

Embodied Subjectivity: Implications for Philosophy and Theology

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ABSTRACT

It is because mental states are constituted by perspectivity that it is hardly possible capturing them by means of their abstract logical relations, as in Cartesianism, or their material causal relations, as with functionalism. The dual issue of what having a mental state is and of how such a state accounts for behaviour seems to be interrelated. Having a mental state is being a subject of behaviour that has a perspective on the world. This perspective is established by the behavioural responses to this world of objects that it renders apt. One's responses to this world, in some form, transform the objects in question. Thus, the subjectivity at issue is an embodied one. Embodied subjectivity is authentic, because it accounts for the simultaneity of body and mind, and avoids the fragmentationist thought-trajectory. An embodied thought enables us find an epistemological substitute for both objectivist and relativist thinking, and an ontological replacement for both holist and fragmentationist thought-habits. Embodied subjectivity makes the fragmentation of the human agent and of the human society unnecessary.

Keywords: Embodied Subjectivity, Ending fragmentation, Perspectivity, Incarnation, Corporeality, Leib, Inter-corporeity, Inclusiveness, Organismic integrity

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY OF MIND AND OUR CARTESIAN HERITAGE

The philosophical enterprise time and again forgets its historical antecedents. Yet philosophical reflections take place within certain historical settings. Most of the philosophical problematics of contemporary philosophy of mind derive from Descartes reflections. That a disembodied conceptualization of mind remains paradigmatic indicates the extent of Descartes' influence over our conception of mind and body. Merleau-Ponty's "sedimentation of history" articulates this phenomenon well enough. We all build on the philosophical antecedents of earlier thinkers. The result is that, for instance, we find ourselves denying some of Descartes thoughts from viewpoints that grow out of his other thoughts. Hence, Merleau-Ponty proposes that it is difficult answering the question whether a certain author or a certain perspective is Cartesian or not (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 11). This is the case especially in contemporary philosophy of mind. Theories that claim an anti-Cartesian stance find themselves merely continuing Cartesian reflection in some other ways. One is thus drawn to assume that we have all in some form become Cartesians.

We recall how Descartes's philosophy of mind, his formulating a new science, and his conception of the nature of the material universe form one piece. Descartes supposes that to understand our world we need to avoid an individual and active engagement with it. This enables us externalise and objectify it, and let it be run exclusively by the laws of physics. Given its coupling with the body, the mind intermittently intervenes in this world; and this, when it does happen, takes place, probably, exclusively as localized inside the small area of the pineal gland. The pineal gland, Descartes assumes, is a tiny gland suspended at the centre of the ventricles (La Dioptrique {Dioptrics} 1637; Descartes, 1664: 63).

Irrespective of his more informed insight, he still identifies this body with the mechanistic world outside of the mind. His dualistic philosophy, therefore, has its motivation in his longing for the preservation of the unique position of the mental in his new science. But

then, this is possible, probably, only if he places the mental in a different domain of interior substance that is not material. We note that he does not intend the mind to be a material object. In fact, his conception of mind recognizes the crucial first personal perspective that is only possible in a non-materialist paradigm.

Ironically, for all the correctness of his philosophy of mind, Descartes' dualism creates an opening for a reductive materialist notion of mind. Regrettably, a large chunk of thinkers after him take their cue from this reductionist opening. Possibly the modern physicalist account no longer has much of the stringently mechanistic trappings of science in the 17th century, yet it in a lot of ways derives from the Cartesian new science. Cotemporary philosophy of mind is an example of a side of the Cartesian equation trying to engulf the other. Here the physical part tries clipping the feathers of the mental by prioritising the physical side of the material-immaterial split.

Descartes adopts immaterialist metaphysics in recognition of both the distinctive features of the mental and its causal powers. An all-out mechanistic characterisation of the human phenomenon will be at odds with subjectivity and rationality, two principal examples of mental characteristics, Descartes finds. Following the downside of Cartesianism, contemporary theories adopt materialist metaphysics and attempt to provide a causal role for the mental within this full-blown physicalist mechanistic depiction of the human being. Contemporary philosophy of mind thrives on these conceptual assets.

Be it as it may, we can hardly resolve the problem of a disembodied mind if we choose to ignore our Cartesian heritage. This is so because this heritage generates problematic questions that we can hardly gloss over. Contemporary philosophy of mind has, as it were, two key motivations. First, it is inspired by a couple of highly persuasive explanations. Second, it is driven by the aspiration to position the human mind in a single, non-mentalistic causal explanatory order. This, challengingly, calls for our resolving the very ostensibly unresolvable dilemma that we identify as the motivation for Cartesian dualistic philosophy.

On the one hand, the mind is endowed with rationalist and subjectivist qualities and other similar distinctive features that prevent it from being included in the received view of a scientific world that comes from Descartes and his colleagues. On the other hand, it possesses features (for instance it is causally effective) that indicate that it fits into this mechanistic picture. Our essay will take a cursory look at these alternatives. In the end, it does seem, there will be no alternative to an embodied theory of mind.

