

DOI:10.14394/eidos.jpc.2020.0028

Piotr Karpiński
Catholic Academy in Warsaw
Higher Seminary in Łowicz, Poland
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1692-3876>

On the Relation with One's Own Body

Abstract:

The paper discusses the unique relationship that exists between the *ego* and one's own body. There are two fundamental possibilities to grasp it – using the verb “to be” or “to have,” which results in two known formulas: “to be the body” or “to have the body.” However, after careful examination, it turns out that they are one-sided and entangle us in numerous *aporias*. A more complete picture of the relationships with one's own body is made possible by a phenomenological description, which is a first-person and direct approach. The body, given in numerous experiences, turns out to be paradoxical and ambiguous. This is also my relation with it – it is feeling myself and others, getting to know myself and the world; an internal and at the same time external bond, at most my own experience along with the need to transcend the body. Finally, we consider whether the category of “relationship” *resp.* “relation” matches the experience of one's own body. Perhaps a better solution is to give up this term and describe the body as a character of human being.

Keywords:

body, *ego*, event, object, phenomenology, time, world

The history of philosophy consists of its achievements and discoveries but also, no less, of forgetfulness. French phenomenologist Jean-Luc Marion begins his work *Le phénomène érotique (The Erotic Phenomenon)* with an essay *Le silence de l'amour (Silence of Love)*, in which he shows how philosophy, by focusing on being and meta-

physics, lost love.¹ Paul Ricoeur and other modern philosophers show that French phenomenology evolved when it reached for topics forgotten by classical German phenomenology; such as the body, otherness, or event.² Similar examples can be enumerated. Among the topics forgotten by philosophy is certainly the problem of the human body. And yet it is one of the most fundamental experiences and a part of every experience. Through the body, human being comes into cognitive contact with the world; through it he receives impressions and experiences. Emotions are revealed in the body and through the body man expresses himself and his states. Although the contemporary philosophical reflection on the physical dimension of existence has accumulated a wealth of achievements, one can speak of centuries of omitted corporeality in anthropological descriptions and of the contemporary revalidation of the experience of the human body.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the unique relation that exists between myself and my body and capture it in the most adequate way possible. Our question is how to express the category of corporeality so as to convey the essence of my relationship with it. One can speak of two fundamental ways of expressing relations with one's own body – “to be the body” and “to have the body.” We will examine these two formulas, which may prove to be too one-sided, and only phenomenological descriptions will provide a more complete picture of the relationship with our own body. First, however, we will try to give a preliminary intuition of relationships with our own body and analytical and semantical preparation.

Preliminary Question: What is the Human Body?

The most classic answer to this question is extremely simple: the body is the material part of a person. From a biological point of view we can see in it a body-object, or that it is a thing in space that has a specific structure and functions. The way the body-object functions is explained by science where it is described as a mechanism that functions according to the laws of matter. However, we immediately think that the body-object lying on the dissecting table is not my own body. My body is not only a thing, but it is also experienced internally by me. My body is not a quantity of the physical world, but it is felt and therefore imagined. It is the body that I am. Maurice Merleau-Ponty names it one's own body (*corps propre*).³ So it is not about the body-object, but about the body-subject. The latter is at the same time the power of action and perception, and it is also the subject's way of entering the world.

If the subject is in the world thanks to its body, the metaphysical status of the world changes as a result. The latter is no longer an objective being, an object regarded in a spiritual or intellectual sense, but a constructed structure within which my body grasps itself. The exchange between the world and my body is the most fundamental movement of existence. The perceiver is not a pure intellect but a conscious body. As Merleau-Ponty writes: “Consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body.”⁴ By which it should be understood that the spirit does not so much use the body as a mere tool of thinking, but also creates itself through the body. In this context, Cartesian dualism – radically differentiating body and soul, seems too idealized. What we get in experience is some primal unity: the embodied spirit or the spiritual body. This is the original structure, and there are dialectical relationships between its elements.

Being the body also means experiencing a life that is not completely transparent to the spirit. The body is not just matter. It is a whole tangle of affects, impulses, unconscious forces, habits, character traits and incli-

1) Marion, *Le Phénomène érotique*, 9–24.

2) Ricoeur, *À l'école de la phénoménologie*, 9.

3) Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 171.

