

JEAN-LUC NANCY

Corpus

TRANSLATED BY RICHARD A. RAND

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS
New York ■ 2008

On the Soul

Before starting, I'd like to say that, while I was on the way here yesterday, I was extremely troubled by the fact that I am taking part in a colloquium about the body just as the headlines of *Le Monde* are announcing the tortures and cruelties currently being committed in Bosnia. It's just that, I don't know how to put this, I'd like to give some thought to them before starting, to all those tortured, violated, wounded, humiliated bodies in Bosnia, at this very moment. And I'd add, for those bodies being denied their being as bodies.

I decided not to give a lecture in the form of a written and continuous text to be read, since the organizers offered us the possibility of an intervention to be recorded and subsequently transcribed. I prefer to leave room for a bit of improvising in my intervention, so as not to produce a *body effect*, precisely in Plato's sense when he says that a discourse is like a big animal, well organized, with a head, a tail, and a heart in the middle. I don't want to produce the effect of a closed or finite thing, because when we talk about the body we talk about something entirely opposed to the closed and the finite. With the body, we speak about something open and infinite, about the opening of closure itself, the infinite of the finite itself. That's what I want to try to develop: the body is the open. And in order for there to be an opening, something has to be closed, we have to touch upon closure. To touch on what's closed is already to open it. Perhaps there's only ever an opening by way of a touching or a touch. And to open—to touch—is not to tear, dismember, destroy.

We could start with this point: a closed, shut, full, total, immanent world, a world or a thing, whichever, so on its own and within itself that it wouldn't even touch itself, and we wouldn't either, a world alone to itself and in itself, wouldn't be a body. For me, this observation seems to suffice. Most of the time when we say "body," in opposition to "soul" or "mind" (or "spirit"), we have in mind something closed, full, on its own and in itself. If a closed-up body exists, if we can provide ourselves a kind of equivalent in the image of the inorganic, physical body—of a stone, for example (but perhaps even this is only an image; it isn't clear that a stone wouldn't be a body as *we* are a body)—if we suppose that there could be something of the sort, completely closed up in itself, to itself, I'd say that this isn't a body, it's a *mass*, however spiritual this mass might be: it can be purely spiritual (it's a certain image of God, for example). A mass is what is massed, gathered up in itself, penetrated with self and penetrated within itself such that, precisely, it's impenetrable. So there is nothing that articulates a mass to itself.

The mass is the impenetrable, in the sense of something penetrated without remainder or limit, thoroughly self-penetrating. The mass is also the absolute ground, which is at the ground and only there, grounded on its ground, completely. It's what's grounded [*se fonde*] in itself and *metts* [*fond*] into itself. In certain respects, it's something with a very long tradition in our philosophical thought, with a very simple name that everyone knows: the name is *substance*, that which is *under* something and no longer belongs to anything else. This is the definition of *substantia*, itself a term that translates Aristotle's *hypokeimenon*: what's under something and what, underneath a certain number of attributes or accidents, no longer belongs to anything other than itself. Substance, taken in this sense (because it's definitely more complicated in Aristotle, and undoubtedly in the whole philosophical tradition, as we shall shortly see), the substance of what we think of when we speak of "a substance," is what we think the body is. We often tend to think that the body is a substance, that something bodily is substantial. And opposed to this, or elsewhere, under another rubric, there would be something else—for example, something like the subject—that would not be substantial. I'd like to show that the body, if there is a bodily something, is not substantial but a subject. Let's keep this word for the moment and keep it simple. Substance—what for the moment I'm calling mass—has no *extension*. The true idea of substance is not even the stone, but the *point*, which has no dimension, in exactly the sense that Saint Augustine, who didn't much like extension and bodies—perhaps for having loved them too much in his early years—said that the body in general is a *tumor*, a tumor, an excrescence (he wasn't thinking of

fiona's lecturing
& writing
suddenly makes
so much more
sense

tumor in its modern sense), a protuberance, which, "as such," is not "good." Only the point is "good," the self that is unto itself, without extension, which also means that it is without *exposition*.