AN EMBODIED THEORY OF MIND: AN ACCOUNT OF MIND GROUNDED IN EMBODIED SUBJECTIVITY

To address the problematic of mind and behaviour so as to determine the kind of beings we are, brute animals, embodied minds, or disembodied minds, we need to find out what a mental state is and how it accounts for behaviour. The Cartesian answer is that a mental state is a conscious state and a mental substance. The Cartesian mental state accounts for behaviour by virtue of reasons that explain actions through the agent's perspective in relation to a mental substance that continually scrutinizes itself. The functionalist answer is that a mental state is a functional state that plays a role in explaining behaviour. The functionalist mental state accounts for behaviour through a functional state that provides the agent's reason for action via (nay, as automated by) physical causes in the body.

Computational functionalism attempts to accommodate the mental in some physicalist scheme. The human mind operates the way the computer does, it claims. This, though, leads to two unpalatable options: We either drop the function we assign the mental of explaining causal relations or admit we have causal links we cannot map onto lesser ones.

So it is that in Cartesianism, reasons explain behaviour through a mental substance, that lets reasons abstractly relate logically to actions. Also in functionalism, reasons account for

behaviour through their rather abstract and mechanistic relations to behaviour; reasons are the material causal relations to action (the subject does not scrutinise the content of his state)

In contradistinction of the Cartesian immaterialist-mysterious-abstract-logical metaphysics and the functionalist materialist-mechanistic-causal metaphysics, we opt for an account of an embodied subjectivity, where the mind reflects a subject's perspective on his world. This account is at a far remove from the functionalist causalist theory and closer to the Cartesian logical but first-personal perspective.

For an embodied theory of mind, the perspective of the subject of behaviour on her world is of the essence to the subject's mental state. The world at issue is the world of objects in the subject's physical surroundings. The perspective of this subject on these objects creates a category of relationships with the objects in consideration of which we can explain the subject's behaviour in his surrounds. For instance: He believes in the sanctity of life and devotes his life to activism against all forms of killing. The fact that the appearance of the world to this subject takes this form provides him with the reasons for the way he responds to the world in behaviour. Consequently, mental states are to be fundamentally comprehended as offering those reasons that make the subject's behavioural responses (actions) appropriate.

It is because mental states are constituted by perspectivity that it is hardly possible capturing them by means of their abstract logical relations, as in Cartesianism or their material causal relations as with functionalism. The dual issue of what having a mental is and of how such a state accounts for behaviour seems to be interrelated. Having a mental state is being a subject of behaviour that has a perspective on the world. This perspective is established by the behavioural responses to this world that it renders apt. It is of the essence that the world on which one has a perspective is the world of objects rather than the world of ideas. It is as well essential that one's responses to this world in some form transform the objects in question. All this makes this subjectivity an embodied one.

An Account of Body Consistent with a Model of Mind Grounded in Embodied Subjectivity

If we propose, as we do in this essay, that the human being is an embodied subject, and suggest a model of mind rooted in embodied subjectivity, then we need to proffer an account of body consistent with this understanding of the human phenomenon. This requires that we not only go beyond the Cartesian body, but also that we go far back in time to access our primordial experience of being body. This will, in turn, take us to a phenomenological account of body.

The Cartesian Body: The Body in Contemporary Philosophy of Mind

The body one finds reading contemporary philosophy of mind is the body that physico-mathematical and medical sciences posit. It is the body conceived of as we conceive objects. It is the body that medical scientists, for instance, dissect on their surgical tables. It is the body utterly objectified, reified, and completely subjected to the causal mechanical laws that govern all physical and material entities. This way of conceptualizing the human body is so widespread in our western worldview, in and out of our philosophy lecture halls, that it does seem very nearly unthinkable contemplating and conceding alternative models of body.

Even so, this notion of the human body as a material object is a philosophical proposition with a history. It is a model of interpreting the world traceable to the seventeenth century Cartesian philosophy. This Cartesian model is a conception of the human body as something the human understanding grasps abstractly. Let us call it the abstract, theoretical, and mechanistic body of Descartes, of the physico-medical sciences, and of contemporary philosophy of mind.

The Lived-Body, the Body of Human Experience, the Body Prior to all Thematisation

Contrary to the body Cartesianism articulates, a body physico-medical sciences and contemporary philosophy of mind take up and appropriate, one notices a way of conceptualizing body that struggles for recognition in Descartes. This is the body that he in the *Sixth Meditation*, by rights, calls his. He is aware of the significant difference this body has from perceived objects and its distinctive status. He knows how much he cannot separate himself from this body. He recognises that his emotions, his feeling of pain and pleasure are all anchored in the body. He acknowledges his inability to provide any theoretical articulation of his experience of this body. He admits that he is unable to articulate this prescientific body, and that “nature” teaches him what he knows of it (See: Cottingham, Stoothoff & Murdoch, 1984: 52-53).

Descartes experiences this body in a way that has both a quantitative and a qualitative difference from the way he experiences other forms of body. This body has a permanent presence that the objects we perceive do not have. While Descartes is capable of separating himself from perceived objects, he may well at no time be isolated from this body. Besides, his body makes itself present to him as the ground and place of direct and immediate sensation and perception. In fact, not only that his body is the place where he feels his appetites, pain, pleasure, and emotions in general, it is also, and more importantly, thanks to this body that he is able to have these sensations and perceptions in the first place (See: Cottingham, Stoothoff & Murdoch, 1984: 52-53).