4) *Ibid.*, 159–60.

nations, abilities and disabilities. In this way the human body is captured by Paul Ricoeur who, however – to distinguish himself from Sigmund Freud – does not talk about the subconscious, but about the involuntary (*l'involontaire*). The exponent of what is involuntary in humans is bodily spontaneity.⁵ For this reason, the experience of the body cannot be fully expressed in terms of intellect, where transparency and the principles of non-contradiction and sufficient reason apply. The body-subject, or the lived body, is not entirely transparent to the intellect and requires a different cognitive method.

My body-subject is mine.⁶ Nevertheless, I can also experience it from the outside; which is confirmed by looking in the mirror. So my body is not pure subjectivity. I never see it completely; I can rather see a small part of it. However, apart from the internal experience, it is also given to me from the outside. In this separation of the self from the body that introduces consciousness; we have a different experience – escaping from ourselves. I am attached to my corporeality, but not as a grave or prison like in Plato's.⁷ I have my own body, but I am not its prisoner. I cannot escape from it physically, but I can transcend it.⁸ Crossing one's own body toward another human being is given in the experience of sexual desire. As Jean-Paul Sartre writes: "Desire is a singular modality of my subjectivity... Desire is a consciousness that becomes body to appropriate the body of others... It is not so much a question of taking a part of the body of the other as of carrying one's own body against the body of the other... So the revelation of the body of the other is done through my own body."⁹

The transcendence of the body engages me into a dialectic with the other.¹⁰ Erotic relationship is not the only experience of this type. Crossing one's own body toward external experience also occurs in such behaviors as makeup, tattoo, body-piercing, and so forth. There will always be a distance, a difference between the subject and its body. As a result of transcending the body, we also notice the reverse movement – the desire to assimilate the body. The tattoo is an attempt to assimilate the body by placing in it the identity signs that have never been fully realized.

Thus, we see that the experience of the body is paradoxical. It is marked by ambiguity. The body can be treated as an object, but it is also experienced as mine. It has a certain material base, but it is also spiritual, thinking, participates in perception and exploring the world. I can experience it from both inside and outside. I am attached to it. After all, I do not exist outside the body, but I can exceed it. I also experience the bodies of others through my own body. The other bodies make me aware of my own corporeality. The body is therefore ambiguous and paradoxical, and so is my relationship with it.

The Grammar and the Semantics of the Body

The body's ambiguity calls for appropriate terminology. In French and German philosophy two terms are used to describe the human body. French *la chair* means living corporeality, subjective, human, lived, my own body. *Le corps*, in turn, means the body as a thing, treated completely externally and objectively. This distinction corresponds to Husserl's distinction between *Leib* and *Körper*.¹¹ By corporality (*la chair*), we do not mean bodies

5) Ricoeur, *Philosophie de la volonté. 1. Le Volontaire et l'Involontaire*, 291.

6) Barbaras, *De la phénoménologie du corps à l'ontologie de la chair*. M. Henry, M. Merleau-Ponty, 245.

7) Schaal, *Le corps*, 20.

8) Cf. Lévinas, *Totalité et Infini*, 306.

9) Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, 426–31. All translations from French and Polish in this paper by Piotr Karpiński, unless otherwise noted.

10) Cf. Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre*, 57.

11) Cf. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*; Franck, *Chair et corps*.

(*les corps*) that are extended in time and space and perceived or rather felt. Corporeality is a unique body, my own body which is the only one by which I can feel the bodies of the world. My own body feels bodies that do not feel. It can do it for one reason only: it feels the other bodies – first feeling itself.

The material body – *le corps* – is an object that is involved in science, such as physics, chemistry or biology. A completely different thing from the body of the embodied human being – *la chair*. The difference between these two types of bodies lies mainly in the fact that the first does not feel itself and does not experience, while the human body feels everything, perceives qualities, sees colors, and hears sounds. In short, the human body experiences the world, but first experiences itself. Everyone has a direct experience of his own body – he feels the difficulty of fatigue or the pleasure of a light wind on his face. The relation of a human to his own body is absolutely unique, no other incarnation has such a reference. Hence, the human body is not even a well-developed and well-organized thing, but, a material thing. The human body is unique.

We ask how to express this unique experience of human corporeality. Apart from the terminological distinction of *le corps* and *la chair*, or *Leib* and *Körper*, human corporeality may be recognized by means of various verb operators, usually two: “to be” and “to have.” We say “I have a body” or “I am my body.” Could grammar itself tell us something about the human body?

