

# The Question of the Living Body in Heidegger's Analytic of Dasein<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyze the significance of the absence of the problem of living body in Heidegger's analytic of Dasein. In order to evaluate the occurrences of the problem of the body in *Being and Time*, I also refer to the context of some of Heidegger's later work where there is to be found a sketch of an ontological investigation of the living body. I analyze then in detail the scarce occurrences of body in the fundamental ontology, showing finally that the lack of a proper phenomenological examination of living body generates a series of conceptual difficulties for the problem of Dasein's death, precisely when the issue of dead body is at stake.

## Keywords

Heidegger, body, life, animal, ontology, phenomenology

The fact that the question of the living body is absent from the project of fundamental ontology in *Being and Time*<sup>2</sup> has been noticed by many commentators.<sup>3</sup> It has been stated that the thematic omission of the body from the

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<sup>2</sup>) Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1986), hereafter cited as *SZ*; translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson as *Being and Time* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1962), hereafter cited as *BT*.

<sup>3</sup>) Frank Schalow, *The Incarnality of Being. The Earth, Animals, and the Body in Heidegger's Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006); David R. Cerbone, "Heidegger and Dasein's 'Bodily Nature': What Is the Hidden Problematic?", *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8, no. 2 (2000): 209–30; Jean Greisch, "Le phénomène de la chair: Un 'ratage' de *Sein und Zeit*," in *Dimensions de l'exister. Etudes d'anthropologie philosophique V*, ed. G. Florival (Louvain: Peeters, 1994), 154–77; Michel Haar, "Le primat de la *Stimmung* sur la corporéité du *Dasein*," *Heidegger Studies* 2 (1986): 67–80; Didier Franck, *Chair et corps* (Paris: Minuit, 1981).

analytic of Dasein uncovers a symptomatic insufficiency in Heidegger's philosophical endeavour, a fact which also points to several problems situated in direct dependence on it: what is at issue is not only the absence of the range of questions raised by animality and by the life of Dasein,<sup>4</sup> but also the absence of an interrogation on sexual difference,<sup>5</sup> the omission of any reflection concerning birth,<sup>6</sup> and the absence of a bodily intermediation in the encounter of others, all of which, to a certain extent, obstruct the prospect for an ethics interrogation. The absence of an interrogation regarding the body undermines the prospect of an ontological foundation for phenomena such as pain, suffering, exhaustion, hunger, procreation. Certain scholars have even concluded that the whole of Heidegger's project is, on account of this absence, led into an aporia. Also, the failure of *Being and Time*, it is claimed, is due in part to the very failure of the attempt to settle, from the phenomenological point of view, the question of the living bodily nature, as this leads in turn to the failure of an adequate interrogation with respect to the existence of others: if the body effectively mediates Dasein's access to the world and to others, the absence of an ontological characterization of bodily nature leads, from a certain angle, to an ontological solipsism.

The absence of the question of the body in *Being and Time* is even more striking if we evaluate it in the light of contemporary phenomenological debate, where this theme has a fundamental reach.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the keen phenomenological analyses of Edmund Husserl, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michel Henry, or Emmanuel Levinas, the absence in *Being and Time* of an ontological investigation regarding the body reveals once again its profoundly problematic character.<sup>8</sup> The question that is raised is the following: even if we let ourselves be guided by a purely ontological intention, even if the ultimate goal of research may be that of posing the question about the meaning of being, can we simply rid ourselves of the ontological meaning of the living body? If it is true that the concept of Dasein refers to that being that, proximally and for the most part, we ourselves are, can we circumvent without qualms, of all things, our own body, the one thing which accompanies us through our whole existence?

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<sup>4</sup> David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life. Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Geschlecht. Différence sexuelle, différence ontologique," in *Cahier de l'Herne: Martin Heidegger*, ed. Michel Haar (Paris: L'Herne, 1983), 571–95.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Henry, "Phénoménologie de la naissance," *Alter* 2 (1994): 295–312.

<sup>7</sup> Natalie Depraz, *Transcendence et incarnation* (Paris, J. Vrin, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Marc Richir, *Le corps. Essai sur l'intériorité* (Paris: Hatier, 1993).

Still, how far can the scholar go with “researching an absence”? Is it not only counterproductive but downright suspect, from the methodological point of view, to focus our attention on a “lack”? Indeed, maybe therein lies the risk of our undertaking, or its specific difficulty. We can, of course, examine various themes in Heidegger’s work, such as time, the world, language, truth, space, etc. We can, in all those cases, adequately articulate the questions, and find for each of them generous textual grounds, elaborate developments, and complex argumentations. For each of those instances, we can follow the manner in which Heidegger expounds his phenomenological discoveries, the premises sustaining them, and the conclusions following from them. That comfortable situation, however, is not there in what concerns the “body”: occurrences are scarce, observations are offered with parsimony, and there seems to be no eloquence wasted on the theme. The subject, therefore, can seem from the outset to be extremely disconcerting. This is accentuated by the fact that, in the few passages in which Heidegger does bring up the body, he constantly embraces a negative approach, or privative tactics, or a strategy of avoidance by means of which he eliminates and keeps away this question from the locus of fundamental ontology.

