

2015

The Lived Body in Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Derrida

Manhua Li

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Li, Manhua, "The Lived Body in Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Derrida" (2015). *LSU Master's Theses*. 11.
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/11

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.

THE LIVED BODY IN HEIDEGGER, MERLEAU-PONTY AND DERRIDA

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Philosophy

in

The Department of Philosophy

by

Manhua Li

B.A., Beijing Language and Culture University, 2014

December 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Louisiana State University for funding this research. I would also like to thank Professor François Raffoul, Professor Gregory Schufreider and Professor Deborah Goldgaber for guiding me and sharing their knowledge and experience to further my education.

Special thanks go to my Chair Professor François Raffoul for his dedicated supervision of my thesis and Professor Adelaide Russo for her wholehearted support to my project.

I am also grateful to my good friends at Louisiana State University for their help in general, and last but not least, my loving family who have been giving their ceaseless support to my life and studies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. THE BODILY NATURE OF DASEIN.....	5
2.1 Dasein's Bodily Nature in <i>Being and Time</i>	5
2.2 Bodying Forth and the Spacing of Space	8
2.3 The Aporia of <i>Leibkörperlichkeit</i>	13
3. FROM THE BODY TO THE FLESH	20
3.1 The Body as Pre/personal Existence	20
3.2 Flesh and Being.....	28
4. TOUCHING THE OTHER	36
4.1 The Problem of the Example: My Hand	36
4.2 The Aporia of Touch	43
5. CONCLUSION.....	51
REFERENCES	54
VITA	57

ABSTRACT

In my thesis, I discuss the accounts of the lived body in Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Derrida in terms of the extent to which they succeed as counter-accounts to the Cartesian metaphysical view of the body-object, as well as the limits of each account. I first introduce Descartes' account of the body as substantiality (*res extensa*), which isolates the body as the object from its subject, the mind, the "I think" (*res cogitans*). After contextualizing the body as non-living objectivity in Cartesian metaphysics, I discuss the later Heidegger's appropriation of the Husserlian notion of the lived body (*Leib*)—as *separate* from the corporeal body (*Körper*)—in *Zollikon Seminars*. I argue that this account helps to dissolve the mind-body dualism, but is limited by the aporetic duality of *Leibkörperlichkeit*, rendering the abysmal relation between the bodily nature of Dasein in its "unalive" being—*loss-of-the-world*, and animality—*poor-in-the-world* (as distinguished in *Being and Time*). In contrast, Merleau-Ponty's account of the body (*le corps*) in *Phenomenology of Perception* is both lived and corporeal. The body is lived as the personal existence with practical intention "I can", alongside the pre-personal organism that underlies the body-subject. Later in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty takes the pre-personal existence of the body to be the element of Being, flesh (*la chair*). I demonstrate that this ontology of flesh amounts to a dislocation or deconstruction of the body-subject. The account of the flesh, however, is criticized by Derrida in *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, for the intuitionism underlying the example of "my hand" in Merleau-Ponty—an auto-affection of touch already found in Husserl's *Ideas II*. I discuss Derrida's account of touch as "auto-hetero-affection" and also, his acknowledgment of the impossibility to live outside the intuitionism embedded in the Western philosophical tradition—despite his recognition of the Nancean term

the *technē* of bodies” as an attempt to break away from the immediate presence of *the* Body
Proper (*Leib*) in Husserl.

INTRODUCTION

The mind-body binary is rooted in Descartes' metaphysical notion of subjectivity in which the mind as subject grasps "objective reality" through contemplation (Gelven, 64-65). To be more specific, the Cogito—the mind-subject is separate from the object body as *substantia*, "substantiality" or "substance" which need "no other entity in order to *be*" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 123, 125). As such, the body is an object of substantiality (*res extensa*) as opposed to the thinking (*res cogitans*) subject, the mind (Leder, 120, 124). However, for philosophers like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Derrida, this Cartesian body-object—*substantial presence* in front of the mind-subject—limits the body as a dead, corporeal and non-relational being, neglecting the every-day bodily experience in which one lives. In this thesis, therefore, I aim to compare and contrast these three philosophers' distinct accounts of the lived body, as alternatives to the Cartesian body-object.

In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger avoids the Cartesian dualism by approaching to the question of the meaning of Being through Dasein—the being of human beings; "Da" designates "there" and "sein", "being" (*Being and Time*, 24). Dasein is displaced from the ego-cogito "I", and *always already* remains open, as the "there" (Raffoul, "Dasein", 280). In other words, Dasein is not an entity isolated from others—it is neither the mind-subject nor the body-object, but an open place, there. Dasein exists in the world as its clearing of the "there", "projection and that in turn as *thrown*" (Raffoul, "Dasein", 278). In other words, Being is experienced primordially in the "Da"—the open to the futural possibilities co-determined by the fact that Dasein has been thrown into the world. In this way, the *ecstatic* temporal structure of Dasein's Being dislocates the Cartesian subject and dissolves the body-mind dualism based on substantiality—what is *present*.

Accordingly, Heidegger's analyses of the spatiality of Being-in-the-world, space and Dasein's spatiality altogether avoid an account of "the body" as an object. Instead, Dasein's bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*) is a way of its Being-in-the-world. Although scholars like Ciocan notes that the bodily nature leaves its traces in Dasein's ontological structure of care (*Sorge*)—for instance, in the shoes and gloves that are "cut to the figure (*auf den Leib zugeschnitten*)—a thematic account of the lived body is largely missing in *Being and Time* (79). In the *Zollikon seminars* (1959-1969), however, Heidegger elaborates on the Husserlian notion of the lived body (*Leib*) as part of the existential structure of Dasein as Being-in-the-world—as opposed to the corporeal body (*Körper*). For Heidegger, the lived body is always already in the "Da", making room for events *to take place*. I focus my discussion on the question whether Heidegger's recent endorsement of the *Leib-Körper* duality contravenes the existential structure of Dasein, and in particular, to what extent the *Leib-Körper* distinction is lucid enough to account for the bodily Being in its "unalive" status—the corpse of the human.

Different from Heidegger's account, Merleau-Ponty's notion of the lived body undergoes a change from the body (*le corps*) which is both the personal and pre-personal existence in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, to the flesh (*la chair*) as anonymous and general element of Being in *The Visible and the Invisible*. The early Merleau-Ponty understands the lived body as "a vehicle of being in the world" through its "perpetual engagement therein"; the phenomena that appear to consciousness are thus affects of the relation between the body and the world. (*The Phenomenology of Perception*, 84). Such engagements and relations are not motivated by the epistemic intention "I think (*je pense*)" that isolates itself from the world, but by the practical intention "I can" (*je peux*) to manipulate objects in the world through the body. Instead of being the body-object for the mind-subject, the lived body claims subjectivity through its practical

intention “I can (*je peux*)”. Despite the largely consistent two-way relation between the world and the body-subject, Merleau-Ponty describes the body (*le corps*) also in terms of its being a pre-personal organism, a kind of “anonymous and general existence” *in the world* (Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, 86). This organism, different from the Cartesian worldless body-object, constantly responds to the world as the background of the intentional activities of the body-subject “I can”. The body-subject is further dislocated in his notion of the flesh (*la chair*) in *The Visible and the Invisible* where Merleau-Ponty uses innovative terms such as reversibility, chiasm, and hiatus. I explore the extent to which Merleau-Ponty’s ontology of flesh succeeds in its attempted break from the transcendental subjectivity in Husserlian phenomenology, and to what extent he challenges the scientific positivity in his project of hyper-reflection (*sur-réflexion*).

As for Derrida, although the notion of the flesh appears attractive, he prefers to account for bodily sensation in terms of the aporetic event of touch. In *On Touching, Jean-Luc Nancy*. Derrida explores the privileged status of touch over other senses in the phenomenological accounts of the body. He uses the example of the hand as the starting point for his critique of the intuitionism motivated by a desire for immediacy in Merleau-Ponty and Husserl. Moreover, he points out the “humanism”, a teleological hierarchy between the human and the non-human shared by Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, despite the many differences between their accounts of the lived body. I explore Derrida’s disclosure of the contradiction lying the intuition of touch—what he calls the “aporia of touch”—mainly in his reading of Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, as well as his discussion of the Nancean term “the *technē* of bodies” which attempts to overcome such intuitionism.

In the following, I therefore start with the first chapter “The Bodily Nature of Dasein”, introducing the later Heidegger’s account of the lived body (*Leib*) as an alternative to the Cartesian corporeal body (*Körper*), with references mainly to the *Zollikon Seminars*. I discuss the extent to which the notion of the lived body (*Leib*) could enrich Heidegger’s account for Dasein’s bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*) in *Being and Time*, and the aporia between the lived body and the corporeal body in Heidegger. In the second chapter “From the Body to the Flesh”, I look into Merleau-Ponty’s account of the body (*le corps*) and the flesh (*la chair*) to see if he provides a successful alternative to the *Leib-Körper* duality. This is followed by my discussion in the third chapter “Touching the Other” in which I explore Derrida’s discussion of the aporia of touch, the untouchable that haunts the intuitionism of touch in the Western philosophical tradition. Finally, based on this comparison between the three philosophers’ accounts of the lived body, I conclude with an assessment of each account concerning the extent to which they clarify the questions of existence, the self, and the self’s relation with the other.

2. THE BODILY NATURE OF DASEIN

2.1 Dasein's Bodily Nature in *Being and Time*

Heidegger's ambiguous attitude towards Dasein's bodily character starts with the body's association with corporeality present-at-hand in the notion of Being-in (*In-sein*). This notion is introduced in the preliminary sketch of Being-in-the-world as an "existential" and an "*a priori* state of Dasein" (*Being and Time*, 79). This 'in' comes from *innan*, namely to dwell, to inhabit, and belongs to the entity which "in each case I myself am [*ich bin*]"; "Being [*Sein*] as the infinitive of '*ich bin*', signifies 'to reside alongside...', 'to be familiar with'" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 80). As such, Being-in is an inescapable state resulting from Dasein's thrownness, the "primary leap into dwelling" (Sloterdijk, 37). As long as Dasein "is", it is always Being-in-the-world. One must distinguish this ontological notion from the ontical notion of location such as water "in" a glass or a human body "inside" entities present-at-hand (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 79). The human body for Heidegger in this context is regarded as some present-at-hand.

However, the body's being-present-at-hand is part of Dasein's facticity, namely the way in which Dasein is thrown into the world, or how it is situated; for instance, the time and place of birth (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 82). As Dasein is never out of the existential-ontological structure of Being-in-the-world—even when it is observed as an object "in[side]" some entities—Dasein's *own* "factual Being present-at-hand" is different from the "factual occurrence of some kind of mineral" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 82). Following Heidegger, as the bodily feature of Dasein is part of its "situatedness" (*Befindlichkeit*)—a result of Dasein's being thrown into the world—this feature is to be revealed in particular moods, and thus enables things such as jobs, relationships, identities to "emotionally matter" to us [and our understanding of Being] (Aho, "The Body", 269). In this regard, Dasein's bodily nature is, potentially, of ontological

significance to Dasein's existence. However, given Heidegger's scanty description of the body, it remains "not essential" and does not "belong to Dasein's essential structure" (Dreyfus, 41, 137). Thus a problem arises: despite the fact that Dasein's bodily nature is ontologically *other* than present-at-hand and constitutes the facticity that determines Dasein's understanding of the world, it is secondary.