English does not recognize the terminological distinction – the word “body” describes both the physical and the lived body. Also, grammar does not reveal any subtleties here. Both “possessing” the body and “being” the body are still about the same object – the grammatical formula remains unchanged. It is different in French, in which our two formulas sound respectively: *J’ai un corps* and *Je suis mon corps*. In these two sentences we see a change of indefinite article to a personal pronoun. When I say “I have a body,” I really mean that I have any body. The indefinite article *un* stains my enunciation. In the category of possession, the body is any, it does not matter which one. It is therefore radically different from the subject and more like a thing. The subject is not as bodily as external physical bodies are perceived to be, and the latter can be seen. When I have a body, I can also use it as when I use a thing or a tool. It is completely different in the expression “I am my body.” *Je suis mon corps* means exactly “I have my own body,” so it is one, specific, unique – it is my own and I am it. The subject appears here inseparable from its body, given and acting only through the body. The latter is not a body-thing but a body-subject.

Here we can see how expressions of language are not innocent and show how grammar comes to the aid of philosophy. “To have a body” and “to be one’s own body” coincide with the terminological distinction of *le corps* and *la chair*. However, each of these formulas has limitations. We do not agree to reducing the body to things, but on the other hand the body is not pure subjectivity. The body is neither pure externality nor pure internality. It is not completely objective nor just subjective. Once again, we touch the paradox of the body’s ambiguity. Or maybe the distinction between body-thing and body-subject is too idealized? Do the formulas “I have a body” and “I am my body” not reveal some aspects of the body, covering others?

The Expression “To Have a Body” and its *Aporia*

We have seen above that in the expression *J’ai un corps*, the body becomes a thing. In this approach, the subject is disconnected from the body that it possesses. Man is the subject who possesses the body. The body can be possessed, like a thing. This position was formulated by Descartes, who distinguished between two substances: thinking and extended.¹² “I” from our expression refers to the sphere of the subject, while “body” to the sphere of the object. According to Descartes, there is *ego* that will never be able to be objectified, rather it is itself a condition of any objectification. I can mentally separate myself from my body, but I will never separate from

12) Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 10–11.

my thoughts, hence "I think, therefore I am."¹³ I am the thinking subject, the *ego cogito*, which everything that mentally catches immediately objectivizes it, that is, reduces it to the object. The body is also exposed to such objectification. You can look at it, it extends in space, it is completely external and objective, and it has the status of an object. As such, it can be of interest and studied in science. For a biologist, the body is a material structure with a specific function.¹⁴ The laws governing the body are identical to the laws describing organized matter. The scientific body is a body-object.

Is it possible to accept the body as a pure objectification? The expression "I have a body" introduces three controversial moments in the description of the human body: the problem of its objectivity – that is grasping it as an object, the problem of its externality – in other words, its separation from the subject's internality, and finally the problem of disposing of the body and the ruling over it resulting from the previous two. These three moments mark the three main *aporias* for "I have a body."

(1) The *Aporia* of Objectivity

The question may be asked whether the body-object, the impersonal body that science deals with, is still a human body. Experience shows that the human body is not only a reality from the physical world, but is created throughout history. Man does not agree to the pure and brutal physicality of the body, but shapes, beautifies and develops it according to the intended image. This is confirmed by the experience of plastic surgeons. Their patients turn to them with the desire of changing their body. Very often, however, the very vision of these changes is completely incomprehensible to the doctor, and thus to the external observer. The patient feels bad in his body, but the reasons why he only knows himself. So we see that the human body is not a physical object. Much more should be said from an objective point of view about the imaginary body, which in French terminology is expressed as *le corps fantasmé*. To describe the objective body, one should not talk about the object, but about the projection – the representation of one's own body. Otherwise we strip it of the human dimension. This experience shows that the human body cannot be a pure object, but is also internally lived. This is the reason for the anthropological deadlock of modern medicine which, in the era of incredible development in biotechnology, must understand that it does not deal with an abstract body – an object – but it is always a human body in which what is real and what is imagined is mixed.