In this paper, I want to underscore the place of the living body in the analytic of Dasein. This task can only be accomplished through a thorough textual investigation, focusing on the passages (scanty as they are, but precious) where this question is present, and after that, contextualizing these occurrences in the whole of the work. This way, we shall be able to draw the outlines of this absence, together with the traces of Heidegger’s privative and limitative action. Thus, the genesis of this absence, the demands that have led to the marginalization of the phenomenon of the body, and the prior theoretical positions that have favored such a marginalization finally become open for interrogation by means of this filigree approach.

We may also bring into discussion here two of the fundamental premises of this marginalization, themselves two types of conceptual “evacuation”: the avoidance, as a matter of principle, of life, and the affirmation of an ontological abyss between Dasein’s and animal’s Being. Indeed, the exclusion from the game of the living and of animality already configures the conceptual framework in that the abandonment of the body will take place in fundamental ontology. To the extent that the body is grounded in the dimension of life, the exclusion of life constitutes the condition of possibility for marginalizing the living body of Dasein. The living body, as a self-moving entity, one that opens up its own existence through birth and that meets its ultimate limit in getting old and after that in dying; the body continually exposed to diseases, affected

by pain, subjected to suffering and exhaustion; the body weakened by effort; the body determined by its sexuality and open to eros; the body endowed with senses; one's own body and body of another; the body that involves an "abysmal bodily kinship with the beast"<sup>9</sup>—these are so many facets that existential analytics, if not totally omitting them, neglects in their fundamental significance. Thus, in *Being and Time*, the human body does not have a determined ontological status. Although we could not possibly doubt that Dasein "has," from the ontical-existential point of view, a body of its own, neither the existential rootedness nor the proper ontological grounding of the living body are explicitly investigated by Heidegger. Ownership over one's own body, its pertaining to our Being, does not arouse the slightest ontological interest. The body only appears in passing, never tackled in itself and for itself, reduced to a truly surprising insignificance.<sup>10</sup> Besides this, the occurrences of the idea of the body are always anchored in a predominantly negative, privative, and reductive stance. It might seem that an adequate clarification of the being of Dasein must do away with this substantialist obstacle that entails the danger of reifying the human being and of transforming it into a being made up of parts of the order of objective presence.

### The "Abysmal Bodily Kinship with the Beast"

In the "Letter on 'Humanism'" Heidegger concedes that "of all the beings that are, presumably the most difficult to think about are the living creatures."<sup>11</sup> He makes a similar observation also with respect to the human body in the *Zollikon Seminars*. In this context, Medard Boss reminds Heidegger of Sartre's reproach that in *Being and Time* there are only seven lines dedicated to the body and, consequently, that the treatment of this fundamental phenomenon

<sup>9</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus,'" in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996), 326 (hereafter cited as *Wegmarken*); translated by Frank A. Capuzzi as "Letter on 'Humanism,'" in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 248 (hereafter cited as *Pathmarks*).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. "Some Body Is Alive," in chapr. 1 of *Daimon life*, pp. 52–63. "Did Heidegger simply fail to see the arm of the everyday body rising in order to hammer shingles onto the roof, did he overlook the quotidian gaze directed toward the ticking watch that overtakes both sun and moon, did he miss the body poised daily in its brasen car, a car equipped with turn signals and fabricated by and for the hand and eye of man, did he neglect the human being capable day-in, day-out of moving its body and setting itself in motion?" (52).

<sup>11</sup> *Wegmarken*, 326/*Pathmarks*, 248.

is insufficient. Heidegger accepts Sartre's reproach as valid, merely confessing that he did not know what more to say on this phenomenon. At the same time, he adds something significant: the corporeal or the being of the order of the living body (*das Leibliche*) is the phenomenon most difficult (*das Schwierigste*) to think.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, with this triad: life—animality—living bodily nature (*Leben, Lebe-Wesen, Leiblichkeit*), two abysses open in the face of thinking. On the one hand, there is an evident and at the same time “abysmal bodily kinship with the beast [*abgründige leibliche Verwandschaft mit dem Tier*]”;<sup>13</sup> on the other hand, there is the difference in essence, a difference abysmal in its turn, between our ek-sistent essence and the essence of the living being (“*das Lebe-Wesen... durch einen Abgrund von unserem ek-sistenten Wesen geschieden ist*” [ibid.]). In any event, against any tendency to humanize the being of the animal and to animalize the human being, Heidegger is adamant: “The human body is essentially other than an animal organism [*der Leib des Menschen ist wesentlich anderes als ein tierischer Organismus*].”<sup>14</sup>

Our topic is then kept amid these two abysses: the abysmal kinship and, at the same time, the abysmal difference between existence and life, between human body and animal's organism. According to the testimony of Heidegger himself, here we are, if we like, at the limits of thinking—the living and the body—or at least at one of its limits. For if the meaning of Being allows itself to be glimpsed or sensed in the self-understanding of Dasein, in the texts of the philosophers, or in the lyrics of the poets, as that transparency that opens any understanding and any utterance, then Being is nothing else than the “upper” limit of thinking, the celestial limit, that which thinking seeks, and that towards which it tries to elevate itself. In contrast, the living and the body are the abyss underneath, the unfathomable from the depths, a chthonic limit, or, so to speak, the “lower” one. Of course, also unfathomable and abysmal is Being itself, yet in a different direction, distinct from the unfathomableness of

<sup>12</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Zollikoner Seminare. Protokolle—Gespräche—Briefe*, hrsg. von Medard Boss, (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1987), 292 (hereafter cited as *Zollikoner Seminare*); translated by Franz Mayr and Richard Askay as *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols—Conversations—Letters* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 231 (hereafter cited as *Zollikon Seminars*). See also Jocelyn Benoist, “Chair et corps dans les séminaires de Zollikon: La différence et le reste,” in *Figures de la subjectivité. Approches phénoménologiques et psychiatriques*, ed. Jean-François Courtine (Paris : CNRS, 1992), 179–91; Caroline Gros-Azorin, “Le phénomène du corps (*Leib*). Une entente participative,” *Les Etudes Philosophiques* 4 (1998): 465–77.

