The Dance of Life
Buytendijk and the Phenomenology of the Encounter[1]

Claudinei Aparecido de Freitas da Silva
Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná
cafsilva@uol.com.br

Reception date: 26-08-2025
Acceptance date: 13-10-2025

Abstract: In his original study, *Phénoménologie de la Rencontre*, F. J. Buytendijk develops one of the most admirable phenomenological descriptions around the experience of the encounter. Moving away from all causal explicative models, Buytendijk interrogates the ultimate sense of this manifestation, such as it appears, aiming at its most originary and therefore authentic, essence. The encounter is transfigured as a phenomenon *sui generis*: it is the expression of our "being" or our "becoming world" by the unity of my body and the other in a single plot or perceptual event.
Keywords: Buytendijk; Phenomenology; Encounter; Body; Other

Life is the art of encounter, although there is so much dis-encounter in life.
Vinícius de Moraes

1.

Buytendijk (1887–1974) was more than a psychologist or ethnologist. This pivotal Dutch thinker, though still relatively unknown, left a significant mark on scientific and academic debate not only through his vast and multifaceted body of work, but also through the methodological style by which his thought engaged the landscape of contemporary ideas. What, then, defines this style? Published in 1952 by Desclée de Brouwer, the short book *Phénoménologie de la Rencontre* is, without question, one of its most compelling examples. In this concise yet original work,

[1] This article is the second revised version of its original publication in Portuguese, as featured in *Revista Estudos Filosóficos* (ISSN 2177-2967), n. 13/2014, 73–86, published by the Department of Philosophy, Education, and Interdisciplinary Methodologies (DFIME) at UFSJ – São João del-Rei, MG. I am immensely grateful to Marília Dominicci, who collaborated on the translation and discussion of the text, via the company Tikinet in São Paulo.

ISSN: 0874-9493 (print) / ISSN-e: 2183-0142 (online)
DOI: 10.2478/phainomenon-2025-0007

Buytendijk gradually unfolds himself both through his descriptive ability and his precise and critical method of deconstructing long-standing certainties and rigorously testing new interpretive hypotheses, all centered on the book's thematic core: the notion of the "encounter." The style, as the very title of the work suggests, could only be phenomenological. Through this lens, the issue takes shape, advancing a radically new understanding by establishing a distinct analytical rhythm in contrast to the prevailing explanatory models of behaviorist-influenced psychology. In this regard, Buytendijk proposes, beyond a psychological reinterpretation, a phenomenological one. That is to say, at the heart of his scientific inquiry lies a profoundly ontological account of the encounter's mode of appearance as a *sui generis* event.

From the outset, Buytendijk establishes the true state of the question. The main goal of this work is not to outline a systematic taxonomy of encounters. Indeed, there are indifferent, impassive, affective, reserved, unreflective, degrading, hostile, friendly, loving, kind, fearful, and solemn encounters, as well as countless others. The author observes that, in the solemn encounter, one is compelled to be present through the body in an "intentionally" unnatural manner (Buytendijk, 1952a: 56). Yet it is not precisely this kind of contact, which is typical of our everyday rituals, that is under consideration in this work. Being wholly conventional, such a form of encounter is, therefore, artificial. What Buytendijk seeks to describe, by contrast, is the general phenomenon of the encounter, in which "the other is situated in the most intimate sphere of community" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 54). It is, therefore, a matter of projecting a broader sense of the phenomenological experience – not by offering an exhaustive description of the many possible forms of encounter, but by delineating only certain types or limit-cases, when necessary, ones that move beyond the order of facts and toward the order of phenomena.

2.

A *phenomenology of the encounter* is one that undertakes a study in greater depth, capable of clarifying "the relationship between the human being and the ritual from a broader and more general human perspective" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 8). To this end, two levels of encounter must be established: "the apparent" and "the authentic." Thus, let us begin with the first. Here, an entirely positivist standpoint prevails, in which the encounter is defined as "a portion of the perceptible