So we see that the experience of my own body is significantly different from the experience of things. This can be seen in the motorics and maneuverability of the body; with respect to the things I can move, rotate, and watch from any perspective. Meanwhile, the body always shows itself from the same side; it is more with me than it is in front of me. So I cannot say I have it, but I am more like it or with it. The body-subject concept emerges from body-object criticism. That is characterized by the fact that it constantly accompanies me and is inseparable from the sense of my subjectivity. This concept was developed by Merleau-Ponty, who introduced the concept of "one's own body" (*le corps propre*). What is the relationship with my own body? I cannot go around it, I cannot fathom it, and it is never given to me fully. My own body introduces me to the world, becoming the condition for exploring the world. As Merleau-Ponty writes: "The body is the vehicle of being in the world."¹⁵ It is not an object but a condition for the existence of objects. And further:

In so far as it sees or touches the world, my body can therefore be neither seen nor touched. What prevents its ever being an object, ever being "completely constituted" is that it is that by which

13) Ibid., 10.

14) Marzano, *La philosophie du corps*, 25.

15) Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 94.

there are objects. It is neither tangible nor visible in so far as it is that which sees and touches. The body therefore is not one more among external objects, with the peculiarity of always being there. It is permanent, the permanence is absolute and it is the ground for the relative permanence of disappearing objects, real objects.¹⁶

It follows that the body is not an object, but also that the subject is not pure thinking separated, as in Descartes, from any corporeality. Consciousness is, according to Merleau-Ponty's famous formula, "being-toward-the-thing through the intermediary of the body."¹⁷ This means that the body is not a simple structure of consciousness. It is the origin, and source, of reality. The body gives access to the world, and therefore participates in cognition. However, this is not about thinking conceived as intellectual reflection. The body plays the important role of pre-reflective cognition in perception. What is the role of the body? It comes in direct contact with the world and organizes the experience of the world through spatial quantities. The latter, in turn, reveals that we are experiencing a world that is a correlate of our body. The world is not given directly in reflection, the spirit cannot fathom it, but it is a structure created by taking a body in me. By taking the world in perception through my own body, I give this world a body. It also follows that consciousness cannot be expressed by the Cartesian "I think," but the "I can" of Maine de Biran is much more adequate here.¹⁸ Thinking is not something higher than the body, but it is inscribed by Merleau-Ponty into the body.

The *aporia* of the objectivity is also revealed in touch. When I touch my body, I do not discover only sensual quantities, for example warmth and softness of the hands. That would be the case with anything. In the case of the body, sensuality appears only on the surface. In fact, however, the roles of subject and object are constantly turning and changing. When I touch my left hand with my right hand then with my senses I feel that the hand is being felt. I sense the warmth of my hand and other sensual qualities, but at the same time I have experience that I feel and I am felt. Merleau-Ponty calls this experience *touchant-touché*.¹⁹ This is another proof that objectification of the body leads us to *aporia*. The body is both an object and a subject. Certainly, the body is not something you have, but it is constitutive of human subjectivity. Also, when I look at the body of the other, it becomes more the face than the raw matter of the physical body. The experience of the human body is therefore not the experience of the object. This is evidenced by the ability to perceive, act and express. The body is the entry point of the subject into the world. In man, the body ceases to be an object and becomes a sign.

(2) The *Aporia* of Externality

The formula "I have a body" suggests that the body is completely outside the subject. If we were to distinguish between being internal and external as human, then undoubtedly spiritual acts would have an internal character and the body would fill the external space. What you have must be different from who you are. The category of external body appears in the classic approach to the relationship of soul and body in human being. The body is described by various metaphors. At Plato, it is a prison or grave with a soul inside.²⁰ Descartes speaks of a sailor present in a ship.²¹ Again, it is enough to refer to experience to see that these metaphors have nothing to do with the human. The body is not only external, but I am closely and intimately connected with it, as in

16) Ibid., 105–6.

17) Ibid., 160.

18) Henry, *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps*, 73.

19) Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 106.

20) Cf. Garivier, *Le corps dans l'esprit grec*, 14–18.

21) Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 29. Cf. Carman, *Merleau-Ponty*, 80.

pleasure or suffering. I have no external view of my body's experiences, like a captain looking down at the ship. Rather, if my body is in pain, I suffer internally with it. I feel pleasure, thirst and hunger similarly. These experiences are both physical and mental.

