The Hidden Art of Understanding:
Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty's Appropriation of Kant's Theory of Imagination

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Abstract:
In this paper I explore the influence of Kant's theory of imagination on a specific aspect of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty's thought, viz., their theories of understanding. I argue that the theories of *Verstehen* that Heidegger presents in *Being and Time* (1927) and of *comprendre* that Merleau-Ponty presents in *Phenomenology of Perception* can be helpfully read as elaborations of Kant's account of imagination.

Key Words:
Imagination, Understanding, Kant, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology

§1. Introduction

There can be little question that one of the most phenomenologically fruitful notions in Kant's philosophy is that of the imagination [*Einbildungskraft*]. Heidegger, for one, makes this concept the centerpiece of his interpretation of Kant in the late 1920s, where he treats Kant's theory of imagination as a precursor of his theory of temporality.[1] Meanwhile although in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) Merleau-Ponty is often critical of Kant, in the Preface he praises Kant's account of the "hidden art of the imagination" for anticipating the phenomenological theory of intentionality (PhP lxxxi/18).[2]

In light of this positive phenomenological appraisal, in this paper I aim to explore the influence of Kant's theory of imagination on a specific aspect of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty's thought, viz., their theories of understanding. I argue that the theories of *Verstehen* that Heidegger presents in *Being and Time* (1927) and of *comprendre* that Merleau-Ponty presents in *Phenomenology of Perception* can be helpfully read as elaborations of Kant's account of imagination.

[1] See Heidegger's *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason (1927) and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929).
[2] For the purposes of this paper, I focus on the influence of Kant's theory of the imagination on Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. For a discussion of its connection to Husserl, see De Santis, Doyon, Dumont, and Jansen in this volume.

In teasing out these parallels, I have three goals. One, I hope to highlight some of the more phenomenologically viable aspects of Kant's theory of imagination. Two, I hope to elucidate important points of continuity between Kant, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. Three, I hope to show that all three thinkers want to bring to light a unique way we have of finding meaning in the world, which makes more present to us than we are literally given through the senses, but does so without recourse to cognition and judgment.

I proceed as follows. I begin in §2 by presenting Kant's framework for imagination and four basic claims that he commits himself to. Next in §3 I offer a reading of Heidegger's theory of understanding [*Verstehen*] and interpretation [*Auslegung*] in *Being and Time* in light of Kant's framework for imagination. In §4 I consider Merleau-Ponty's variation on this theme, with his account of the understanding [*comprendre*] in the *Phenomenology*. I conclude in §5.

§2. Kant on Imagination

My aim in this section is to provide an interpretation of Kant's theory of imagination that highlights the particularly phenomenologically productive aspects of it. To this end, I shall emphasize four claims Kant makes about imagination. First, I show that Kant is committed to the view that imagination is a capacity that makes more sensibly and perceptually present to us than we are literally given through the senses. Call this the 'perceptual presence' claim. Second, I underscore the fact that in addition to his analysis of the empirical operations of imagination, Kant accords imagination a transcendental role in making experience possible. Call this the 'transcendental' claim. Third, I stress that Kant allows for imagination to operate in ways that are prior to cognition. Call this the 'pre-cognitive' claim. Fourth, I attribute to Kant the view that imagination does this through know-how. Call this the 'know-how' claim.

Let's begin with the *perceptual presence claim*. In the first *Critique*, Kant offers the following definition of imagination: "**Imagination** is the faculty for representing an object in intuition even **without its presence**" [*Einbildungskraft ist das Vermögen, einen Gegenstand auch ohne dessern Gegenwart in der Anschauung vorzustellen*] (B151, transl. modified).[3]

[3] I here follow Stephenson's translation (2015): 487-8 of this passage. References to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* are to the A and B pagination of the first (1781) and second (1787) editions (**A**/**B**). All other

Offering a variation of this definition in the *Anthropology*, Kant glosses the "power of imagination [*facultas imaginandi*]" as "a faculty of intuition without the presence of the object" (Anthro. 7:167).

I want to highlight two features of this definition of imagination. First, in both of these passages, we find Kant characterizing the imagination as a 'faculty of intuition'. On Kant's view, intuitions are sensible, i.e., spatial and/temporal, representations. So, by describing imagination as a faculty of intuition, Kant is indicating that it deals with what we encounter in space and time. However, and this is the second point, by qualifying imagination as a faculty of intuition 'even without the presence of the object', Kant intends to distinguish it from another intuitive capacity, which he calls 'sense' [*Sinn*] (see, e.g., Anthro. 7: 153). For Kant, whereas the intuitions of sense result from us being affected by an object given to us here and now, the intuitions of imagination can outstrip what is literally present to us. For example, when I visualize what the cover of my copy of *Middlemarch* looks like or I hallucinate a martini, although neither the book nor the drink is literally present to me, I can nevertheless form an intuition of each in imagination.

This being said, Kant is clear that the imagination does not just operate in relation to objects that are absent. Kant has a wide-ranging theory of imagination, which allows for it to play a role as much in relation to objects that are absent, e.g., in hallucination, visualization, memory, and make-believe, as in relation to objects that are present, e.g., in perception and cognition.[4] Given this range, it clearly will not do to read Kant's above definition of imagination as indicating imagination is only responsible for representing objects that are absent. Instead we need a broader account of imaginative activity that can accommodate the various imaginative phenomena just listed.

I believe that Kant points us in a helpful direction in the longer definition of imagination he offers in the *Anthropology*:

> The power of imagination (*facultas imaginandi*), as a faculty of intuition without the presence of the object, is either productive, that is, a faculty of the *original presentation* [*ursprünglichen Darstellung*] of the object (*exhibitio originaria*), which thus precedes experience; or reproductive, a faculty of *derivative presentation*

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references are to the volume and page of *Kants gesammelte Schriften*. **KU**: *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, **Anthro**: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Bolded words indicate Kant's emphasis in the original text.

[4] See, e.g., A120fn, A124, KU 5:217.

> [*abgeleiteten Darstellung*] of the object (*exhibitio derivativa*), which brings back to the mind an empirical intuition that it had previously (Anthro. 7: 167, my emph).

Here Kant glosses the idea that imagination represents objects even in their absence with the idea that it does this through the 'presentation' [*Darstellung*] of the object. And this is not the only place Kant describes imagination in these terms: in the third *Critique*, Kant consistently characterizes imagination as the 'faculty of presentation'.[5] I take his idea to be that, as a faculty of presentation, imagination makes more present to us than we are literally given. Through presentation, then, imagination can represent things in intuition even in their absence.