That's the whole point: the body's a thing of extension. The body is a thing of exposition. It's not just that the body is exposed but that the body *consists* in being exposed. A body is being exposed. And to be exposed, it has to be extended, not perhaps in the sense of Descartes' *res extensa*, which we think of right away, a thing that's flat, mechanical, and absolutely deprived of soul or spirit (although we'll see that it's more complicated even for Descartes).

Let's start there: what isn't body is mass, or substance in the sense of mass, without extension, without exposition, a point. We can just as well call this spirit itself, spirit taken as concentration in itself, which we can call, in a still more terrible way, precisely, *concentration* as such. I need say no more. What concentration in itself means for us today is effectively the annihilation of bodies, the annihilation of the body as extension, of the body of which there are always several. Of the body, there's always a *lot*. There's always a *crowd* of bodies, there's never a *mass* of bodies. Where there's a mass of bodies, there's no more body, and where there's a mass of bodies, there's a mass grave. And this is concentration. It's one of those aspects of the corpse that we discussed this morning: it's the cadaver forming a mass. That's also why, when we want to discuss the body, we confront a major problem (which is why I didn't want to offer a seamless, polished text). In order to speak about the body, or, to put it in the Latin and professorial mode, to speak *de corpore* ("on the subject of the body"), we always have to speak about the body *ex corpore*: we should speak from the body, speaking should be projected out of the body—*ex corpore*, as in *ex cathedra*. A discourse of the body should always be a discourse *ex corpore*, coming out of the body, but also exposing the body, in such a way that the body would come out of itself. But I'd say this isn't the affair of discourse, as something that is *held*. On the contrary, the great temptation of thinking that we can hold a discourse adequate to the body, a discourse that would come "ex-corporate," project, cry, howl, sigh, and laugh the body, is naïve. It's an unavoidable temptation that at the same time is a thing that *ought to be*. I learned that at the opening of this colloquium you listened to Artaud's lecture "To be done with God's Judgment," one that I have heard elsewhere. And that's what's going on with Artaud: his lecture is truly a discourse "ex-corporated" and without naïveté, but we also see the limits of that discourse. It's not the business of discourse as such, as a discourse, merely to mime "ex-corporation." The issue is rather that discourse, which is necessarily in and of itself incorporeal, is also the

incorporeal. (This word comes from our tradition: for the stoics, everything is body except discourse, or what's said, the *lekton*, which is the "incorporeal.") The whole point about a discourse on the body is that the incorporeal of the discourse should nonetheless *touch* on the body.

But what's the touching of the incorporeal and the body? Necessarily, this has to do with a certain interruption of the one by the other. The incorporeal is necessarily interrupted when it touches on the body, and the body is necessarily interrupted, or open, when it touches upon, or as soon as it's touched by, the incorporeal. This is what is at stake. I mean that what is at stake is that a discourse on the body, of the body, is not simply "dis-corporated" like an object, like the object of an anatomy lesson; as Annie Le Brun showed us this morning, a discourse of the body or on the body is both touched by and touches upon something that isn't discourse at all. Which means quite simply that the body's discourse cannot produce a *sense* of the body, can't give sense to the body. Rather, it has to touch on what, from the body, interrupts the sense of discourse. That's the whole point. If this colloquium exists, and we're interested in the body today, it's because we sense, more or less obscurely, that the body of the body—the affair of the body, the affair of what we call body—has to do with a certain suspension or interruption of sense, which is where we are and is our current, modern, contemporary condition. Every day we put our finger on the fact that, concerning sense, there's no longer any available, in a certain mode of sense—some sense said, pronounced, enunciated, some incorporeal sense that would come to make sense of everything else. We are touching on a certain interruption of sense, and this interruption of sense has to do with the body, it is body. And it's no accident that the body has to do with sense, in the other sense of sense, sense in the sense of sensing, in the sense of touching. Touching on the interruption of sense is what, for my part, interests me in the matter of the body.