<sup>13</sup> *Wegmarken*, 326/*Pathmarks*, 248.

<sup>14</sup> *Wegmarken*, 324/*Pathmarks*, 247.

life and of the body. Thinking seems to dwell in this interval between Being and the body, without ever grasping the meaning of Being (but forever on the way toward it) and, at the same time, without ever succeeding in penetrating the essence of the living and of one's own body. In spite of this, thinking thinks inside Being as inside its own element, and at the same time, it dwells in a body that, because it exists, it cannot do without.

Let us remark however that, while in *Being and Time* the living bodily nature comes up in a purely marginal way (in contexts that we shall analyse in detail), later on this question will no longer be completely circumvented. For instance, in his lectures on Nietzsche, Heidegger brings up an essential meaning of the human body, which must not be reduced to the objectively present.

We do not “have” a body in the way we carry a knife in a sheath. Neither is the body [*Leib*] a mere corporeity [*Körper*] that simply accompanies us and which we can establish, expressly or not, as being also at hand. We do not “have” a body, but we “are” bodily [*wir “sind” leiblich*].<sup>15</sup>

Consequently, the philosopher delineates here an ontological meaning of the body, shifting the accent from “*having* a body” to “*being* a body.” We can see the very same move, the very same shift, from “to have” to “to be” on other similar occasions, in which cases Heidegger “extracts” a structure of Dasein from the rut of common understanding and projects it into an ontological dimension. Thus, we are told, first of all, that Dasein does not “have” a space but, in an essential way, “is” spatial. Also, it does not “have” a time, as a property of its Being, but “is” itself temporal, which is to say it exists starting from a temporal grounding of its Being. Similarly, with reference to the body we shall again encounter a “bodying forth” as “existing in the mode of the body,” which—we suppose—is only achievable in an approach of the body from an ontological angle.

Heidegger not only shifts the accent from “having a body” to “being a body” but vests this phenomenon of the body with *verbal* meaning. In the same way as in the attempt to determine the temporal essence of Dasein's Being Heidegger has said that Dasein is not in time (*in der Zeit*) but is temporalizing (*zeitigen*); in the same way as he has said about the world not that it

<sup>15</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Erster Band, hrsg. von Brigitte Schillbach (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996), 99 (hereafter cited as *Nietzsche I*); translated by David Farrell Krell as *Nietzsche*, vol. 1: *The Will to Power as Art* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1991), 99; translation modified (hereafter cited as *The Will to Power as Art*).

“simply is” but that the world “worlds” (*die Welt weltet*); in the same way as he has said that nothingness “nihilates” (*das Nichts nichtet*); and that the thing “exists-as-thing” (*das Ding dingt*); here as well, in the context of an essential differentiation of the body, Heidegger says: “We are not first of all ‘alive,’ only then getting an apparatus to sustain our living which we call ‘body,’ but we live to the extent in which we exist-as-body [*wir leben, indem wir leiben*].”<sup>16</sup> Thus Heidegger exploits the etymological connection between life (*Leben*) and body (*Leib*), proceeding then to coin, from the noun *Leib*, the verbal term *leiben*, which, being rather difficult to translate, might be rendered through a paraphrase such as “existing-in-the-mode-of-the-body,” “existing-as-body,” or “bodying forth.” It seems here that Heidegger does justice—or at least intends to do justice—to this great lacuna in *Being and Time*: the phenomenon of the living body. The same idea is reprised in the *Zollikon Seminars*, where Heidegger affirms that this “bodying forth of the body [*das Leiben des Leibes*]” is a way of Dasein’s being (*eine Weise des Da-seins*), having “a peculiar relationship to the self [*eine merkwürdige Bezug auf das Selbst*].”<sup>17</sup> Moreover, we must characterize all comportment as “being-in-the-world determined by the bodying forth of the body [*ein durch das Leiben des Leibes bestimmtes In-der-Welt-sein*].”<sup>18</sup>

### The Missing Body in *Being and Time* and Its Unavoidable Traces

Let us now come back to *Being and Time*. Even though the body is eliminated from the ontology of Dasein, this finding does not dispense us from the necessity of following the outlines of this elimination, the traces of this forced removal.

For a start, we may notice in the nooks and crannies of existential analytics various occurrences, more or less random, of the idea of the body. Under discussion are, of course, passages that do not possess great conceptual eloquence, yet that still configure a background presence—more like a rumor than anything—of this absence. We must not, therefore, expect such fleeting occurrences to elucidate the significance of this phenomenon. For example, when Heidegger identifies the meanings of the concept of phenomenon, he discusses a derived meaning, which is that of “announcing-itself by something which does not show, but which announced itself through something which

<sup>16</sup> *Nietzsche I*, 100/*The Will to Power as Art*, 99 (translation modified).