In light of these considerations, I suggest we think of the Kantian imagination as follows: it is a capacity that makes more perceptually present, in an extended sense, than we are literally given through the senses. The phrase 'perceptual presence' is one that I am drawing from contemporary philosophy of perception and it is used to refer to the phenomenon in which we perceive objects as having features that are not literally present to us. This happens in amodal perception when features of the object are perceptually present to us even though they are not literally given to us. For example, if I am looking at the front cover of my copy of *Middlemarch*, the backside of the book is still perceptually present to me.[6] Although Kant indicates that imagination is responsible for perceptual presence in this sense,[7] I think there are resources in Kant to extend this notion of perceptual presence to any situation in which the imagination makes something intuitively present to us, e.g., in hallucination, illusion, memory, visualization, etc. When I, for example, remember starting *Middlemarch* last December or visualize one of Dorothea Brooke's dresses, on a Kantian analysis, my imagination makes that December night and that dress intuitively present to me. For this reason, I suggest that we treat the Kantian imagination as a capacity for perceptual presentation 'in an extended sense'. And it is this view of the imagination that is at the heart of the perceptual presence claim.

The second claim that I want to highlight from Kant's account of imagination is the *transcendental claim*: in addition to its empirical exercise, Kant accords imagination a

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[5] See KU 5:232, 5:244, 5:366.
[6] See Noë (2004): 33 for a formulation of the problem of perceptual presence.
[7] See Thomas (2009), Kind (forthcoming), and Matherne (2015) for a discussion of how Kant addresses the problem of perceptual presence.

transcendental role in making experience possible.[8] In the 'A' edition of the first *Critique*, for example, Kant attributes a 'transcendental function' to imagination:

> We therefore have a pure imagination, as a fundamental faculty of the human soul, that grounds all cognition *a priori*…. Both extremes, namely sensibility and understanding, must necessarily be connected by means of this transcendental function of the imagination, since otherwise the former would to be sure yield appearances but no objects of an empirical cognition, hence there would be no experience (A124).

The sort of cognition Kant is concerned with in this passage is 'empirical cognition' or 'experience'.[9] And, on his view, this kind of cognition requires both intuitions and concepts (see A50-1/B74-5). However, given the difference between intuitions and concepts (the former are sensible, singular, and immediate representations, whereas the latter are intellectual, general, and mediate),[10] Kant thinks that in order for cognition to be possible, there must be something that mediates between them. And in the above passage, he tasks the imagination with this mediating role.

Although I cannot address the complexities here, in both editions of the first *Critique*, Kant offers an analysis of how the imagination performs this transcendental function. Part of this story turns on his account of 'transcendental' or 'figurative' synthesis in the Transcendental Deductions and the other part on his view of 'schematism', which he presents in the Schematism chapter.[11] What is significant for our purposes, however, is the fact that Kant thus acknowledges that in addition to its empirical exercise in perception, memory, visualization, hallucination, make-believe, artistic creation, etc., the imagination also has a transcendental role to play in making experience possible in the first place.

The third claim I want to bring out from Kant's theory of imagination is the *pre-cognitive claim*: the imagination can operate prior to cognition. Support for attributing this claim to Kant can be found in both the first and third *Critiques*. Beginning in the first

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[8] Kant also defines 'experience' as 'empirical cognition' at A124, B147, B165-6, B218.
[9] Kant also aligns 'experience' with 'empirical cognition' at A124, B147, B165-6, B218. And cognition in this sense is to be distinguished from the broader notion of cognition that Kant discusses in the so-called *Stufenleiter*, which involves objective representations with consciousness (A320/B376-7).
[10] See A320/B376-7.
[11] Among the complexities I cannot address here are those pertaining to whether in the B edition of the first *Critique* Kant collapses imagination into understanding. Heidegger takes Kant to have done so and this is why he prefers the A edition over the B.

Critique, insofar as the imagination's transcendental activities make cognition possible, it is 'prior' to cognition in this sense. Moreover, at the empirical level, at least on one reading of Kant's account of perception, he attributes to the imagination pre-conceptual modes of synthesis and image-forming activities, which happen prior to cognition.[12]

Meanwhile in the third *Critique*, Kant's theory of judgment in general and his aesthetic theory more specifically both make room for the imagination to operate pre-cognitively. To begin, Kant's theory of judgment in the third *Critique* turns on a distinction between two types of judgment: determining and reflecting. A determining judgment is a cognitive judgment in which we apply a universal we already possess to a particular that is given to us, e.g., when I make the judgment, "The bartender is pouring my martini." By contrast, in a reflecting judgment, all we are given is the particular, which we must, in turn, find the universal for, e.g., when I taste a gin I am unfamiliar with (KU 5:179, EE 20:211). The imagination will, in turn, have a different role to play in each type of judgment. In a determining judgment, the imagination is 'constrained' by the understanding, as it has to synthesize what we intuit in light of particular concepts, e.g., 'bartender', 'pouring', 'martini', etc. Meanwhile, in a reflecting judgment, since we do not yet have the concept needed for cognition, the imagination must operate pre-cognitively, as we search for the universal.

Kant's aesthetic theory in the third *Critique* also accords the imagination a significant pre-cognitive role. In his discussion of judgments of the beautiful, for example, Kant argues that unlike in cognition where the imagination is constrained by the understanding, the imagination and understanding engage in 'free play': a state in which "no determinate concept restricts them" and the imagination acts with "**free lawfulness**" (KU 5:217, 240). Moreover, in his account of genius, Kant continues in the vein of imaginative freedom, asserting,

> The mental powers, then, whose union (in a certain relation) constitutes **genius**, are imagination and understanding. Only in the use of the imagination for cognition, the imagination is under the constraint of the understanding…; in an aesthetic respect, the imagination is free to provide, beyond concord with the concept, unsought extensive undeveloped material for the understanding (KU 5:317).

[12] See, e.g., Young (1988), Pendlebury (1996), Longuenesse (1998): 116-20, Rohs (2001), Allison (2004: 187–9), Hanna (2005: 255, 267).

Like in the judgment of taste, Kant's account of artistic creation thus turns on the idea that it is possible for the imagination to relate to the understanding in a free way, distinct from how they interact in cognitive judgment. In both the first and third *Critiques*, then, we find Kant attributing to imagination activities that occur prior to cognition.