Furthermore, in Dasein's involvement in the context of readiness-to-hand, Dasein's bodily nature's ontological status is also at stake. According to Heidegger, Dasein already understands the world in the mode of instrumentality prior to cognition; it understands the world in that "it itself is the clearing (*Lichtung*)"—as opposed to the rationalistic "clarifying (*lumen naturale*)" and Dasein always already engages in a prerational disclosure of events and phenomena (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 171; Vallega, 120). In disclosure, Dasein (*Being-there*) is "itself in every case its 'there' [*Da*]", pointing to a "yonder"—something ready-to-hand to be encountered within-the-world—and coming back to the "here", its own Being understood only in relation to the "yonder" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 171). As such, Dasein always already discloses the world with *care*—its circumspection in a referential context of manipulation towards the "yonder", its care about that which concerns its own Being, the "I-here". In Dasein's manipulation, entities present-at-hand become "accessible" or encounterable in a world open to it in ways that are impossible for other entities, which are "worldless" and can never "touch" each other (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 81, 171). This description of care provokes a question regarding Dasein's bodily nature: insofar as Dasein is its "there", disclosing the world of phenomena through touching, manipulating and encountering, it cannot be the "there" without being bodily. For instance, in Heidegger's famous example of Dasein's pre-reflective hammering, Aho notes that Heidegger already presupposes a bodily being that raises its arm in

order to hammer (“The Body”, 270). Yet the ontological status of the human body remains veiled in this instrumental context. As such, the questions, for instance, regarding the extent to which my hand constitutes part of the readiness-to-hand when I hammer, or the ontological significance of my hands in touching things and animals are left unattended.

Adding to this obscurity, Heidegger relegates Dasein’s bodily nature as a “problematic issue” that “we shall not treat” in his discussion of Dasein’s spatiality and its disclosure of regions (*Being and Time*, 143). In fact, the “highest ontological dignity” that the body is granted in *Being and Time* is its relevance to Dasein’s spatiality, but even in that account of spatiality, the body is “*ontologically derived*” from the structure of Being-in-the-world (Ciocan, 79-80). Heidegger discusses two characteristics of Dasein’s spatiality, de-severance and directionality. De-severance means making remoteness disappear and discovering the distance; de-severance is an existentiale for Dasein, as entities can only be revealed and accessed in their deseveredness (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 139). The remoteness cannot be equated to some objective quantitative distance, since our knowledge of statistics is “blind” and irrelevant to our Being-in-the-world; instead, distance is ‘known’ through circumspection—for instance, estimations like “a stone’s throw” and “as long as it takes to smoke a pipe” are remoteness for de-severance (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 141). However, this anti-rationalist stance prevents Heidegger from talking about the contemplation and calculation of the mind and its binary opposition in the Cartesian tradition—the body, for de-severance is not oriented towards the rational “I-Thing encumbered with a [corporeal] body” but Dasein’s “concernful Being-in-the-world” (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 142). This point is well-taken, but because remoteness deseveled through activities such as throwing stones cannot be without Dasein’s bodily nature—a term that Heidegger actually already mentions but refers to as the problematic, the ambiguity of its

ontological status in relation to Being-in-the-world in the context of de-severance requires further clarification.

The second characteristic of Dasein's spatiality is directionality, as opposed to Kant's notion of orientation in the instance of feeling my way in a dark room familiar to me but with objects rearranged so that everything that "used to be at my right is now at my left" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 144). For Kant, orienting oneself in the room is based on memory, namely the previous positions of the objects relative to the left side and the right side of the human subject, which shows that all orientations entail a subjective principle as *a priori* (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 144). But for Heidegger, this example demonstrates nothing but the irrelevance of the "mere feeling of differences" between the left and the right of the body out of the context of a world/region; thus he rejects this worldless notion of subjectivity, maintaining that Dasein's directionality is co-determined by its Being-in-the-world (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 144). However, trivializing the body's directionality with the left and the right into "mere feeling", Heidegger implicitly downplays this co-determination by stressing the directing power of the world over Dasein's bodily leftness and rightness—as if the body is meaningless without the world whereas the world can be formed without the body.

2.2 Bodying Forth and the Spacing of Space

In *Zollikon Seminars*, more than three decades after the publication of *Being and Time*, Heidegger discussed the notion of the lived body (*Leib*). While scholars like Aho believe this notion of the lived body "successfully fills out the account of embodiment that is missing in *Being and Time*", others like Raffoul notice a change, an elevation of the ontological status of the "bodying" (*Leiben*) as "the existential structure of Dasein as being-in-the-world" (Aho, "The Body", 271; Raffoul, "The Event of Space", 98). Heidegger responds to Sartre's criticism of his

lack of explanation of the body in *Being and Time*, disputing the connotation of the Cartesian corporeal body indicated in the French word for “the body” “*le corps*” (*Zollikon Seminars*, 89). To account for Dasein’s bodily nature, Heidegger uses the German vocabulary to distinguish the lived body (*Leib*) from the corporeal body (*Körper*). According to Heidegger, prior to any scientific-naturalistic *explanation* concerning the “what” of my corporeal body (*Körper*), the *fact* that I am already “bodying-forth” (*Leiben*) is my prereflective *interpretation* of my Being-in-the-world (*Zollikon Seminars*, 86). As an interpretation, the lived body (*Leib*) “makes explicit the as-structure of the ‘worlded’ world” and is thus meaningful and worldly, as opposed to the Cartesian-rationalist explanation of the world as the objective “Nature” (Cerbone, 230). Although the lived body can be seen ontically as a natural body, it is always already *in* the world and ontologically different from an animalistic body that belongs to the realm of the worldless Nature. For instance, waving my hand to a friend in the street is to be interpreted *as* a meaningful gesture of greeting that concerns my Being-in-the-world, prior to the rationalist explanation of the physical and physiological operations of the hand as something present-at-hand.

To this extent, the lived body helps to resolve the aforementioned problems concerning Dasein’s bodily nature in relation to its Being-in-the-world. First, in terms of Dasein’s bodily nature as part of its situatedness, Dasein does not *have* a corporeal body attached to its mind to make up a thinking Thing, but *is* bodily, situated in the world. The lived body does not “stop with the skin” for it is always already out there and constitutes the situations that determine moods, as opposed to the “states of mind inside of us” (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 176; Aho, “The Body”, 272). Moods are already intertwined with the worldly contexts of meaning around us, determining how events *matter* to us in various situations, prior to mental processes. As such, the erosion of the surface of the body in the corporeal-physiological sense makes the notion of

the lived body as an exteriority without an interior. Thus, the bodying forth (*Leiben*) of Dasein is by no means an anthropocentric self-containment at the center of the world, but rather, an “ecstatic being” that is always already situated “outside itself” (Raffoul, “The Event of Space”, 101). This ecstaticity indicates the inseparability between the lived body and the world: “bodying forth belongs to being-in-the-world, which is primarily the understanding-of-being” (Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 200). In other words, the body is worldly and the world is understood in terms of Dasein’s bodying forth.

Moreover, the lived body as the site of Dasein’s Being-in-the-world strengthens Heidegger’s anti-Cartesian stance regarding deseverance and anti-Kantian position regarding directionality. As the lived body is a prerational interpretation of my own Being-in-the-world, it is essentially ‘mindless’ and ‘subjectless’ as opposed to the Cartesian thinking-Thing. Rational calculations of homogeneous space or pure knowledge of immanent direction are blind and useless to Dasein, which does not bear these ‘in mind’ when it goes about engaging with the world. Remoteness and directionality can only be approximated in a way that matters to Dasein’s bodily experience, which is in each case *mine*. As such, I am never separate from my own bodying forth: “an eye does not see, but my eyes see—I see through *my* eyes” (Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 88). As such, Dasein’s bodying forth is indispensable to its spatiality. For instance, ‘a five-minute walk’ designates a more instrumental interpretation of remoteness, and thus more relevant to my Being-in-the-world than objective statistics. But this could still be useless if I have not yet tried walking, and a five-minute walk to another person may not be such in *my* case. Moreover, vocally directing a person to turn right at a crossroads could amount to no help if the person cannot tell left from right, as he has difficulty in associating the region with his bodying forth, which, in turn, influences how familiar this region is to him when he is *concerned*

about using it to take care of his Being-in-the-world. Therefore, our understanding of space is not only prereflective but also bodily, in that our familiarity with the world of my concern cannot be without my own bodily experience.

Furthering this correlation between Dasein's spatiality and its lived body is the relation between bodying and spacing—the eventfulness of space that Raffoul stresses. Heidegger defines spacing as the “clearing out” and “making free” of possibilities of regions, remoteness and directions (Heidegger cited in Raffoul, “The Event of Space”, 102). As mentioned, Dasein is its disclosedness and is itself the clearing (*Lichtung*), but Heidegger's discussion of the bodily nature of Dasein is minimal regarding this clearing in *Being and Time*. The relation between the lived body and space, to some extent, fills out this gap. Insofar as Dasein's bodying forth belongs to Being-in-the-world, its clearing is spacing, an event that does not initiate from a worldless subject “I-here”, but from the ecstatic bodily being “out there” which extends its corporeal limit and engages with entities ready-to-hand *taking place* in the ‘there’. For instance, pointing my finger to the window's crossbar, “I [as body] do not end at my fingertips” (Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 86). As such, bodying forth is co-determined by “the way of my being [my own bodying forth in each case]” and “my being human in the sense of the ecstatic sojourn amidst the beings in the clearing [*gelichtet*]” (Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 86-87). On the other hand, Dasein's spatiality entails its own singular ecstatic bodying forth in the world, with a horizon ‘out there’ with infinite possibilities of regions in which things take place. Within different contexts of involvements, the “horizon within which I sojourn”—namely the space I inhabit, each case—is the “limit of bodying forth” and it changes constantly (Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 87). In other words, bodying forth, Dasein renders space *as* space, through the spacing

of possibilities within a regional horizon of circumspection, which, in return determines the limit of the lived body.

This interconnection between Dasein's bodying and spacing, to some extent, helps to clarify the ontological distinction between Dasein's bodily nature and animal organisms. Cerbone suggests that for Heidegger the animal is "poor in world" in the sense that it is a self-enclosed system of instincts and capacities (Cerbone, 223). Heidegger takes the example of seeing in his *Fundamental Concepts* lecture, which Cerbone explains in terms of conception and rationalization: "human beings see things *as* the things they are, which is to say that human beings are capable of bringing the objects in their environment under concepts... something entirely different from the animal's merely differential responses" (Cerbone, 224). However, this amounts to a misinterpretation of the *as*-structure that Heidegger emphasizes in Dasein's Being (primordially instrumental, not cognitive) in its relation to the being of animals, which can be better explained by the relation between Dasein's bodying and spacing—the primordial mode of Dasein's Being-in-the-world. As mentioned, the lived body (*Leib*) is not limited by its physical surface as a corporeal body (*Körper*), but is ecstatically engaging with the possibilities of regions, namely the event of space 'there' in the world. As such, animals as world-poor (according to Heidegger) do not question or care about their own being, and lack instrumental relation to the 'there'. As such, its body is not lived as the site where possibilities of interpretations and understandings of the world are open—namely, where space *spaces* as an event. Unable to open space by assigning possibilities of regions and relations in a referential totality, animals lacks the *as*-structure of worldly interpretation. To put it in Heidegger's own words, Dasein discloses space through spacing while "the animal does not experience space *as space*" (*Zollikon Seminars*, 16).