<sup>17</sup> *Zollikoner Seminare*, 113/*Zollikon Seminars*, 87.

<sup>18</sup> *Zollikoner Seminare*, 118/*Zollikon Seminars*, 91.

does show itself”; in this particular place, he offers by way of an example the symptoms of a disease, which are, he says, “occurrences in the body” (*Vorkommnisse am Leib*).<sup>19</sup> Besides this, the whole body will be at stake when Heidegger speaks about the preoccupation for “food and clothing” and the “nursing of the sick body [*die Pflege des kranken Leibes*].”<sup>20</sup> In another passage, which talks about establishing the intersubjective network of preoccupation, he says that the shoe is “cut to the figure [*auf den Leib zugeschnitten*]” of that person who is to use it.<sup>21</sup> Also in a discussion regarding equipmentality, he will bring about the “sole of one’s feet” as that “part of the body” that treads on the being at hand called a sidewalk.<sup>22</sup> A thing ready-to-hand is also the glove that, being “used for the body [*für den Leib Gebrauchtes*],”<sup>23</sup> must go along with its movements. This to say nothing of the paradigmatic importance of the “hand” in the construction of concepts such as *Vorhandenheit* and *Zuhandenheit*.<sup>24</sup> We can see, therefore, that one’s own body plays a certain role, not yet specified, in constituting the commerce of Dasein with the entities within-the-world. Heidegger wants to show, however, that this role is not as important as the philosophic tradition would have it: it is not the body that is the key moment in the contact of Dasein with the world.

The last two examples are situated in the locus of the issue of spatiality. Precisely in the context of spatiality does the phenomenon of the body receive more weight in existential analytics.<sup>25</sup> Here Heidegger speaks, laconically, even of a spatialization (*Verräumlichung*) of Dasein in its “*Leiblichkeit*.”<sup>26</sup> This is the highest ontological dignity that the body ever receives in *Being and Time*: that

<sup>19</sup>) SZ 29/BT 52.

<sup>20</sup>) SZ 121/BT 158.

<sup>21</sup>) SZ 70 and 117/ BT 100 and 153.

<sup>22</sup>) SZ 107/ BT 142.

<sup>23</sup>) SZ 108/ BT 143.

<sup>24</sup>) Cf. Jacques Derrida, “Geschlecht II. La main de Heidegger,” in *Psyché. Invention de l’autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), 415–51; Jean-François Courtine, “Donner/prende la main,” in *Heidegger et la phénoménologie* (Paris: Vrin, 1990) 283–303.

<sup>25</sup>) For the question of space in Heidegger’s work, cf. Alejandro A. Vallega, *Heidegger and the Issue of Space: Thinking on Exilic Grounds* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Maria Villela-Petit, “Heidegger’s Conception of Space,” in *Martin Heidegger. Critical Assessments*, ed. Christopher Macann (London: Routledge, 1992), 1: 117–40; Didier Franck, *Heidegger et le problème de l’espace* (Paris: Minuit, 1986); Françoise Dastur, “Réflexions sur l’espace, la métaphore et l’extériorité autour de la topo-logie heideggérienne,” *Alter* 4 (1996): 161–78; Jean-Louis Chrétien, “De l’espace au lieu,” in *Les symboles du lieu. L’habitation de l’homme*, ed. Constantin Tacou (Paris: L’Herne, 1983), 117–38.

<sup>26</sup>) SZ 108/BT 143.



of contributing to the spatialization of Dasein, that of occasioning it, that of determining it. The body seems to be subordinated to the structure of spatiality that is in turn subordinated to the structure of Being-in (*In-Sein*). After so many subordinations, all that is left for us is to resign ourselves in front of this *ontologically derived* condition of the body. Heidegger, however, adds that this spatialization of Dasein in and through its bodily nature “hides a whole problematic of its own, though we shall not treat it here.”<sup>27</sup> Do we have here, by any chance, the somewhat embarrassed clue about the reserve that Heidegger himself seemed to have had towards his own approach? Is Heidegger inconvenienced by the problem of the body, which he can no longer ignore at this point? Does he tacitly admit that the problem has a distinct importance and that existential analytics does not treat it as it should have?

Anyway, this problematic correlation, *Räumlichkeit*—*Leiblichkeit*, allows us to place the Heideggerian investigation in a Husserlian line of descent. Evidently, as almost all the time, Heidegger does not remain faithful to the theses of the father of phenomenology, yet it is beyond a doubt that his questionings move in a framework already set out by Husserl. Furthermore, even if Heidegger’s solution overthrows that of his master, in terms of its philosophical vantage point the former remains profoundly indebted to the latter. For example, it is well known that Husserl developed a series of explanations regarding the constitution of space from the zero-point of orientation, which is one’s own body. My body is “the absolute here” of orientation, the point starting from which I measure my distances and evaluate my movements. Consequently, Heidegger’s treatment of space cannot, in its turn, wholly circumvent the body, which is a fundamental moment of the explanation of space. Heidegger, however, relying on the concept of de-severance (*Ent-fernung*), contests this Husserlian vantage point centered on the absolute here of the body and says that “in accordance with its spatiality, Dasein is initially never here, but yonder. From this ‘yonder’ it comes back to its ‘here.’”<sup>28</sup> Therefore, when, as I am walking on the sidewalk, I touch with the soles of my shoes this entity ready-to-hand, for such a factual situation it is not the contact with “certain portions of one’s body [*Leibteilen*]<sup>29</sup> that confers meaning, in the here of touch, but the fact that “there,” ten yards away, I see a friend. In the same way, even if my glasses are on the nose, “objectively” close to the body, closer to me in an existential sense is the book that I am reading. Similarly, it is not the

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<sup>27</sup>) Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>) *SZ* 107–8/*BT* 142.