Descartes softened this radical dualism of soul and body in the further stages of his thought. He writes:

Nor was it without some reason that I believed that this body (which by a certain special right I call my own) belonged to me more properly and more strictly than any other; for in fact I could never be separated from it as from other bodies; I experienced in it and on account of it all my appetites and affections, and finally I was touched by the feeling of pain and the titillation of pleasure in its parts, and not in the parts of other bodies which were separated from it.²²

Hence the conclusion: "Nature also teaches me by these sensations of pain, hunger, thirst, etc., that I am not only lodged in my body as a pilot in a vessel, but that I am very closely united to it, and so to speak so intermingled with it that I seem to compose with it one whole."²³

Therefore, it is impossible to describe the body only in external terms, which is assumed by the formula "I have a body." This approach overlooks many human experiences. Distinguishing between the soul and body, the spiritual and material parts in man, is possible only on a speculative path. Hence the conclusion is that Cartesian dualism is an idealized category. To approach the "concrete man" on the road of experience, these two elements should be treated as data in the original, experimental and existential unity. Two substances – thinking and extended – do not form a third one after joining. Man is a psycho-physical unity, although this unity remains unclear to reason. The body is not something purely external, but an indelible part of the self with which I have internal and intimate bonds.

(3) The *Aporia* of Availability

To say "I have a body" also means that I have complete control over it and I can use it freely. I can absolutely assimilate, manipulate, use and rule my body at will. This is the logic that governs the world of things. Does it fit the human body? Of course, it might seem that I am doing my deeds in the body and with it, and thus I experience freedom in it. However, the body often appears to be my limit. It is more often an obstacle, impediment, limitation than an obedient tool. The body constantly confronts me with my finitude. "My life is slipping away from me on all sides,"²⁴ says Merleau-Ponty. On the one hand, birth and death on the other – all this eludes me, I do not control it, not even cognitively. So it is difficult to think of the body as completely available.

First, I experience the body as being able to resist, but also as feeling resistance. A headache can disturb calm thinking. I resist in an effort, but when I encounter the other body I feel it as a border.²⁵ The "I can" through which the subject works in the outside world is not some acosmic freedom. The body marks the *a priori* limits of human possibilities. This is a fundamental human situation in the world. Of course, we do not deny that the body has some power and ability – "I can" is the formula of the body of Maine de Biran and Ricoeur.²⁶ However, the point is to emphasize that I do not dispose the body as I do things. The body also cannot be completely instrumented. Both ethics and law guard it. Complete instrumentalization of the body would lead

22) Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 27.

23) *Ibid.*, 29.

24) Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 386.

25) Henry, *Incarnation*, 299.

26) Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre*. Ricoeur, *Lectio magistralis*, 81.

to its dehumanization. Hence the respect of the body and the person is difficult to distinguish. The oldest forms of humiliation were of a bodily nature, such as violence, rape, torture, murder – humanity somehow subconsciously understood that the path to humanity leads through the body. Also in many modern legislations, the human body does not have the status of a thing, which results in a ban on human or human organ trafficking. Therefore, we can clearly see that the body cannot be arbitrarily disposed.

The formula “I have a body” turns out to be very limited. It leads to three *aporias*: objectivity of the body, externality of the body and its disposition. It is impossible to put the human body in objective terms, because it leads to its dehumanization and objectification. Does this mean that the second formula – “I am my body” – better understands human corporeality? Should the body be completely reduced to the subject? Does the non-externality of the body automatically mean its internality?

Analysis of “To Be the Body”

It was mentioned above that the French version of the formula is *Je suis mon corps*, so it is not about a body, but about my own body. Therefore, the body contains some element of ownness which is absorbed in my subjectivity. In this approach, the self is identified with one’s own body, which, however, is devoid of any objectivity. It is also a reductionist approach because although, as we have shown above, the body is not an object, it does not mean that there is no externality. Somewhere on the periphery, on the very outskirts of myself, there is the externality of the body, even in the form of the possibility of perceiving it by me or by others.

The relationship of man with his own body is ambiguous and original. The human is the only living being who can present his body from the outside. A simple mirror experience proves this. No animal can put itself in the viewer position to look at itself in the mirror, as if from the outside. Man, on the other hand, can objectify himself. This also implies care for the appearance, which is extremely human. Body care, style, elegance, fashion: all this is proof that man understands himself as an incarnation and exposed to the eyes of others. He recognizes his reflection in the mirror therefore he can look at himself with the eyes of the other. We see here a constitutive doubling of the body: on the one hand, its internality, on the other, possible objectification and externality.

