

Phenomenology, Interrogation and Biopower: Merleau-Ponty on 'Human Resources Exploitation'

INTRODUCTION

Interrogation methods in Western countries have undergone a deep shift since the end of the Second World War, a result of systematic intelligence research on the topic. 1961 saw the landmark publication of 'The Manipulation of Human Behaviour', funded in large part by the United States Air Force.¹ This basic research has been the standard from which a half-century of field interrogation manuals and techniques have drawn. The declassified 1963 CIA manual known as 'KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation' cites the book approvingly, noting in a sub-section entitled 'The Theory of Coercion' that "all coercive techniques are designed to induce regression," directly referencing one of the book's articles.² Twenty years later, the updated 'Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual,' used in a half-dozen training courses in various parts of Latin America, has lost the direct citation in the equivalent sub-section but states that

...regression is basically a loss of autonomy, a reversion to an earlier behavioural level. As the subject regresses, his learned personality traits fall away in reverse chronological order. He begins to lose the capacity to carry out the highest creative activities, to deal with complex situations, to cope with stressful interpersonal relationships, or to cope with repeated frustrations.³

We have decisively moved beyond a naïve 'stimulus-response' paradigm where the chief tool of the interrogator is pain, and his sole obstacle the subject's ability to tolerate it, until he 'gives in' despite himself. Such blunt methods, it is noted by the manuals, often do not result in accurate information; the subject will 'confess' to anything at all. Rather, "his capacity for resistance should be

¹ Biderman, A., & Zimmer, H., eds. *The Manipulation of Human Behaviour*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1961. Funding was provided under Air Force Contract [18(600)1797] and with support from the ominously-named 'Society for the Investigation of Human Ecology Inc.'

² Author unknown. *KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation* [KUBARK], 1963. p. 83.

³ Author unknown. *Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual* [HRETMT], 1983. p. K-1. The manuscript made available has the following line in pen written next to the paragraph above-cited, almost as an after-thought: 'the use of most coercive techniques is improper, and violates [unintelligible: laws?]'.

destroyed and replaced with a cooperative attitude.”⁴ Sensory deprivation, disruption of routine, and ‘stress positions’ are deployed in an attempt to induce this ‘regression’. It is made clear that indiscriminative use of physically coercive methods and of pain can be deeply counterproductive, causing the subject to ‘withdraw’ rather than regress.⁵ So while waterboarding is again proscribed under the Obama administration, commentators have noted that this ban has little to do with a sudden ethical mandate but rather with the now-admitted ineffectiveness of the practice. The techniques outlined above are still used at Guantanamo and in “black sites” whose locations remain undisclosed.⁶

In what follows I propose to examine in more detail the methods by which ‘regression’ is induced, particularly sensory deprivation, and take it up in terms of phenomenological ‘embodiment’ through the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. I hope to show not only that the basic research into manipulation and interrogation points to central theses of Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* but that analysis of interrogation using the concepts elaborated by Merleau-Ponty shed significant light on the practice itself. Indeed, induced regression may best be understood as a sort of deliberate breaking down of the ‘intentional arc’, which ‘subtends’ our cognitive life and helps us to ‘situate’ ourselves.⁷ The link Merleau-Ponty finds between motility and ‘basic intentionality’ is thrown in sharp relief when considering the techniques used to induce psychological regression, which involve strictly limiting intentional and motile capabilities in the subject, inducing a highly atypical, pathological state.⁸ Before doing this however, I will historically situate modern interrogation by drawing the work of Foucault.

⁴ *ibid.*, H-2 (b). In pen, on the manuscript, the word ‘must’ is replaced by ‘should’ and the words ‘destroyed and’ are crossed out. The emphasis is mine.

⁵ *ibid.*, K-2.

⁶ On this see Mitchell, Luke. “We Still Torture.” *Haper’s Magazine*, July 2009 49-55.

⁷ Merleau-Ponty, M. *Phenomenology of Perception*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2006. p. 157.

⁸ *ibid.*, 159. It is beyond the scope of this paper to determine in a legal context whether this state constitutes “severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental”—the definition of ‘torture’ according to the U.N.