Again, in determining the identity of any other form of body we try to establish that a certain mass of matter is the same with the object in question (sameness of matter is the determining factor here). On the contrary in determining the identity of the human body we work to identify a certain body mass with a certain person. Thus, the concept of person is part of the identity of the human body place. Descartes seems to be aware of this insight too (See: Cottingham et al., 1991: 242-243).

Perhaps his inability to give these insights a theoretical place in his propositional thought leads him into separating the body we live in experience from the body the human understanding grasps as an abstraction. After all is said and done, Descartes misses the opportunity to exploit these insights to articulate the human organism we encounter in our everyday experience. He rather ends up mechanising and objectifying the human body; and contemporary philosophy of mind continues to follow this thought trajectory, treating the human body as what the understanding in the sciences of mathematics, physics and, medicine abstract.

A Phenomenological Account of Body: The Body We Live in Human Experience

In contrast to contemporary philosophy of mind, twentieth-century phenomenology takes up this body to which Descartes’ insights point but which, by his own admission, he is unable to explain. This is the lived-body, the body we encounter in our everyday human experience, in contradistinction of the thematised body that we abstract in the physicalist sciences. Phenomenologists such as Husserl, Marcel, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty explore this differentiation between the abstracted body of the physical sciences and the lived body of our everyday experience. The fact that the human body is the only object the human being knows from the inside not only makes this differentiation pertinent, it also makes the characterisation of the human body as the lived-body appropriate.

Consequently, Marcel affirms that one’s body belong to one so long as for one the body is not an object, instead, one is one’s body (See: Marcel, 1950: 100). In this way Marcel shows that one’s body is not an object the way physical objects are; one’s body is, rather, a certain singularity, a certain specificity, at the epicentre of one’s world. The implication again is that

the body is not peripheral to human life and behaviour; it is rather key, pivotal, and central to being human in all its ramifications.

The phenomenological understanding of the human body reveals that the mechanistic undertones of Cartesianism, the scientism of the contemporary philosophy of mind, the exclusionary thought-habits of modern civilizations all derail and miss the mark at that point where they posit the idea of the body as physical object that the understanding abstracts as ontologically prior to the lived-body that we encounter in our everyday experience. Of course, the body with which we at first come in contact, grapple, and interact has every ontological primacy and priority to any abstraction our latter thematisation of this experiential encounter might yield.

Such is the case that Merleau-Ponty insists that the naturalist project that treats of the human body as an organic matter does regrettably impoverishes the “primordial phenomenon” of the body we encounter and perceive in our everyday experience. This body that we experience and perceive, the body as we live it day-to-day, is not only a phenomenon that has primacy over, it is also one that is the grounding, the very *fundamentum* for, our conceiving of the body as something physiological (See: Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 351). Merleau-Ponty is right here, after all, our intellectual abstraction of the body as something merely physiological is only an extension of Descartes attempt at making sense of the body to justify his new science, despite his better judgments (as he seems to concede in the *Sixth Meditation*).

To the extent that Cartesian immaterialism and the physicalist philosophy of the prevailing model of mind, both by-products of Descartes’ exclusivist bipolar thought trajectory, fail to recognise the primacy and priority of the lived-body over the abstracted-body, they are incapable of accounting for the human embodied experience. The human experience of being body teaches an alternative existential mode that is *at once a subjective being and an objective one*. We thus live our embodiment as both subjective and objective beings. We do not live our embodied experience as either exclusively subjective beings as in Descartes’ autonomous/bodiless mind or exclusively objective beings as in the reified/mindless body of the prevailing accounts of mind (Burwood, Gilbert, & Lennon, 1999: 169).

Our experience of the lived-body, prior to all thematisation and abstraction, shows how we live our embodiment as an embodied experience of ‘both and’ instead of as a historically abstracted ‘either or’. Our experience of our embodiment shows how we live in an embodied existential mode caught up in a *curious* synergy of (seemingly mutually accommodating) seeming opposites. Our embodied experience of ourselves reveals us as both weak and strong, as more or less simultaneously primitive and rational, as nearly at once civilized and irrational, as almost at the same time logical and illogical. All this is perhaps due to the fact that, among other factors, our embodied nature, the perspectival character of human knowledge, the positional and situational character of our situatedness allow us see from simply one angle at a time. Little wonder then that our experience of being body teaches a curious existential mode that makes us at once subjective and objective creatures.

Thus, on the face of it, we are either exclusively subjective beings as in Descartes’ autonomous/bodiless mind or exclusively objective beings as in the reified/mindless body of the prevailing account of mind. On a closer inspection, though, we have an alternative curiously inclusive embodied existential mode that makes us both subjective and objective organisms. So, if we take Cartesian immaterialism and the physicalist (materialist) philosophy of the prevailing model of mind as two sides of our conventional thought trajectory, then our proposed alternative embodied existential mode of inclusion becomes unthinkable. Yet, it is at this thinking of the professedly unthinkable (e.g. inclusive thinking) and the attendant doing of the supposedly undoable (e.g. celebrating diversity) that our embodied philosophy of mind aims.