The final claim I would like to attribute to Kant's theory of imagination is the *know-how claim*. In both the first and third *Critiques*, Kant appeals to the notion of 'art' [*Kunst*] to describe the activity of imagination. Though this claim is perhaps most familiar from his account of the fine art of genius in the third *Critique*, this is not the only context in which he glosses imagination in artistic terms. In his discussion of schematism in the first *Critique*, he characterizes the imagination's activities as a "hidden art in the depths of the human soul" (A141/B180-1).[13] Although this may seem like a metaphorical way of saying schematism is impenetrable, Kant has a technical conception of art, according to which it is, in part, an activity that involves 'skill' [*Geschicklichkeit*] (KU 5:303).[14] Kant thus contrasts art with science: whereas science requires theoretical knowledge, art requires skill and know-how. To illustrate this point, Kant offers the example of Pieter Camper, the author of the *Treatise on the Best Form of Shoes*, who, even though he was able to "describe quite precisely how the best shoe must be made… was not able to make one" (KU 5:304). Art, on Kant's view, thus requires some sort of practical skill or know-how. And, on my reading, since in its pre-cognitive use, there is no science, but only art for imagination to rely on, we can conceive of it as engaging in art qua know-how in its non-aesthetic exercises.

Putting these four claims together, the following framework for Kant's theory of imagination emerges. The imagination is a capacity that makes things perceptually present to us in the extended sense, which outstrips what is literally given to us here and now. This capacity is one that we can, in turn, enact at the empirical level, e.g., in memory, visualization, hallucination, perception, empirical cognition, judgments of taste, and artistic creation. However, this capacity is one that also has a transcendental

[13] See Matherne (2014) for a more thorough discussion of the role art plays in Kant's account of schematism and genius.
[14] Kant also insists that it is an activity that involves "production through freedom, i.e., through a capacity for choice that grounds its actions in reason"; however, I shall leave this point aside here (KU 5:303).

function: it mediates between sensibility and understanding in a way that makes experience, qua empirical cognition, possible. This ability is one that can, in turn, be exercised outside the context of cognition, e.g., in schematism, reflecting judgment, judgments of taste, and genius. And when it is so exercised, it relies on art, i.e., skill or know-how.

What I would now like to argue is that if we look at the theories of understanding developed by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, then we will find that Kant's theory of imagination provides a helpful framework for reading their views.

§3. Kantian Imagination as Heideggerean Understanding

When considering Heidegger's relation to Kant's theory of the imagination, what typically comes to mind is Heidegger's interpretation of the first *Critique*, which he first presented in his 1927-8 lecture course, published as *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason, and his 1929 book, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. In these texts, Heidegger defends a controversial interpretation of Kant's theory of the imagination in the first *Critique*, according to which it serves as the 'common root' of both sensibility and understanding.[15] So understood, Heidegger claims that the transcendental power of the imagination is to be identified with "original time," where original time is what grounds sensibility and understanding (KPM 131). Though Heidegger thinks that Kant ultimately "shrank back" from this position, he takes this to be a promising phenomenological insight at the core of Kant's view of imagination (KPM 112).

Though Heidegger's analysis of imagination in his Kant interpretation is a topic worthy of serious attention, this will not be my focus.[16] Instead I am interested in the Kantian legacy in *Being and Time*. More specifically, I shall focus on Heidegger's account of understanding [*Verstehen*] and interpretation [*Auslegung*] in §§31-2, respectively, and the extent to which this account parallels Kant's theory of imagination. I address Heidegger's analysis of both understanding and interpretation because, as I read his view, they are two aspects of a unitary phenomenon, viz., the phenomenon of seeing the world as a space of

[15] See Henrich (1994) for criticism of this reading of Kant.
[16] For broader discussions of Heidegger's interpretation of Kant, see Blattner (1994), (1999): Ch. 5; Weatherston (2002); Han-Pile (2005); Golob (2013); Shockey (in progress).

possibility and meaning in which we can work out our existence.[17] And I hope to show that Heidegger's treatment of the unitary phenomenon of understanding and interpretation can fruitfully be read as a variation of the Kantian imagination.

In order to bring to light the Kantian underpinnings of Heidegger's view, I want to look at the way in which the four Kantian claims about imagination explored above bear on Heidegger's treatment of understanding and interpretation. However, I will proceed in a slightly different order and begin, as Heidegger does, with the pre-cognitive claim.

Heidegger presents his account of understanding as an alternative to cognitive accounts of it. To this end, he argues that understanding, in his sense, is more fundamental than cognition. More specifically, he claims that the kind of understanding he is interested in is a "fundamental *existentiale*," i.e., a fundamental ontological structure or "basic mode" of Dasein's being (SZ 143). As we shall see below, this structure is connected to Dasein's ability to project possibilities, and insofar as this structure characterizes Dasein's existence at the most fundamental level, Heidegger thinks it differs from cognition, which is something he thinks we only sometimes engage in. For example, while I could cognize the book on my coffee table as the Harper Perennial Legacy Edition of *Middlemarch*, I could also unthinkingly pick it up. And, on Heidegger's view, both these experiences involve understanding. For these reasons, Heidegger asserts that, "[U]nderstanding in the sense of *one* possible kind of cognizing [*Erkenntnisart*] among others… must… be Interpreted as an existential derivative of… primary understanding" (SZ 143). For Heidegger, understanding is thus pre-cognitive in the sense that it is a basic structure of Dasein's existence, which is more fundamental than cognition.

Moreover, Heidegger's account of 'assertion' [*Aussage*] and 'judgment' [*Urteil*] in §33 points in the pre-cognitive direction. For, there, he argues that "assertion ('judgment') is grounded on understanding and presents us with a derivative form in which an interpretation has been carried out" (SZ 153-4). On Heidegger's view, then, understanding and interpretation is something that happens prior to us making cognitive judgments.

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[17] In contrast to pragmatist readings of Heidegger (e.g., Dreyfus (1991): 169, 195; Blattner (2007): 11; Carman (2003): 21), which treat interpretation as an optional addition to understanding, I attribute to Heidegger the view that interpretation permeates understanding. Wrathall (2013): 180-1 calls this latter view the "interpretation pervades understanding-comportment" thesis.