<sup>29</sup>) *SZ* 107/*BT* 142.

receiver of telephone that is truly close to me, although it physically “touches” my ear, this part of the body, but the voice of whomever I am listening to.

We can, therefore, perceive that Heidegger invariably affirms a pre-eminence of meaning over the body, a subordination of sensible perception to existential understanding, an ontological precedence of the capacity of Dasein to be pre-occupied over the bodily senses as such. Heidegger also mentions at some point the “bodily eyes [*leiblichen Augen*],”<sup>30</sup> whose perceptive capacity must be distinguished from existential sight (*Sicht*).<sup>31</sup> Existential sight is thus the ontological ground of bodily sight. Furthermore, we are told that hearing (*Hören*), which is grounded in existential understanding (*Verstehen*), ontologically precedes hearkening (*Horchen*) and that, in its turn, hearkening comes before acoustic perception (*akustische Vernehmen*), by which he means the sensing of tones (*Empfinden von Tönen*) and the perception of sounds (*Vernehmen von Lauten*).<sup>32</sup> Later on, Heidegger will emphasize even further the ontological precedence of capability over the organ that the respective capability employs. He will say that we do not see because we have eyes, but we have eyes because we can see; likewise, we do not hear because we have ears, but we have ears because we can hear.<sup>33</sup> We are confronted with a grounding—even though only a sketchy one—of the body in an existential-ontological constitution, because the capacity to hear and to see pertains to the ontological dimension of existence that is in an essential way a “capacity-to-be.”

Even if the passages above refer to Husserl, he is not Heidegger’s main “enemy” as concerns the question of space. This privilege is evidently assigned to Descartes. The Cartesian ontology of the world is, in Heidegger’s view, the joint that brings together the ontology of the Middle Ages and the subjectivist tradition of the modern age. This strategic moment in the history of philosophy is under constant attack in its quality as a paradigm of the ontology of *Vorhandenheit* and, more specifically, as an ontology of *extensio*. This manner of interpretation has a substantial effect on the manner in which the human body is understood, deliberately reified as objectively present. In his analysis of Descartes’ ontology, Heidegger makes reference to the “human creatures

<sup>30</sup> *SZ* 147, 346/*BT* 187 and 397.

<sup>31</sup> See for this aspect, the article of John Protevi, “The ‘Sense’ of ‘Sight’: Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty on the Meaning of Bodily and Existential Sight,” *Research in Phenomenology* 28 (1998): 211–23.

<sup>32</sup> *SZ* 163/*BT* 207.

<sup>33</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Tübingen: Neske, 1954), 215; Martin Heidegger, *Heraklit*, vol. 55 of Gesamtausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979), 246–47.

encumbered with bodies” (*das leibbehaftete Menschenwesen*),<sup>34</sup> and this is only an exemplification of the tradition that conceives of human being as a union between a soul and a body. This particular tradition, paradigmatically illustrated by Descartes, is what Heidegger challenges.

From the very beginning, when he establishes the constitution of Being-in, Heidegger warns us not to interpret this *In-Sein* in the sense of a *Sein in*, a “Being in something.” As for the expression *In-Sein*, Heidegger says, “one cannot think of it as the Being-present-at-hand of some corporeal thing (such as the human body) ‘in’ an entity which is present-at-hand.”<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, Heidegger challenges the reifying mode of that inauthentic understanding that objectifies the human body and reduces it to the specific nature of a corporeal thing (endowed though it may be with senses). This understanding misses both the primordial meaning of the spatiality of Dasein but also (we may anticipate) the meaning of its living bodily nature.

Being-in is not to be explained ontologically by some ontical characterization, as if one were to say, for instance, that Being-in in a world is a spiritual property [*geistige Eigenschaft*], and that the “spatiality” of human being is a result of its bodily nature [*Leiblichkeit*] (which, at the same, always gets “founded” upon corporeality [*Körperlichkeit*]).<sup>36</sup>

We can see here that Heidegger pays attention to the duality between bodily nature and corporeality, between *Leiblichkeit* and *Körperlichkeit*, and the use of these terms does not seem at all random. They pertain, as we well know, to the conceptual arsenal of Husserlian phenomenology: simply and intuitively put, it is one thing to feel my pain (and I feel it as *Leib*) and another to see one’s right foot “externally” (as a part of one’s corporeity: as *Körper*). It follows that we do not have direct access to the other’s body (we know, indeed, that the other has a toothache, but we do not feel it). Husserl speaks of a constitution of intersubjectivity by means of the transcendental dynamics between one’s own body and the other’s corporeity: starting from the significance of my own *Leib*, which is given me in my immanent sphere of transcendental experiencing, I come to grant the significance of body to the other’s corporeity. This *Körper* of the other is thus constituted as a body, and an *alter ego* is thus given to me. Conversely, from the significance of corporeity of the other, I come to grant the significance of corporeity to my own body and to “comprehend”

<sup>34</sup>) SZ 96/BT 129.

<sup>35</sup>) SZ 54/BT 79.