SITUATING MODERN INTERROGATION

What distinguishes ‘regressive’ interrogation is not only the methodology, but the context in which it is used. Near the end of the first volume of his *Histoire de la Sexualité*, Foucault chronicles a profound change in the mechanisms of power in the West—from ‘power’ understood as an “instance of deduction (prélèvement), a subtraction mechanism ... essentially a right of seizure, of appropriation,”⁹ to a “power bent,” instead on “generating, multiplying, and growing forces... and administering over life (*gère la vie*).”¹⁰ What biopower designates fundamentally, Foucault writes, is specifically “what made life and its mechanisms enter into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life,” which is the consideration of the biological species as a stake (*enjeu*) in its own political strategizing.¹¹ Here we can see a very important intersection between Foucault’s analysis of biopower and the work of Merleau-Ponty—the centrality of the body, of the biological. Here it finds direct expression in that the social productivity, the ‘work’ of biopower is inseparably drawn from embodiment:

The control of society over individuals is not conducted only through consciousness or ideology, but also in the body and with the body. For capitalist society biopolitics is what is most important, the biological, the somatic, the corporeal.¹²

Expanding on Foucault, Hardt and Negri identify one of the central embodied productivities as the creation and manipulation of affects; the professionalization of affective labour, Hardt and Negri maintain, produce “social networks, forms of community, biopower,” and necessitates “human

⁹ Foucault, M. *Histoire de la Sexualité I : La Volonté de Savoir*. Gallimard : 1976, p. 178-179. I’ve used Robert Hurley’s translation for Random House’s as a template for my own. The page references are to the French edition.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 179.

¹¹ *Histoire de la Sexualité*, p. 188. Mere consideration : not control, not exhaustive integration.

¹² Foucault, quoted in Hardt, M. & Negri, A. *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, 27.

contact, labour in the bodily mode.”¹³ Here interrogation is remarkable in that it is simply professionalized affective labour; it is, in a sense, banal. Coercive interrogation and extra-judicial incarceration are not haphazard, subsidiary activities, supervening on specific military goals: they are rigorously designed, bureaucratically implemented, and hierarchically controlled with the same precision found in hospital wards or laboratories, aiming to break down individual autonomy and so to “elicit guarded information from captives” in a standardized, neutral fashion.¹⁴

The interrogative regime in effect reveals to us, first, the ontological limit and corporeal nature of biopolitical control over the individual; and second, the ways in which affective labour may be wielded to re-arrange, fundamentally, the individual’s life. Everything about interrogation is designed along totalizing lines, from the arrest, always in the earliest hours of the morning to “achieve surprise and the maximum of mental discomfort” to the incarceration, where “isolation, both physical and psychological, must be maintained from the moment of apprehension.”¹⁵ The subject is to be provided with “ill-fitting clothing,” since, as the manual notes “familiar clothing reinforces identity and thus the capacity for resistance.”¹⁶ At the same time questioners are told that a “real understanding of the subject” is crucial to successful interrogation—ironically, it is within custody that the subject is most thoroughly individualized, but only to better induce eventual psychological regression.¹⁷ It is this regression that is the object of interrogation; and its ‘objective’ dimension can best be understood through close consideration of its biopolitical nature. What I propose to consider, however, is not solely this aspect, but also the phenomenology of interrogation.

¹³ Empire, p. 293. As *The Manipulation of Human Behaviour* dryly notes, “the behaviour of others involve the distinctively human capabilities of men and their significance for one another.” (p. 7)

¹⁴ *The Manipulation of Human Behaviour*, p. 4.

¹⁵ HRETM, F-1, F-2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, F-3.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, G-14(b). In A *New Scientist* interview with Israel’s former chief interrogator, Michael Koubi, he candidly admits the importance of treating the subject as an individual: “You have to learn everything about him and his background. You have to know about his family, his wife, his children, his friends, his neighbourhood, his city.” Bond, M. ‘The Enforcer’ in *New Scientist* Vol. 184, Issue 2474; p. 46-49.

