



From Umwelt to Umwelten of Human Being; a Glance on Mulla Sadra's Mind-Body Model

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Editorial

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This editorial is the result of my questions about and insights into "phenomenal world" (Umwelt). It is a text consisting of some short contemplations which immediately push us into the "phenomenal world". Although it seems that each topic gives us a unique perspective for contemplating ourselves and other topics, sometimes they come together in some determining points and transform this text into a picture of concepts and meanings. Wherever in the text you see it, the term "phenomenal world" is brought in quotations - of course, not in the sense of Husserl's bracketing the world. I resort to two great philosophers in my contemplation so that it is possible to finish the text in the briefest form while explaining the reason for putting "phenomenal world" in quotations and the meaning of "phenomenal world" to the most possible extent with the hope of grasping some worthwhile insights about "phenomenal world" in their philosophy. It is

evident that the extent to which we explore is never enough to fully grasp their philosophy about the subject. One of the philosophers is Mulla Sadra - the great Iranian philosopher - and the other is Rene Descartes - the well-known French philosopher, and the pioneer and founder of modern philosophy in the west. What is said about the "phenomenal world" is from the perspective of the relationship between body and soul. Nevertheless, it was not intended to deal with the historical genealogy or terminology of the concept of "phenomenal world". Therefore, we supposed that the concept of Umwelt ("phenomenal world") in its biological sense in the German language initiated in the theoretical activities of the German biologist Jakob von Uexküll. "Phenomenal world" is the endless potential of our "phenomenal worlds" to the time we exist. These are the worlds that are the signs of existence of the being and our existence in the being, not in the sense that Martin Heidegger sought in sein (being), but in the sense that Mulla Sadra found from existence of the phenomenal world.

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Contemplation 1. It has been said that Jakob von Uexküll used the theory of *Umwelt* to answer the biological question of the behavior of the earthworm. His question was: "How does the earthworm, which has neither hands nor eyes, understand where the tip and base of a leaf are?" (Atarodi, Rafieian, & Salavati, 2016). Through this theory, he ultimately wanted to explain why and how animals have "phenomenal worlds". How does he reconstruct the map of the earthworm's "phenomenal world" based on the functional cycle? In his view, the "phenomenal world" creates a world which envelopes the body of an organism as it is perceived by body organs. The world which surrounds the body is a space with boundaries; to put it another way, the boundaries of the world around the body is like a skin which has surrounded it. This skin is not visible for an outside observer (von Uexküll & Pauli, 2016). How can we understand that an invisible skin envelopes the "phenomenal world", which is around the organism's body? His answer is that we, as an organic system, can reconstruct the other organism's boundaries of "phenomenal world", which has surrounded its body, through analysis of its nervous system and sensorimotor organs and observation of its behavior (von Uexküll & Pauli, 2016). What does this "phenomenal world" do for an organism? The "phenomenal world" is that which creates the relationship between the organism and its environment. The "phenomenal world" works as a translator to convert the language of the environment into the inner language of the organism. Can we conclude that it is for this reason that animal systems illustrate their environment in the form of "phenomenal worlds" that contain accessible objects for them? The question of "phenomenal world" for Jakob von Uexküll and his functional cycle and also for Thure von Uexküll – Jakob's son – and his situational circle is how do human beings or animals as organisms communicate with their outside world (or their environment) and how do they

survive as organisms in the world outside of their own and how do human beings as organisms give meaning to their outside world and their behaviors? Now I can shift from biological questions to philosophical ones. Hence, in this concluding part of contemplation 1, I have to say that biological questions are the starting point of epistemological questions not the end of their answers.

Contemplation 2. Can a human being be thought of as an earthworm in this being who, despite having hands and eyes, cannot understand where the tip and base of the leaves are?