<sup>36</sup>) SZ 56/BT 82 (translation modified).

myself as corporal. One deals in both processes with a pairing (*Paarung*) of *Leib* with a *Körper*, constituting the corporeal body (*Leibkörper*).<sup>37</sup> Heidegger discusses nothing of this detailed problem of constitution. By accentuating that *Leiblichkeit* is grounded in *Körperlichkeit*, Heidegger seems to desire to accentuate not so much the revolutionary innovations of Husserlian phenomenology as its dependence upon traditional Cartesian metaphysics and, implicitly, upon the ontological conception of the being as objectively present (*Vorhandenheit*) that lies at its basis.

In the refusal of this traditional issue, one can see dimly Heidegger's constant resistance to the idea that human being is, in the first instance, a soul that, only in the last instance, "has" a body. This is a dualist idea that has imbued the whole traditional anthropology. This is an idea that endures throughout the subjectivism of modern philosophy in the shape of a triad body-soul-spirit, a triad in which the spirit is allegedly determined as a "synthesis of soul and body" (*der Geist als die Synthese von Seele und Leib*).<sup>38</sup>

[The question] must face the Being of the whole human being, who is customarily taken as a unity of body, soul, and spirit. In their turn, "body," "soul," "spirit" may designate phenomenal domains which can be detached as themes for definite investigations; within certain limits their ontological indefiniteness may not be important. When, however, we come to the question of the Being of human being, this is not something we can simply compute by adding together those kinds of Being which body, soul, and spirit respectively possess—kinds of Being whose nature has not as yet been determined. And even if we should attempt such an ontological procedure, some idea of the Being of the whole [*Idee vom Sein des Ganzen*] must be presupposed.<sup>39</sup>

The ontology of *Dasein*, therefore, constitutes an attempt to surpass this fragmentation (either dual or triadic) of the Being of human being, seeking to capture the original unity that characterized the totality of *Dasein*'s constitution of Being, a totality that is unitary before all division, the totality of being-in-the-world.

In this passage, Heidegger's critique has two aspects in view. First of all, there is the "ontological indefiniteness" (*ontologische Unbestimmtheit*) of these phenomena. The fact that the body (*Leib*), the soul (*Seele*) and the spirit (*Geist*)

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, hrsg. von Elisabeth Ströker, (Hamburg: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950), V. Meditation, 121–77; translated by Dorion Cairns as *Cartesian Meditations* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), Fifth Meditation, 89–151.

<sup>38</sup> *SZ* 117/BT 153.

<sup>39</sup> *SZ* 48/BT 73–74 (translation modified).

are ontologically indefinite “phenomenal domains” (*Phänomenbezirke*) means that they have not originally been thought as ways of being (*Seinsarten*) of Dasein and are not interrogated starting from the idea of an original Being of Dasein. Secondly, there is the question of the “putting together” of these “component parts,” in other words, of how to obtain unity. Indeed, is this *leiblich-seelisch-geistige Einheit* an original unity of an a priori whole? The answer must remain negative, while this totality is obtained by summation, as if it were a question of layers of reality objectively present. Precisely because the manner in which this unity is obtained is one “of summation,” these ways of being of Dasein are implicitly considered to be parts objectively present, a fact that blatantly disregards the primordial Being of this entity.

As we know, for Heidegger “the ‘*substance*’ of human being is not the spirit as the synthesis of soul and body; it is rather *existence*.”<sup>40</sup> However, this affirmation does not also explain that might be the actual ontological relationships between existence, on the one hand, and the phenomena identified as spirit, soul, or body, on the other. In any case, if existence—this essence of Dasein—is spatial in its very Being, Dasein’s spatiality should not be attributed to the body: it must neither be considered as a corporeal feature nor be interpreted from the “mythological” connection body-soul.<sup>41</sup>

This traditional dualism also surfaces, however, in the fable of care, which is expounded and interpreted by Heidegger as a pre-ontological proof regarding his ontological construction of Dasein as care (*Sorge*). The plot of this fable is enacted around a dispute between Care, Jupiter, and Earth (Cura, Jovis and Tellus) over the name of the human being. Let us remark that nothing else is at stake but the name of the human being, or else the essence residing in the name. As we well know, the three characters contribute to the creation of the human being: Earth gives the creature a body, Jupiter gives it its spirit, while Care is the one that actually engenders its being. Each then claims that the being created in this way should bear their name. This dispute is settled by Saturn, which is to say, by Time. What does Time say, then? For our subject, two aspects are quite important. First, the name of the human being (and the name could stand for the essence) is directly related to the earthly dimension

<sup>40</sup>) *SZ* 117/BT 153.

<sup>41</sup>) “Neither may Dasein’s spatiality be interpreted as an imperfection which adheres to existence by reason of the fatal ‘linkage of the spirit to a body’ [*Verknüpfung des Geistes mit einem Leib*]. On the contrary, because Dasein is ‘spiritual,’ and only because of this, it can be spatial in a way that remains essentially impossible for any extended corporeal Thing” (*SZ* 368/BT 419).

of the living body: “let it be called ‘*homo*,’ for it is made out of *humus* (earth).”<sup>42</sup> Second, as a criterion for decision, Saturn brings into discussion, death itself: “Since you, Jupiter, have given its spirit, you shall receive that spirit at death; and since you, Earth, have given its body, you shall receive its body [*tu Jovis quia spiritum dedisti, in morte spiritum, tuque Tellus, quia dedisti corpus, corpus recipito*].”<sup>43</sup> It is not, therefore, a chance occurrence that the phenomenon of death comes here into play. The entity that exists in the horizon of death, nevertheless, is the one that “lives.” Thus, Saturn decides, Care “shall possess it as long as it lives.” Even so, the connection between death and the body is already evidenced. Yet, beyond this mythical illustration, what direct connection has the question of the living bodily nature with the question of death?