What our alternative inclusive embodied account of mind promises to be is an ambiguous existential mode that contests the conventional divisive and disembodied subject-object

opposition on which every Cartesian-styled philosophy is built, irrespective of the side of the Cartesian divide it prioritises and favours. Descartes' healthier insights and better judgment show how nature teaches the unity and the embodied nature of the human experience, revealing an everyday experience of a body whose presence has a permanence the objects we perceive do not have, and a pre-thematic body that is the field of immediate feelings and perceptions. This provides evidence, Descartes seems to argue in the *Sixth Meditation*, that we can only know the unity of the mental and the physical by means of human experience rather than expecting to capture this fully in the faculty of understanding (See: Cottingham, Stoothoff & Murdoch, 1984: 52-53).

Merleau-Ponty takes up the insights on the pre-thematised body and insists that our encounter with and awareness of this unique mode of existing is not a matter for human thought that we can attain by reflection but a case of an embodied experience we need to live. If we attempt to reduce the phenomenon of body, or our embodied experience, to mere thought and endeavour to detach ourselves from it and contemplate it as a bunch of impersonal processes (sight, motility, sexuality,) it becomes clear how mere causal links cannot relate these functions to one another and to the outer world. Instead, these functions not only ambiguously imply one another but also a certain invisible tread seems to pull them together in a distinctive theatre of life

We learn from the phenomenon of motility, for instance, what a style looks like. From the initial walking steps we take, already a walking-style is inaugurated and a movement-rhythm proliferates itself. Every gesture metamorphosis into a habit of motorics. For Merleau-Ponty, this development of a pattern or style across the spatio-temporal domain, this instability that the organism institutes, this fluctuation that it organizes and presides over, this self-schematization is the essence of the lived-body (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 48-49 & 230). The unity of the sensible thing is, therefore, the unity of style, or pattern, the unity of scheme. It does not hold together by mere legality or conglomeration.

The visible things come into identifiable visibility, come to preside over a domain of visibility, through their style of being. Things remain in one piece the way the body does. Thus, their unity is created (made) and recreated (remade) as the inauguration of a "style of being" wherever there are parts and pieces of being (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 49 & 139). The style is that inner thing that animates, that rhythm that assembles or brings together, that coordinated variability that recreates and regenerates. The sensible being comes into recognizable visibility through a "scheme of contrasts" that presides over and fine-tunes a constellation.

Therefore, the wildness, uncultivatedness, and unconstitutedness of the visible being is its dimensionality rather than an indication of its opacity (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 49). Each sensible thing is a "universal-particular" and a dimensional thing. The sensible thing is dimensional because becoming a style of being endows it not only with the typicality but also with the productivity of that style (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 1 & 208).

In the motility that goes with perception, what we receive and have are not changes from one point to the other (points). Instead, what is given to us phenomenally are miniature structures, metaphysical spots. It is a principle of conservation across change that we have. Our recognition of such a principle and system helps preserve the world's "structural unity" and avoid the "isolating attitude" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 152).

The experiences, encounters, and sensitivities of the flesh come with a peculiar ideality that lends the human body its profundity, its denseness, and its proportions. For in much the same way as there is adhesion and cohesion among the parts of our body and between our body and the world, so also is there adhesion and cohesion between the moments and fragments of our ideas (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 152). There can be no purity of thought, devoid of flesh (one's flesh and the flesh of the world or the flesh of things). The flesh is a knitting or weaving of the

perceiving into the perceptible and of the perceptible into the perceiving (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 153).

From the foregoing we see how the body cannot be an object the way physical objects are. We also see how our awareness of this body cannot be one of abstract, theoretical, thought. This means that it is not possible dissecting this body, examining it, and stitching up the pieces (as medical science does) to form clear and distinct ideas. The fact that the unity of the human body is not something stated, but something understood in what is lived and expressed in embodied experience, and since this corporeal integrity is not what we can immediately see-through but something that has a certain vagueness and obscurity around it, it does seem that the only way of having knowledge of the experience of the human body is to live this reality. This means, as Merleau-Ponty maintains, engaging in the spectacle of life that is being acted out in the body, and losing oneself in this phenomenon.

The above-stated considerations reveal how our experience of the lived-body is at odds with the reflective method that artificially cuts off the subject from the object and leaves us merely with thoughts and speculations rather than our experience of the body. The complete procedure leaves us with the consciousness of the body as merely an abstract idea instead of the body as we live it in reality. What is given to us phenomenally are not detached thoughts but metaphysical points and structures.

There is a marked difference between Descartes and Merleau-Ponty on the characterization of the human body. For Descartes, our knowledge of the body is mediated by thought and ideas. For Merleau-Ponty, awareness of the phenomenon on of body is primary and unmediated. When we recognize the priority and primacy of the embodied experience, we renounce our arbitrary attachment to the artificiality and unreality of a historical separation of thought from experience and of reason from human behaviour. This helps free up our minds to consider a third alternative of real-life experience that refuses to divide and disconnect the two dimensions of an embodied experience.