world, objectively coherent [...] that is, the encounter is perceived as one manifestation among many, as a fact that can be observed and described by a spectator indifferent to human activity" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 9). Within this domain, the most impartial stance dominates: the stance of an "objective observer who deliberately withdraws from any form of relation of being" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 9). Moreover, materialism and mechanicism are not the only perspectives that remain bound to this initial theoretical framework. Surprisingly, Buytendijk contends, there is yet another position that has become canonical – one arising from within philosophy itself. It is the position adopted by some phenomenologists, most notably Husserl and Sartre. This approach privileges the ideal of a constituting transcendental consciousness in an attempt to disclose the ultimate meaning of the phenomenon of the encounter. Sartre's well-known maxim that "Hell is other people" (Sartre, 1945: 122), or that "… I am pinned in the midst of the world, in danger, in a situation which I cannot assume …" (Sartre, 1943: 327), operates as the stubborn principle of an ego – or a translucent, transcendently purified consciousness – incapable of advancing a theory of intersubjectivity. It is ultimately necessary to overcome the dualism[1] of this unbreachable position, which obscures the deeper specificity of the encounter as an event that, strictly speaking, eludes the grasp of the hegemonically Cartesian idealist analysis professed within our Western culture. It is thus by renouncing this postulate that Buytendijk begins to explore the second level of the experience of the encounter, seeking another perspective of convergence within the context of the phenomenological tradition.

> For this reason, we maintain that the common source of knowledge from which a phenomenology of the encounter proceeds is not transcendental consciousness but engaged consciousness (Merleau-Ponty) or the being-in-situation (Gabriel Marcel), understood in light of the fundamental forms of human existence. (Buytendijk, 1952a: 11)

In this new endeavor, the affiliation with Gabriel Marcel and Merleau-Ponty assumes particular prominence, though it is accompanied by other references, such as Binswanger, Heidegger, and others. Drawing on these concentric theoretical sources, Buytendijk takes a direct and radical stance: "there is no possible encounter with an essence that, prior to existence, defines and delimits it" (Buytendijk, 1954: 27; 2010: 30). Or, in Merleau-Ponty's words, "there is in human

[1] For this purpose, Buytendijk cites Binswanger (1947), who described the Cartesian division of the world into subject and object as the "cancer of psychology."

existence no unconditional possession and, therefore, no fortuitous attribute" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 199). At this point, the task becomes one of situating the "authentically" essential encounter, insofar as one must "choose the relation of the being-in-itself which connects our existence with the person we encounter" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 9). It is only through "this relation that the understanding of the truly human element of the encounter becomes possible" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 9). From this perspective, "the phenomenal world opens up as *ours* with a new immediate significance" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 9). How, then, does such an opening to the world arise – not one rooted in a solipsistic attitude, but questioned within an intersubjective horizon?

To this end, Buytendijk argues that examining the encounter requires a dual orientation:

> […] first, it is necessary to know empirically the various modalities through which the human being relates to the world and to others; that is, how one encounters given situations, develops meaningful projects, and becomes subject to those projects within the dialectical tension between nature and freedom. Second, knowledge of these modalities of encounter must always be guided by an understanding of human existence. (Buytendijk, 1952a: 11)

On this mutual basis, the task is no longer one of "explaining" or "demonstrating," but solely of "revealing ontologically and phenomenologically" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 13). Buytendijk maintains that "the psychologist can and must think and work from an ontological standpoint" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 16). At this stage, his theoretical perspective seeks to hold together both the unity of existence and world, as well as transcendence. As he emphasizes: "we believe that each concrete form of encounter can, from the outset, be known psychologically in the transcendence of the encounter" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 16). What is ultimately at stake, then, is the meaning of an "interhuman world" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 15). And if "there is never a facticity completely devoid of meaning" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 15), it is because this meaning is always transcendent, without ever severing its link with the world itself. How, then, is this transcendence not fiction within the psychologist's field of experience?

> This transcendence takes place, however, within the ambivalence of the fundamental psychological attitude, which is always directed both toward the given and the ontic. The psychologist can only know a human being insofar as the encounter takes place "with all one's heart"; yet at the same time, it is equally necessary to suspend this communication when reflecting upon it, when bracketing its

> reality. The phenomenological method demands precisely such an attitude, one that mirrors the gaze directed toward all phenomena. *We must, then, likewise move toward the encounter and, more precisely, toward the being of its manifestations*. (Buytendijk, 1952a: 16; emphasis added)

To move toward the encounter. It is from this clearly phenomenological and ontological perspective that Buytendijk advances another step in his theory. This methodological commitment is never abandoned in his epistemic-clinical proposal. Therefore, he wonders to what extent it is illuminating to inquire whether perception might not already be, from the very outset, a form of encounter. Or, more precisely: what is the relation between perception and encounter?