### “Living Body—Dead Body” and the Ontological Aporias of the Corpse

Indeed, death, in the way it is commonly understood, touches a living body, and by this touch the living body becomes a dead body. This is the point, therefore, where the ontological question of the “corpse” comes up. In *Sein und Zeit*, paragraph 47, Heidegger attempts to describe in ontological-categorical language “what happens” when an entity that has the character of Dasein dies.<sup>44</sup> When a Dasein—understood as “being-there” (*Da-sein*)—dies, it is a *Nichtmehrdasein*, a no-longer-being-there, or else a no-longer-being-in-the-world (*Nicht-mehr-in-der-Welt-sein*). Dying (*Sterben*) is consequently established as a “going out of the world” (*Aus-der-Welt-gehen*), as “losing being-in-the-world” (*In-der-Welt-sein verlieren*). Let us here indicate a significant point: even if Heidegger avoids an understanding of the event of dying in the traditional philosophical sense (as a departure of the soul from the body) or in a biological sense (as an extinction of vital processes and as a loss of life), we perceive that he cannot do without the verbs that pertain to these paradigms: “to leave” (from the world or from the body) or “to lose” (one’s life or one’s being-in-the-world). The “logical subject” of these verbs, “the one that leaves” and “the one that loses,” remains, however, indeterminate in this case. For to *where* can the Dasein “leave”? If it is essentially “*in-der-Welt*,” can there be for it a departure *aus der Welt*? There is no chance of that. Dasein is not a substance, a consistency, a “something,” as is the soul, which—let us

<sup>42</sup>) SZ 198/BT 242.

<sup>43</sup>) Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>) SZ 238–39/BT 281–82.

assume—can leave from a place (the body) into another (non-)place, into *l'au-delà*. Dasein is, if we will, a quality, or rather a modality, of Being: a “how.” Similarly, how exactly can that entity, which is a Being-in-the-world, “lose” precisely this Being-in-the-world? Such aporetic formulations, after all, conceal fundamental difficulties regarding precisely the notion of Dasein as *In-der-Welt-sein*.

In any event, Heidegger refers to the being of the dead one and asks himself how it is exactly that we can conceive of such an existent that, by losing its being-in-the-world, is a *Nicht-mehr-in-der-Welt-sein*, a no-longer-being-in-the-world. What can a *Nichtmehrdasein*, a “no-longer-being-there” mean? Heidegger successively brings forward two categorial demarcations, one centered on *Vorhandensein* and another on *Zuhandensein*, eventually showing that neither of these two categories can encompass the meaning of Being of this paradoxical entity.

The first conceptual demarcation is the following: the Being of this problematical entity that has lost its kind of Being may be understood as a corporeal thing (*Körperding*), further specified as *Nur-noch-vorhandensein*, the fact of being merely objectively present. We notice the same ambiguity here, yet again: the body of the deceased, the cadaver, “remains” in the world, while the Dasein itself (that is, in traditional logic, the “soul”) is no longer in the world. Thus, the first ontological-categorial divide is as follows:

In the dying of the Other we can experience that remarkable phenomenon of Being [*merk-würdige Seinsphänomen*] which may be defined as the change-over [*Umschlag*] of an entity from Dasein's kind of being (or life) to no-longer-being-there [*Nichtmehrdasein*]. The *end* of the entity *qua* Dasein is the *beginning* of this entity *qua* something present-at-hand.<sup>45</sup>

Certainly, this demarcation of the body of the deceased as objective presence appears to Heidegger himself to be quite a problematic one. First of all, there is no doubt that the mode in which we come upon the body of the deceased in our world essentially differs from the mode in which we come upon the neutral objects within the world, the rocks, mountains, or roads. Heidegger explains: “This something which is just-present-at-hand-and-no-more [*Nur-noch-Vorhandene*] is ‘more’ [*mehr*] than a *lifeless*, material Thing [*lebloses materielles Ding*]. In it we encounter something *unalive* [*Unlebendiges*], which has lost its life.”<sup>46</sup> Let us remark here that the dead body's originating in “aliveness”

<sup>45</sup>) SZ 238/BT 281 (translation modified).

<sup>46</sup>) SZ 238/BT 282.

(the dead body, of its essence, being what it is only *qua trace* of a *living* body) precludes its placement under the category of *Vorhandendheit*. Indeed, Heidegger states that interpreting this being through the lens of mere objective presence is deeply inadequate, because it “misses the phenomenal content” of this being. Never could Dasein possibly be assessed by using something of the order of presence-at-hand: not even this “residue” that the Dasein “leaves behind” in the world as it “leaves” the world, its dead body, is something objectively present. This *Nichtmehrdasein* is thus “more” than a *Vorhandenes*, even if it can be “a possible object for pathological anatomy” and be assigned, therefore, to the province of the forensic physician. Does it mean that the possibility of the dead body to become the concern of forensic medicine transforms it into an entity ready-to-hand, a *Zuhandenes*? By no means. The forensic viewpoint is a theoretical scientific viewpoint, and it objectifies the dead body through the lenses of science, transforming it into a neutral “cadaver”: it no longer is a “who” but a “what” that possesses certain properties and characteristics, so that with reference to it, the “causes” of death may, if required, be inquired into: one dies of heart failure, of leukemia, of cancer, or of something else.