Contemplation 3. Bodily perception of the earthworm from the objects in its outside world is resulted from embodiment of the motion of its body's "phenomenal world". Embodiment of the motion of its body's "phenomenal world" assimilates the entire world outside its body into it. This is embodiment of the motion of its body's "phenomenal world" that continuously recreates its body in all its "phenomenal worlds". Can we reach the earthworm's "phenomenal world" through the causal cues of its behaviors or is "phenomenal world" the cue for all causal cues of its world?

Contemplation 4. Is the "phenomenal world" where the body and the soul unite with each other on the one hand, and the body and soul associate with their outside world on the other hand?

Contemplation 5. Immanuel Kant's Copernican revolution was simply aimed at telling us that it is not the subject that adapts itself to the object, but it is the object that adapts itself to the subject. Does what Kant has stated about the structure of the mind of the human being have a clarifying similarity with Jakob and Thure von Uexküll's "phenomenal world"? In his philosophy, Kant says that the mind of the human being is designed in a way that it cannot know noumenon and can merely know phenomena. Does this mean that we are the same blind earthworm who understands where the tip and base of the leaf is through phenomena?

Contemplation 6. Human being is the only creature who is the translator of his own being through his "phenomenal world".

Contemplation 7. "Phenomenal world" is the lexicon for our world of being.

Contemplation 8. Our "phenomenal world" is the motion itself. If it is not, the embodiment of motion of the earthworm's "phenomenal world" reaches no leaves.

Contemplation 9. The philosophy of Descartes is based on the duality of the body and mind (\approx soul). In his philosophy, the mind is a thinking object and the body is an object with extension that belongs to the world outside of the mind. What is this world outside the mind that Descartes talks about? Let me say we do not know what happens to our earthworm if it enters Descartes's world outside the mind since, when it passes the gate of the world outside the mind to enter it, it has to take its "phenomenal world" off his body! It is evident that if our earthworm comes into Descartes's world outside the mind in this way, it will find no leaves!

In Descartes's philosophy, the mind and body belong to two fundamentally different worlds. Hence, the laws of the mind and the laws of the body are fundamentally different from each other. In one direction, we have the scene of the world of the mind and, in the other direction, there is the universal scene to which body, nature, matter, or, to put it another way, all being, except the mind, belongs. Here, we have to inquire into the relations of the body and mind with the important subject of "motion" in Descartes's philosophy. Descartes knows body as an object that is subject to the laws of motion dominant in the world outside the mind. Again we have to ask what laws of motion the mind is subject to? Descartes answers that the world of the mind is fixed and has nothing to do with "motion"; motion is exclusive to the worlds of body, nature, and matter. Such distinction between body and mind in Descartes's philosophy is because he believes that the origins of the body and mind are fundamentally different; the body

originates from matter and the world of nature, and the mind originates from a metaphysical and non-material world (by metaphysics Descartes intends the meaning he has made himself). In his philosophy, the body and mind have not simultaneously come from the same place and do not finally end in one place either. Descartes's ontological and epistemological system is based on the relationship between mind and body-object, rather than body-mind and object. There is no place for Umwelt in such a philosophy and, when the "phenomenal world" in this sense is put aside, there is no place for knowledges such as psychosomatics either. For instance, the relationship of the mind with body-object in Descartes's philosophy does not match Jakob's functional cycle, Thure's situational circle, or systemic theories. Here it is worthy to point out a very important subject matter: from our point of view, the modern mind in Descartes's philosophy is without environment (Umbegung) in the sense used by Jakob or in systemic theories. Overall, the relationship of the mind with body-object in Descartes's philosophy is the movement from the mind to the outside world and the existence of the outside world is not resulted from the mind. This is while the relationship between body-mind and object is the movement from the outside world toward the mind and the existence of the world is not possible outside the mind. Our earthworm knows that if the body and soul were separated completely somewhere, there would be no place for "phenomenal world", and of course, for death!

Contemplation 10. The "phenomenal world" is the result of a kind of adaptation, coordination, and correspondence of we as "body-soul" to the outside world.