Following Löwith, it is above all necessary to recognize "the original meaning of an encounter [...] the reciprocal encounter" (1928: 65). To do so, one must first dismantle a somewhat fossilized interpretation – from Descartes to modern psychology – concerning the status of perception[1]. That is, the classical conception that defines perception as an apprehension that knows itself, perception being nothing more than a reflexive process that interrupts the continuous flow of sensation. Within the philosophical tradition and, along with it, behaviorist psychology (Pavlov, Skinner) and even Erwin Strauss's neurophenomenological work, perception has been separated from the constitutive structure of the immediate relation with the surrounding world (*Umwelt*) and with the interhuman world. In contrast to this postulate, Merleau-Ponty is invoked: "for us to perceive things, it is necessary that we live them" (1945: 376). What relation is established here?

> Natural perception is not a science; it does not posit the objects to which it is directed, nor does it take distance from them in order to observe them; it lives with them. It is the "opinion" or "primordial faith" that binds us to a world as to our homeland. The being of the perceived is the antepredicative being toward which our entire existence is polarized. (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 371–372)[2]

Thus, "from the moment existence concentrates and engages itself in a conduct, it falls under perception" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 415). It is within this context, in particular, that the movement of dance appears exemplary to Buytendijk. There is an intimate unity between perception and

[1] On this point, see Silva (2009a, 2009b).
[2] The transcendental status of the antepredicative dimension, as prefigured here by Merleau-Ponty, is also what Buytendijk seemingly has in view when he refers to the idea of a "nature in its undivided and intact unity" (Buytendijk, 1951: xv; 1958: 12). See also Silva (2019).

movement, as well as between two dancers, such that each moves in relation to the other. In other words:

> The unity is incessantly renewed and unfolds through either repetition or new encounters. From this perspective, dance becomes a precise image of the intermingling, separation, and renewed relation between the human being and the world. (Buytendijk, 1952a: 22–23)

Buytendijk then refers to a "dance of life" (1952a: 23). What emerges here, as we can see, is an image constructed around the phenomenon of dance as a movement of encounter, vividly portrayed in the Dutch classic *Antonia's Line*: "nothing dies forever ... something always remains ... from which another is born ... Thus, life begins without knowing where it came from ... because life wants to live ... This is the only dance we dance" (Gorris, 1995). To dance life conveys nothing more than the treasured sign of a mode of existence, whose expression already becomes perceptible in early childhood, the inaugural moment of every encounter, the authentic condition in which the first human encounters are transfigured. Childhood, as Buytendijk describes it, is that "place of the primordial play" (1952a: 23). It radiates like no other form of life; that is, it is transfigured as "the genesis of encounters" (1952a: 22). Thus,

> Every play is a reciprocal dynamic relation that arises from an encounter. Play therefore presupposes a world whose image is given and whose dynamic possibilities become the object of a project. We play with something that, in turn, plays with the player. Each player is a companion of the play, while also becoming its toy […]. For the child, it is above all the sense of touch – linked to tactile motricity – that serves as the medium through which, each time, the experience of the Other takes place: as a partner in play and in one's own bodily existence, as the one with whom the Other plays. (Buytendijk, 1952a: 23)

This first expression of the dance of life, glimpsed here as primordial play, constitutes a form of authentically human encounter. Naturally, however, this duality-unity of play assumes a different character within the functional circuit of maternal breastfeeding, as Buytendijk emphasizes. For in the infant's experience, "this is not yet a matter of play, of an encounter, or of intermingling. There is yet no relation, no being-with" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 24). Returning, then, to the child's playful experience, one cannot ignore that "the child steps into the sphere of

ambiguous human behavior" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 25). It is within this fundamental ambiguity that the encounter reveals itself in its most spontaneous and, therefore, most authentic expression. On the other hand, a second, equally fundamental source of primordial play must also be recognized: the expansive, aggressive impulse – what we might call countermovement. Thus, even struggle remains a genuine form of encounter. It unfolds as a dialectic of tension, of striking out and yielding, of seeing and being seen.

