, methodologically, phenomenology is radically empirical in insisting that we must not assume concepts, but prove them with experience.

Yet, plainly, the very bones and sinews of our language and tradition cry out against phenomenology undermining or reconstituting the subject-object distinction—and make my position look anti-scientific. Philosophy, however, wears two hats: analyzing already enshrined concepts and forging new ones. In donning the latter hat, philosophy may go against the grain, but this does not mean it has no licence or nothing to learn. What would our view of reality be like if we put on the second hat and sought a new concept of nature rather than merely analyzed the received one? I would not venture in this direction absent some empirical motivation. Scientists, I think, may actually be more conceptually radical than philosophers, for they are not so dogmatically wed to concepts in advance. For example, Einstein overturned Newton’s absolute space and time as dogmatic philosophical abstractions by returning to space and time as empirically measured from a limited point of view. At bottom I suspect we philosophers are, for dogmatic reasons, beholden to a view of scientific explanation in which Leibniz’s principle of sufficient reason holds sway: there must be some reason why something is the way it is and not another way, and that reason must itself be wholly specified and determinate, or have its determinacies specified by some other such thing. In this case there is some least possible unit of explanation—*versus* a dynamically and temporally evolving system of interdependent explanatory terms that cannot be broken down into least possible units. And we philosophers think that, ontologically, objectivity must come down to such least possible units that are what they are in and of themselves, units in which what does the explaining is altogether present in a given temporal moment. This thought is central to the doctrine of “objectivism,” for a nature that is really and fully objective is a nature purged of temporal dynamism (a move enshrined in the classic image of “Platonism”). On the other hand, scientists studying thermodynamics, such as Ilya Prigogine, find systems that bifurcate in ways such that their bifurcation requires reference to time as making a real difference to the ways things are.

So, explanation is endlessly prolonged, rather than coming to rest in any single, present given term or slice of time, any least possible unit, sufficient for explanation of the bifurcation. In other words, a kind of disclosure or constitution, which anticipates the deontological level, is already at work in nature. This challenges objectivism and thence the usual scientific realism. It would not just be the case that images as we experience them slice through transitional movement patterns, but that the world is
also artifactually sliced through when we image it as already constituted and objectively real in the traditional sense: the real world is dynamic through and through and cannot be purged of process and constitution (and thence a liminal sort of subjectivity), so even at this level of nature the world is not “ready-made.” This does not, however, mean that the world has no reality of its own, just that this reality is pervasively dynamic; and this does not mean that this reality would escape science, rather that it would challenge some deep conceptual commitments built into our usual view of science and its method (perhaps more so by philosophers than working scientists). The phenomenological realist is at this point like the constructivist who will not grant the axiom of choice simply because it makes “Platonic” sense, but wants to be shown just how the mathematician is actually going to do the choosing: if there is some time \( t \) that in and of itself is sufficient to explain the rest, then show it—and here scientists such as Prigogine urge that time \( t \) cannot be so isolated. To strike a Bergsonian note, the objectivist image and concept of the world as objective in and of itself is an artifact of our evolved, perceptual relation to it: the world is a resolving symphony, but we evolved to cut it up note by note.

This may sound outré, but, as Merleau-Ponty said, “If we begin our search for truth with an eye for conclusions, there is no more philosophy. The philosopher does not look for shortcuts; he goes all the way” (1964, p. 183). Or, to quote from Andrew Bailey’s website, this time from Peter Medawar, a Nobel prize winner in immunology, “The human mind treats a new idea the same way the body treats a strange protein; it rejects it.” Philosophy is, I think, a sort of anti-vaccine that challenges our innate and acquired conceptual immune system; it lets us be infected by wonder anew. So here I have to thank Andrew Bailey for “anti-vaccinating” me against my own ideas, by puzzling over my conceptual ventures in *The Sense of Space*.

**Notes**

1. This close connection between perceiving, imaging, and doing is suggested on an evolutionary register by the discovery of mirror neurons and also the fact that even at the lowest level our sensory organs tend to be sensitive to changes of content, not content itself (cf. Berthoz 2000). It would also be continuous with a view of dream imagery as rehearsing and anticipating waking movement and activity.

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