

nature of medical sociology more obvious; at the same time it has alerted us to the historical and political linkage between medicine and sociology. A sociology of the body is thus fundamentally an exercise within medical sociology.

Phenomenology

It can be argued that structuralism had played a part in the modern analysis of the body either directly in the rejection of Cartesian dualism or indirectly in the analysis of the body as metaphor. Mikhail Bakhtin (1968) provided a rich diagnosis of the positional imagery of the body in mediaeval folk-humour. Another illustration would be Roland Barthes (1973) in his analysis of the messages of striptease and wrestling. Structuralism was in part a rejection, therefore, of the presuppositions of rationalism, which were grounded in the Cartesian formula – *cogito ergo sum*. This rejection of the mind/body dichotomy was not peculiar to French structuralism, but was a position which characterized post-war French philosophy generally. For example, within the phenomenological movement (Spiegelberg, 1960) writers like Gabriel Marcel in his *Le Mystère de l'Être* (1951) treated the body as the core of the ontological problem. Marcel argued that the body does not have a contingent or exterior relationship to existence, since my body is always immediately present in experience. He rejected the conventional dichotomies of subject/object and being/having to argue for the unity of mental and physical experience. For Marcel, to have a body is in fact always to be embodied so that existence is experienced-embodiment. The body is not an object or an instrument; rather I am my body, which is my primordial sense of possession and control. My body is the only object in which I exercise immediate and intimate rulership. For Marcel, therefore, the body is the ultimate starting point for any reflection on being and having, on existence and possession.

The mind/body legacy of Cartesian philosophy was also fundamental to the early philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, especially in *Being and Nothingness* (1957). To some extent, Sartre intensified the Cartesian division of mind and body by emphasizing the importance of intentionality of knowing (Danto, 1975). Under the influence of the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger, Sartre distinguished between being-in-itself (*en-soi*) and being-for-itself (*pour-soi*) in order to bring out the irreducible presence of free will and intentional action as necessary features of human existence. Because we experience freedom and responsibility as burdens, we are inclined to act as if our lives are determined by forces, whether psychological or sociological, which are beyond our control. We live, that is, in bad faith. The central doctrine of existentialism is that a person is essentially what they choose to be and to know (Warnock, 1965). Given the centrality of intentional consciousness in Sartre's existentialist philosophy, it might appear that the body has little part to play in our being-in-the-world. The problem

of the body does, however, play an important part in Sartre's treatment of the philosophical question of the existence of other minds in his analysis of being-for-others. For Sartre, the body is our contact with the world which constitutes our contingency. Briefly, his argument is that we do not know other minds, but only minds as they are apprehended through the body. Sartre's account of the body is thus closely connected with his emphasis on intentionality and this feature of his argument is illustrated by his distinction between the three ontological dimensions. First, he drew attention to the body-for-itself. The body is not just a physical fact for me, alongside other facts – this typewriter, this chair or this paper – because my lived experience in the world is always from the point of view of my body. In seeing the world, I am not conscious of my eyes but only of a field of vision; my body-for-itself cannot be an object to me precisely because I am it. Furthermore, in so far as I apprehend my body at all, it is through objects in the world which indicate my location. My embodiment is indicated by the typewriter in front of me and the chair underneath me. Secondly, Sartre distinguished the ontological dimension of the body-for-others. Whereas I cannot apprehend my body as an object but only as a body-for-itself, I apprehend the body of the other as an object about which I take a point of view and realize that my body as an object is the body-for-others. I do not perceive, however, the other's body as mere flesh, but always in a specific and concrete situation which I interpret as meaningful. The other is perceived not as a cadaver, but as a being-in-body with intentions whose actions or gestures are goal-directed and purposeful – such as striking a match to light a fire in order to eat. This interaction of my body as a subject for myself and an object seen by the other leads to the third ontological dimension. Being seen and observed by the other results in a recognition of my facticity, that I am an object to the other. In interaction I begin to experience my intimate inside as an impersonal outside. The body-for-itself becomes objectified and alienated. What my body is, through being observed by the other, is simply a body.

Sartre's attempt to transcend Cartesian dualism has been criticized on a variety of grounds – for example by Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) – but these objections may be summarized in the claim that Sartre did not overcome dualism: the problem was simply transferred to a distinction between *en-soi* and *pour-soi*, a distinction which is problematic and inconsistent with Sartre's commitment to an intentional ontology. The consequence of these criticisms and debates in French phenomenological philosophy is a rejection of any dualism between mind and body, and a consequent insistence on the argument that the body is never simply a physical object but always an embodiment of consciousness. Furthermore, we cannot discuss the body without having a central concern for intentions: the objective, 'outside' world is always connected to my body in terms of my body's actions or potential actions on it. To perceive the world is to reflect upon possible actions of my body on the world. Similarly, I experience my body as mine through my intimate, concrete

control over my body. The basic idea of embodiment is that my animate organism,

is me, and expresses me: it is at once the self-embodiment of my psychic life, and the self-expressiveness of my psychic life. Thus, we can say, the problem of the experience of the body is the problem of embodiment. ... The phenomenology of the animate organism is, accordingly, the descriptive-explicative analysis of the continuously on-going automic embodiment of consciousness by one organism singled out as peculiarly 'its' own, and, at higher levels, graspable by me as 'my own'. (Zaner, 1964: 261)

This view of the body from a phenomenological perspective is particularly important for sociology and, as I demonstrate in later chapters, especially for medical sociology as a critique of behaviourism. While the body is an object with specific physiological characteristics and thus subject to natural processes of ageing and decay, it is never just a physical object. As embodied consciousness, the body is drenched with symbolic significance. Phenomenology is a critique of behaviourism which, in treating the body as an object separate from consciousness, has to embrace, however covertly, Cartesian dualism. While the phenomenological critique is important, it is also limited as a philosophical basis for a sociology of the body.

The phenomenology of the body offered by Marcel, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty is an individualistic account of embodiment from the point of view of the subject; it is consequently an account largely devoid of historical and sociological content. From a sociological point of view, 'the body' is socially constructed and socially experienced. Their descriptive analysis of embodiment is of course consistent with phenomenological methodology which seeks to bracket out the question of existence in order to focus on the problem of meaning. Such an approach, however, brackets out too much, since in their own terms being involves meaning and vice versa. In presenting a sociological critique of their approach to embodiment, it is valuable to start with a consideration of the question: what is a person? The reason for this question is that the problem of the body in philosophical debate cannot be separated from the related issues of personhood, individuation and identity.

The Person

In philosophical terms, an individual person in the full sense of the term is a being with a body, consciousness, continuity, commitment and responsibility. Some aspects of this ensemble of characteristics are contained in the following statement of what is implied in the notion of the identity of a human being:

(1) the perception of an overall *coherence* – either 'substantive' or 'methodological' – within the experiences and expressions of an individual; (2) the memory of this individual and, normally, in at least some others of the *continuity* of