Alongside this, another crucial phenomenon emerges in the earliest infant encounters: the perception of the Other. From this standpoint, Buytendijk is quick to observe the unfolding importance, for instance, of the problem of expression and imitation:

> The young child, as we all know, studies the faces of the mother and of strangers, their expressions, and above all, their eyes. The very first encounter is that of the gaze meeting our own. But what does the child actually perceive in this encounter of gazes? The eyes do not first appear as objects among other objects in space. Rather, the child sees that the Other is looking back – and always in a particular manner. From the very beginning, the child perceives not simply eyes, but the Other, their gaze, and expression. (Buytendijk, 1952a: 25)

This line of analysis, in fact, had already been anticipated by Scheler in his critique of principled subjectivism. He shows that the perception of the Other, as well as the phenomenon of expression, is never reducible to a judgment based on sensory data. Instead, it points to an original "being-capable-of-participating-in-being" (Scheler, 1923: 258), irreducible to any causal explanation. Moreover, he writes: "Expression is what the human being first apprehends in a being encountered outside the self" (Scheler, 1923: 275).

The child's first smile exemplifies this expressive dimension. Buytendijk devoted an important and unprecedented article to this theme (1988), which was later taken up by other notable theorists such as Kurt Goldstein (1957). In *Phénoménologie de la Rencontre*, the smile is described as the very sign of the first loving encounter. Here, Buytendijk recalls Plessner, for whom "the smile is the expression of humanity blossoming in the first timid sympathetic encounter" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 30). "This encounter," he continues, "is a model of that unity of love and knowledge that ensures a deeper understanding of the human being" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 31). Such an encounter is transfigured into the advent of the true, genuine, and thus original human encounter. "The child then crawls into a relation of being with other human beings. The perception of the

Other becomes encounter" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 32). Here, another example from Merleau-Ponty, cited by Buytendijk, proves illuminating: it is the infant's behavior at the singular moment when

> [...] the child opens its mouth if, in play, I place one of its fingers between my teeth and pretend to bite it. Now, it has scarcely looked at its own face in a mirror; its teeth, as it feels them from within, are for it immediately instruments for biting. Thus, my jaw, as it sees it from the outside, is for it immediately capable of the same intentions. The 'bite' has, for it immediately, an intersubjective meaning. It perceives its intentions in its own body, perceives my body with its body, and through this perceives in its body my intentions. (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 404)

"Everything takes place," notes Merleau-Ponty, "as if the intention of the Other inhabited my body, or as if my intentions inhabited his" (1945: 215). As Buytendijk rightly reiterates, "there is authentic imitation here, precisely within the relation of being that defines the encounter [...]; moreover, this meaning is only possible on the plane of the encounter" (1952a: 33). The existence of the Other, like our own, is open to the world in such a way that

> The Other is the existing complement of my existence, its fulfillment, and this relation of being appears in the lived ambiguity of one's own existence. [...]. Thus, the child first discovers the presence of the Other in immediate encounter, and then in a mediated fashion – in sensory impressions, signs, sounds, events, and the cultural objects surrounding them. One's own world is also the world of the Other. (Buytendijk, 1952a: 34)

In this panorama,

> Little by little, there develops in the life of the child the knowledge of the surrounding world and of the interhuman world, the awareness of coexistence, and the existence of the being of the Other and of the being of the self. It is only in the course of this development that encounters take on their accent in dialogue and are deepened through thoughts, affective states, feelings, values, and intentions. (Buytendijk, 1952a: 35)

Buytendijk does not confine his descriptions to human experience alone; he programmatically extends them to another domain particularly central to his research: animal psychology (cf. Buytendijk, 1928; 1965b; 1973). In this clinical field of interest, he shows how,

between the perception of the Other and the animal world, functional and intentional relations emerge that are capable of generating the situations that constitute life. Within this domain, the central problem of imitation inevitably reappears, now with the aim of distinguishing mimetic experience in both human and non-human beings. In short, if it is true that imitation within the human community structurally shapes all encounters, animal experience follows a different dynamic. An animal is incapable of imitating another animal, or even a human being.

In any case, Buytendijk redirects these explorations, focused thus far on the genesis of encounters, toward another arc of epistemic-phenomenological concern. It is now a matter of exploring the more concrete perception of the essence of the encounter. A new theme emerges from this perspective: the ontological relation between the body and the realization of presence.

3.