The third alternative at issue reveals how the human body remains, prior to every other thing, a rudimentary aspect of the life of the human subject. The human subject, as Merleau-Ponty recognizes, is well outside the idealized and simplistic separatist classification into an objectivist “mechanistic body” and a subjectivist “immaterial soul.” It is not a case of either one or the other. The human subject is instead principally a “bodily subject, or an incarnate subjectivity” (Burwood, Gilbert, & Lennon, 1999: 170). Thus, whereas the human body is admittedly material, it does not belong entirely to the physical sphere. Actually, the body has an existential mode with such an ambiguity that Cartesian and physicalist reductionist characterizations can hardly capture (Burwood, Gilbert, & Lennon, 1999: 170).

It is in the light of the foregoing that we understand Merleau-Ponty and Marcel when they negate the supposition that the body is an object. Indeed Merleau-Ponty takes the matter farther than merely objecting to the objectification of the body. He contends that the human body, the flesh, is at once an object and a subject. The flesh, which is also the *Leib*, is a corporeal schema. As a corporeal schema it reveals the lived body’s empathy with the being we perceive and with the body of the other. To be more exact, the *Leib* feels itself into the world around it.

One implication of our body schema is that the *Leib* is one that moves, and thus, one that perceives. The human body is then a subject of movement and perception. This makes the *Leib* as sensing-sentient, touching-touched, perceiving-perceived, seeing-seen, the site of a certain type of reflecting. This also gives it the power to relate itself to something else, to something other than itself, to a sensible external thing (Merleau-Ponty, 2003: 209 & 210).

The idea of the *Leib* as what empathizes with others is an insight that is of notable philosophical relevance (Merleau-Ponty, 2003: 209 & 210). Recognizing empathy is to recognize the role the corporeal plays in thought and to decide to encourage what is positive

about the emotional aspect of thought. This often-neglected dimension of human thought is of cardinal importance in this essay. Only an embodied thought can genuinely talk of empathy. Empathy is not an abstract thing. It also cannot come from that kind of thought that denies its bodily bearings, even as its bodily and emotional undertones are written all over it, as Levinas all too well expresses (See Levinas, 1969: 203).

As the capacity for empathy, the *Leib* is an originary desire for identification (Merleau-Ponty, 2003). It is an originary desire to identify with the world around it, to identify with things, with animals, with other bodies. It is an originary desire that manifests itself as an intersubjectivity that is first and foremost an inter-corporeity, and which turns into culture only as it hinges on a corporeal communication that reveals the seeing-seen, sensing-sentient *Ineinander* (Merleau-Ponty, 2003: 273). Thus, as empathy the *Leib* desires to and does identify with the world around it rather than merely wanting to know the world; a wanting-to-know that is often exploited, it appears, for selfish reasons against the other, as Schopenhauer's critique of theoretical egoism (that reduces the world to an object or idea, Schopenhauer, 1995, xxv) and Levinas' rationality of the Other make evident. Hence, the embodied experience is not a thought.

The primordial desire to feel oneself into others (into the world around one) reveals a "natural rooting of the for-other" (Merleau-Ponty, 2003: 210). Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, as does that of Levinas, is open to the experience of the Other as an experience of an alter ego. This important insight is lacking in most of what structuralism and post-structuralism dismiss as the philosophy of the subject. Vis-à-vis an embodied subject that recognizes empathy as an indispensable dimension of being human and of doing logic, a disembodied subject that treats human experience in abstraction and claims an attitude of disengagement seems to be not only indifferent but also superficial, and pretentious. Philosophizing seems to become even farther from the truth when this sort of disembodied and presumably detached thought has an exclusivist, absolutist, and totalizing tendency about its idea of the Other, as in much of systematic metaphysics and analytic philosophy (See Levinas, 1969: 12-18).

First, the objects we perceive show themselves up to us, disclose themselves to us, as something on hand to be comprehensively explored. The human body, the *Leib*, on the contrary, manifests itself to us as something that is part of us, diminishing our capacity to examine it thoroughly. Central to our constraints in exploring the *Leib* is the reality that it is the epicenter of our acting and perceiving. As our behavioural focal point, the *Leib* is a perspective, already a viewpoint. More significantly, it is a point of view upon which one cannot take a point of view.

Again, although there is a sense in which the body's perspective seems absent and variable, yet the perspectivity of the *Leib* and of perceived objects makes it hardly feasible for the perspective of the *Leib* to be completely absent from and entirely variable in perception. This is the case because the lived-body's perspectivist permanence and invariability seems to be a precondition for the perceptual object to present itself to us. In consequence, as we rediscover the *Leib* we become aware of the need to review the way we understand and conceive of its relationship with its world. This, in turn, will make us realize the error in characterizing the lived body by empirically analysing some supposedly accompanying causal relations. This awareness will also enable us comprehend why we can only access the lived-body by phenomenologically analysing the primordial dialogue of shared implication that exists between the lived-body and its *Umwelt*.

Our essay makes three proposals that could help us have a better understanding of the phenomenon of the lived-body, the *Leib*. First, we need to substitute an empirical analysis of supposedly accompanying causal relations with a phenomenological analysis of the originary and pre-thematised reciprocal relation of implication between the *Leib* and its *Umwelt* (milieu).