2.3 The Aporia of *Leibkörperlichkeit*

Although the notion of the lived body (*Leib*) has potentials for enriching Heidegger's account of Dasein's bodily nature, and to avoid the Cartesian mind-body binary, it is based on another duality: the *Leib* versus the *Körper*. Heidegger's account above adamantly asserts the distinction between Dasein's bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*) and corporeality (*Körperlichkeit*). First, for Heidegger, "existential understanding" involves Dasein's bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*) which precedes "sensible perception" pertaining to its corporeality (*Körperlichkeit*) (Ciocan, 81; Aho, "The Missing Dialogue", 47). In other words, for Heidegger, since pre-cognitive understanding through instrumental involvements with entities ready-to-hand (*Zuhandenes*) is primordial to Dasein's Being as Being-in-the-world, it always precedes the objective perception of entities present-at-hand (*Vorhandenes*). Dasein's bodying forth is thus always already determined by such a mode of instrumentality that "'seeing' does not mean just perceiving with the bodily eye [*leiblichen Augen*]" but "grounded primarily in understanding" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 187). For instance, the glasses on my nose are less distant to my eyes as part of my corporeal body (*Körper*) than a book that I am reading, but the book in this context of referential totality is the "there", and is thus existentially more pertinent to my instrumental involvement in the world and closer to my bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*)—as a way of my Being-in-the-world. Accordingly, Dasein's understanding of its Being-in-the-world precedes sensory organs, and thus the difference between the lived body (*Leib*) and the corporeal body (*Körper*).

Heidegger's account of the lived body appropriates Husserl's account concerning the Body Proper (*Leib*). The distinction between *Leiblichkeit* and *Körperlichkeit* of the human body, despite Heidegger's reluctance to mention, is an appropriation of the term *Leib* in Husserl, arguably, the first phenomenologist who made efforts to distinguish the two. According to

Husserl, the transcendental Ego has direct and immediate access to its own living experience such as pain, as it lives in its Body Proper (*Leib*), but the Ego has no direct access to an alter Ego's experience of pain because the body of the alter Ego appears as "external" to the Ego, like a thing, a *Körper* (Ciocan, 82). For Husserl, the abyss between the two is bridged by *inter-subjectivity*: when the Ego looks at its own body from the alter Ego's perspective, the Ego's body appears external and is thus given the significance of *Körperlichkeit*; in reverse, the alter Ego's *Körper* is also 'immanently' experienced by itself as the *Leib* (Ciocan, 83). This transcendental dynamic for Husserl constitutes the body (*Leibkörper*), as *both* lived and corporeal.

Since Husserl's notion of *Leibkörperlichkeit* is rooted in transcendental subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, Heidegger attempts to distance Dasein from the transcendental Ego in his emphasis on the two-way relation between *Leib* (as bodying forth) and the world-space (as spacing) in *Zollikon Seminars*—as I discussed above. For Husserl, space is construed by the zero-degree point of the "I-here", namely one's own body as the absolute point of orientation (Ciocan, 80). This notion of the lived body (*Leib*) as the "I-here"—an absolute point present-at-hand to which the *intending* subject has immediate access—suggests the Husserlian preference for the absolute presence as a mode of temporality and hence, "I-here" is the location of the subject which remains immediately present *in* space. This notion of space is worldless according to Heidegger, who understands "the 'here' of an 'I here' as always in relation to a 'yonder' ready-to-hand" (*Being and Time*, 171). In other words, Dasein's existential spatiality is grounded in its Being-in-the-world, and the "here" is only possible in a "there", an ecstatic openness where Dasein discloses space as possible locality for entities to take *place*. Such disclosedness indicates the primordially of instrumentality in Dasein's existential structure, and thus its co-belonging

with with space—Dasein is not in space, but *of* space. Given this the account of the “I-here”, both *Leib* and *Körper* in Husserl are worldless according to Heidegger in both *Being and Time* and *Zollikon Seminars*. To this extent, Heidegger distinguishes his account of the lived body (*Leib*) from Husserl’s account of the Body Proper (*Leib*), in that he grants the *Leib* the world that is inaccessible to the *Körper*.

However, this worldhood also helps to distinguish Dasein and the being of animality, “organism” enclosed with capacities, biological responses and instincts and is thus poor-in-the-world (Cerbone, 223). In *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, as I mentioned earlier, Heidegger takes seeing as an example: although human beings and animals both have eyes with similar anatomical structures, seeing for animals is a *capacity* but for humans is a possibility (219, 231). As mentioned, Dasein’s bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*) is manifest in the as-structure of interpretation, its “clearing” that starts from the “there”—a way of my Being in the world-space. For instance, a lizard lying on a rock does not understand the rock *as* a rock, or even *as* a being (Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 198). In other words, the animal as an organism is captivated by its autonomous drives and stays *indifferent* to the relations with events to happen, with others and with itself, and thus it does not enter space as space and has no access to the world. In contrast, the lived body always already opens in the yonder, it experiences ecstatic changes of the horizon of existential events determined by the way of my Being-in-the-world, and thus it is the “most distant” to me [as the “Da”, without a consistent boundary] (Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 84).

As I discussed earlier, the body *as* body is in *each case, mine*. As such, bodying forth designates a “particular relationship to the *self*” (Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 87). This relation to oneself is in turn manifest through the as-structure which *aims* at interpreting the meanings of

entities and events according to what one is “up to” in the world, and thus Dasein’s bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*) is co-determined by its Being-in-the-world. To this extent, bodying forth (*Leiben*) also distinguishes Dasein from animals as organisms, consolidating the presupposed privilege of Dasein over animals in terms of worldhood. I will return to this theme in my discussion of Derrida’s criticism of this hierarchy between humans and animals in terms of the intuitionism of touch underlying the example of the human hand in different phenomenological accounts of the lived body.

Let us return to the problem with the distinction between Dasein’s bodily nature and corporeality. The “lived” status of Being-in-the-world is conditioned by “Being-in”, which I pointed out in my discussion of Being-in (*In-sein*), an ontological notion of Dasein’s spatiality. He states that Dasein “*can* with some right and within certain limits be taken as merely present-at-hand” but to do this, one must “completely disregard or just not see the existential state of Being-in” (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 82). In other words, Dasein can be seen as solely corporeal in certain situations where the existential Being-in is at stake—for instance, “the end of entity *qua* Dasein is the *beginning* of this entity *qua* something present-at-hand”, namely in death (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 281). However, even the corporeality of the human corpse does not completely deprive Dasein of its privileged ontological status even after death, for the remains of Dasein’s bodily nature as “something which is just present-at-hand-no-more is ‘more’ than a lifeless material Thing” (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 282). This indicates that Dasein’s corporeal being (*Körperlichkeit*)—that which *remains* after death—is of some significance to its existential structure, and this existential structure, as Heidegger adamantly states above, involves *only* its bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*). In other words, this remains of Dasein’s corporeality—despite being no longer “Being-in” the world or “lived”.

This concerns the ontological distinction between Being and beings in *Being and Time*. Ontologically speaking, things are *primordially* entities ready-to-hand, items of gear in a referential totality within an instrumental involvement of Dasein's care for its own Being-in-the-world. For instance, a stone *primordially* appears as an item of gear in relation to other instruments in a task relevant to Dasein's own concern for cracking a nut or hammering a nail. However, the stone does not *care* if the task is done, as it does not have the ability to care about anything regarding its own being and thus has no access to the world. On the other hand, a thing could be an object present-at-hand that simply occurs as an object for contemplation, and not manipulation. As such, a thing as present-at-hand does not *belong* to a place and cannot be *out of* place. Therefore, the present-at-hand and the ready-to-hand are fundamentally worldless, whereas Dasein and the world belong to each other. Given this ontological categorization, Heidegger designates the end of Dasein—the total loss of its world—as something qua present-at-hand, and to this extent, the dead body ought *not* to be a “who”, a *Being-in-the-world*, but becomes a “what”, a *being*.

Nonetheless, Heidegger continues:

This something which is just-present-at-hand-and-no-more [*Nur-noch-Vorhandene*] is “more” than a *lifeless* material Thing. In it we encounter something unalive [*Unlebendiges*], which has lost its life... those who have remained behind *are with him* [the deceased], in a mode of respectful solicitude... Thus the relationship-of-Being which one has towards the dead is not to be taken as a *concernful* Being-alongside something ready-to-hand (*Being and Time*, 282).

In other words, the dead body is something deprived of life, some remains of “aliveness” that persist—neither an object present-at-hand nor an item ready-to-hand—and is addressed by a “who” (he), not a “what” in relation with those “who” are still Being-in-the-world. Three problems occur here. First, Heidegger emphasizes lifehood, instead of worldhood in the ontological status of the dead body. This contravenes the emphasis he lays on worldhood that

primarily distinguishes Dasein from other beings in *Being and Time*. Second, the dead body is an aporetic Being/being, since it is no-longer-Being-in-the-world but still *more* than beings present-at-hand or ready-to-hand (Ciocan, 87). The difficulty of ontologically categorizing the remains of Dasein jeopardizes the three ontological categories in Heidegger's proposition in *Being and Time*: Dasein, entities present-at-hand (*Vorhandenes*), and entities ready-to-hand (*Zuhandenes*). Third, in a peculiar way, the deceased has abandoned the world and no-longer-Being-there, or Being-with-others, yet others can still *be with him*. This asymmetrical relation of the "Being-with" leads to a question of Dasein's existential structure: to what extent is Dasein in a relation with some entity no-longer-being-there?

Accordingly, these problems challenge the ontological distinction between Dasein's bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*) and corporeality (*Körperlichkeit*) in Heidegger. First, for Heidegger, the as-structure of bodying forth (*Leiben*) is what distinguishes the two types of bodily nature. As discussed, bodying-forth as a way of Dasein's understanding of the world through "clearing", and it always already opens to the "Da" ("there") and remains ecstatic beyond the corporeal boundary of the "here". As such, Dasein's bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*) is co-determined by its Being-in-the-world, *not* its being-*alive*. However, Heidegger's designation of the dead human body as that which "has lost its life" flies in the face of the lived body that does not take "having its life" as much as "Being-in-the-world" as a co-determinant of its structure. Accordingly, the ontological significance of lifeness in Heidegger's account for the dead body poses a threat to the lived body that bases its structure on Dasein's Being-in-the-world. If lifeness is taken into account in Dasein's bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*), then the ontological distinction between the animal and Dasein deserves a reconsideration, since animals as organisms are also lively. Moreover, Heidegger's ambiguity in the ontological categorization of the dead body of Dasein

shows that the dead body could be counted as still a “who” / “he”, yet no-longer-being-there. If an entity could be a “who” without a “there”, then it contravenes the co-belonging of bodying forth and the “there” in the as-structure of Dasein’s bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*) which is, in each case, *my* way of Being-*there*. This leads to the third challenge. As Heidegger indicates, despite the deceased no-longer-being-there, those who remain can still be with *him*. Thus the loss of the world does not deprive the deceased human of a relation with Daseins who are still in the world—though it is an asymmetrical one. It is then unclear how the animals’ being *poor-in-the-world* is non-relational, whereas Dasein’s dead bodily being, the *loss-of-the-world*, still stays in an asymmetrical “Being-with” relation to those who are still Being-in-the-world.

3. FROM THE BODY TO THE FLESH

3.1 The Body as Pre/personal Existence

As shown in the first chapter, Heidegger's account of Dasein's bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*) as an attempt to avoid the Cartesian mind-body dualism generates a duality between the lived body (*Leib*) and the corporeal body (*Körper*) but eventually, this account causes the aporia of *Leibkörperlichkeit* problematizing the ontological distinction between Dasein and animality. In the French phenomenological tradition, however, thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty and Sartre refer to both the lived body and the corporeal body as the body (*le corps*), indicating a possibility of synthesis between the two. While Cartesian metaphysics influences on the French notion of the body, motivating the separation of the body in its material from its lived aspect, Merleau-Ponty—inspired by Husserlian phenomenology, tries to re-invent the meaning of *le corps* in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. Unlike Heidegger who opposes to the scientific explication of the body (*Körper*) for its worldless characteristic in *Zollikon Seminars*, Merleau-Ponty starts his work with an attempt to engage with psychological and physiological accounts of pathological dysfunctions of the human body. While Heidegger separates worldly Dasein's bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*) from its worldless corporeality (*Körperlichkeit*) which is shared by the animals, Merleau-Ponty attempts to show the relation and interaction between the two.