Above all, it must be recognized that "in the encounter, it is always, first and foremost, existence that encounters itself" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 49). From here we can better grasp what Buytendijk calls the "authentic mode of presence" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 54). In other words, it is essential that "every authentic encounter must be understood as a human cultural event in which the ambiguity of existence comes to light" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 8). Van Haecht, in his reading of *Phénoménologie de la Rencontre*, puts it this way: "the encounter reveals the condition of the incarnate spirit […]. Bodily presence in the world is realized in communication and in the reciprocity of consciousnesses" (Van Haecht, 1952: 661). Such, in summary, is the program of an existential phenomenology to which Buytendijk commits himself. In fact, his analyses show with striking clarity that "the immediacy of behavior makes this fact a meaningful project of conduct" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 52). What is at stake here is not a "fact" to be explained but a "phenomenon" to be understood – one revealed in flesh and blood, in its radical concreteness. From this perspective, and even beyond Heidegger, Buytendijk takes up Minkowski's suggestion that we should speak not of "being-in-the-world" but of "becoming-world" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 40). This is possible only through the lived experience of the body. But what, after all, is the body?

In posing this question, Buytendijk once again turns to Gabriel Marcel and Merleau-Ponty, whose descriptions are well known. As he writes:

> The phenomenology of the encounter must proceed from the understanding of the relation between the human being and their body. Such understanding is possible only if we free ourselves from the conceptual and objective stance of the disinterested spectator, a stance that has remained dominant even in psychology. (Buytendijk, 1952a: 39)

In this critical task, Buytendijk does not lose sight of the deeper dimension through which the body, from the very beginning, expresses itself ontologically as a dynamic reality; an exemplary mode of the human being's presence in both worldly and interhuman unity. As the Dutch thinker emphasizes:

> What we call the body in the encounter is the human form that has a behavior: it expresses, announces, mediates – that is, it exists in the world. It is the medium through which the freedom of the artist is expressed in his work [...]. The body, however, through which the human being exists in the world, is produced continuously by the human being in the animated attitude and movement that constitute behavior. The human being shapes a situation in and through the body, defining it as a situation for the one who encounters it. The Other, the one who encounters it, stands before a freedom that places limits on their own freedom. (Buytendijk, 1952a: 41)

It is within this framework that Buytendijk's phenomenology of the encounter establishes its proper scope. Bodily meaning projects itself as "human form," as a behavior in the world. Such corporeality is now far – very far – from being reduced to objective causality. It reveals itself as existing-in-the-world, as a "motivating situation" (Buytendijk, 1959; 1969). It is in this context that the distinction between "cause" and "motive" proves instructive, for the body can only recognize another corporeality by its motivational value and not by its causal function. Recognition of the Other is possible solely through this more dynamic "human form." Without it, the encounter could not take place at all, and it is precisely through it that the communal meaning of a "we" becomes possible.

This deeper significance of the intersubjective phenomenon, in turn, draws the attention of another notable Dutch scholar: Wilhelmus Antonius Maria Luijpen. An interpreter of the phenomenological tradition, Luijpen distinguishes two levels of encounter, following the same interpretive trajectory developed from the outset: the "authentic encounter" and the "apparent

encounter." He begins with the latter, linking it to a reductive explanatory model he caricatures as a "phenomenology of indifference." This is a form of analysis that precisely distorts the idea of "we." What, then, is the "we of indifference"? "In such a 'we,'" he writes, "the 'encounter' merely signifies the confrontation of one quality or function of the 'I' with the quality or function of the 'you'" (Luijpen, 1973: 304). The nature of this contact here is merely functional and thus bureaucratic, in which the Other is reduced to a set of predicates, subject to classification or cataloging. A clear example of such abstract functionalism is found in work relations governed by technical-administrative efficiency, where "no one is anyone, because no one cares about anyone" (Luijpen, 1973: 305). In presenting this diagnosis, Luijpen does not suggest that social functionality must be abolished: "we do not call functional relations 'indifferent' because they are *merely* functional, but because and insofar as they are *purely* functional; and it is enough to observe that, in purely *functional* relations, *no* affectivity is found" (Luijpen, 1973: 306). But under what conditions does the encounter cease to be *mere* function? In what context can it assume an authentically human significance?