Second, the phenomenological analysis will have to incorporate some elements of structuralism, in the hope that phenomenological and structuralist thoughts interacting with each other could offer an alternative to the poststructuralist anti-humanist thinking and the politics of identity that grows out of it. This enables us to see how meaning is not synonymous with a philosophy of the subject, even as meaning is not a process that operates completely without the human subject.

IMPLICATIONS OF AN EMBODIED SUBJECTIVITY FOR THEOLOGY

The “church is the sacrament and instrument of the sought-after unity and community,” we call salvation. This sought-after unity and community, we suppose, becomes increasingly elusive or more and more realizable to the extent theology encourages or discourages thought-habits and ideas that tend to divide the human subject and the human community (See: Ike, 2011: 20).

Theology, it appears, teaches how the church of Christ summons us to our “ultimate goal and vocation.” That is to say, theology shows how the church calls fallen man into fully encountering and participating with the creator (the Trinitarian Community of mutual self-giving and reciprocal love) (See: Ike, 2011: 20).

Yet, it seems to us that it is only as a concrete, historical human person, that is to say, as this woman or this man, with body and spirit, that we encounter God, through the humanity of the church-community (See: Ike, 2011: 20).

It does seem also that the church mediates salvation for me as a unity of body and soul. The saving encounter with God, it appears, takes place within the context of the word and sacrament, through the strengths and weaknesses of human breath (body) and the limitations of the material elements of bread, wine, water *et cetera*.

This, perhaps, indicates how much we are tied to the material and the corporeal, and how much our salvation is to be worked out recognizing and appreciating rather than denigrating and denying our ties to our world and our body, with all the weakness and strengths these bring with them.

So, if God chooses to inextricably link our salvific encounter with him to material and corporeal elements such as human breath, bread, wine, water, and if he opts to share our body with us, becoming one with us in everything except in sin, why are we so preoccupied with separating ourselves from these the way Christian theology apparently does? After all, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 42:24-26 shows how the opposites in nature merely compliment and perfect each other. “All things go in pairs ... the one consolidates the excellence of the other.”

Could it rather not be the case that we will be saved in the context of these ties rather than by separating ourselves from them?

What does it mean for theology that Christ enters our history, our world, our community?

What does it mean for us for Christ to take on the human body and to share the human experience?

Could catholic theology not be more relevant to its calling, as it struggles to assist the church be true to its apostolic mandate, if it does more to recognize its responsibility for the embodied, historical man?

After all, the world and the human body, some theologians point out, are God’s dialogical advances to humanity. They are God’s gifts to man, and not some “threatening, impersonal and anonymous” forces, as Christian philosophy and theology tend to imply (See: Semmelroth, 1971: 217).

Coming from the creative and redemptive hand of God the body carries God's inscription of His loving design. The body is not only a sign of a mystery in God's mind, but it also gives that hidden mystery visibility in the world. When we reread our experience of the human body

from the viewpoint of the logic of its creation as gift to the world we recognize God's plan for human embodiment (McNamara, 2018).

The magnificence and marvel of the human body as a wondrous gift from God is often overlooked and unappreciated. The beauty, complexity, intricacies, and competences of the body components were all carefully and purposefully designed by the Eternal Father and Creator. The body has not only the sacred gift of the reproductive capacity, it is also designed to heal and regulate itself. Amazingly, these reproductive, self-healing, and self-regulatory competences are often carried out without our being aware of them (Jones, 2020).

Attempting to look in a certain way to gain societal approval and acceptance and placing physical beauty on par with moral virtue are ways of deifying the body. This will not do. But the other extreme is the gnosticism-influenced conception of the body as evil. Gnosticism believes that all matter is evil. Since the body is made-up of matter, it holds, letting go of the body will enable us achieve fulfilment of God's purpose of creating us. This idea of the body reifies and vilifies the human body. Yet, if God gives us the body to be put to use for his glory, lets His son take on the human body at incarnation, and allows the risen Christ have a glorified body, then, the human body must be of essence to God's purpose for creating man (Pellegra, 2022).

God calls man to participate in constructing and reconstructing his world. He calls him to be part of the naming and meaning-giving process.

The event of the incarnation confirms this. The Jesus-event sanctifies man's history. Christ establishes her church as a continuation of this sanctifying and saving work. And, God saves man as a man, amidst his corporeal overhang and historical antecedents.

Two theological distortions, therefore, seem to work against the mind of God and of his Christ.

1. The one tends to see Christianity as *fuga mundi*, a flight from the world. Here theology's concern seems to be the hereafter and not the here and now. This attitude erects a barrier between the "city of God and the city of man". This thought habit, with its excesses and distortions, reaches its climax in medieval thinking and politicking.

It took the renaissance, humanism, and Martin Luther to call this divisive theology to some sense. By then, though, mother church had been humiliated and brutalized, and the hierarchy had lost its authority and credibility.

2. The other distortion tends to over spiritualize the meaning of the Christian life, altering our biblical heritage. It misrepresents the biblical picture of how God works in his world. It inclines toward conceiving of the world as a "foreign body" in the salvation process. And it is wont to treat the human body as what must be combated to save the soul.

Yet, the human being is redeemed, specifically, as a human being with all of one's "historicity and corporeality" (Ike, 2011: 220).