The Manipulation of Human Behaviour, as I noted above, forms the basis of much modern interrogative methodology. The goal of the research was, from the outset, to present

an authoritative examination of publicized speculations regarding the possible use of scientific developments in the manipulation of behaviour against future prisoners of war.¹⁸

The book's chapters deal, in turn, with sensory deprivation, drugs, body language, malingering, hypnosis and interpersonal influence on the interrogative process. Particularly, we learn that reduced sensory stimuli increases "vulnerability and receptivity to new external environmental influences."¹⁹ The effects of prolonged sensory deprivation, the authors note,

may best be characterized as a general loosening of subject's ability to perceive reality and the weakening of stable internal norms against which to evaluate perceptual (visual experience). The breakdown of internal norms is demonstrated in a variety of other functions...²⁰

These other functions include 'cognitive and learning abilities', 'suggestibility', 'time perception' and 'personality traits'. Prolonged sensory deprivation not only leads to waking hallucinations and feelings of discomfort,²¹ but also a slow disaggregation of the above-mentioned basic cognitive functions. Without social or perceptual stimulus, the individual's sense of self begins to come apart (as the authors note, however, the studies are restrained by "ethical considerations and have not pushed subjects to their ultimate limits.")²² This is indubitably one of the crucial factors in inducing the "regression", where "the interrogatee's mature defences crumbles as he

¹⁸ The Manipulation of Human Behavior, p. 3.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 63-64.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 63.

²¹ See discussion *ibid.*, 73-75. The hallucinations typically involve "simple flashes of light or geometric shapes, rather than meaningful, symbolic, integrated scenes" that appear to "originate outside the self." (p. 75).

²² *ibid.*, 91.

becomes more childlike,” facilitating interrogation.²³ As the KUBARK manual notes,

It is a fundamental hypothesis of this handbook that these techniques, which can succeed even with highly resistant sources, are in essence methods of inducing regression of the personality to whatever earlier and weaker level is required for the dissolution of resistance and the inculcation of dependence. All of the techniques employed to break through an interrogation roadblock [...] are essentially ways of speeding up the process of regression.

As the interrogatee slips back from maturity toward a more infantile state, his learned or structured personality traits fall away in a reversed chronological order, so that the characteristics most recently acquired - which are also the characteristics drawn upon by the interrogatee in his own defence - are the first to go.²⁴

Both the scientific and military literature seems content to report on the effects of the techniques used in interrogation,²⁵ but little is said about why or how these techniques should have such pronounced and profound effects. Turning to phenomenology may help us understand what is happening.

EMBODIMENT AND INTERROGATION

Merleau-Ponty provides us with a theoretical bridge connecting the political analysis of interrogation as expression of biopower and the scientific studies of human behaviour under stressful circumstances. This follows from the nature of Merleau-Ponty’s work, which is deeply concerned with embodiment—in other words, it proceeds without neglect of our corporeal, somatic nature—and also, as we have seen above, that the productivity, the ‘work’ of biopower, while enabled by technology is necessarily somatic.²⁶ Here

²³ HRET, L-3.

²⁴ KUBARK, pagination missing (Sec. VII.A.7).

²⁵ Techniques identified as “arrest, detention, deprivation of sensory stimuli, threats, fear, debility, pain, heightened suggestibility and hypnosis, and drugs.” HRET, L-1; these are by and large the same categories explored in *The Manipulation of Human Behaviour*.

²⁶ There are deep analogies here to Heidegger’s notion of ‘work’ as well as Merleau-Ponty’s own in *The Structure of Behaviour*, but I will not be able to pursue these here.

I will consider interrogation in terms of three important concepts from Merleau-Ponty's work, drawing particularly on the *Phenomenology of Perception*: the primacy of perception, motility and the intentional arc.

The primacy of perception is an appropriate starting-point for our phenomenal 'taking-up' of interrogation and regression. From the thesis that consciousness is irreducibly perceptual we begin to understand why sensory deprivation can have such damaging effects on the individual subjected to it. With no patterned stimuli or perception to 'latch on' to consciousness loses its orientation to the world. Consciousness from the phenomenological standpoint, as Merleau-Ponty writes, is "meant for a world which it neither embraces nor possesses, but towards which it is perpetually directed."²⁷ Without this world-directionality, without a "world to live through,"²⁸ consciousness does not become merely unanchored—for this identifies it as somehow existing separately—but senseless, here making use of the multiple meanings in French of *sens* as Merleau-Ponty often does: direction, sense and meaning. The body is not some afterthought or shell: consciousness must be embodied in order to perceive, reflect, and finally act. What is it to be a body? Merleau-Ponty answers that "to be a body is to be tied to a certain world. Our body is not primarily in space. It is of it."²⁹