Yet pathological anatomy is not the only one that takes over the dead body as the object of its own “preoccupied” speciality; those who survive, those “remaining behind” the deceased, are also preoccupied with it—and here Heidegger specifies: “in funeral rites, the burial, and the cult of graves.”<sup>47</sup> However, is this “preoccupation” that the survivors have with the deceased quite equivalent to the preoccupation with the equipment encountered within the world, in a network of equipmental references, in the space of signification, in the totality of involvements? Not in the least. The deceased, says Heidegger, is—once again—“more” (*noch mehr*) than a simple item of equipment at hand within the world that we can be concerned with (*besorgbares umweltlich zuhandenes Zeug*).

We notice, therefore, that the entity that “remains” after a Dasein dies is an aporetic being. It cannot be circumscribed to any identifiable kind of Being. It has not the kind of Being of the Dasein, which it has just left (abandoned or lost), and at the same time is “more” than a presence-at-hand (*Vorhandenes*) and “more” than a ready-to-hand (*Zuhandenes*). These are the three great kinds of being that Heidegger identifies in *Being and Time*: the being that is of the order of Dasein, and the beings different from the Dasein, which, according

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<sup>47</sup>) SZ 238/BT 282 (translation modified).



to the mode in which they are encountered, are divided into equipments at-hand (encountered in one's preoccupation) and presences-at-hand (which one encounters neutrally, in a theoretically objectifying attitude). These three categories seem to exhaust Heidegger's "universe of discourse" and completely circumscribe the sum of "what there is." We may, therefore, ask ourselves: is this threefold division really sufficient to circumscribe the totality of beings that the Dasein encounters in the world? Does any entity really fit into this grid—Dasein, *Vorhandenheit*, *Zuhandenheit*? Can we be sure that a significant "segment" of reality is not missing from this scheme, for instance, "life," "animality," or the "living bodily nature"? This difficulty of placing the dead body within the ontological frames opened by Heidegger—is it not directly dependent on an absence that leaves its imprint on the whole existential analytic, namely, the absence of a phenomenological investigation of the living body, the omission of the phenomenological relation between the Dasein and its living body, a relation on the basis of which one could raise, from a privative perspective, the issue of the dead body's quality of being?

All that Heidegger, within the framework of existential analytic, can say about the relation between the "deceased" (*Verstorbene*) and "those who have remained behind" (*Hinterbliebenen*) is limited to the following sentence: "In tarrying alongside him in mourning and commemoration [*im trauernd-gedenkenden Verweilen bei ihm*], those who have remained behind *are with him*, in a mode of respectful solicitude [*ehrende Fürsorge*]." <sup>48</sup> The relation, therefore, is still conceived in terms of *Mitsein* and *Fürsorge*, yet it is a relation privatively modified, to the extent in which "the other" is no longer "there present" (*da*), because through his death he has abandoned both his *there* of presence (*das Da*) and his being-with-one-another with respect to us and to our common world in which this being-with-one-another used to occur. We, however, as survivors, by remaining in this world and in this being-with-one-another, can "be with him," even when he no longer "is with us." This is the reason why Heidegger says that "it is *in terms of this world* that those remaining can still *be with him*." <sup>49</sup>

With *him*? Who then is this "he"? What does Heidegger specifically have in mind when he speaks of the "deceased," about the "dead one," about this impossible to place "reality"? Does he have in mind the dead body that we encounter in the world or that "other" that, as *being alive*, is still *alive* to us in our memory? Who and what is the "deceased" really? Do we not face here a

<sup>48</sup>) SZ 238/BT 282.

<sup>49</sup>) Ibid.

certain, fatal, ambiguity? Indeed, at one end of Heidegger's argumentation we might think that this being—which he identifies as *Nichtmehrdasein*, as *Nicht-mehr-in-der-Welt-sein*, as *Gestorbene* and as *Verstorbene*—is what “still is” (in a kind of being that is difficult to specify) after the *Dasein* has died, in other words, the dead body, the corpse, the cadaver. At the other end of his argumentation, this “he” that those remaining think about and whom they mourn is not necessarily that present being (the dead body of the deceased), but, quite the opposite, that being that is no longer present *there* (*da*), the living being of the other *who is no more*: in other words, a nonbeing. This ambiguity sends one to the same difficulty, which I have already pointed out, namely, the fact that Heidegger does not succeed in identifying, in an ontological sense, the relation of being between the being-there (*Da-sein*) and the body that, on the most complete phenomenal grounds, accompanies and carries this *there* of presence of the human *Dasein*.

To conclude then, such seem to be the inescapable aporias that Heidegger's discourse falls into, precisely owing to this concern to “purify” the ontological investigation of any vital and bodily traces, in his attempt to eliminate the living body from the list of fundamental phenomena of the entity that we ourselves are. These aporias are more than just a few, and we were able to see how deeply inconvenienced Heidegger is by this abyss of life and of the living corporeity, which he tries to circumvent and to excommunicate from the area of fundamental ontology.