This happens when there is genuine participation in the personal life of the Other, toward whom "I care," in the intentional sense articulated by Gabriel Marcel, such that "to encounter someone is not simply to cross paths with him; it is to be, at least for a moment, near him, with him; as a *co-presence*" (1999: 22). It is the recognition that "I am always, at every instant, more than a mere fortuitous conjunction" (Marcel, 1999: 22), more than a bundle of predicates. Luijpen illustrates the "metaphysical importance of the encounter," developed in a Marcellian spirit, with a typical scene: that of a subway passenger in Paris. The subway is crowded. People brush against each other without the slightest irritation. Nothing could be more ordinary. A few minutes later, the train stops at Saint-Michel. On the platform, an elderly man is waiting. The doors slide open, and he steps inside, but in doing so, he "collides" with me, right at the entrance where I am standing. Did he really just "bump" into me? Perhaps. Yet it is equally possible that something else entirely occurred between this man and me. It may be that some flicker of affection arose in that instant: I tried to make space for him, and he, smiling, apologized for treading on my foot. What, then, remains of that moment after we disembark together at the next station and go our separate ways? "Nothing," a materialist might say. And yet, was there not something like a hidden mutual bond – since, on the following day, when I happened to meet the same man again at the Louvre, I felt an

immediate impulse to voice my surprise at this second unexpected encounter? What, in fact, had taken place between us? Was it merely a physical jostling, nothing more?

As Luijpen points out, if that were the case, the encounter would be utterly incomprehensible – devoid of any deeper meaning, affectivity, or humanity.

> It was not the "we" of indifference which took place, for I had "cared" about this man, making room for him despite the crush of passengers, not wanting the train to depart before he could enter. He, too, "cared" for me, as was evident from the tone of his apology when he unintentionally stepped on me. What was most striking, however, was that in our brief exchange, the objective qualities that might otherwise have defined each of us faded entirely into the background of our encounter. Only later did I notice that this man was rather corpulent and that his left eye was impaired. Yet I did not reduce him to the predicates "fat" and "cross-eyed." Had I done so, what truly unfolded between us would never have taken place, nor would I have felt any desire to speak with him upon meeting again the following day at the Louvre. I would simply have thought to myself: "There is the fat, cross-eyed man again". (Luijpen, 1973: 308)

Martin Buber captures this atmosphere with remarkable precision, affirming that "it is by grace that the *Thou* comes to me; it is not by seeking it that it is found […]. All real life is encounter" (2012: 44). Every "relation is reciprocity" (Buber, 2012: 48), understood here in terms of a "reciprocity of the face-to-face" (Buber, 2012: 58). In this sense we enter what Buber calls the interhuman, or dialogical, domain.

> Importantly, this domain extends well beyond the sphere of sympathy. Even the simplest of situations may belong to it as when, on an overcrowded railcar, two strangers briefly exchange attentive glances before sinking back into the ease of not wanting to know anything about one another. We must also include within it every encounter between adversaries, however casual, whenever it leaves a mark on their mutual behavior, that is, whenever something actually transpires between them, however imperceptibly, regardless of whether it is charged with feeling at the time. The only important thing is that, for each of the two men, the other happens as this particular other; that each becomes aware of the other in such a way that precisely thereby he assumes a stance toward him – not considering or

> treating him as an object, but as a partner in a life event, even if it is only a boxing match[1]. This is the decisive factor: the not-being-object. (Buber, 1982: 137–138)

In these subtle examples, both Luijpen and Buber seem to discern the ultimate character of a "phenomenology of the encounter" in Buytendijk's sense. Yet this conceptual horizon must continually be reaffirmed, despite the modern world's ever-present risk of "dis-encounter" under the destructive sign of "indifference." In this regard, Buytendijk contributes to phenomenological reflection the claim that every human encounter is, in some way, both mutual and reciprocal:

> Reciprocity is the very condition of an *effective* encounter. Yet it is seldom complete. Some encounters understand it in terms of equivalence, as in friendship. Only in the loving encounter, in the existence of a community of "we," can reciprocity – as Binswanger demonstrated – become complete. At that point, however, it is no longer the object of an intention, but the secret of an inherent gift and of a revelation. (Buytendijk, 1952a: 42)

In this context, this "magic of the we" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 52) assumes a further dimension, phenomenologically expressed as a "mutual encounter and self-discovery" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 52). The encounter then comes into *effect* reciprocally, becoming the "ontological foundation of existence as the community of the 'we'" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 52–53). It is within this communion that "the authenticity of the encounter, founded on the presence of the human being through the body and in the body" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 42), comes to light – an authenticity that finds its highest realization in the experience of dialogue. Dialogue makes actual "this primordial possibility of the loving encounter" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 53), understood as "reciprocal presence" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 51). At this point, the phenomenology of the encounter, in its most radically Buytendijkian ambition, also becomes a phenomenology of language, where "speaking is the differentiated form of this presence, asserting itself as a question in discourse, in the common world, in the field of encounters" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 44).