What Merleau-Ponty is trying to say here becomes rather clearer when he considers the case of Schneider in the *Phenomenology*. Signification, the production of meaning by consciousness, is likewise embodied. The deficiencies affecting Schneider—where his abstracted understanding mediates the perceptual field, by proceeding from various linguistic hypotheses concerning an object perceived to finally, after much effort, an assertion of fact such as 'it is a pen'—are clearly pathological. But that this is so exposes, Merleau-Ponty writes, the "existential conditioning" of all normal "sensitivity and significance."³⁰ In the normal case the "subject's intentions are immediately reflected in the perceptual field."³¹ The normal perceptual field

²⁷*Phenomenology of Perception*, xx. Merleau-Ponty is talking about Husserl here, in the *Phenomenology's* introduction, but situates himself sympathetically in relation.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, xviii.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 171.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 151.

exhibits a measure of spontaneous 'plasticity' upon which the subject can, as it were, impress significance like a hand on clay. Here the physical metaphor is appropriate: that the world suggests meanings at all is because these meanings are embodied in the given world and subsequently translated into movement, motility, the capacity to move freely.³² In Schneider's case language comes between this spontaneity, blocking the penetration "into the object of perception" where one assimilates "its structure into his substance."³³ Now while admittedly Schneider's pathology is highly atypical, the techniques deployed in interrogation aim at creating a similar cluster of pathological responses by manipulating the subject's perceptual consciousness. Sensory deprivation is a central component in the process of inducing regression. Without a perceptual field, the subject can neither exhibit intentionality nor attribute meanings to the world around him. It is not that consciousness is 'left idle' and turns inwards: it is senseless lacking a perceptual field to orient it or motile freedom to act upon it.³⁴ The subject is only tenuously tied to a world, is only tenuously a body, or anybody at all.

This is also the explicit view of the researchers involved in the writing of the *Manipulation of Human Behaviour* and the military organizations that adopted it as a guide for conducting interrogations. The lead article of the book, 'The Physiological State of the Interrogation Subject as it Affects Brain Function' asserts that

Deprived of information, the brain does not function 'normally'. It must have a certain quantity of patterned, meaningful, sensory input from the external environment, and some opportunity to organize its output as behaviour ... it cannot function 'normally' unless it receives a certain amount of information upon which to operate.³⁵

³² Ibid., 152. Crucially, motility as a biological term refers to the organism's use of energy to move about: a free-riding barnacle is not motile.

³³ Ibid., 152.

³⁴ One particularly striking experiment performed at McGill University placed volunteers in "comfortable air-conditioned cubicles and put goggles, gloves and ear muffs on them. In 24 hours the hallucinations started. In 48 hours they suffered a complete breakdown. ... they suffered a disintegration of personality." "Hicks 'Severely Damaged,' says CIA Expert", *Lateline*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, transcript of broadcast 13/06/06: <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2006/s1662218.htm>

³⁵ *The Manipulation of Human Behaviour*, 28.

This strikingly echoes Merleau-Ponty's own ideas, as we've just seen. Not only the characterization of consciousness as requiring perception to operate but, rather more strikingly, also the importance of the translation of this information to movement and action. While Merleau-Ponty's concern is with the specific pathologies of the Schneider case, the military research here aims to induce pathologies with a specific objective in mind: successful interrogation. They realize, as Merleau-Ponty did, that perception is primary, that it structures consciousness. Isolation and sensory deprivation peels away the subject's sense of self by effectively disembodimenting consciousness, by artificially separating it from its corporeality, from its ability to take in sensory input, assimilate it and translate this to movement and intentionality. 'Separating' is even misleading a term: consciousness is corporeal, there is nothing to separate, only functions to atrophy. Hence motile restriction is a crucial component in inducing regression. With nothing to fix upon, consciousness effectively crumples and fades away, to the benefit of the interrogator:

The first functions lost are those that are thought to be the most complex and to have been acquired most recently by civilized man: the capacity to carry out the highest creative activities, to meet new, challenging, and complex situations, to deal with trying interpersonal relations, and to cope with repeated frustrations ... concern about 'accuracy', 'propriety', 'moral rectitude', 'honour' and 'feelings of other people' and similarly socially oriented behaviour falls away.³⁶