This is why I've called this lecture "On the Soul." Why this title? To begin with, certainly, it's a provocation. I've been asked to talk about the body, so I'm going to talk about the soul. But of course it isn't that simple, I ask you to credit me that. *On the soul*: because such a title causes an interruption, a rupture. But, to say it up front, *On the Soul* (*De anima*) is also the title of a very famous treatise by Aristotle. Now, in this treatise Aristotle talks only about the body. I'm now going to make use of this paradox. But first of all, to reassure you, in relation both to that silly provocation (or what could have been merely silly) and to the fear of hearing a Christian sermon, I'd say that, with the soul, there is, in effect, an effect of rupture, a rupture that is the body itself, in that the body can only

break with sense. In saying “of the soul,” I simply wanted to indicate this: “of the soul” or “of the body outside the self.” If the body isn’t mass, if it isn’t closed in on itself and penetrated by itself, it’s outside itself. It is being outside itself. And this is what is at stake in the word *soul*. It in no way involves an understanding of the ineffable interiority behind this word, a sublime or vaporous identity escaping from the prison of the body. To put it in an extremely simplified way, it therefore has nothing whatsoever to do with the soul as it appears in the Platonic or Christian tradition, though this tradition itself is surely far more complex than it seems.

The premise of this proposition is therefore this: with the soul, it’s not a matter of another spiritual body. In the whole of traditional iconography, we see the soul as a little person, a little angel with wings, exiting the mouth of a dying person and taking off. This states very clearly a certain representation of the soul. But it means that the soul is another body, simply a more subtle body, more aërian, a spiritual body, but another body—*something else*, if you will. What it ought to involve, on the contrary, is the fact that here, as with Aristotle, as with Saint Thomas, and, as we’ll also see, with Spinoza and Descartes, surprising as this may seem, the soul, in all these “figures” of our tradition, doesn’t represent *anything other* than the body, but rather the body outside itself, or this other that the body is, structurally, for itself and in itself. We have to talk about the soul, even if this gives rise to all sorts of ambiguities (it’s true that beyond today’s intervention, I won’t necessarily remain attached to this word *soul*), if “on the soul” means: “on the body’s relation with itself,” insofar as it is a relation to the outside—being out.

The soul is the body’s difference from itself, the relation to the outside that the body is for itself. In other words, and this allows me to return to Aristotle, the soul is the difference from itself that makes the body, what Aristotle declares by defining the soul as the *form* of a living body. The soul is not specifically human, even if the human soul has its proper characteristics. Here it therefore has to do with the soul of every organized living body. The soul is the form of a body. We have to understand that the form is not an exterior in relation to an interior. What would a body without form be? I hinted at this just now: it would be a mass, a pure substance. The form of a body is above all the body itself. If there is a body, it has a form—but even this is poorly stated, given that this verb *to have* makes us think of a certain exteriority of form in connection with the body. The body is the form. If there’s indeed a thing that our whole climate of modern thought makes us think about directly, it’s that the

form of a body—my body—is nothing other than the body; it’s not an exterior aspect in relation to which there’d be an interior.