However, if it is not through cognition and judgment that we understand and interpret things, then how does Heidegger think we do so? I hope to show that the answer to this question reveals Heidegger's commitment to the perceptual presence claim. As I shall argue, in Heidegger, the Kantian claim that the imagination enables us to make present even what is absent transforms into the claim that understanding and interpretation enable us to make possibilities present. And I claim that, Heidegger, like Kant, thinks they do so in a way that involves 'perceptual' presence in a broad sense, i.e., presence through sight. Thus, according to Heidegger's version of the perceptual presence claim, understanding and interpretation are ultimately responsible for making us see in terms of possibilities, thus for seeing in ways that make more present to us than we are literally given. This being said, as I shall now detail, although Heidegger maintains that both are needed for us to fully see in terms of possibilities, understanding and interpretation each enable us to see possibilities in a unique way. Understanding enables us to see in terms of possibilities *in general*, while interpretation enables us to see *specific* entities as embodying *specific* possibilities.

In order to fill out this account of perceptual presence, I want to begin with Heidegger's account of understanding and his claim that it has the structure of 'projection' [*Entwurf*] (SZ 145). According to Heidegger, the understanding does not just grasp what is present to us; instead, it grasps what is present to us by projecting it in terms of possibilities.

There is, in turn, a question about what kinds of possibilities Heidegger thinks we project through understanding. According to some commentators, with his account of understanding, Heidegger intends to offer us an analysis of how we, in a specific scenario, understand something in terms of specific possibilities. For example, when I pick up *Middlemarch* and start reading, you might think I am understanding the book as 'to be relished' or myself as a 'George Eliot fan'. And commentators who pursue this reading, tend to treat understanding as a mode of 'absorbed coping', in which we, without reflection or deliberation, project something in terms of its possibilities through our absorbed engagement with it.[18]

[18] See, e.g., Dreyfus (1991): Ch. 11; Blattner (2006): 85; Carman (2003): 19.

By contrast, on my reading, Heidegger intends his account of understanding to explain our projection of possibilities *in general*. That is to say, I take understanding, for Heidegger, to be responsible for projecting the whole suite of possibilities that we can grasp the world and our selves in light of. Support for this reading comes from the following passage:

> Projection always pertains to the *full* disclosedness of Being-in-the-world;… understanding has itself possibilities, which are sketched out beforehand [*vorgezeichnet*] within *the range* [*Umkreis*] of what is essentially *disclosable* in it (SZ 146, my emph).

Here, Heidegger indicates that projection involves a 'full' disclosure of Being-in-the-world, i.e., a full disclosure of how it is that we, as Dasein, are at grips with the world. And projection does this, he claims, by 'sketching out' the 'range' of what is 'disclosable' to us, i.e., the range of what we can make sense of and engage with in relation to our selves and the world. So construed, projection opens up the possibilities that pertain to our existence in relation to the world in general.

However, this emphasis on the general orientation of the understanding should come as no surprise, given that Heidegger asserts at the outset of §31 that understanding discloses both the ""for-the-sake-of-which" *and* significance" (SZ 143). By the 'for-the-sake-of-which', Heidegger has in mind how understanding discloses Dasein to itself. And by 'significance', he means the significance of the world insofar as it involves the relational whole that encompasses the ready-to-hand, other Dasein we are with, and the present-at-hand.[19] According to Heidegger, then, far from disclosing this or that possibility to us, understanding discloses the possibilities pertaining to our selves and the world as a whole.

This being said, Heidegger maintains that the range of possibilities that understanding projects is not limitless. Rather he makes clear that the set of possibilities open to each of us is delimited by the overarching factical situation we are 'thrown' into (SZ 144). That is to say, we cannot project every possibility there is, rather only those

[19] For his discussion of significance in relation to the ready-to-hand, see SZ §18, and in relation to others, see SZ 123. Although he does not use the term 'significance' in relation to the present-at-hand, in §31 he indicates that the understanding can project the present-at-hand: "even the 'unity' of the manifold present-at-hand, of Nature, can be discovered only if a *possibility* of it has been disclosed" (SZ 144-5).

possibilities that can make sense to us given the unique historical, social, economic, personal, etc., circumstances that we find ourselves in.

With this general scope of possibilities in mind, we can now turn to Heidegger's claim that understanding enables us to *see* in terms of possibilities. In this vein, Heidegger connects his account of projection through the understanding to the notion of 'sight' [*Sicht*]: we project possibilities by seeing things in terms of them (SZ 146). Heidegger uses the language of 'sight' in this context because he wants to emphasize that the way in which we grasp the world and our selves in terms of possibilities is not something that involves 'thematically' grasping those possibilities, i.e., through cognition and judgment (SZ 145-6). Rather he claims that our grasp of possibilities is manifest in how we see our selves and the world, through the 'circumspection' [*Umsicht*] of the ready-to-hand, the 'considerateness' [*Rücksicht*] involved in our solicitude for others, our 'transparency' [*Durchsichtigkeit*] to ourselves, etc. (SZ 146). For Heidegger, then, is it not through cognition, but rather through sight that understanding allows entities to show up for us in terms of their possibilities.

Yet, for Heidegger, our ability to see in terms of possibilities involves more than just seeing things in terms of possibilities in general. He claims that the understanding must, in turn, "develop itself" by seeing *specific* entities in light of *specific* possibilities (SZ 148). And, on his view, this task falls to interpretation.

According to Heidegger, interpretation involves the 'working-out' [*Ausarbeitung*] of specific possibilities that the understanding has projected (SZ 148). In order to work-out a possibility, Heidegger claims that we must interpret a specific entity in light of a specific possibility. When we do so, Heidegger claims we treat the entity "*as something*" (SZ 149). For example, when I see my martini as to be sipped, I am seizing upon the many background possibilities surrounding the martini (to be sipped, to be thrown, to be shaken, to be stirred) and I interpret it in light of this specific sipping-possibility. As Heidegger will sometimes make this point, when we do this, we make a particular possibility 'express' [*ausdrücklich*] (SZ 149). I take his idea to be that in seizing upon a particular possibility as that in terms of which we will interpret a specific entity, we bring

that possibility into the foreground, pressing it out from the background of general possibility we are 'familiar' with through understanding.[20]

However, Heidegger insists that interpretation is not to be identified with making a conceptual 'assertion' [*Aussage*] or 'judgment' [*Urteil*]. To this end, he claims that the 'articulation' [*Artikulation*] of interpretation is something that happens prior to making a "thematic assertion [*Aussage*]" (SZ 150). Instead, he suggests, interpretation happens at the level of 'perception' [*wahrnehmen*] and "mere seeing" [*schlichte Sehen*] (SZ 149).[21] Thus, when I see my martini as 'to be sipped', this is something that occurs at the level of sight: I perceive the martini as such. This is not to say that we cannot make assertions or judgments; rather Heidegger claims that when we do so, e.g., "That's my martini!", we are engaged in a "derivative [*abkünftiger*] mode" of interpretation, one that is parasitic on the perceptual mode of interpretation (SZ 153).