Merleau-Ponty's approach, starting with the scientific/empirical accounts of the body, uses examples of pathological bodies to challenge Cartesian assumptions that still condition both psychology/physiology and philosophical accounts of the relations between psychic versus physical phenomena, and motivate a search for a new account of the mind-body relation that can do justice to these phenomena. The metaphysical concept of the body-object is profoundly

shaped by Descartes' endeavor to find "evident natural reasons" in the dissection of the animal's body to support that the soul outlives the (human) body (Leder, 118). As such, the Cartesian model of the human body is based on the inanimate body lying *in front of* the scientist as a lifeless object. Modern medicine probes into a patient's body as if it is a collection of a variety of organs with no subjectivity—as pure *res extensa*, as opposed to a pure *res cogitans*—which Merleau-Ponty challenges through the exploration of phenomena like the phantom limb (Leder, 120, 124). To propose an alternative to this Cartesian model, Merleau-Ponty defines the body as an intending subject, as pre/personal existence *who/that* constructs the world. Instead of separating the materiality of the body from the lived experience (as in Husserl's and Heidegger's accounts), Merleau-Ponty rejects the *Leib-Körper* binary through his notion of the body (*le corps*) as a hybridized synthesis—the body is both an intending subjective consciousness and a material object.

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty takes the example of the phantom limb—a limb that an amputee experiences after its mutilation—and reveals the problems of contemporary physiological and psychological assumptions about this phenomenon by returning to the phenomenon in question through careful descriptions of the patient's own experience. The physiologist explains the phantom limb as "an actual presence of a representation", and the psychologist "a representation of an actual presence"—both presupposing an objective world without "middle ground" between presence or absence (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 82). In other words, the scientists regard the phantom limb as a psychic phenomenon, or that the body is producing a sensation as if the limb is still there, a representation/illusion of the the mind. However, though the patient *experiences* the phantom leg and this persists despite the fact that the patient does experience and acknowledge the failed

attempts to walk with it, his description of the limb's strange motricity shows his intact cognitive awareness of the loss of the limb (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 83). But the recognition that he does not in fact have a leg in his description does not prevent him from *experiencing* the leg as still an "available", "indivisible power" for his movements—because "like the normal subject, he has no need of a clear and articulated perception of his body in order to begin moving" (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 83). This illustrates that the phantom limb is not experienced as one's cognitive representation of the objective, mechanistic body in the Cartesian order—"I think that [my limb is missing]"—but as an ambivalent *presence* of an arm (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 83). This ambivalent presence is only possible due to the subject's decision to claim the integrity of the body, but the decision is not deliberately made at the level of "thetic consciousness", namely, the cognitive or epistemic—otherwise, it would remain at the cognitive level, with as little effect as his objective description of the actual body to the subject's experience (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 83).

According to Merleau-Ponty, instead of a cognitive consciousness, the subject's decision to allow for the ambivalent presence of a limb is a *practical* intention—unthinkable within the mind-body framework—of the body (*le corps*) as personal existence: an "I" (*je*) that refuses the loss and allows the limb to be kept on the horizon of the present, an "I" that remains open to the tasks of manipulation in the world in which "I" am thrown [even though my physical body can no longer perform] (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 84). The body as my "vehicle of being in the world" through "perpetual engagement" with the world is motivated by my *practical* intention to manipulate these objects with my body, not my epistemic intention to rationalize the world (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 84). As such, Merleau-

Ponty shows the limit of the mind-body split that haunts contemporary physiology and psychology in the same way that Cartesianism haunts contemporary metaphysics. In other words, the Cartesian mind-subject constructed through the epistemic consciousness of the world is not the primordial subjectivity of the person in the world, and intentionality defined as the Cartesian Cogito is too narrow for Merleau-Ponty as for Husserl. As the case of the phantom-limb patient shows, the subject intends to the world in terms of practical actions like walking or grasping, regardless of his/her epistemic analysis of the body as a disabled object. As such, phenomena that appear to my intention are primordially *relations of manipulation* between—not objectifications of—the body and the world. While objectification isolates the subject from the object and reduces the world into a collection of self-contained substance, manipulation entails the two-way relation between the intending subject and the world of manipulable objects that provokes this intention.

As such, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty specifies phenomena as the effect of the body-world relation. On the one hand, “I am conscious of my body through the world” (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 84). In other words, the world with objects for manipulation appeals to my practical intention and arouses my desire to manipulate, and thus the intending subject experiences the body as originally interactive, as the correlate of the world which is experienced as the sum of manipulable objects. Namely, the body is the correlate of the experience of the manipulability of the world. On the other hand, “I am conscious of the world by means of my body” (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 84). In other words, the body is not only the implicitly given *correlate* accompanying the revelation of the world to which we are directed, but also the *instrument* through which the world appears. To this extent, my body is the zero-degree correlate of perception to which objects in

the world turn their faces but unlike other objects, my body cannot be perceived, for it is the instrument through which I perceive (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 84). Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, the body is subjective, as opposed to the Cartesian body-object, for it is not in space (as all objective things are), but *of* space—as the center around which the world-space is constructed. According to this symmetrical unity between the body and the world, the phantom-limb patient experiences an objectively lost bodily integrity as long as the world as it is given to him remains given in all its prior manipulability—possibilities that have been objectively lost—to his/her practical intention, and thus appealing to a limb that the body must have so as to unite with the world. As such, this account does more justice to the patient’s description of the phantom limb than the Cartesian explanations from the physiologists and psychologists, as I discussed above.

Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between two aspects of the body (*le corps*): the habitual body and the actual body (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 84). The actual body refers to the objective body (with the actually lost limb) whereas the habitual body is the one with the intact world, and hence the phantom limb is the experience of their clash. In other words, the habitual body is the body-subject with the practical intention “I can” towards the world, whereas the actual body exists as a corporeal-mechanical object. As mentioned, for Merleau-Ponty the practical intention precedes the epistemic intention, and thus the body (*le corps*) is primarily lived as a personal existence in relation to the world. This primordially of the body-subject lies in its being immediately present, compared to epistemic subject: “How can I perceive objects as manipulable when I can no longer manipulate them? The manipulable must have ceased being something that I [*je*] currently manipulate in order to become something one can [*on peut*] manipulate” (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 84). The “I” here refers to the

body-subject with the practical intention “I can”, and “one can” indicates the derivation of the “I can” into intersubjectivity by the epistemic subject “I think”.

This immediacy of the intention “I can” of the habitual body helps to further clarify a phenomenon like the phantom limb in terms of its temporal structure. For Merleau-Ponty, the temporal structure of experience is such that “through its horizon of the immediate past and the near future, each presents grasps, little by little, the totality of possible time” (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 87). In other words, each present captures both the past and the future in its immediate vicinity, and integrates them into itself. Accordingly, each past can remain on the horizon of our world as long as it presents itself as a previous present capturing the totality of being, of all possible time. This temporal structure of bodily experience means that the past, as a previous present, can refuse to go away and thus interferes with the body’s relation with the world at present. As such, the present world is *never merely* what is at present, actual or possible *now*. The phantom-limb phenomenon is thus a phenomenon where a previous presence of the limb haunts the present of the body’s intentional activity.

This temporal structure of the phenomenon indicates that the body (*le corps*) is both personal, as the immediate intention “I can” at present (now), and pre-personal, as the organism that constantly responds to the world which is constituted by different moments of present. As Merleau-Ponty notes, “my organism—as a pre-personal adhesion to the general form of the world, as an anonymous and general existence—plays an *innate complex* beneath the level of my personal life” (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 86). In other words, different from the Cartesian body-object, Merleau-Ponty’s pre-personal organism is worldly; through sensory organs and physicality, pre-personal existence engages with a general world (*Welt*), without which human cultural milieus (*Umwelt*) cannot take place (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 89).

For instance, when I lost myself in grief, my gaze, without the practical intention of catching sight of a bright object appearing from afar, cannot help but turn to the object. This incident reveals the world (*Welt*) with which the organism (pre-personal existence) engages, which is often repressed but still lurking beneath the personal existence in a specific milieu (*Umwelt*). As Merleau-Ponty puts it, my organism adheres to “a general world to which we first belong in order to enclose ourselves within a particular milieu [of the human situation for my personal existence]” (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 86). However, the relationship between the pre-personal and the personal existence is still ambiguous. Although Merleau-Ponty refers to the phantom-limb phenomenon as a phenomenon of “repression”, the extent to which he regards the phantom limb as the repression of the pre-personal or the personal remains unclear (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 85).

To further his explanation of this relationship between the personal and the pre-personal, Merleau-Ponty considers another pathological phenomenon, psychic blindness. Merleau-Ponty carefully describes this phenomenon: for instance, when asked to move his arm, the patient is first “dumbfound”, and then “moves his whole body and the movements are subsequently restricted to the arm that, in the end, the subject finds” (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 112). In other words, the patient is blind to a part of his own body. He puts the whole body in an affective/manipulative mode to let the movement appear in his body in order to locate his arm, but after finding it, he is enclosed in his actual body and moves it as an object-mechanism constituted by isolated parts, in no relation with the world. Whilst the patient has problems with such abstract movements of no practical meaning, he also has difficulty acting out a concrete movement in a virtual situation. When asked to salute, he has to set his body into the overall position to fully place himself in an affective situation where he sincerely has the practical

intention for a military salute; if he is reminded of the experimental situation, he fails to achieve the movement (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 107).

In both abstract and concrete movements, the patient needs to execute some preparatory movements in order to pull himself out of the present situation in which he lives; to this extent, his body functions like a program capable of acting upon practical intention, but only in response to the fixed and ready-made world. In contrast, a normal body-subject is “not merely ready to be mobilized by real situations that draw it toward themselves, it can also turn away from the world” and lends itself to the virtual situations as a “correlate of pure stimuli stripped of all practical signification” (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 111). At first sight, it seems the patient’s robotic body is in perfect unity with the world in which it is thrown, but it lives only at moments of fragmented present, and lacks the freedom to live in the world “according to the temporal vector”—an intentional arc that projects around the past, present and future, and connects one situation with another throughout our personal history and physical situations (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 137).

Connecting situations of each present, the intentional arc creates the unity of time that “allows us to center our experience” in the world at present and also “prevents us from centering it completely, and the anonymity of our body is inseparably both freedom and servitude” (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 87). In other words, the body as personal existence is never in *complete* unity with the world; as the world is a locality of changes, so is the body, which projects itself into the socio-cultural milieu (*Umwelt*) situated in a general world (*Welt*). In this co-presence of the general world and human situations, “consciousness can be seen attempting to maintain its superstructures even though their foundation has collapsed” (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 139). This means that the body-subject (*le*

corps) seeks to eliminate interventions from the constantly changing world in its intentional arc towards a specific situation, maintain an equilibrium to reabsorb new situations, and adopt new habits or skills. This entails a “rupture of sedimented meanings” or identity, a decision to “a leap beyond immanent subjectivity” (Reynolds, *Merleau-Ponty and Derrida*, 89). Following Merleau-Ponty, Casey calls the bodily practice a work (*l’ouvrage*) that exists between the generality of society’s rules/forms and the specificity of the self’s realization of such forms (212). To this extent, the body’s identity is interrupted by its biological technicality to be absorptive and adaptive to social institutions and cultural situations—where the identity of the subject is compromised. However, the body is not objective as in the Cartesian view, as it exists upon the continuity of the body’s biological structures which is not self-contained, but open to alteration in its response to the world (213).

