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Abstract: Phenomenology since Husserl has always had a problematic relationship with empirical science. In its early articulations, there was Husserl's rejection of 'the scientific attitude', Merleau-Ponty's distancing of the scientifically-objectified self, and Heidegger's critique of modern science. These suggest an antipathy to science and to its methods of explaining the natural world. Recent developments in neuroscience have opened new opportunities for an engagement between phenomenology and cognitive science and through this, a re-thinking of science and its hidden assumptions more generally. This is so partly because of the shortcomings of conventional mechanistically-conceived science in dealing with complex and dynamic phenomena such as climate change, brain plasticity, the behaviour of collectives, the dynamics of various microbiological processes, etc. But it is also due to recent phenomenological scholarship focussed on the 'embodied' phenomenology of Husserl's Ideen II and Merleau Ponty's later ontology of nature which have helped to extend the insights of phenomenology beyond the narrowly 'human' to an understanding of nature (which includes the human) more generally. Thus re-contextualised, phenomenology is well placed to examine some of the assumptions that give rise to the reductionism and associated scientism which has characterised conventional science in its approach to the study of natural processes. In light of this, it might be suggested that the 'anti-science' of early articulations of phenomenology is more a hostility to the underlying assumptions of science as conventionally understood than to science itself – that it is scientism rather than science that is targeted. In this paper, I aim to show how a phenomenological naturalism might be seen as a necessary step towards the development of a non-reductionist and non-scientistic approach to scientific inquiry. A key to this is a reconceptualization of nature as inclusive of meanings

and of mind. It is a conception developed by Merleau-Ponty, especially in his later ontology of nature, and one that is shared by American pragmatist philosopher of science, C.S. Peirce (1839-1914). For both philosophers, meaning must be understood in terms of an ontology which is relational rather than atomistic, and dynamic or processual rather than static and substance-based. For Merleau-Ponty this is an experientially-derived ontology; for Peirce it is a more conceptually-based one. In this paper, I explore this connection between these two philosophers in two stages. The first is by reference to Peirce's theory of signs or semiotics. More specifically, I look at the application of this theory to the study of biological processes as developed in Peirce-inspired biosemiotics. In the light of this, I suggest that Merleau-Ponty's account of intentional relations in nature might be articulated as semiotic relations, and can serve as a philosophical basis for a non-reductive biological science. I then turn to questions relating to the ontology of nature. I explore Merleau-Ponty's experientially-based "ontology of flesh" and Peirce's distinctive form of naturalism to show affinities at this ontological level. These affinities consist in commitments to a reality that includes possibility, meaning, temporality, and final causation - that is, an ontology which is far more inclusive than that of conventional positivistic science. Peirce's broader scientific metaphysics enables us to extend Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological naturalism beyond the biological to the physical sciences. Whilst Merleau-Ponty's ontology of nature provides the experiential basis necessary for a critique of scientism, Peirce establishes the relevance of that ontology for a re-conceived empirical science.

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