As the higher-order functions fall apart, so does the subject's ability to resist interrogation. Not because she merely wishes for relief from the process, but rather because she has lost the capacity to make the higher-order distinctions and evaluations necessary to withhold information when it is elicited from her. The subject in a sense does not have the capacity to realize she is effectively betraying secrets:

So far as one can tell, the willingness to give information is not determined by any constitutional factor or by the direct action of the agent from the outside, but by information already within the brain, what might be called its 'directions

³⁶ Ibid., 40.

for action'. Most of the 'directions' which call for a prisoner to withhold information were implanted by his society ... as brain function is impaired, information derived from past experience generally becomes less potent as a guide for action.³⁷

By removing the grounds for action-direction—for motility—through isolation and sensory deprivation, one effectively dissolves the subject's personal identity. Sensory deprivation, isolation and disorientation works in the interrogative context precisely because, as Merleau-Ponty writes, that

the life of consciousness—cognitive life, the life of desire or perceptual life—is subtended by an 'intentional arc' which projects round about us our past, our future, our human setting, our physical, ideological and moral situation, or rather which results in our being situated in all these respects.³⁸

As we have seen however, the debilitating effect of sensory deprivation and isolation is specifically to impair higher-order brain functions, crucially those involving 'socially oriented behaviour'. Without patterned stimuli and motile freedom consciousness 'decoheres'; the intentional arc of the subject breaks down, as impairment prevents the situating features and functions to play their proper role. This is precisely what the interrogator seeks, for without 'ideological' or 'moral' situating, the subject cannot resist the exchange of information for comfort or even for the mere interaction with another human being that the questioning process provides. Merleau-Ponty writes that in illness, the "unity of the senses, of intelligence, of sensibility and motility" brought about by the intentional arc "goes limp."³⁹ This characterization captures precisely what occurs in interrogation: the techniques deployed shatter this unity, effectively destroying the capacity for resistance which depend on the higher-order cognitive functions now absent or impaired. A

³⁷ Ibid., 41.

³⁸ *The Phenomenology of Perception*, 157.

³⁹ Ibid., 157.

successful interrogation is a managed, induced illness created by the techniques we've outlined.⁴⁰

It is important to note that the HRETM manual constantly stresses that control over the interrogatee's environment is crucial, as

thwarting any attempt by the subject to relate to his new environment will reinforce the effects of regression and drive him deeper and deeper into himself, until he no longer is able to control his responses in an adult fashion.⁴¹

The manual details several ways in which the interrogator may disorient the subject and prevent him from 'situating'. Interestingly, they are all directed at breaking any 'patterns' the subject may perceive in his new environment. The manual lists 'persistent manipulation of time,' 'retarding and advancing clocks,' 'serving meals at odd times,' 'disrupting sleep schedules,' 'disorientation regarding day and night,' 'nonsensical questioning' and 'rewarding non-cooperation' as different means of disrupting any relation the subject can make to his surroundings. Why this should be so effective becomes manifest when Merleau-Ponty writes that

even when cut off from the circuit of existence, the body never quite falls back on to itself. Even if I become absorbed in the experience of my body and in the solitude of sensations, I do not succeed in abolishing all reference of my life to a world. At every moment some intention springs afresh from me...⁴²

Where the I does not succeed, the interrogator instead must. While intense sensory deprivation is probably too debilitating to be of much use to interrogators, periods of isolation and minimal sensory input coupled with attempts at thwarting relation and reference to the world by the means indicated above, constantly frustrating intention, eventually render

⁴⁰ "Before all else, you must be efficient. You must only cause the damage that is necessary, not a bit more ... premature death means a failure by the technician." This statement is attributed to a CIA trainer assigned to Latin America in the 1960s; quoted in Harper's, 55. The banality of evil is rarely more stark.

⁴¹ HRETM, IV. L-17.

⁴² *Phenomenology of Perception*, 191.

consciousness otiose. The process here involves the frustration of conscious motility, a decoupling of the world-subject relations that structures consciousness and eventually results in its dissolution: “because existence realizes itself in the body,” Merleau-Ponty writes, the body “expresses total existence.”⁴³ Thus just as “the thing expressed does not exist apart from the expression,”⁴⁴ the interrogative process, by disconnecting the individual’s embodiment at every level seeks to dissolve selfhood and induce a ‘corporeal’ regression, an induced pathology, which squashes expression, intention, motility— and thus negates the thing as well due to their inseparability.