As was the case in his account of understanding, then, Heidegger insists that interpretation does not happen at the level of thematic assertion or cognitive judgment; instead, it involves a mode of sight. However, unlike with the understanding's orientation towards possibilities in general, Heidegger claims that with interpretation we see a specific entity in terms of a specific possibility. And between the interplay of understanding and interpretation, Heidegger claims that we are able to see our selves and the world in terms of possibilities: whereas the former enables us to see a general space of possibility, the *Spielraum*, in which we can exist, the latter enables us to seize upon specific possibilities as that which we can grasp specific entities in light of, as we work out our existence in concrete ways. Insofar as Heidegger thus attributes to understanding and interpretation ways of seeing that make more present to us than what is literally given, we can read him as taking on a commitment to the perceptual presence claim with regard to them.

In addition to the pre-cognitive and perceptual presence claims, there is reason to think that Heidegger also commits himself to a version of the transcendental claim and

[20] See, e.g., Heidegger's claim that, "That wherein Dasein already understands itself in this way is always something with which it is primordially familiar" (SZ 86).
[21] See Doyon (2015) for further discussion of the role interpretation and the 'as-structure' play in Heidegger's account of perception.

the know-how claim.[22] Regarding the transcendental claim, insofar as Heidegger identifies understanding as a fundamental ontological structure of Dasein's being, it will serve as a ground of possibility for all of Dasein's particular 'ontic' engagement with the world. More specifically, however, Heidegger emphasizes two ways in which understanding and interpretation make possible features of Dasein's existence.

In the first place, Heidegger claims that understanding makes possible the diclosedness, or accessibility, of our selves and the world. To this end, in discussing the disclosure of the understanding, Heidegger maintains that through the sight of understanding, entities become 'accessible' to us:

> In giving an existential signification to "sight", we have merely drawn upon the peculiar feature of seeing, that it lets entities which are accessible [*zugänglich*] to it be encountered unconcealedly [*begegnen unverdeckt*] in themselves (SZ 147).

And it is for this reason that Heidegger suggests that we can think of sight as what enables "access in general [*Zugang überhaupt*]" (SZ 147). Whether we consider something ready-to-hand, present-at-hand, our selves, or others, on his view, understanding is what makes these entities accessible to us at all. Understanding thus serves as a condition of the possibility of us being able to disclose, hence access entities at all.

Second, Heidegger argues that understanding and interpretation together are the conditions of the possibility of 'meaning' or 'sense' [*Sinn*]. In general, Heidegger describes sense as the framework of 'intelligibility' [*Verständlichkeit*]: it is the space in which something can become "*intelligible* [verständlich] *as something*" (SZ 151). Although understanding is responsible for holding open the space of intelligibility in general, Heidegger claims that we do not experience an entity as meaningful unless we have also interpreted, i.e., articulated, it in light of some possibility: "That which can be Articulated in a disclosure by which we understand, we call "meaning" [*Sinn*]" (SZ 151). For this reason, Heidegger claims that both understanding and interpretation are required for the possibility of meaning: "The *concept of meaning* embraces the formal existential framework of what necessarily belongs to that which an understanding interpretation Articulates"

[22] Although I cannot pursue this topic here, there is a broader discussion of whether to read *Being and Time* as a piece of transcendental philosophy. For further discussion, see Crowell and Malpas (2007).

(SZ 151). For Heidegger, understanding and interpretation thus serve as the conditions of the possibility of experiencing meaning.

Heidegger's commitment to the transcendental claim is thus apparent not only in his commitment to understanding being a condition of the possibility of access to entities, but also in his view that understanding and interpretation are conditions of the possibility of the experience of meaning.

The final claim to explore is the know-how claim. Toward the beginning of §31, as part of his effort to distance his account of understanding from cognitive views, Heidegger reminds us of the fact that we do not always use the term 'understanding' in cognitive terms:

> we sometimes use the expression 'understanding something' [*etwas verstehen*] with the signification of 'being able to manage something' [*einer Sache vorstehen können*], 'being a match for it' [*ihr gewachsen sein*], 'being competent to do something' [*etwas können*] (SZ 143).

Here, Heidegger draws our attention to the fact that sometimes when we say we 'understand' something, we mean that we understand how to handle something or we are competent with that thing, e.g., when I understand how to raise a martini without spilling or how to hold *Middlemarch* at an appropriate reading distance. Drawing on this usage, Heidegger then suggests that understanding, in his sense, can be understood as a kind of competence or ability, viz., a "competence [*Gekonnte*]… [with] Being as existing" (SZ 143). He calls this basic competence our '*Sein-können*', our ability to be (SZ 143). And he claims that what it is to have an ability-to-be is to have an understanding that projects possibilities. For Heidegger, it is this know-how, rather than cognition, that makes possible our access to entities and the experience of meaning.

Stepping back, in this section, I have attempted to show that Heidegger's account of understanding and interpretation parallels Kant's account of imagination insofar as he takes on board the four Kantian commitments discussed in §2. On my interpretation, just as imagination, for Kant, enables us to make more perceptually present to ourselves than is literally given, so too do understanding and interpretation extend what we see beyond what is simply in front of us, to possibilities. Moreover, Heidegger claims that this is a condition of the possibility of any access to entities and the experience of meaning. And

he insists that understanding and interpretation do so pre-cognitively and through a basic know-how, viz., our competence with existing. Prior to cognition, then, Heidegger carves out space for understanding and interpretation to serve as moments of a unitary structure that enable us to see the world and our selves in terms of possibilities and meaning. And I take this Heideggerean space of sight, possibility, and meaning to map onto the space of imagination in Kant.