The form of a body is the body itself, insofar as it is not mass, or formless mass, or pure punctuality. Without wishing to be provocative, I’d say that a body, insofar as it is a form, is what is neither shit nor spirit. Shit and spirit are the excretions of the body, what the body rejects, even if rejecting and expelling are essential to the functioning of a body. But in expelling, the body gives itself form. Thus the form of the body is not the opposite of matter. There isn’t, to begin with, the body’s matter and something that would then come and give it its exterior appearance, because then the material would itself be the formless and we could ask: But what’s the meaning of the form of the formless? We’re accustomed to manipulating the couple form-matter, but if we notice that it signifies the form of the formless, we understand, strictly speaking, that it’s meaningless. The form of the body doesn’t mean the form of a material that would be a body, of a material that would be exterior to the form—this is nothing but excrement—but signifies, on the contrary, the body insofar as it is form, essentially form, in other words, *body*. Form means that body is articulated, not in the sense of the articulation of members but as the relation to something other than itself. The body is a relation to another body—or a relation to itself. This Aristotelian form has another name, which is at the midpoint between the three big instances of the organic body, the merely living (vegetal), the sensory (animal), and the human (which, in addition to being alive and sensory, is also thinking). The term common to these three instances is *sensing*, and this is the term for the body as form in Aristotle. The soul as form of the body—which is not the beautiful form according to the aesthetics of the moderns—signifies that the body is what is *sensing*. The body senses and is sensed. At this very moment, the body’s matter, for Aristotle, is nothing other than its form. He literally says that we can’t distinguish matter and form. The matter of the body is sensing matter. And the form of the body is the sensing of this matter. At most, we can say that matter designates the impenetrability of form. If I penetrate the form of a body, I destroy it, I dissolve it as form and then make it into a mass, a rotting or a mass grave. If we wish to keep the word *matter*, then we should say that it’s the impenetrability of what is form—in other words, relation, articulation, and therefore, yet again, the relation between sensing, sensing oneself, being sensed, and sensing something as from the outside.

The last definition of the soul that Aristotle gives, further along in his development, is the following: the soul is the primal *entelechy* of a natural organized body. “Entelechy” means being accomplished with regard to

its end (*telos*). Entelechy is a thing's being completely achieved. Which means two things. First, the soul is the ensemble of form-matter (but we shouldn't put it that way: there isn't matter on one side and form on the other—the one takes place only through the other, and as the other), the soul as the entelechy of a body is this body as a complex, as a whole—as a body, finally! The entelechy of a body is thus the fact that the body is matter as form, and form as matter—a sensing. Second, the true entelechy for Aristotle in general, and this is very important for us, is always the *individual*, a word heavy today with many moral and political ambiguities. Entelechy doesn't aim at the notion of the body, but a body. The soul as entelechy of a body means this body, and this body is *this one here*. There is no body other than that of a “this one,” and we should immediately add that “this one” is often feminine. Singular determination is essential to the body. We can't define a body as sensing and as relation if we don't define it at the same time by this indefinable fact of its being each time a singular body—this body here and not another. It is only on the condition of having this body here and not another that this body here can *sense itself* as a body and sense others. The soul as the first entelechy of a natural organized body (Of the Soul, 412b) is not some thing but the fact that there is a body, its existence. We can accentuate this word, as Heidegger has done, by saying *ex*-istence. The soul is the presence of the body, its position, its “stance,” its “sistence” as being *out-side* (*ex*). The soul is the fact that a body exists, in other words, that there is extension and exposition. It is therefore offered, presented open to the outside. A body touches on the outside, but at the same time (and this is more than a correlation, it's a co-appurtenance), it touches itself as outside. A body accedes to itself as outside.

Have you already encountered yourself as pure spirit? No. This means that you are like me, that we only gain access to ourselves from outside. I am an outside for myself. This isn't simply through the fact, long recognized and repeated, that the eye doesn't see itself, that the face is something *turned* to the exterior and that we never see it, that we never appropriate not only the face but also the whole body. This is what skin is. It's through my skin that I touch myself. And I touch myself from outside, I don't touch myself from inside. There are some celebrated analyses by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty on this question of “self-touching,” of my own hands' “self-touching.” But curiously—and this comes up over and over again in the whole tradition—everything always returns in interiority. The phenomenological analyses of “self-touching” always return to a primary interiority. Which is impossible. To begin with, I have to be in exteriority in order to touch myself. And what I touch remains