3.2 Flesh and Being

While Merleau-Ponty insists upon the subjectivity of the body in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, such insistence does not persist in his later work *The Visible and the Invisible*. Instead of engaging with the scientific and medical explication of the body mechanism through a rigorous investigation into cases of bodily dysfunction, the later Merleau-Ponty turns to the metaphorical notion of the flesh (*la chair*), opening a new conceptual space for his account of perception. Similar to the notion of the body (*le corps*), the flesh (*la chair*) underscores aspects of the lived bodily experience over the Cartesian concept of body-object as physical mechanism. However, as discussed, the body (*le corps*) features a largely consistent subjectivity to act upon the practical intention “I can (*je peux*)”, who seeks to eliminate inconsistency and maintain equilibrium between the body and the world through the intentional arc (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 136, 153, 250). Contrasting this largely consistent coincidence

between the personal body and the world, the later Merleau-Ponty focuses on the pre-personal and anonymous lived experiences constituted by “one same ‘element’” of Being, the flesh (*la chair*) (*The Visible and the Invisible*, 136, 140). Therefore, turning from the account of the body (*le corps*) to the flesh (*la chair*), Merleau-Ponty has extended his phenomenological project on perception to an ontology of flesh.

To define the notion of the flesh, Merleau-Ponty first delves into the ambiguous identity of the body-subject through the notion of reversibility. He regards the body as a two-dimensional being: as both the sentient and the sensible, namely, “what in the past we called objective body and phenomenal body (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 136). Indeed, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty already distinguish between the two bodies: the objective (sensible) body that functions as an organism that responds to the world, and the phenomenal (sentient) body as the intending “power” that exists as the “center-point of ‘the intentional threads’ towards the world (108, 125, my emphasis). However, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, these two dimensions *intertwine* with each other: when my right hand touches my left hand while my left hand is touching another object, the “‘touching subject’ passes over to the rank of the touched, descends into the things”, but the operation is “reversible at will” (Merleau-Ponty, 134, 141). As such, the sentient and the sensible is intertwined—the sentient cannot experience itself touching without experiencing its being touched. This intertwining between the sentient and the sensible constitutes the “synergic body”, *not* as an object, but an “pre-objective unity” (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 130, 141).

Reversibility not only exists between the touching and the touched, but also between touching and seeing: “every experience of the visible has always been given to me within the movements of the look, the visible spectacle belongs to the touch neither more nor less than do

the tactile qualities” (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 134). For instance, when I see the lamp from one perspective, I not only see the visible parts, but also the invisible parts that I can touch but hidden from my vision. Reversely, with my eyes blinded, I can envisage someone’s face simply by touching it. Following this analogy, every experience is an experience of touch, not in the sense of the tactile, but the intertwining of the sentient and the sensible. For Merleau-Ponty, touch does not pertain to “one same consciousness”, but rather, as “the return of the visible upon itself, a carnal adherence of the sentient to the sensed and of the sensed to the sentient” (*The Visible and the Invisible*, 142). This amounts to a divorce between the early and the later Merleau-Ponty: intentionality or consciousness which determines the body-subject (*le corps*) in the *Phenomenology of Perception*—is not important to the synergic (the sentient-sensible) body. To this extent, the sentient-sensible is an active-passive happening in an anonymous body, or between anonymous bodies. For instance, in my handshake with another person, “I can feel myself touched as well and at the same time as touching” (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 142). In this happening, I am not sure whether it is “I” who touch the other, or the other who touches me, since touching entails being touched; one’s touching is inseparable from its being touched by the other. Similarly, the seer’s gaze touches the objects; in the activity of seeing, the seer finds himself passively seen by the surrounding objects to the extent that “we no longer know which one sees and which one is seen” (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 138, 139).

The reversing and intertwining between the sentient and the sensible challenges subjectivity: since it is no longer certain who is the seer and who is seen, it is difficult to claim the practical intention to act, namely the “I can (*je peux*)”. The subject “I (*je*)” is no longer characterized by its power to maintain consistency with the world through the intentional arc as

shown in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, but by its subjectivity always already intertwined with passivity, a generality of the visible and the sensible in itself. Although Merleau-Ponty already denotes the anonymous organism as the innate complex of existence in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the body-subject is but disrupted by this anonymity. However, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, the ontological status of this anonymity “innate to Myself” is elevated to be the element of Being; with no name in philosophy, it refuses to be translated into substance, matter, form, fact, or representation, but rather like a general element such as water or fire in the age-old attempts to name the mythical being, and thus Merleau-Ponty names this narcissistic anonymity “the flesh (*la chair*)” (139). As such, flesh is not only the Being of my body, but also the Being of the world.

Merleau-Ponty’s definition of the flesh, moving from the concrete sensory experience to the Being of the world provokes criticisms. For instance, Barbaras notes a contradiction between the phenomenology of perception and the ontology of flesh. On the one hand, flesh is defined as the Husserlian notion of the lived body (*Leib*) as “givenness (*Leibhaft*)”, namely that which is given to consciousness, and thus entailing an exteriority between the transcendental subject and the object of perception. But on the other hand, flesh as the Being of the world “comes to designate the ontological status of external reality”, which amounts to “a unity between consciousness and its object”, “a positive anthropomorphism which understands man as the measurement of all thing” (Barbaras, 21, 22). In other words, Barbaras regards Merleau-Ponty’s dependence on the transcendental dualist standpoint leads to his failure to articulate the ontological specificity of what he calls the flesh, as a movement of incarnation which supposedly defies binary oppositions.

My response to Barbaras' criticism is three-fold. First, as discussed, in *Phenomenology of Perception* where Merleau-Ponty remains more loyal to the Husserlian transcendental subjectivity, he already detects the pre-personal body as anonymous organism that responds to the general world as the background of intentional activities of the body-subject (the "I can"). As such, this thematization of the pre-personal organism already suggests a break from the Husserlian transcendental subjectivity to which objective qualities are bracketed *outside* of the world of experience. To this extent, *The Visible and the Invisible* can be seen as Merleau-Ponty's attempts to come to terms with the name "flesh" as a designation of this general, anonymous organism. As such, this project is first and foremost an attempt to challenge consciousness as a conceptual space for an account of perception, and it is therefore anti-Husserlian and anti-transcendence for its own cause. Instead of being dependent on the notion of subjectivity, the notion of the flesh amounts to a deconstruction of the ego and the absolute present. As Merleau-Ponty declares, the flesh is "midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea": "one cannot say that it is *here* or *now* in the sense that objects are" and neither is the flesh in "any reference to an ego" (*The Visible and the Invisible*, 139, 147, 159). In other words, flesh refers to a movement, a possible way of Being, a style or a manner of Being, but not a fact articulable through metaphysical or transcendental vocabularies. It is indeed with no name in the Western philosophical tradition, which determines the difficulty to linguistically reach specificity.

This leads to my second rebuttal to Barbaras' criticism: the difficulty of reaching a specific literary meaning of the flesh does not amount to the failure of Merleau-Ponty's project in *The Visible and the Invisible*, such a difficulty demonstrates the demand for a new language and a new methodology for philosophy to reconsider questions regarding perception and the meaning of Being. For Merleau-Ponty, reversibility of the seeing-seen, the touching-touched,

and between the visible and the tangible is “always immanent and never realized in fact” (*The Visible and the Invisible*, 147). There are two indications of this statement. First, touching is never fully present, but an on-going tendency, an event to come. My hand is always in the attempt to touch but never reaches coincidence with the touched. Second, reversibility is a *chiasm* that happens alternatively, not simultaneously. My hand *never* senses itself touching and being touched at the same time. As such, “either my right hand really passes over to the rank of touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted; or it retains its hold on the world, but then I do not really touch it” (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 148). In other words, experiences of reversibility never overlap; at the verge of rejoining, there is a gap between my right hand touching and my right hand touched. Merleau-Ponty calls this gap “hiatus”, the “clear zones” around which my flesh and the flesh of the world “pivot their opaque zones” (*The Visible and the Invisible*, 148). Thus, the hiatus is the negativity that allows for existence, a primary opening to the possibilities of Being—as Merleau-Ponty puts it, “a horizon”, “a logical possibility of conception”, “a being by pregnancy” (*The Visible and the Invisible*, 149).

As such, the hiatus is the bond between the visible flesh and the invisible idea—a type of ideas or thoughts different from those of science, as they are inseparable from their sensory presence (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 149). For instance, the “little phrases” between the marks of musical notations in Proust manifest such a new type of ideas—as languages— “they could not be given to us *as ideas* except in a carnal experience [the flesh of their language]”, and the attempt to grasp them by *reflecting* upon them and *translating* them into pure ideas leads to, at most, a derivative interpretation (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 149, 150). In other words, between reflection and perception, there is a hiatus that interrupts the intertwining between the two, and thus reflection never touches, or captures

perceptual experience in its unfolding. Therefore, the conceptual specificity that Barbaras demands could only be an attempt to capture perceptual experience through secondary interpretation, and it is doomed to fail according to Merleau-Ponty. For him, philosophy itself is a language that is “lived”, irreducible to the scientific coincidence between the signified and the signifying, or that between perception and reflection (Sellheim, 271, 272). Philosophy thus distances itself from scientific positivity, approximating itself to a negative, indirect, metaphorical, and poetic language.

Merleau-Ponty calls this philosophy hyper-reflection (*sur-réflexion*), a language which does not speak “according to the law of the word-meanings inherent in the given language, but with a perhaps difficult effort that uses the significations of words to express, beyond themselves, our mute contact with the things, when they are not yet things said” (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 38). Hyper-reflection is a reflection that knows its finitude, a reflection that mutes itself, defers its own speaking and lingers upon the horizon or the initiation of experience. As such, it defers the “immediacy” of the givenness in phenomenology which, to Derrida, amounts to a “new transcendental illusion” privileging the absolute present and rendering phenomenology another metaphysics (Reynolds, *Merleau-Ponty and Derrida*, 56). Thus, hyper-reflection aims to overcome immediacy. Instead of speaking a transcendental dualist language of the phenomenology of perception—as Barbaras suggests—Merleau-Ponty turns to the “imperception”, a “*punctum caecum*”, namely a blind spot of consciousness, an “*irremediable absence*” (*The Visible and the Invisible*, 159, 247). He predicts that within this impossibility of vision lies the possibilities of finding our experience “in a movement towards what could not be present to us in the original” (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 159). Thus, Merleau-Ponty not only seeks to “return to the phenomenon, but return to the

phenomenon in a way open to that which makes the phenomenon itself possible and yet also problematic”, and hence his paradoxical regard towards the invisible and the hiatus detaches himself from phenomenology and bears a similar ambition with the Derridean notion of “the trace”: the residue of a past that is neither “fully reactivated” nor “entirely present” (Reynolds, *Merleau-Ponty and Derrida*, 81).