§4. Kantian Imagination as Merleau-Pontyean Understanding

The role that Kant plays in the *Phenomenology of Perception* is a complicated one. At times, Merleau-Ponty treats Kant as the arch-intellectualist, who serves as one of Merleau-Ponty's primary targets. In this vein, Merleau-Ponty is particularly critical of Kant's account of the transcendental subject as the condition of the possibility of experience and the world.[23] By Merleau-Ponty's lights, Kant hereby misconstrues the subject: we are not transcendental subjects who condition the world, we are embodied subjects who are beings-in-the-world.[24]

Yet at other times, Merleau-Ponty treats Kant as a proto-phenomenologist, whose views he is sympathetic to.[25] And, as we saw at the outset, it is in particular Kant's account of the imagination that Merleau-Ponty takes to be on the side of phenomenology.[26] In this context, Merleau-Ponty specifically highlights Kant's aesthetic sounding descriptions of the imagination, particularly, Kant's claim in the schematism

[23] See, e.g., Merleau-Ponty's claim that Kant treats the subject as "a condition of possibility distinct from our experience and… without which there would be no world" (PhP lxxii/10).
[24] See, e.g., "Kant concluded that I am a consciousness who encompasses and constitutes the world, and, in this reflective movement, he passed over the phenomenon of the body and the phenomenon of the thing" (PhP 317/356-7).
[25] For a lengthier discussion of Kantian themes in Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception, see Matherne (2016), and in his account of pathology, see Matherne (2014b).
[26] It should be noted that the Kantian view of imagination, which Merleau-Ponty is drawn to is different from the Sartrean view of imagination, which he criticizes. Whereas Kant allows for imagination to operate in relation to both real and virtual objects, Sartre, who follows Husserl on this, restricts the imagination to operating only in relation to 'irreal' objects. Sartre, who follows Husserl on this, thus distinguishes sharply between imagining and perceiving, whereas Kant thinks imagination plays a crucial role in perception. Therefore, when Merleau-Ponty claims in "The Primacy of Perception," that amodal perception is not the result of imagination, he is rejecting the Husserlian/Sartrean view, not Kant's (PrP 13-4). For Merleau-Ponty's own appraisal of Sartre's view, see his 1936 review of Sartre's *L'Imagination*. For a discussion of the relationship between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty's theories of the imagination, see Lennon (2015): Ch. 3.

that imagination is a 'hidden art' (KrV A141/B181, PhP lxxxi/18, see also 453/493). And he claims that this aspect of Kant's philosophy anticipates the phenomenological theory of intentionality (PhP lxxxi/18).

In the spirit of this positive appraisal of Kant's theory of imagination, in what follows I want to consider the ways in which Merleau-Ponty's theory of understanding can be read as an appropriation of Kant's theory of imagination. As was the case with Heidegger, I shall argue that Merleau-Ponty defends a pre-cognitive account of understanding, as something that makes perceptually present to us more than we are literally given, through projecting the world and our selves in light of possibilities and meaning. Moreover Merleau-Ponty accords imagination a role in conditioning the possibility of experience. However, unlike on the Heidegerrean view, we shall see that Merleau-Ponty thinks it is crucial to recognize that understanding is ultimately mediated through the body and our bodily know-how.

As in my discussion of Heidegger, I think it will be helpful to begin by analyzing Merleau-Ponty's endorsement of the pre-cognitive claim. Merleau-Ponty labels cognitive models of understanding 'intellectualist' models, and it is one of his primary goals in the *Phenomenology* to develop an account of understanding that serves as an alternative to the intellectualist view. In this spirit, he claims that we need to "rework our notion of "understanding" [*comprendre*]" in a way that acknowledges that it has its seat not in cognition and judgment, but rather in our bodily engagement with the world (PhP 146/180). Indeed, one of his main aims in the chapter titled, "The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motricity," is to show that there is a zone of bodily understanding that lies between "automatic reflex" and 'knowledge' [*connaissance*] (PhP 145/179). This is not to say that Merleau-Ponty denies that we can have knowledge or cognition of the world; rather his point is that our cognitive activities are grounded in a more foundational way we have of understanding the world through our bodies.[27]

However, it is important to recognize that in defending this new bodily theory of the understanding, Merleau-Ponty does not just want to account for action and perception. Though action and perception are, no doubt, of central interest to Merleau-

[27] See, e.g., Matherne (2018) for a discussion of Merleau-Ponty's account of abstract thought in mathematics and natural science.

Ponty, he intends to offer a general account of understanding, which does justice to all our modes of our existence. In this vein, he indicates that his analysis of bodily understanding is meant to account for both our 'real' and 'virtual' engagement with the world:

> the normal subject… does not have his body available merely as implicated in a concrete milieu, he is not merely situated in relation to the tasks set by his trade, nor is he merely open to real situations. Rather, in addition he possesses his body as the correlate of pure stimuli stripped of all practical signification; he is open to verbal and fictional situations…. The normal subject's body is not merely ready to be mobilized by real situations that draw it toward themselves, it can also turn away from the world… and be situated in the virtual…. The normal person *reckons with* the possible (PhP 111-12/139-40).[28]

With his theory of the understanding, then, Merleau-Ponty aims to offer an analysis of both our 'real' encounters with reality through perception and actions and our 'virtual' encounters with possibilities through cognition, morality, sexuality, politics, art, etc. So understood, Merleau-Ponty present his pre-cognitive account of bodily understanding as a general account of our 'real' and 'virtual' engagement with the world.

In clarifying how bodily understanding operates pre-cognitively, Merleau-Ponty also defends a version of the perceptual presence claim. Indeed, in a Heidegerrean vein, he argues that understanding involves projection and that, as a result of this projection, the world shows up for us in meaningful ways. In more detail, Merleau-Ponty argues that what enables the understanding to operate in this rich variety of ways is its 'function of projection' (see PhP 114-15/142-3). He claims that this function is a 'fundamental' function, which lies "beneath intelligence and perception" (PhP 137/169). And he defines this function, in general, as "the general power of placing oneself in a situation," where a 'situation' is a space that is meaningful in some way, e.g., a perceptual situation, a sexual situation, a political situation, etc. (PhP 137/169).[29] More specifically, he characterizes this function as,

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[28] For discussion of the power to reckon with the possible see Romdenh-Romluc (2007), (2011): 93-102. My own reading differs from hers insofar as she tends to gloss this power in practical terms, i.e., as a way we reckon with the possible through bodily action, whereas I defend a more encompassing view of the power to reckon with the possible as something that is enacted whenever we engage with the world, through action, perception, or intellect. I discuss this difference at more length at Matherne (2014).
[29] See, e.g., Merleau-Ponty's discussion of affective and ideological situations (PhP 159/194) and sexual situations (PhP 158-60/193-5).