Contemplation 11. In the philosophy of Mulla Sadra, all being is the same as motion and motion is the same as all being, not that all being is in motion. Our existence in this being is the same as our body and soul. Therefore, we can conclude that his philosophy is the same as substantial motion

and substantial motion is the same as body and soul. How can we grasp the true meanings of the language of being without the instant deep contemplating body and soul? Mulla Sadra believes that substantial motion is the syntactic structure of the language of being, and body and soul are syntactic structures of the language of substantial motion. In his ontological philosophy, being is an integrated whole with correlations devoid of contrasts. Hence, being is not dual for him; not two completely separated and independent realms as is for Descartes.

Mulla Sadra believes deeply in unity, harmony, and interweaving of body and soul. Body and soul are a common language, but sometimes are different dialects, in this being from their simultaneous incidence of body and soul until the death of the body.

In his view, the soul originates from the material force of the body when it is emerging simultaneously with the soul and the substantial motion of the body, which comes from the force of nature and the outside world, and transmits to the soul. What Mulla Sadra, who lived in the second half of the 16th and first half of the 15th centuries and was more or less contemporary to Descartes, states about the body and soul is fundamentally different from what Descartes states about them. In Mulla Sadra's philosophy, the body and soul have emerged simultaneously from one place and they go to one place in the end, with some difference, while in Descartes's philosophy, as previously mentioned, the body and soul do not come from one place simultaneously and their fate is not the same at the end. We have also emphasized this about Descartes that the "phenomenal world" has no place in philosophies like that of Descartes, which know the body and soul as completely separate and independent of each other.

The question raised is what is the state of the "phenomenal world" in the philosophy of Mulla Sadra, which is fundamentally different from the philosophy of Descartes? In Mulla Sadra's philosophy, we can talk

about "phenomenal world", but not specifically in the sense that Jakob von Uexküll has explained in his theory of Umwelt ("phenomenal world"). Here, we will point out some of the differences between what we can get from Mulla Sadra's explanations about the "phenomenal world" and what Jakob and Thure von Uexküll have expressed about it.

1. In Mulla Sadra's philosophy, the body is the carrier of the soul until it reaches a relative abstractness. After that, the soul is the carrier of the body. However, in the Umwelt theory, the body of the organism is always the carrier of the Umwelt.

2. When the "phenomenal world" transforms into the image of the functional cycle of Jakob and situational circle of Thure, it becomes a sign component in the human being and organism. However, in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, the soul and the "phenomenal world" do not transform into a single component, but each are a world at the level of the hierarchy of their being.

3. The "phenomenal world" in the Umwelt theory is essentially a machine for translating the organism's environment signs or inner signs for the organism. Mulla Sadra confirms that our "phenomenal world" functions as the translator of the signs of the shared language of the body and soul. Nevertheless, he does not identify it merely as a machine for translating the codes of images resulted from objective things in the environment.

4. In Jakob's functional cycle and Thure's situational circle, the mind and soul are totally replaced with the "phenomenal world". Such an attitude can bring about some restrictions and challenges for spiritual dimensions in research and clinical practice. In Mulla Sadra's philosophy, the body, mind, soul, and spirit are not replaced with each other; hence, his view is more compatible with transpersonal psychology.

5. The functional cycle and situational circle follow a kind of circular ontology, while the ontology of Mulla Sadra is based on the intermittent creation of being and

actualization of all its potential forces for our soul, and the phenomenal world reaching higher levels of evolution of existence.

Contemplation 12. The theoretical achievement and research activities of Jakob and Thure von Uexküll are valuable and appreciated. What I have discussed in this short essay was simply a few points to open up some new perspectives and start some useful dialogues between well-known theories in the psychosomatic field such as Jakob and Thure von Uexküll's functional cycle and situational circle and less-known theories such as the philosophy of Mulla Sadra. Such cross-

cultural conversations can specially yield useful results for advancing the goals and methods of psychosomatic knowledge.

References

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