4. TOUCHING THE OTHER

4.1 The Problem of the Example: My Hand

In his work *On Touching—Jean Luc Nancy*, Derrida criticizes Merleau-Ponty's account of the body and perception in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), *Signs* (1964), and *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964). Derrida's critique focuses on the example of "my hand" as the touching-touched in Merleau-Ponty's account of the body (*le corps*) as well as the flesh (*la chair*). Derrida points out two intuitionisms in Merleau-Ponty, manifest in the problematic usage of the word "as" in *Signs*: "I see this man over there sees, as I touch my left hand while it is touching my right" (Merleau-Ponty in Derrida, 197). Derrida notes a parallel between vision and tactility: "the 'as' which makes symmetrical, compares, and analogizes seeing *and* touching—notably, on the one hand, seeing-a-man-seeing, *and*, on the other, touching-my-left-hand-touching-my-right-hand" (197). This parallel between vision and tactility was already shown in my discussion of *The Visible and the Invisible* where Merleau-Ponty states: "the visible spectacle belongs to the touch neither more nor less than do the tactile qualities" (134). In other words, vision is a *kind* of touch. This parallel actually already exists in the early Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on synesthesia, the unity or community of senses, as "the rule" of perception (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 229, 235, 239). Derrida points out two intuitionisms that make this parallel possible: first, "a certain privilege for the gaze... co-perception", and second, "a non-coincidence I coincide with" (198).

The first intuitionism is accompanied by the hierarchy underlying the ubiquitous parallel in the notion of flesh. This hierarchy is two-fold: between the visual and the tactile, and between man and animality. Regarding the ostensible privilege of vision in Merleau-Ponty, Derrida quotes from *Phenomenology of Perception* to show that synesthesia not only designates a unity

but also a hierarchy of senses, among which “visual experience is truer than tactile experience” due to its “richer structure” (206). Whatever this richer structure implicates, the intimacy between the visible and the truth in Merleau-Ponty comes to the fore; while the example of the touching-touched hand is interrupted and diverged by the hiatus, the seeing-seen—entailing the same kind of chiasm according to Merleau-Ponty—appears to bear an almost transcendental status as the *truer* perception. Derrida also observes this special status of the visible in the ontology of flesh (though based upon with the chiasm of the touching-touched) in *The Visible and the Invisible*: “my visible is confirmed as an exemplar of a universal visibility... a sublimation of flesh, which will be mind and thought...a relationship with oneself and with the world as well as a relationship with the other” (208). As such, thought is considered as the metaphorical *sense* of vision, indispensable to Being in terms of a three-dimensional relation, namely, the incarnation of the self, the other, and the world into one: the flesh (*la chair*). Vision, as one of the senses in the sense communion (synesthesia) thus exemplifies *the one* element of Being.

Nonetheless, for Derrida, this privilege of vision remains *in suspense*. Vision, involving the seeing-seen, is but *dispersion* of the touching-touched sensation of “my hand as the hand of a man”, the example that “comes pedagogically to drive the discourse [of the flesh]... on demonstrating that feeling [the chiasm] is somewhat ‘dispersed’” (208, 209). In other words, the touching-touched as a sort of original, first chiasm is dispersed *into* the seeing-seen in the account of the flesh. Derrida quotes from *The Visible and the Invisible*: “Manifest as it is that feeling is dispersed in my body, that for example my hand touches... that unique touch that governs the whole tactile life of my body as a unit” (209; Merleau-Ponty, 145). Derrida also finds this emphasis on the dispersion of touch in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, “Because I

know that the light strikes my eyes, that contact is made by the skin, that my shoe hurts my foot, I disperse through my body perceptions which really belong to my soul” (209). The statement discloses the omnipresence of the touching-touched dispersion, from skin surface to other organs—eyes, the feet, etc.—without which “my visible”, the seeing-seen would not be felt in the first place.

At this point, Derrida notices *two* senses of touch in Merleau-Ponty: the first sense of touch involves noncoincidence, inaccessibility, the chiasm in the touching-touched, and the other sense of touch is the “unique” and “central” touch, “always conspicuously put on an equal footing—which should be an equal hand—with all the other senses or other organs of my body” (208). In other words, the first sense of touch is *literal*, the tactile feeling of the chiasm, while the second sense of touch is almost *metaphorical*, the sense of proximity or immediacy that can be dispersed in other sensations—for instance, his gaze touched me. This double meaning of touch, according to Derrida, persists in the Western philosophical tradition prior to Merleau-Ponty—for instance, in Maine de Biran, touch is a pure sensation, an *exact* balance between the faculties of feeling (passivity) and moving (activity) motivated by the willing ego (149, 150). With this perfect exactitude, touch “covers” all the other senses from the most passive (taste and smell) to the most active (hearing and sight), excluding itself *out* of the community—as the law that governs it (Derrida, 156, 157). To this extent, touch, privileged *implicitly* as both a local (species) and the unlocalizable (genus) in the sense community, is the basis for Merleau-Ponty’s usage of the word “as”, paralleling vision to touch—more precisely, equating vision *as* a species of touch.

This touching-touched hand mediating passivity and activity, “is properly human”, and thus indicating a “humanualism” with a teleological hierarchy between the human and the non-

human (Derrida, 152). In *The Visible and the Invisible*, the project of hyper-reflection is such that the “I think” must accompany all our experience, as “we are proceeding toward the center, we are seeking to comprehend how there is a center” (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 145-146, my emphasis). This “we”, to Derrida, “can in no way refer to other ‘animals,’ other living beings”, since the example of the hand in the first instance, is localized in “we, men” (210). In other words, despite Merleau-Ponty’s effort to dislocate the body-subject (*le corps*) into the anonymous flesh (*la chair*), the exemplary of “my hand” still locates the subject. This is similar to the pure Ego which supposedly referring to “the animal, man or beast”, but Husserl’s phenomenological project never includes serious *examples* or descriptions of the non-human world (Husserl in Derrida, 166). Husserl even explicitly distinguish men, “rational living beings” from animals, the “lowest level” [of living beings] (Derrida, 167). To this extent, Merleau-Ponty and Husserl differentiate the being of animals from the Being of human beings, a gesture also found in the Heidegger’s interpretation of the lived body (*Leib*)—animals are world-in-the-poor—as I discussed in the first chapter. This leads to Derrida’s exploration of what he calls “humanualism” in phenomenology, metaphysics and Christianity. I will return to this theme in my discussion of Derrida’s rejection to this tradition and his exploration of auto-hetero-affection, the *technē* of bodies, and the aporia of touch in his reading of Nancy’s *Corpus* and *L’intrus*.

The second intuitionism in Merleau-Ponty involves a coincidence of non-coincidence in the touching-touched sensation, which Derrida regards as an unfaithful reading of Husserl’s account of the Body Proper (*Leib*) and double apprehension (*Doppelauffassung*)—which Merleau-Ponty appropriates to explain the notion of the flesh (*la chair*). To understand Derrida’s position, it is necessary to review his discussion of the Body Proper in Husserl. Husserl defines the Body Proper as “an organ of the will, the one and Only Object” for the will of my pure Ego,

immediately and spontaneously movable and produces mediate movements of other objects—for instance, “things struck by my immediately spontaneously moved *hand*” (*Ideas II*, 159, my emphasis). Husserl’s emphasis on the Ego’s original and immediate intuition of the Body Proper (*Leib*) is manifest. The Ego directs its will, intentionality, to the pure realm of the real (*reelle*), the transcendental sphere of my *own* lived *experience*, bracketing the real (*reel*) as the extensive, spatio-temporal facts of the physical or psychological (Pirovolakis, 103). Accordingly, the self-givenness is not derivative from Husserl’s phenomenological description, but *prior to* any description of phenomena, namely, “before everything else (is), *I am*” (Pirovolakis, 104). As such, the world in which my Body Proper (*Leib*) lives is transcendental-solipsistic.

Given this definition of the Body Proper, Derrida cites the description of double sensation.

So here we have that double apprehension: the same touch-sensation is apprehended as a feature of the “external Object” and is apprehended as a sensation of the Body as Object (*des Leib-Objekts*) [*de l’objet-corps propre*]. And in the case in which a part of the Body [*du corps propre*] becomes equally an external Object of an other part [*pour une autre partie du même corps*], we have the double sensation (each part has its own sensations) (Husserl, 155; Derrida, 168).

For Derrida, the primordial double apprehension means *one* sensation [“the same touch-sensation” in Husserl words] doubly apprehended, as both “a sensation of the touching hand or finger *and* as a feature of the object by which the touching hand or finger is touched” (Pirovolakis, 106). As such, double apprehension of the touch sensation occurs on the surface of the Body Proper when it touches an external Object, and the double apprehension occurs on the surfaces of *both* parts of the same body when they touch each other, thus the double sensation. This interpretation of touch as *one* sensation doubly apprehended “at the same time”, for Durie, is based on the inaccurate French translation of the German word “*mit*” in Husserl’s description— “[the touch sensation is] grasped along with (*mit*) [*en même temps*] the touching

hand” (80-81). Nonetheless, Derrida deems this translation “perfectly faithful” to the description of the intuitive and immediate access to the Ego’s Body Proper (*Leib*) (Derrida, 171-172).

Derrida points out that this touching-touched as one sensation of my hand is necessary as *the evidence* of the Ego’s immediate access to its Body Proper for Husserl. Husserl describes the example of the hand: “The touch-sensing is not a *state* of the material thing, hand, but is precisely the *hand itself*... and the way in which it is mine entails that I, the ‘subject of the Body’ (*das ‘Subjekt des Leibes’*), can say that what belongs to the material thing is its, not mine... it is precisely thereby that this surface [of my hand] manifests itself immediately as my Body” (Husserl, 157; Derrida, 174). There are two indications of this description. First, the touching-touched sensation *is* the self-sensing hand, as part of my own experience of the Body Proper (*Leib*), spontaneously and immediately moved by my intention. This means that for Husserl, the touching-touched sensation belongs to the transcendental sphere in which my intentionality reigns, bracketing the material qualities of the hand. As such, this touch sensation must be immediate, intuitive, and not exterior or mediated in any way. Accordingly, the touching and the touched must be both immediate, coinciding with each other *temporally*, and thus Derrida’s choice of translation of “*mit*” as “*en même temps*” is not only justified, but also *necessary* as an evidence for the account of the Body Proper. Second, it is precisely the owing to the *spatial* localization of the touching-touched *on the surface* of my hand that the body manifests immediately as my Body Proper. In comparison to this spatial localization of the touching-touched on my hand, the color sensations cannot be localized *on* the seeing eye (Husserl, 158-159; Derrida, 169). Therefore, the touching-touched sensation must be a temporal-spatial coincidence so as to be *the* example in Husserl for the “auto-affection” of the real (*reelle*) given

to the “I”, excluding the “not mine” in “the real (*reell*) space, the *extensio*”, the visible (175, 179).

Accordingly, the “I” immediately access the Body Proper (*Leib*) through the auto-affection of my hand touching my other hand, but indirectly accesses the “not mine”, the “other bodies [*Körper*]”, a real (*reell*), extensive, spatial thing “without introjection” (Derrida, 176, 178). In other words, I have no direct access to the other’s body as the lived body (*Leib*), and thus my touching or seeing of other bodies can in no way coincide with my hand touching my other hand. As such, Merleau-Ponty “puts the shoe on the wrong foot” when quoting Husserl to argue that “My right hand *was present [assistait]* at the advent of my felt hand’s active sense of touch. *It is in no different fashion* that the other’s body becomes animate before me when I shake another man’s hand or just look at him [Husserl, *Ideas II*, pp. 173-74]” (Merleau-Ponty in Derrida, 190). Merleau-Ponty parallels self-touch with hand shake and sight, in the sense that the *noncoincidence* (hiatus) between the touching-touched between my right hand and my left hand *coincides* with the *noncoincidence* (hiatus) between my hand touching and being touched by the other’s hand, or between my seeing and being seen. Derrida points out that this coincidence “runs the risk of reconstituting an intuitionism of immediate access to the other” that Husserl would never endorse (191). Despite Merleau-Ponty’s insistence on the hiatus, he nonetheless maintains “a possibility or virtuality of a synthesis on the score of a ‘presentiment’ or feeling of imminence” when he writes that “this hiatus... is spanned [*enjambé*] by the total being of my body” and as a fission, “only a more profound adhesion to Self” (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 148, 255-56; Derrida, 213, 214). As such, the ever “imminent coincidence” of hiatuses allows for a quasi-symmetry between tactility and vision, thus in chiasm “nothing seems to count but reciprocity” (Derrida, 213, 215). Therefore, although Derrida credits Merleau-Ponty

for innovations of the hiatus and chiasm, he is not so keen as other scholars like Hatley and Reynolds on discovering the deconstructive potentiality in Merleau-Ponty—for instance, the noncoincidence or *difference* between the hiatus in self-touch and the hiatus in handshake or the seeing-seen (Reynolds, “Touched by Time”, 324).