> [the] power of marking out borders and directions in the given world, of establishing lines of force, of arranging perspectives, or organizing the given world according to the projects of the moment, and of constructing upon the geographical surroundings a milieu of behavior and a system of significations that express, on the outside, the internal activity of the subject (PhP 115/143).[30]

For Merleau-Ponty, the understanding is thus something that projects around us a 'milieu' or 'system' that reflects our intentions and what is significant to us.

While this may make it sound as if understanding simply imposes significance on a meaningless world, we must be careful here. Merleau-Ponty is clear that projection is something that is responsive to the meaning that is in the world.[31] For this reason, he describes understanding in terms of "the accord [*l'accord*] between what we aim at and what is given" (PhP 146/180). As he sometimes makes this point, understanding involves some sort of 'communication' or 'communion' between our intentions and what is significant to us, on the one hand, and the world with its meaning, on the other (PhP 334/376). So in projection, we do not simply throw meaning over meaningless objects, our projection is responsive to the meanings that objects themselves have.[32]

Though the notion of projection is one familiar from our earlier discussion of Heidegger, what is distinctive in Merleau-Ponty's account is his emphasis on the role of the body. Emphasizing the bodily nature of projection, Merleau-Ponty says,

> Our body… is the origin of all [expressive spaces], it is the very movement of expression, it projects significations [*significations*] on the outside by giving them a place and sees to it that they begin to exist as things, beneath our hands and before our eyes (PhP 147/182).

For Merleau-Ponty, 'expression' is the activity by means of which we give significance to things (though, again, in response to the meaning things themselves have).[33] And, as he indicates in this passage, he regards the body as the 'origin' of all expressive activities in

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[30] Although the 'internal activity of the subject' might seem to suggest an intellectualist picture, Merleau-Ponty is clear that the subject he has in mind is an embodied subject who is a being-in-the-world (see, e.g., PhP 139-40/171-2, 454/493).

[31] See PhP 62/88, 138/170. The imposition model of projection is one that Merleau-Ponty describes in terms of the "projection of the interior into the exterior" (PhP 62/88) and the "pure power of signifying" (PhP 138/170).

[32] For a discussion of the meaning objects have in terms of their 'style', see Matherne (2017).

[33] It, in his words, involves "implant[ing] meaning," "project[ing] significations" and "mark[ing] things with the trace of human elaboration" (IL 104, PhP 147/182, IL 96)

which we project significance into the world.[34] Moreover in this passage, Merleau-Ponty claims that expression makes the significations we project 'exist' 'before our hands and before our eyes'. For Merleau-Ponty, then, this bodily projection is what makes those significations perceptually present to us.

Merleau-Ponty, in turn, delineates three different kinds of bodily projection we can engage in. The first form of projection operates through "gestures necessary for the conservation of life," which make present significations related to biological functions, e.g., seeing a cracker as 'to be eaten' or a glass of water as 'to be gulped' (PhP 147-8/182). Meanwhile, the second form of projection has its seat in "motor habits," which allows us to make present significations related to habits, like typing, driving a car, or playing an organ (PhP 147-8/182).[35] However, Merleau-Ponty claims that there is a further mode of projection that requires more than the body's 'natural means':

> finally, sometimes the signification aimed at cannot be reached by the natural means of the body. We must, then, construct an instrument, and the body projects a cultural world around itself (PhP 148/182).

Although this final form of projection is still a bodily form of projection, Merleau-Ponty claims that it depends on the development of cultural instruments, e.g., through a painting, novel, mathematical proof, scientific experiment, etc. Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, the bodily projection involved in understanding is something that projects the world not just as a 'physical' world, but as a 'cultural' world as well, and the meanings it makes present to us are similarly variegated (PhP 139/171).[36]

Given Merleau-Ponty's commitment to bodily understanding being the means through which we project significations and so make those significations perceptually present to us, we have reason to attribute to him a version of the perceptual presence claim.

Turning now to the transcendental claim, there is also reason to read Merleau-Ponty as taking on board this kind of commitment in his theory of understanding.[37] And,

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[34] See a similar claim in "Indirect Language": "All perception, all action which presupposes it, and in short every human use of the body is already *primordial expression*" (IL 67).
[35] These examples are ones Merleau-Ponty mentions at PhP 144-5/178-9.
[36] See also PhP 307/347.
[37] For transcendental readings of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, see Gardner (2015) and the articles collected in Inkpin and Reynolds (2017).

on this point, Merleau-Ponty himself highlights the continuity between his view and Kant's. As I mentioned earlier, in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, Merleau-Ponty lauds Kant for anticipating the phenomenological theory of intentionality:

> In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant himself demonstrated that there is a unity of the imagination and of the understanding… which is itself without any concept. Here the subject is no longer… the positing power that imposes the law of understanding upon the manifold; rather, he discovers himself and appreciates himself as a nature spontaneously conforming to… the understanding. But if the subject has [such] a nature, then the hidden art of the imagination must condition the categorical activities; it is no longer merely aesthetic judgment that rests on this hidden art, but also knowledge, and this art also grounds the unity of consciousness (PhP lxxxi/18).

Here, Merleau-Ponty suggests that in the third *Critique*, specifically in his account of reflecting judgment and his account of beauty, Kant recognizes that there is a way for the imagination and understanding (on Kant's definition) to engage with each other prior to cognition and concepts. Merleau-Ponty then suggests that Kant hereby recognizes that the 'hidden art' of imagination underwrites not only reflecting and aesthetic judgment, but also serves as the condition of possibility both knowledge and the unity of consciousness. While the idea that the hidden art of imagination underwrites knowledge or cognition is familiar from our discussion of Kant's view, the claim that the hidden art of imagination grounds the unity of consciousness will take some more unpacking.

By the 'unity of consciousness', Merleau-Ponty has in mind the unity of our various ways of intentionally relating to the world.[38] Following Husserl, Merleau-Ponty indicates that the sort of intentionality at issue here is not just "act intentionality," i.e., the "intentionality of our judgments and of our voluntary decisions" (PhP lxxxii/18).[39] Instead he claims that consciousness extends to our "operative intentionality [*fungierende Intentionalität*]," which concerns our 'pre-predicative' relation to the world, through action, perception, affect, etc. (PhP lxxxii/18). For Merleau-Ponty, the unity of

[38] With this account of the unity of consciousness, Merleau-Ponty is less interested in how a subject synchronically unifies various conscious states together in a single instance and more interested in a structural account of how our various modes of intentionality involved in, e.g., perception, thought, affect, etc., are integrated together in a single consciousness.