The use of ‘stress positions’ in conjunctions with extended periods of isolation and sensory deprivation expedites the process of regression. Stress positions have few of the ‘drawbacks’ of directly inflicting pain upon the subject while accelerating the process begun by isolation and sensory disorientation / deprivation. Notes the KUBARK manual,

It has been plausibly suggested that, whereas pain inflicted on a person from outside himself may actually focus or intensify his will to resist, his resistance is likelier to be sapped by pain which he seems to inflict upon himself ... when the individual is told to stand at attention for long periods, an intervening factor is introduced. The immediate source of pain is not the interrogator but the victim himself. The motivational strength of the individual is likely to exhaust itself in this internal encounter.⁴⁵

It should come as relatively unsurprising that the obvious hierarchical dynamic between interrogator and interrogatee, particularly in regards to the infliction of pain, could only serve to re-affirm identity by providing the interrogatee stimuli to focus on and, more importantly, ‘situate’ him or herself in contrast to the one causing the pain.⁴⁶ Hooded and placed in a ‘stress position’ such a dynamic is absent.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 192

⁴⁵ KUBARK, 94. (Sec. IX.H)

⁴⁶ “Persons of considerable moral or intellectual stature often find in pain inflicted by others a confirmation of their belief that they are in the hands of inferiors, and their resolve not to submit is strengthened.” *Ibid.*, 94.

While sensory deprivation works by depriving the subject of the stimuli and motility required to sustain consciousness, stress positions direct the 'body schema' of the subject to work against itself, in a task whose continued successful performance will result in pain. The 'body schema' for Merleau-Ponty means that one's body is perceived as "an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task ... a spatiality of situation."⁴⁷ Since the spatiality of one's own body is task-oriented, is directional, the stress position is effective in sapping resistance and immediately distinguished from straight 'other-inflicted' pain. The other-directness is mitigated by one's own body schema incorporating the task as its identification, and as more time passes this identification becomes further anchored. As the position becomes difficult to hold, the subject's focus and concentration on maintaining it only serves to confirm the situation's hold on the body schema.

CONCLUSION: BIOPOWER AND THE SOMATIC

As Hardt and Negri note, economic production is increasingly aimed at the "production of information, communication, cooperation—in short, the production of social relationships and social order."⁴⁸ In the limit-case of interrogation the body as the privileged site for the expression of power and 'production of order' is made explicit. While Merleau-Ponty's work on the body predates understandings of the body as 'performative' there are without a doubt similarities to be found. Just as the biopolitical productivity of the body is performative, so is the speech act in Merleau-Ponty: "the process of expression," he writes, "brings the meaning to life in an organism of words"—it is not a "kind of reminder."⁴⁹ Interrogation is a perfect example of 'performative embodiment' in this sense, where immaterial labour and work in the bodily mode intersect. We see this because while the over-arching logic of interrogation is biopolitical—it is ordered and carried out in a systematic,

⁴⁷ *The Phenomenology of Perception*, 114.

⁴⁸ *Multitude*, p. 334.

⁴⁹ *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 212.

neutral fashion for political goals often outstripping specific situations⁵⁰—the methods used to elicit information from captives is fundamentally corporeal. The creation of ‘social cooperation’ through biopower means working on bodies, and considered in toto finally translates to a working on the ‘social flesh’ itself. Abstracting from the specific bodies we find a flesh Merleau-Ponty characterized as ‘elemental’ which is becoming increasingly hard to regulate.⁵¹ Inducing psychological regression in interrogation was a matter of disorienting and isolating captives. In a sense both the effectiveness of these techniques and the reasons for their deployment can be understood through Merleau-Ponty’s conceptual re-alignment of philosophy, away from mind-body distinctness and towards the unity of body.

⁵⁰ The ‘mosaic theory’ of intelligence-gathering is that one should glean small amounts of intelligence from various sources and assemble these to form a coherent picture, instead of expecting one source to show all.

⁵¹ “The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term ‘element’, in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth and fire.” Merleau-Ponty, quoted in *Multitude*, 192.