4.2 The Aporia of Touch

Given Derrida’s criticism of the intuitionism concerning the privilege of touch and the privilege of man that phenomenology presupposes, he points out the impossibility of immediacy in the experience of the lived body: “there is never any pure, immediate experience of the continuous, nor of closeness, nor of absolute proximity... A ‘deconstruction’ begins in this very experience; it is, makes, and bears out the experience and experiment of this aporia” (125). This aporia lies in the irreducibly untouchable in touch. He demonstrates the happening of this aporia in the very description of the touching-touched sensation. Earlier, I showed that in Merleau-Ponty, the localization of touch on the skin disperses into other organs including the eyes, making the touch as the universal principle of senses. Similarly, in vision Husserl finds “*nothing* comparable” to such localization in tactile sensation; “each thing that we see is touchable and, as such, points to an immediate relation to the Body, though it does not do so in virtue of its visibility” (Husserl, 158-159; Derrida, 169, 172). In other words, sight lacks the ability of localization, as one cannot see one’s own eye and even through the mirror, seeing is an indirect access to one’s organ—unlike the hand capable of approximating the seen into the touched and reduce the distance to a local point *on* the surface of the body.

Nonetheless, Derrida detects an irreducible hetero-affection haunting this auto-affection of touch. He notices that the hand and especially, the fingers are privileged over other parts of the skin, such as lips, tongues, feet, or inner parts of the body like the heart, because the touch of

the hand is “visible from both sides, the touching and the touched” (Derrida, 178). Derrida argues that even though Husserl treats visibility as a *possible* condition of the hand, it is actually the *necessary* condition for double sensation to happen: “obviously there is visually a certain image of my touching hand and its touching movements. All this is given to me myself as belonging together in co-presence and is then transferred over in empathy” (Husserl, 173-174; Derrida, 178). First, this *obvious*, and thus, intuitively given visibility of the hand, along with the touching-touched, comes into co-presence. To this extent, the visibility of the hand is treated as immediately accessible as the tactility. And *then*, co-presence of the image and the touching-touched apprehension are transferred over to empathy, the Ego’s *indirect* access to the realm of the real (*reell*), the *extensio* outside of the transcendental-solipsistic realm. In other words, the visibility of the hands—what Husserl regards as exterior, accessible only indirectly through tactility—already mediates the double sensation that constitutes the Body Proper in the solipsistic moment when I touch myself, *before* empathy. As such, the experience is “*constitutively haunted* by some hetero-affection related to spacing and then to visible spatiality—where an intruder may come through” (Derrida, 179). Thus, auto-affection of the touching-touched of my hand is neither immediate nor pure, due to the hetero-affection of the seeing-seen (image of my hand) in the very beginning, which is supposed to be untouchable, or rather touchable only in a deferred, detoured, indirect way. Therefore, the aporia of touch lies in this “auto-hetero-affection” of self-touch, which is at once possible and impossible (Derrida, 180). In other words, to touch oneself is only possible by a spacing of the visible, an intruder impossible to touch from space and materiality outside the “I”.

As discussed earlier, the privileged example of the hand accompanied by a “humanualism”, a teleological and intuitionistic perception of the body, does not exist

exclusively in phenomenology for Derrida, but rather, finds its traces in the long-standing tradition of Western metaphysics and Christianity. For instance, in Plato's *Phaedo*, the *psuchē* (soul) gives up bodily touch absolutely—vision, tactility, hearing and others—to attain yet a figure of touch, namely the truth as “the *aspect*, the visibility of the *eidos*”, but the supremacy of this disembodied aspect “does not obey the eye except to the extent that a haptical intuitionism comes to fulfill it” and thus the immediate presence of the “pure *psuchē*” is attained by a pure touch of the figure of truth (Derrida, 120, 121). In Aristotle's *Metaphysica*, there is the “Pure Act”, where the object of thought “comes into contact” and becomes the same as the thought, an immediate presence without distance or representation (Derrida, 249, 364). A similar intuitionistic haptology lies in Christianity's love, desire, and obsession for the incarnation: “spiritual touching [the divine's self-touch that sets itself in flame] as the pure act knows neither intervallic medium nor any distance” (Derrida, 247, 248). As such, in both metaphysics and Christianity, there is already the *aporia* of touch in the desire to touch, to make close, to attain immediate access to the truth or God, which can only be attained by the untouchable, the visible, the *eidos*, the flame. Thus, metaphysics, Christianity and phenomenology share the desire for immediacy and the intuitionism of touch as auto-affection, which is always already intruded by hetero-affection.

Given this *aporia* of touch, instead of distinguishing pure auto-affection from the less pure, one should rather explore the differences among “types of auto-hetero-affection without any pure...auto-affection at all” (Derrida, 180). Deconstruction in this sense is most aptly put by Nancy's statement: “there is no ‘the’ body; there is no ‘the’ sense of touch; there is no ‘the’ *res extensa*” (Nancy, *Corpus*, 119; Derrida, 180). In other words, there is no first principle—neither the eidetic law, nor the tactile localization—that governs bodily experience, the senses are not

common, but rather, constitutively haunted by a spacing from outside, sharing out with each other a kind of absence, death. Derrida refers to this death the “*technē* of bodies”, in Nancy’s words, as the spacing between spaces, namely, between singular bodies (180). For Nancy, appropriation of the body is always already an expropriation, the intrusion of the other problematizes but also makes possible the constitution of the self. This constitutive intruder, however, is never appropriated into another self, but rather, remains an irreducible alterity that is shared out between multiple singular bodies. As such, our bodies end up as bodies among bodies in the world of bodies, and not as *the* body of Christ or any transcendental figure. The *technē* of bodies therefore reintroduces a temporal-spatial interruption, a spacing *before* any spatial/bodily distinctions, for instance, between the transcendental realm of ownness (*reelle*) for pure experience and the *extension* of the real (*reell*) for pure materiality in Husserl (Derrida, 180). In other words, the transcendental, the human is constitutively haunted by the immanent, the non-human.

The *technē* of bodies is by no means “an abstract metaphysics”, because it attempts to bear out the aporia of touch as an event, to address “the crossing of the contingent personal, local, and global histories of bodies” (Landes, 91). As Derrida puts it, “neither is there, in the first place, any ‘the’ deconstruction” (287). To this extent, the *technē* of bodies amounts to an event, unprecedented, unanticipated and unrepeatable. Derrida refers to the concrete instance of Nancy’s heart transplant. The other’s heart, an organ heterogeneous, twenty years younger than the rest of Nancy’s body intruded but also saved his life. But during this event, he experienced the internal differences renewed and recommenced, first through the rejection of his own immunity system, which not only attacked the other’s heart, but also his own body as a whole, and moreover, the intrusion of the cancer induced by the transplant, and eventually, the

chemotherapeutic and radio-therapeutic treatment imposed on this body that no longer recognized itself (Nancy, *L'intrus*, 10, 11). Nancy is touched by this strangeness, the material, the technical, the chemical and the prosthetic, which has nothing to do with quasi-transcendental coincidence between sensations or the Ego's empathy with the Alter Ego in phenomenology. Rather, it is a strangeness that is at the same time an "I": "the empty identity of an 'I' can no longer rest in its simple adequation (its 'I' = 'I') when it speaks [*s'énonce*]: 'I am suffering' implies that there are two 'I's,' each one foreign to the other (yet touching) ... doubtless like birds of a feather [*comme deux gouttes d'eau*]" (Nancy, *L'intrus*, 11). The "I's are no longer immediate or intuitionistic presence, but identities that go through a very difficult detour through the pains, the technology, and the ceaseless rejection—"it [identity] happens through evil or fear, no longer anything immediate—and the mediations are tiring" (Nancy, *L'intrus*, 11). Indeed, as it is no longer possible for the body to find any solid ground for immediacy of the Body Proper, identity is only possible as immunity: the self becomes the intruder, and the intruder the self. As rejection becomes the only source of identity, the "I's are renewed each time a new intrusion takes place, but not infused or confused into a totality—as the heart never erases its singular history in the other's body, which, to Nancy, always remains strange. To this extent, the properness of the "I" is spaced out into an "infinite distance", and subjectivity becomes nothing more than "its exteriority and its excessiveness: its infinite exposition" (Nancy, *L'intrus*, 11, 12).

The bodies infinitely multiplied, exposed and expropriated are the creations, the *technē* of bodies. This creation by the creation itself leads to a world that does not refer to another world as origin, for instance, *cosmos*, or *res extensa*. Instead, it is a world as "a proliferating peopling of (the) body('s) places", but this is the peopling of "singular bodies", not humanity, or any generality of bodies (Nancy, *Corpus*, 39, 41). This world of "*mundus corpus*" is the opening, not

a lack, but a “mass” of singular bodies without a creator, since it does not retain or return to its own creation, namely itself that is distanced infinitely (“cent/100”) and thus without (“sans”) a destined subjectivity (Nancy, *Corpus*, 105, 106). As such, the world is created in its non-worldliness, its immunity, “an irrepressible rejection”, “extreme certainty of the *extra partes*” (Nancy, *Corpus*, 109). In other words, the world of corpus is a creation of its own, and this creation needs to be rejected as a non-world, something other than the world, out of the world, in order to be identified as the world itself. Namely, the world rejects and re-creates itself infinitely. As this ecotechnical world of bodies allows no law or creator to totalize or generalize its immunity-identity, it “deconstructs the system of ends, renders them unsystemizable, nonorganic, even stochastic” (Nancy, *Corpus*, 89). This sense of the world illustrates precisely the deconstructive language “the *technē* of bodies”, as the irreducible alterity rejected by the Western metaphysical and Christian tradition, which always reinvents itself, each time, as a continuation, extension, and exposition of the corpus(es) of this tradition.

Accordingly, as a reinvention of the metaphysical language, the *technē* of bodies does not completely break away from the Christian doctrine of incarnation or the metaphysical desire for transcendence, but remains “a method of reading which comes from beyond the Christian horizon without being completely exterior to it” (Esposito, 93). Neither Derrida nor Nancy regards deconstruction as the end of Christianity and metaphysics, as they doubt the possibility to speak, write or live outside such tradition. For instance, similar to Nancy’s recognition that “the only Christianity that can be actual is one that contemplates the present possibility of its negation”, Derrida regards Nancy’s deconstruction of Christianity as deeply embedded in the Western metaphysical language, and as an “almost impossible task” that risks being exposed as “Christian hyperbole” (Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 140; Derrida, 220). Despite Derrida’s appreciation

of Nancy's innovative notion of the *technē* of bodies, he nonetheless detects in Nancy, as in other philosophers, a desire for immediacy. But rather than referring to *Corpus* or *L'Intrus*, Derrida cites from *Being Singular Plural*, where he notices "a 'logic' of touch" in Nancean deconstruction: "To touch upon the origin is not to miss it: it is properly to be exposed to it. Since the origin is not another thing (an aliud), it is neither 'missable' nor appropriable" (Nancy in Derrida, 115). For Derrida, this "properness of an exposition to the origin" which is "not to miss" in the multiple singularities amounts to "quasi-transcendental", a "form", "a spacing, in truth", which grounds the *technē* of bodies (116, 119). As such, "*the* origin... together with other origins" renders Nancy another "idealist" following Plato and others in the systematic desire for immediacy, properness and indeed, touching (116, 118, my emphasis). This desire to touch *the* origin in *the* Being singular-plural, as Derrida argues, "invades" Nancy's well-attempted break from the law of intuition (116).