[39] Merleau-Ponty here parenthetically remarks that act intentionality is the only kind Kant recognizes in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (PhP lxxxii/18).

consciousness thus concerns what unifies the wide variety of ways we have of relating to the world, as much through action and perception, as through thought and deliberation.

The reason that Merleau-Ponty thinks Kant's account of imagination is promising with regard to accounting for the unity of consciousness is because he thinks of it along the lines of his account of projection. To this end, Merleau-Ponty suggests that, for Kant, the imagination ultimately involves "our power to figure [*figurer*] any intention whatever in the world" (PhP 198/233, transl. modified). However, the idea that we have the power to 'figure' the world in light of our intentions just is what Merleau-Ponty seeks to articulate with his account of the understanding. Merleau-Ponty thus regards Kant's theory of imagination as resting on the same insight that his account of understanding does, viz., we have the ability to project our intentions, whether they be related to the real or virtual world, and that this is something that gives unity to all our intentional activity.

Developing this point on his own view, Merleau-Ponty uses the function of projection to help clarify the unity of consciousness. To this end, he claims that the function of projection issues in an 'intentional arc', which he describes as follows:

> the life of consciousness – epistemic life, the life of desire, or perceptual life – is underpinned by an "intentional arc" that projects around us our past, our future, our human milieu, our physical situation, our ideological situation, and our moral situation, or rather, that ensures that we are situated within all of these relationships. This intentional arc creates the unity of the senses, the unity of the senses with intelligence, and the unity of sensitivity and motricity (PhP 137/170).[40]

The intentional arc of consciousness thus encompasses the intentions that reflect the variety of ways we can project the world in meaningful ways, e.g., cognitively, volitionally, perceptually, physically, morally, aesthetically, etc. And he indicates that what gives unity to these various intentions is the fact that they issue from the same source, viz., the function of projection. Merleau-Ponty accordingly traces the unity of consciousness back to the function of projection, which underlies and unifies together all our intentions. In the spirit of the transcendental claim, Merleau-Ponty thus treats the understanding as the condition of the possibility not only of knowledge, but also of the unity of consciousness.

[40] As he describes the intentional arc a bit later, it is the "vital roots of perception, motricity, and representation," as well as sexuality (PhP 160/195).

The final claim left to consider is the know-how claim. Here too Merleau-Ponty endorses the view that bodily understanding is a matter of know-how. Like Heidegger, in order to motivate this account of understanding, Merleau-Ponty invites us to consider examples in which we describe what we are doing as involving 'understanding', without this being a cognitive or intellectual matter. For example, he claims that when we learn a new dance, we understand the dance when our body ""catches" (*kapiert*)" the movement (PhP 144/178). Understanding, then, need not be a matter of having knowledge about something; it can be a matter of our body 'catching' how to do something. Extending this beyond his account of motor habits, Merleau-Ponty maintains that our body is ultimately a 'knowing-body' [*corps-connaissant*], which grasps possibilities and meaning through its know-how (PhP 431-470).

Pivotal to Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the body's know-how is his account of the body schema. Though I cannot consider the details of his view here, Merleau-Ponty argues that the body schema is something that generally attunes us to the world and enables us to experience the world in meaningful ways. As he makes this point, "there is a logic of the world" that we grasp through our body schema (PhP 341/383). Moreover he claims that there are various 'annexes' of the body schema, e.g., those that correspond to specific sense modalities and to specific motor habits, and that these enable us to grasp specific perceptual structures and patterns of meaning (PhP 49/74). The gaze, for example, is something that Merleau-Ponty claims understands the "logic of illumination," such that it ""knows" [*sait*] what such a patch of light signifies in such a context" (PhP 326/368, 341/383). And he maintains that this knowledge of the gaze is what enables us to see objects as having particular colors (PhP 326/368, 341/383). He, in turn, extends this point to the other annexes of the body schema, arguing that the know-how involved in each enables us to experience the world, our selves, and others in meaningful ways.

Stepping back, I have argued that Merleau-Ponty's theory of understanding involves a commitment to Kant's four claims about imagination. For Merleau-Ponty, the understanding is a pre-cognitive capacity that has its seat in the body. This bodily understanding makes perceptually present to us more than we are literally given: the understanding projects and so makes present significations into a world, which it is, at the same time responsive to. These projected significations reflect the whole suite of

intentions that orient us toward the world in a rich variety of ways, e.g., through action, perception, intellect, affect, etc. This projection, Merleau-Ponty claims, is a condition of the possibility not only of knowledge and cognition, but also of the unity of consciousness. Finally, he maintains that this understanding manifests itself through our bodily know-how. In this way, Merleau-Ponty's account of understanding involves a commitment to the know-how claim.

§5. Conclusion

My aim in this paper has been to explore the continuity between Kant's account of imagination and the phenomenological theories of understanding developed by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. To this end, I have argued that all three are committed to there being a basic human capacity that makes more perceptually present to us than we are literally given, which serves as a condition of the possibility of experience, which operates in a pre-cognitive way and on the basis of know-how.

This, of course, is neither to say that Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty's theories of understanding map perfectly onto Kant's account of imagination, nor to say that these phenomenological theories map perfectly onto one another. Even if Kant recognizes that the imagination can operate in pre-cognitive ways, his over-arching emphasis on cognition and the 'I think' in the first *Critique* stands in sharp contrast to Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's over-arching emphasis on our status as beings thrown into a world that transcends us. And even though the phenomenologists agree that we must acknowledge our fundamental status as beings-in-the-world, while Heidegger proceeds by analyzing the basic ontological structures of Dasein, Merleau-Ponty insists that we must take into account the way our bodies serve as our vehicle for being-in-the-world.

Though these and other differences deserve further treatment, I shall conclude with a note about the value of acknowledging the continuity between Kant, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty on these issues. It seems to me that what all three attempt to do justice to with their respective accounts of imagination and understanding is the insight that between mere sensory reaction and reflective thought, we have the ability to grasp our selves, others, and the world in meaningful ways. And what I hope to have shown is

that it is a shared commitment to this hidden art, which persists from Kant through Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty.[41]

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