The "dance of life" then reveals its full phenomenological choreography, showing how profoundly "for the human being, silence has a rich meaning" (Buytendijk, 1952a: 45). To grasp

[1] This is precisely what Buytendijk describes with regard to soccer: the opposing player is never simply an enemy, an obstacle, or a threat, but the indispensable condition for the game. In this sense, the opponent is also a "co-player" (Buytendijk, 1952b: 40–41; 1965a: 56–57).

the eloquence of this silence is to follow its ceaseless rhythm toward the authentic encounter with the most radical and implacable mystery: life.

References

Binswanger, L. (1947). *Ueber die daseinsanalytische Forschungsrichtung in der Psychiatrie*. In: *Ausgewählte Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Bern.

Buber, M. (1982). *Do diálogo e do dialógico*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Buber, M. (2012). *Je et tu*. Paris: Aubier.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1928). *Psychologie des animaux*. Paris: Payot.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1951). *De la douleur*. Translation: A. Reiss; Preface: M. Pradines. Paris: PUF.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1952a). *Phénoménologie de la rencontre*. Translation: Jean Knapp. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1952b). *Le football: une étude psychologique*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1954). *La femme, ses modes d'être, de paraître, d'exister: essai de psychologie existentielle*. Translation: Alphonse de Waelhens et René Micha. Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1958). *El dolor: psicología, fenomenología, metafísica*. Translation: Fernando Vela. Madrid: Revista de Occidente.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1959). «Le corps comme situation motivante». In: *La motivation*. Paris: PUF, 9-34.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1965a). *Psicologia do futebol*. Translation: Carlos Lopes de Mattos. São Paulo: Herder.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1965b). *L'homme et l' animal: essai de psychologie comparée*. Translation: Rémi Laureillard. Paris: Gallimard.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1969). «El cuerpo como situacíon motivante». In: *La motivación*. Tradução de Dora Douthat y Della Lerner. Buenos Aires: Proteo, 17-41.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1973). *El hombre y el animal: ensaio de psicología comparada*. Translation: Julia V. Iribarne. Buenos Aires/México: Ediciones Carlos Lohlé.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1988). «The first smile of the child». *Phenomenology + Pedagogy*, 6(1), 15-24.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (2010). *A mulher, seus modos de ser, de aparecer, de existir: ensaio de psicologia existencial*. Translation: Teófilo Alves Galvão. Pelotas, RS: Editora UFPel.

Goldstein, K. (1957). «The smiling of the infant and the problem of understanding the "other"». *The Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied*, 44(1), 175-191.

Gorris, M. (Dir.). (1995). *Antonia's Line*. Netherlands.

Löwith, K. (1928). *Das individuum in der rolle des mitmenschen*. München: Drei Masken-Verlag.

Luijpen, W. A. M. (1973). *Introdução à fenomenologia existencial*. Translation: Carlos Lopes de Mattos. São Paulo: E.P.U.

Marcel, G. (1999). *Essai de philosophie concrète*. Paris: Gallimard.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945). *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Paris: Gallimard.

Sartre, J.-P. (1943). *L' être et le néant: essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*. Paris: Gallimard.

Sartre, J.-P. (1945). *Huis clos*. Paris: Gallimard.

Scheler, M. (1923). *Wesen und forme der sympathie*. Bonn: Verlag von Friedrich Cohen.

Silva, C. A. F. (2009a). *A carnalidade da reflexão: ipseidade e alteridade em Merleau-Ponty*. São Leopoldo, RS: Nova Harmonia.

Silva, C. A. F. (2009b). «Percepção e cinema em Merleau-Ponty». In: H. S. Gentil and J. Piva (eds.). *Ensaios sobre a filosofia francesa contemporânea*. São Paulo: Alameda Editorial, 123-141.

Silva, C. A. F. (2019). *A natureza primordial: Merleau-Ponty e o logos do mundo estético* (2nd ed.). Cascavel, PR: Edunioeste.

Van Haecht, L. (1952). «"Compte rendu": Phénoménologie de la rencontre de F. J. J. Buytendijk». *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 50(28), 659-661.