Thus, the aporia of touch is most recognizable in Derrida's intimacy with *and* departure from Nancy and others. On the one *hand*, Derrida shares with Nancy's description of touch as auto-hetero-affection, constantly miming Nancy's phrase "*self-touch oneself*" (*se toucher toi*) as both "(*self-*) touch" and "(*self-*)touch *one another* (among two or many)" (34, 108, 115). On the other *hand*, Derrida repetitively performs a mono-dialogue between his selves and Nancy: "Touch is finitude... Haven't you yourself said 'there is no 'the' sense of touch?' Knowing you, I don't think this objection will stop you, I tell myself" (107, 138-139). This "you" is enunciated as if referring to both Nancy and the other Derrida. As Miller points out, "Derrida's hand" manifests in his self-touching himself touching Nancy (160). And touch is never attained, but "possible only by not touching"; Derrida never touches or exceeds the limit of touch in so far as he— "in your [Nancy's, Derrida's or others'] steps"—reinvents the *senses* of touch, which

already trace back to a hand (de)parting from another in the Western philosophical tradition (Derrida, 107, 298).

CONCLUSION

My thesis has therefore discussed the three different accounts of the lived body in Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Derrida. I have first introduced the Cartesian account of the body as substantiality (*res extensa*), namely, objectivity as opposed to the thinking (*res cogitans*) subject, which isolates the subject from its body, reducing the mind and the body into self-contained and oppositional categories. I then discussed Heidegger account of the lived body (*Leib*)—as opposed to the corporeal body (*Körper*)—as part of the existential structure of Dasein, Being-in-the-world. I demonstrated the aporia of *Leib-Körper* duality in this account, leading to the problematic of the bodily nature of Dasein in its “unalive” status—*loss-of-the-world*, and its abysmal relation with animality—*poor-in-the-world*. In contrast to Heidegger’s account, in Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*, the body (*le corps*) is both lived and corporeal, claiming a subjectivity through its practical intention “I can (*je peut*)” despite its pre-personal existence as anonymous and general organism underlying this subjectivity. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, however, Merleau-Ponty takes the pre-personal existence of the body—constantly disrupting the identity of the body-subject—to be the element of Being, flesh (*la chair*). This disruption of subjectivity is demonstrated through the chiasmic intertwining of the touching-touched sensation of “my hand”, as a hyper-reflective experience of incarnation, which, I argued, amounts to a deconstruction of the body-subject in the later Merleau-Ponty. This is followed by my discussion of Derrida’s criticism of Merleau-Ponty in *On Touching, Jean-Luc Nancy*, that the example of “my hand” shows the intuitionism that privileges touch as the immediate sensation over vision and the “humanualism” that privileges the human over the non-human, which are found already in metaphysics and Christianity. I pointed out Derrida’s acknowledgement of the impossibility to escape from this intuitionism; despite Nancy’s

deconstructionist vocabulary “the *technē* of bodies” as opposed to *the* Body Proper, bodies singular-plural still live in the desire to be properly exposed to the origin so as to touch it.

In conclusion, the three philosophers provide distinct counts opposed to the mind-body dualism, though with limitations. Heidegger describes Dasein as being bodily instead of having a body, which to dissolve the body-object into the ecstatic temporal structure of Dasein’s Being-in-the-world, through its projection as the “there” that orients always into the future that always comes back to its situatedness and facticity. Heidegger distances Dasein’s bodily nature (*Leiblichkeit*) from Husserl’s Body Proper (*Leib*) of the transcendental Ego by emphasizing the co-determination between the lived body and the world in the “there”, not “I-here”. But the asymmetrical relation between Dasein in the world and the lived body in its *loss-of-the-world* needs further clarification—in the face of Dasein’s shared corporeality (*Körperlichkeit*) with animals, the world-poor. Given this aporia between the corporeal and the lived bodies (*Leibkörperlichkeit*), Merleau-Ponty’s account of the lived body (*le corps*) acknowledges this duality in human bodily experience, and questions the Cartesian *cogito* precisely based on the pre-personal existence of the body as the background of the subject’s intentional act. Merleau-Ponty’s account of the pre-personal body, later developed into the ontology of flesh, further dissolves subjectivity into a general, anonymous and incarnated Being. However, his project of hyper-reflection, though aware of its own cognitive limits, faces challenges as a philosophy that starts from the example of the hand of the man. This intuitionism is an age-old problem of Western philosophy, so claims Derrida, who insists upon the aporia: touch is possible only by not touching. He demonstrates the auto-hetero-affection and discloses the untouchable other constitutively haunting the Body Proper, exemplified by the event of Nancy’s heart transplant and the Nancean vocabulary “the *technē* of bodies”. However, this also predicts the limit that

deconstruction never touches, exceeds or invades—the new language of deconstruction departs from, but stays in contact with a metaphysical desire and intuition for touch, and thus always already live in the aporia of touch.

Overall, the three accounts of the lived body have their own distinctiveness and limits. Since they all remain within the framework of Continental philosophy, the three accounts are more or less limited by the European metaphysical and linguistic tradition. Given Derrida's claim that an account of the lived body developed *after* metaphysics can hardly overcome the metaphysical language and thus the intuitionism of touch, one might seek new possibilities for an account of the lived body in a language or a philosophy that develops *outside* the metaphysical influence. For instance, Chinese Daoism as a philosophical—not religious—discourse plays with the metaphorical rather than the categorical or literal usage of the Chinese language, a language which Derrida hypothesizes to be spoken and written *outside* the logocentric and phonetic order of the European languages in his discussion in *Dissemination*. To this extent, Daoism as a philosophical discourse outside the influence of metaphysics could perhaps provide an alternative in writing about bodily experience.

REFERENCES

- Aho, Kevin. "The Missing Dialogue between Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty." *Heidegger's Neglect of the Body*. Albany: State University of New York, 2009. Print.
- Aho, Kevin. "The Body." *The Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger*. Eds. François Raffoul and Eric Nelson. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013. Print.
- Barbaras, Renaud. "The Ambiguity of the Flesh." *Chiasmi International: Trilingual Studies Concerning Merleau-Ponty's Thought* 4.(2002): 19-26. *Philosopher's Index*. Web. 5 Oct. 2015.
- Casey, Edward. "The Ghost of Embodiment: on Bodily Habitudes and Schemata." Welton, Donn. *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*. Malden, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. Print.
- Cerbone, David R. "Heidegger and Dasein's 'Bodily Nature': What is the Hidden Problematic?." *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8.2 (2000): 209-230. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 12 Mar. 2015.
- Ciocan, Cristian. "The Question of the Living Body in Heidegger's Analytic of Dasein." *Research In Phenomenology* 38.1 (2008): 72-89. *Religion and Philosophy Collection*. Web. 11 Mar. 2015.
- Derrida, Jacques. *On Touching—Jean Luc Nancy*. Ed. Werner Hamacher. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005. Print.
- Dreyfus, Hubert. *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991. Print.
- Durie, Robin. "At the Same Time: Continuities in Derrida's Readings of Husserl." *Continental Philosophy Review* 41.1 (2008): 73-88. *Philosopher's Index*. Web. 10 Oct. 2015.
- Esposito, Roberto, and Janell, tr Watson. "Flesh and Body in the Deconstruction of Christianity." *Minnesota Review* 1 (2010): 89-99. *Project MUSE*. Web. 10 Oct. 2015.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row, 1962. Print.
- . *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. Trans. W. McNeill and N. Walker. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. Print.
- . "Letter On Humanism." *Pathmarks*. Eds. William McNeill. Cambridge, Ma: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print.

- . *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols-Conversations-Letters*. Trans. Franz Mayr and Richard Askay. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001. Print.
- Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*. Vol. 2. *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*. Trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989. Print.
- Landes, Donald A. "Le Toucher and the Corpus of Tact: Exploring Touch and Technicity with Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy." *L'esprit Créateur* 3 (2007): 80-92. *Project MUSE*. Web. 20 Oct. 2015.
- Leder, Drew. "A Tale of Two Bodies: The Cartesian and the Lived Body." Welton, Donn. *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*. Malden, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. Print.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Landes, Donald A. London, New York: Routledge, 2014. Print.
- , and Claude Lefort. *The Visible and The Invisible; Followed By Working Notes*. n.p.: Evanston [Ill.] Northwestern University Press, 1968., 1968.
- Miller, J. Hillis. "Touching Derrida Touching Nancy: The Main Traits of Derrida's Hand." *Derrida Today* 1.2 (2008): 145-166. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 10 Oct. 2015.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Corpus*. Trans. Richard A. Rand. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008. Print.
- , and Hanson, tr Susan. "L'intrus." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 2.3 (2002): 1-14. *Supplemental Index*. Web. 12 Oct. 2015.
- . *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*. Trans. Bettina Bergo, Gabriel Malenfant, and Michael B. Smith. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008. Print.
- Pirovolakis, Eftichis. "Derrida and Husserl's Phenomenology of Touch: 'Inter' as the Uncanny Condition of the Lived Body." *Word & Text: A Journal of Literary Studies & Linguistics* 3.2 (2013): 99-118. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 10 Oct. 2015.
- Raffoul, François. "Dasein." *The Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger*. Eds. François Raffoul & Eric S. Nelson. New York, London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013. Print.
- Raffoul, François. "The Event of Space: Heidegger among the Sculptors by Andrew Mitchell." *Heidegger Circle*, 2010. Web. 2 March 2015.
- Reynolds, Jack. *Merleau-Ponty and Derrida: Intertwining Embodiment and Alterity*. n.p.: Athens: Ohio University Press, c2004., 2004.

- . "Touched by Time: Some Critical Reflections on Derrida's Engagement with Merleau-Ponty in 'Le Toucher'." *Sophia: International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Metaphysical Theology and Ethics* 47.3 (2008): 311-325. *Philosopher's Index*. Web. 10 Oct. 2015.
- Sellheim, Berndt. "Metaphor and Flesh—Poetic Necessity in Merleau-Ponty." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 41.3 (2010): 261-273. *Philosopher's Index*. Web. 5 Oct. 2015.
- Sloterdijk, Peter. "Nearness and Da-Sein: The Spatiality Of Being And Time." *Theory, Culture & Society* 29.4/5 (2012): 36-42. *SocINDEX*. Web. 10 Mar. 2015.
- Vallega, Alejandro A. *Heidegger and The Issue of Space. [Electronic Resource]: Thinking On Exilic Grounds*. n.p.: University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c2003. (Baltimore, Md.: Project MUSE, 2014), 2003. Louisiana State University. Web. 11 Mar. 2015.

VITA

Manhua Li is a student from Shenzhen, China. Manhua studied English language and literature at Beijing Language and Culture University as an undergraduate student from 2010 to 2014. She studied politics and law as an exchange student at Newcastle University in the United Kingdom from 2012 to 2013. Manhua began her studies at Louisiana State University in August, 2014. She is interested in the comparative study of Continental philosophy and Chinese philosophy, in particular, Daoism.