on the outside. I am exposed to myself touching myself. And therefore—but this is the difficult point—the body is always outside, on the outside. It is from the outside. The body is always outside the intimacy of the body itself. Why do we always speak of the intimacy of the body? The only veritable intimacy of the body is in silence. This is Bichat's definition of health: health is life in the silence of the organs, when I don't sense my stomach, my heart, or my viscera. There's an intimacy there, but an intimacy that is merely not there, not sensible, it's of the order of the mass. But when I sense my stomach or my heart, or my lung, I sense it, and if I sense it, it's from the outside. That's what I'd want to have understood by “soul”: by this name that, for us, symbolizes the other of the body, through this couple, which generally expresses a couple of exteriority, of contrariety, of opposition and negation, I'd like something else to be understood, which departs from this Platonic and Christian tradition but which would not simply and purely be something else. I don't want to speak of a body without a soul, any more than of a soul without a body. It's not a matter of reconstituting a pure immanence, because that would be, as I've said, the mass, or excrement. No, instead it has to do with trying to make use of the word *soul* as a lever to help us understand this outside of the body, this outside that the body is *for itself*. The soul is the being outside of a body, and it is in this being outside that it has its inside.

Without wishing to bore you with philosophical technicalities, I'll confirm this idea by appealing to Spinoza, when he says that the soul is the idea of the body. (Here we should remember that, when Aristotle says that the soul is the form of the body, he uses the word *eidos*, which gives us the word “idea.”) We might get the impression of ending up back in a simple dualism: the soul is the idea of the body, something of which we have an idea, a representation, an image. But in fact, not at all. See how this works in Spinoza: to say that the soul is the idea of the body means, more precisely, that it's the idea that God has of the body, of my body or of every body. What's God for Spinoza? God is the unique substance. There's nothing else. The unique substance for Spinoza is not a mass, it is in itself double: it is thought and extension—the two being co-extensive and parallel to one another. And this very duality is God. Which is why, from that point on, we can forget God—Spinoza has been more than abundantly treated as an atheist, and, I think, rightly so. Let's forget God, then. The idea of the body is the idea, the vision and form of something that is both an expanse and an extension—insofar as this expanse or this extension is not merely exterior to the idea but visible or sensible in itself and as a form of-itself. The body is linked to the soul, which is its idea. So the idea of the body is the soul's idea of itself, the form of self as it can

be seen or sensed in general by itself and as itself. In other words, I'd say, very quickly, and using Spinoza's terms: God sees himself as *this* body, mine, yours. And, for Spinoza, God doesn't see himself as anything else. If God is the thought of extension, it's because he's the extension of thought. Which enables Spinoza to utter this famous sentence: "I feel I'm eternal." What does this mean? "I feel I'm eternal" in no way signifies that I feel that I last forever—how could I feel such a thing? "Eternal" doesn't mean sempiternal—Spinoza is very precise on this point. It doesn't mean that I last indefinitely. To sense that I last all the time, I'd have to last *the whole time*, waiting for time. No. Eternity is of the order of necessity. If I feel I'm eternal, this means that I feel I'm necessary. This means that in my body, or rather, as my body, as my body itself, along the extension and exposition of my body, God (or substance) feels itself necessary. In consequence, we understand that God feels and knows himself to be necessary in his contingency. To say that my body is eternal doesn't mean that it's sempiternal or immortal.

That's the complete schema of what I'd like to say: for Aristotle or Spinoza, the soul—or at least the fact that we have had recourse to a word other than the word *body* and that the word *soul* was chosen—signifies that *the body is what knows or senses it is necessary in its contingency*. The body is only this singular body, but this singularity is felt and sensed as necessary, as irreplaceable, as irreplaceable exposition. That's what the body is. And we can complete this with Descartes, as surprising as that may seem. We're used to thinking that the body, for Descartes, is geometrical extension, the thing extended—there's only figure and movement—and then there's the thinking thing, the famous *cogito* which is completely and entirely of itself and in itself. In the *Second Meditation*, when Descartes sets out the celebrated imaginary experiment of a piece of wax, he writes that a piece of wax has a figure, a color, that tapping it yields a sound. Then, when we heat it up, it melts, it loses all its qualities, and, to the mind's view, to the *inspectio mentis*, there's nothing left but extension. In this reading, we seem to have, quite clearly, on the one hand, pure extension and, on the other, pure cogitation, an outside-the-self completely pure and an inside-the-self completely pure. We could already very simply ask: how are they related to one another? How does one touch the other? And that's just it: *they touch one another*. It's in Descartes' text. The wax that melts loses its color, its smell, it no longer yields a sound, and then the author hesitates: "we touch it *just barely* if at all," *just barely* because he can't say that we don't touch it any more. Of course, we always touch the wax. Since it's been melted, we might be under the impression

that we can't touch it because it's burning not—but we can get burned, we always have to get burned in order to touch.