Thus, it does seem that to malign the human body so as to exalt the human spirit is to rob the human phenomenon of part of its vital reality. Similarly, to vilify the spirit in order to elevate the body is to rob the human being of that principle of vitality through which we overcome evil in the world.

Hence, the human body cannot be legitimately seen as foreign to us. It cannot also be justifiably presented as fundamentally evil. Such polemics are as unhelpful as they as they distort the meaning of the body of Christ.

The soul of Christ and the body of Christ can no more exclude each other anymore than the human body and the human spirit can mutually be exclusive. Christ is simultaneously present in the human body and the human spirit/soul.

In much the same way as there cannot be, theologically speaking, anything as a completely mundane world, it also seems theologically wrong to talk of a completely mundane

human body. The so-called totally secular world or completely mundane human body is at all times encircled and sustained by divine “providence and grace” (Ike, 2011: 221).

The Old Testament shows how the world, God’s creation is good. It reveals God’s involvement in the historical and developmental strides of the earth (Ike, 2011: 222). The choice of Abraham has the one purpose of serving the blessing of the families and peoples of the earth.

In the New Testament, trees, plants, flowers, mountains, rivers, seas, birds and animals, indicating the goodness of the creator, become materials for the teachings and actions of Christ. Jesus shows how there are no locations, localities, objects, human beings that are intrinsically iniquitous. At his death God tears the veil of the temple, breaking down the artificial walls that separate the sacred and the mundane.

When the New Testament talks of rejecting the world (1 John 2: 15-16), it must be referring to a transitory apprehensive attitude toward the fallen world and the fallen man, which is intended to end with the conquering and subjecting of this world and of this man to the Lord of creation and salvation (See: Ike, 2011: 223).

The human body is apparently the object of God’s saving love and concern. This is, perhaps one of the core imports of the incarnation. The human body and the body of the Jesus of Nazareth, it seems, represent the place where God’s encounter with fallen man is concretely manifested (and made an observable phenomenon, of a sort).

This seems to be one of the highpoints of the new covenant in Christ. God could have continued reaching his people through his faceless, bodiless voice to Moses and the prophets. He chooses instead to take on the human form and body.

The challenge of catholic theology, we suppose, is to show how the mission of the church will be to amicably/calmly subjugate/subdue and joyfully permeate with the fruits of salvation what in the human body is yet to be inserted into or engrafted into the redeeming love of God (I get the idea of peacefully conquering the human body from Otto Semmelroth’s notion of peacefully conquering a fundamentally good world: See: Semmelroth, 1965: 243).

The human body, as with the human world, is an expression of God’s love. As with the world, the body is important in the salvation economy, since it is not only the context in which God gives salvation, but also the context in which we receive it, proclaim it, and preach it (see: Chikodi, 2011: 223).

It does seem consistent with the Christian faith to argue that theology has no other mission other than that which Jesus of Nazareth gives, a mission that takes place in the concrete historical struggles of embodied men and women (embodied subjects).

It does seem to follow too, by some relation of implications, that outside the human body, Christian theology has hardly any other mission. God demonstrates his love for man and his world when he sends his only begotten son (John 3:16). The incarnate Christ takes up the human body, becomes part of it, redeems it through his death, and raises it to the level of the divine through his resurrection and ascension.

This is part of the mystery of the incarnation, where the word of God takes flesh and God becomes man. It is also part of the mystery of Easter and of Ascension where the resurrection and ascension of Christ indicate how God will raise us up and take us up to himself.

It, therefore, appears inconsistent for Christian theology to be part of any culture that makes a virtue of contrasting the body with the spirit. It does seem theology will be serving Christ and his church better if it encourages and promotes the integrity of the human person, which the Good Friday redeems, Easter restores, and the Ascension sanctifies and elevates to the level of the divine.

- The whole mystery of the resurrection, where Christ rises with his body and soul, unifies materiality and divinity. God unifies all things in Christ.

- The ascension, where Jesus ascends to his Father with his risen body, does seem to indicate the inseparability of body and soul.

- The assumption, where God assumes Mary - body and soul - into heaven, suggests that God intends to keep our body and spirit together, even after death.

- The Jesus of Nazareth seems to focus on the whole man: saving his spirit from demonic possessions and from undue attachment to material things, saving his body from disintegration, feeding it, curing it of its infirmities and ailments.

- In all these, God seems to have unified what we are now attempting to divide.

The role of Christian theology, it does appear, is to show how the church, participating in God's creative work and in Christ's redemptive mission, continues to recreate and re-sanctify this spiritual and worldly man - a unity of body and spirit, an embodied subject - in a world that is at once sacred and profane. This, we suppose, is what theology learns from Christ, who does not come to condemn but to bring sinners to repentance. Theology, we assume, has the duty to continue to remind the church that even as it is empowered by God's grace-filled presence, it is still deeply rooted in the human body that is fundamentally good but occasionally weak. We know this to be the case because the embodied subject as weak as he may be is created in God's image and likeness.

The Christian theology has, therefore, no business reinforcing what Semmelroth calls a "schizophrenic duality" (Semmelroth, 1955: 357). To avoid this, we suppose, will better position theology to assist the church carry out its mission of unifying all things in Christ, even as she lives its dialectical relationship of yes and no, closeness/accessibility and remoteness/alooftness to the body and its world.