For Descartes, thought is sensing, and as sensing, it touches upon the extended thing, it's touching extension. We can say, to refine the analysis, that this barely but still touching, this sensing that still remains as touching, is the asymptote of seeing. Descartes seems to suppress the sight of the piece of wax: there's no more figure, no more color, but we certainly see something. This seeing is a touching. For Descartes himself, the famous *ego* (which I'm now using in place of the soul) is only *ego* by virtue of being outside itself, by touching the wax. And therefore, to put it in an arrogant way, I'm claiming to show that, for Descartes, the *res cogitans* is a body. Descartes knows this very well. At this point, we should develop everything he says about the union of the soul and the body, which is evidence as strong as that of the *ego sum* itself. *Ego* is being outside with reference to the *ego*. *Ego* is also being a body. A body is sensing, but sensing such that there's no sensing that wouldn't be a "sensing one's self." To sense, we have to sense ourselves sensing—this is also a proposition of Aristotle that we find in the *On the Soul*. Body means very precisely the soul that feels it's a body. Or: the soul is the name of the sensing of the body. We could say it with other pairs of terms: the body is the ego that senses itself to be other than ego. We could say it by using all the figures of the self's interiority facing exteriority: time, which is sensed as space; necessity, which is felt as contingency; sex, which is felt as another sex. The formula that sums up this thought would be: the inside, which senses it is outside.

That's what the body is. This means we shouldn't say, or we should try to stop saying, that being body, the body self, the being to itself of a body, the relation to self as a sensing oneself outside, as an inside that feels it is outside—we should say not that this is the property of a subject or of an ego, but that it *is* the "Subject." And even "subject" is extremely fragile, since we should say, not that "I," body, am touched and touch in turn—that I'm sensed—but rather try to say (and this is the whole difficulty) that "I" is a touch.

"I" is nothing other than the singularity of a touch, of a touch that is always at once active and passive, and that, as a touch, evokes something punctual—a touch in the sense of a touch of color, in the sense of a pianist's touch, and, why not?, in the sense of the old argot, when we would say that we put the touch on someone (scoring . . .). The unity of a body, its singularity, is the unity of a touch, of all the touches (of all the touchings) of this body. And it's this unity that can make a self, an identity. But it's not a matter of a self, an identity or a subject as the interior of an

exterior. It's not, in accordance with the old image that we've dragged along since the beginning of philosophy, about a very ugly Socrates who's very beautiful inside: interiority, the inside; subjectivity as incommensurable with exteriority, extension, and exposition. No, it's a matter of a "one," and a "someone," of the unity or singularity of what I in effect really want us to keep calling an identity, an ego, a self, a subject, provided that the subjectivity of this subject is clearly understood as a being outside the self, as a "self-sensing," but as a "self-sensing" that is exactly not a being posed by oneself and an appropriating of oneself to oneself in a pure interiority, but a being in exteriority in relation to itself. We sense ourselves as an outside. This is not just a question of the hands, but basically concerns the sense of existence. Kant wrote, in a note to the *Prolegomena* (a note to paragraph 46), that the "self" is without substance and without concept, that it is "only sentiment of an existence" (*Gefühl eines Daseins*). Furthermore, Kant doesn't put the article with *Gefühl*, he doesn't say a sentiment, or the sentiment, but "self" is sentiment of an existence. "Self" is sensing an existence. If we develop Kant's formula rigorously, sensing an existence doesn't mean that a self senses an existence outside itself, as of a table, say. Existence is what's sensed as existence. This doesn't mean that there's a little subject back behind, sensing itself as existence. There's no longer a subject "back behind." There's only a "self-sensing," as a relation to self as outside. And that's what being one's self is. Self being is necessarily being outside, on the outside, being exposed or extended. This is what Heidegger tries to make the word *Dasein* ("existence") say: *Dasein* is being the there (*da*).