This dialectical relationship of simultaneous presence and absence, we recognize, grows out of the fact that the church is "in the world" (John 17: 11), but "not of the world" (John 7: 16.) Yet theology has the duty to articulate how the holy mother the church in its unifying function continues to unify what the mystery of incarnation unifies.

At incarnation, where the "word took flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1: 14), God makes his reign and glory manifest through the human body. Thus, God's love and salvation is incarnate in Christ and through Christ, also incarnate in the human being. At incarnation Christ descends as God's word, God's invitation, to fallen man, an embodied spirit. In his saving death he takes to the father the yes and positive response of man, with all his strengths and weaknesses, as he laments: the spirit is willing but the body is weak (Mt. 26: 41).

Part of the mission of theology, we suppose, is to articulate how the church helps the human body, with all its strengths and weaknesses, engraft and incorporate into the sanctifying and redeeming body of Christ.

IMPLICATIONS OF AN EMBODIED SUBJECTIVITY FOR PHILOSOPHY

The real trouble with dualistic habits of thought could well be that they legitimize and entrench ideas of divisive exclusion, unhelpful autonomy, and deprivative privilege. Such binary oppositions include, "self/other, subject/object, universal/particular, mind/body, private/public, male/female, master/slave, reason/emotion, culture/nature" (Burwood, Gilbert, & Lennon, 1999: 5).

The real problem with these binary oppositions, though, is that they tend to be exclusionary, as if reality must be either one thing or the other rather both things simultaneously. Again, they incline toward autonomous existence, giving the impression that each one of the concepts has a separate existence and cannot imply the concept it opposes. Besides, we privilege the first concept in each binary opposition. The first in the poles takes up a consequential importance and becomes that to which the other must play a second fiddle and do the work of opposition (Burwood, Gilbert, & Lennon, 1999: 5).

The crux of the matter is not that these thought habits recognize difference, which is a natural phenomenon. It is rather they construe difference as an antagonistic and combative contrariety between the terms that make up the binary poles. It does seem, for instance, that the notions of freedom, justice, equity, fairness, and even-handedness that are important to us mean next to nothing when put in the context of privilege, exclusion, and autonomy that such (Cartesian) combative differentiations entrench.

An embodied subjectivity dispenses with these divisive poles. It shows how to do difference, not in an oppositional and exclusionary way, but in an inclusive and natural manner. This is, perhaps, its contribution to knowledge. It also shows how this exclusionary dualism has a history, and how it is possible to return to that natural equilibrium we had before the thematisation and articulation of our being and knowing by Cartesian habits of thought.

A theory of embodied subjectivity enables us see how divergent philosophical pieces can link, even as segments, toward a philosophy of man that recognises the integralness of the human organism. This prospect has a marked philosophical relevance. Its philosophical echo is even more resonant in our day when cartesianism (with its origin in the 17th century) is disintegrating the human subject and the postmodernist thinking and other strands of thought still under the grip of Cartesian thought habits are not only fragmenting the human agent and the human society but also treating this fragmentation as a natural given rather than a historical development. From reductionist tendencies that treat of the human phenomenon as either a mindless body or a bodiless mind to divisive thought habits that treat of human diversity as undoable, the distortions of such fragmentations are far-reaching.

When we use classical dualisms to epitomize distinctions they collapse (Ouden & Moen, 1999: 8). Such attempts at employing Cartesian dualisms in reifying distinctions disintegrate because such divisive distinctions are as unnecessary as they are unnatural. Philosophers that study how the body is in the mind invite us to reappraise the links between how we feel and how we reason, so as to recognize the bodily components of reason and appreciate to what extent rationality is embodied.

Schrader-Frechette (1991: 168-181) draws attention to the moral and social gains of recognising the epistemic and rational components of emotional feeling. The emotional and the rational do not exclude each other.

Brumbaugh (1991) and Borgmann (1991) reveal how “aesthetic engagement” helps us in preserving the world’s dignity and extending the scope and range of values. Johnson (1991: 153-167) discloses how the body is an organisational pattern of “logical order” (Ouden & Moen, 1991: 8).

Gendlin (1991: 22-152) establishes the body as the springboard of an order that surpasses the logical order and specifies how sentient reflexivity helps us find our way around that body-based order.

Moen (1991: 215-243) considers feminist call for our rethinking of our notions of emotion and reason. She also examines the insistence of nihilistic brands of postmodernist philosophy. She proposes that a Peirce-styled pragmatic philosophy can integrate both “sentient reflexivity and intellectual reflection” in a manner that addresses both feminist and postmodernist concerns (Ouden & Moen, 1991: 9).

An embodied thought enables us find, among other things, an epistemological substitute for both objectivist and relativist thinking, and an ontological replacement for both holist and fragmentationist thought-habits. After all, virtue lies in the mean (middle), so Aristotle. It also enables us rethink the phenomenon of body in ways that affirm our embodied nature and make the fragmentation of the human agent and of the human society unnecessary. The embodied account of the human phenomenon is authentic becomes it achieves the foregoing, and keeps what belongs together inseparably integral. This goes close to an organismic integrity, of a sort, that could benefit all of us.

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