With the body, it's only a question of this: how is it that *I* am the there. When we say "I'm here," we presuppose that there's an exterior place that the "I," an unassignable interiority, would come to occupy—as soon as we say this, we involve ourselves in enormous difficulties, because how can "I," which has no place, come into a place? It's the mystery of the incarnation. But that's just it, we can in no way think the body in terms of incarnation. I am speaking not only of the Christian dogma of incarnation, where that which is without place, without exteriority, without form, without matter (God) comes into flesh, but of the incarnation that is the model (itself Christian, in effect) of all our thought on the subject. This idea of incarnation is impossible: what does it mean that something without place would come to occupy a place? It isn't a question, then, of being there. Rather, it has to do, following a perhaps impenetrable formula in Heidegger, with "being the there"—exactly in the sense that when a subject appears, when a baby is born, there's a new "there." Space, extension in general, is extended and opened. The baby is nowhere else

but *there*. It isn't in a sky, out of which it has descended to be incarnated. It's spacing; this body is the spacing of a "there." Thereafter, things do indeed become more complex: the "there" itself is not simply there; it isn't there as a geometrical point, an intersection or a marker on a geographical map. The "there" itself is made only of opening and exposition.

When we want to talk about the body, we need to break with a certain reflex. We spontaneously think of body *against* soul. The body is considered as physical, material, carnal reality. I'm disturbed by certain discourses of the body that either adopt "bodybuilding" and reduce it to Schwarzenegger or else, very subtly, very underhandedly, turn the body into a soul in the traditional sense: the signifying body, the expressive body, the orgasmic body, the suffering body, etc. In saying this, we put the body in the place of the soul or the spirit. Very curiously, I believe that a provisional reflex is necessary. We have to do justice to the ugly Cartesian dualism, Platonic and Christian in origin, that opposes the soul to the body, because we won't respond to the injunction that comes to us in the form of a body if, as contraband and in the name of a "unity" of soul and body, we put the soul back in the place of the body. At any rate, when we speak about the body, we are soon all too ready to reject, to "excrete" something (bad, "material" . . .), by denouncing, for example, the "objectified body." Machines are reputed to be inhuman, soulless, and bad for the body, even though at the same time we're quite content to use them. In wanting to keep a "good," "signifying" body, we reproduce the same schema of the exclusion of the body by the soul. Through the appeal or injunction of what falls under the name of *body*, we must first of all—and I say this as something of a provocation, but not merely so—restore something of the dualism, in the precise sense that we have to think that the body is not a monist unity (as opposed to the dualist vision), having the immediacy and self-immanence with which we earlier endowed the soul.

The body is the unity of a being outside itself. Here, I abandon the word *dualism*, and I also don't say that this is the unity of a duality. The provocative recourse to the word *dualism* lasts only for a second. After that, it becomes instead a question of thinking the unity of being outside the self, the unity of the coming to self as a "self-sensing," a "self-touching" that necessarily passes through the outside—which is why I can't sense myself without sensing otherness and without being sensed by the other. It involves thinking the unity of what a little earlier I called articulation, unity as a form, which is inevitably an articulation. Then what we were calling "soul" (and we can perhaps try to dispense with this word, which is all very heavy anyway) is exactly what makes this *being*

outside, not this being on the outside, but this *being outside without inside that completely forms the inside*—or all *being to self*. The soul is the extension or the expanse of the body. Therefore one has to give it back its rights to extension, even Cartesian extension, even *partes extra partes*, not necessarily as a way to reduce it to the simple position of geometrical points one outside the other, but to give every right to the *extra*, the being outside of, and to *ex-tension*. And after having insisted on the “ex” of extension, we should think *tension* as such. What makes for an extension? Tension does. But an extension is also an in-tension, in the sense of an intensity. And it’s perhaps precisely here that the subject of an intention disappears, in the phenomenological sense of that word, in the sense of an intentional aiming at an object—an aiming that, charged with sense, will endow my perception of an object with sense. For that kind of intentionality, we should substitute intensity, extension in the sense of a tension of the outside as such.

A body is therefore a tension. And the Greek origin of the word is *tonos*, “tone.” A body is a tone. I don’t say anything here that an anatomist couldn’t agree with: a body is a *tonus*. When the body is no longer alive, has no more *tonus*, it either passes into *rigor mortis* (cadaverous rigidity), or into the inconsistency of rotting. Being a body is being a certain *tone*, a certain tension. I’d also even say that a tension is also a *tending*. Consequently, there are possibilities for ethical developments that we might perhaps not expect to find here.

I’m going to conclude with a few words that will try to pull together the results of this very minimal analysis. If we’ve talked about the soul, if our entire tradition has spoken, and in various ways, about the soul, it’s because, for good or ill, and partly in spite of itself, it has thought, not in the soul alone but in the *difference* between body and soul, the difference that the body *is* in itself, for itself—this difference in tension, in extension, in a certain tone of the outside. And what’s been thought under the name of *soul* is nothing other than the experience of the body. It’s simple, and it’s on the textual surface of the whole tradition. What’s the soul, if not the experience of the body, not as an experience among others, but as the sole experience? The whole of experience is there, *in nuce*, in the experience of the body—in the experience that the body *is*. The soul is a name for the experience that the body *is*. *Experiri*, in Latin, is precisely going outside, leaving without a destination, crossing through something without knowing whether we will return from it. A body is what pushes to the limit, blindly, while groping, hence while touching. Experience of what? Experience of “self-sensing,” of touching upon the self. But touching upon the self is the experience of touching on what is untouchable in a

certain way, since “self-touching” is not, as such, something that can be touched. The body is the experience of indefinitely touching on the untouchable, but in the sense that the untouchable is not anything that would be back behind, anything interior or inside, or a mass, or a God. The untouchable is the fact that it touches. We can also use another word to say this: what touches, what we’re touched by, is on the order of *emotion*. Emotion is a very weak word for us, but emotion means: set in movement, in motion, shaken, affected, breached. We can add another word as well, which is perhaps too spectacular: *commotion*. This word has the advantage of introducing “with” (*cum*). Commotion is being set in motion with. What we have thought under the name *soul* for some time is not the emotion or commotion of the body, the body as emotion or commotion. In a sense, this implies such an exposition to the outside, such a being outside, such an *experiri* of the outside or as the outside, that it inevitably introduces something that always induces the word *soul*, a kind of placing in inferiority, a placing of the body as waste or refuse. This is precisely what should be, not gathered up (which would imply a valorization of the waste or refuse of the body), but understood.

We have to understand that outside all the gestures of valorization, hierarchization, and evaluation that have been attached, by a whole huge tradition, to the subordination of the body, to its submission, and even to its abjection, beyond all these indices of *devalorization*, there is, in effect, in the body as such, as “self-sensing,” a structure of being set outside, such that we cannot speak of the body without speaking about it as an *other*, an other indefinitely other, indefinitely outside. Which means that without refusing it or disposing of it as waste, we must also not reanimate and reincorporate it as if *it* were the soul. Which is what I find very well articulated in the title of this colloquium: *The Weight of the Body*. We don’t think the body if we don’t think of it as weighing. And if the body is weighing, it must weigh with all its weight and impart its full measure (a weight is a measure), and this measure is always the measure of an outside, a measure that is not allowed to revert to the unitary measure of the inside or the interior. The weight of the body has to weigh to the point that it becomes impossible to sublimate this weight, to animate it, to spiritualize it—in a word, to withdraw it from its outside. I wanted to make us a little more sensitive to this weight of the body by speaking, as if for one last time, about the soul as the experience of the body.