The conclusion is that the human is not quite his body. The body is not completely a face, a sign of something invisible that would show its opacity in it. There is a distance between the sign-body and the brutal physicality of the body. Sometimes the body moves away from me, takes a distance and even humiliates me. In some situations, the body can become a strange thing. My *ego* also wants to move away from it. Excrement, sweat, secretions, nausea, vomiting, illness, invalidity – this body that I am seems to offend and frighten me, it was something completely alien. I feel that if I were reduced to such corporeality it would mean the destruction of me. The body is mine and close to me, but at the same time alien and distant. As Sartre notes: “I am my body as far as I am; I am not it to the extent that I am not what I am; it is by my nihilation that I escape it. But I do not make it an object for that: because it is perpetually what I am that I escape it.”²⁷ We see, therefore, that human subjectivity is not acosmic and extra-terrestrial, but the body connects it to the world. At the same time, by sneaking out of its facticity, it opens the horizon far beyond embodied intentionality.

Hence the ambiguity of the human condition: man is such a being in which heterogeneous elements come to the fore and intersect. He feels himself as a body and as a spirit. Neither only one nor only the other. This is why in the very center of human experience occurs a tension between original, perceptive, bodily subjectivity, and the transcendental – which was sometimes attempted to be explained on the basis of a dualistic scheme.

27) Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, 366.

Meanwhile, it turns out that the dualism of soul and body creates more problems than it solves. For example, Plato distinguished between body and soul to understand why man is a mortal being and at the same time has a desire for eternity. He is mistaken in his knowledge and at the same time has a desire for truth. He is guided by pleasure and interest, and at the same time wants to be somebody good. Platonic dualism, similarly to Cartesian one, is not a dualism that is derived from experience but from speculation. It should not be forgotten that the body, which sometimes gives the impression that I have it, is the same body that I am. So it is not the case that "I have a body" nor that "I am my body." Both formulas reveal only part of the truth about the body and my relationship with it. The adequate description of the body should be based on experience.

Toward the Phenomenology of Corporeality

After analyzing two linguistic formulas concerning the body, we may notice their limitations. This does not mean that they do not reveal any aspect of the body. Still, it is always an unfinished and reduced picture. They duplicate the limits of the metaphysics and philosophy of the subject. The metaphysics of the body loses its subjective and experiential element. The philosophy of the subject breaks with the body's concreteness, becoming entangled in an idealistic image. It is therefore worth looking for a third way that would give a more adequate description of the human body. This path is marked by phenomenology.

Phenomenology, although it has gone through a rich history and has different formulations, has always been a method of studying phenomena or their appearance. This is eidetic science, because, unlike empiricism, it holds conviction that in the phenomenon itself is given the essence of the experienced thing. Established in Germany, it was in the French language area that it gained full form and lush development, but as a Francophone variety it followed Heidegger more than Husserl. Among the French phenomenologists of corporeality, mention may be made of M. Merleau-Ponty,²⁸ J.-P. Sartre,²⁹ E. Lévinas,³⁰ P. Ricoeur,³¹ M. Henry,³² and J.-L. Marion.³³ Their views, obviously, differ significantly; combining various themes from existentialism, research on perception and regard, through transcendentalism and polysemy of otherness, to the immanence of corporeality and theological turn. In our search for a phenomenological description of corporeality, we will refer to the achievements of the French phenomenologists of corporeality. We will not, however, systematically summarize their views and concepts, but bearing in mind their achievements, we will present our own, original synthesis, that is to say an eidetic description of the experience of corporeality. It is not about the description of the bodies at all, but about the description of the corporeality which we comprehend as one's own body, rendered with the French *la chair*.

The first and fundamental feature of corporeality is its ability to sense. My body and only it has the unique ability to feel bodies from the world. Other bodies can only be felt, and they do not feel themselves. Meanwhile, my body feels other bodies, but this is only possible because it first feels itself as feeling. Therefore, my own

28) Besides the already cited *Phenomenology of perception*, the philosopher's other works on the body are: *La structure du comportement* and *Le visible et l'invisible*.

29) Sartre included three dimensions of corporeality in his main work, already cited *L'être et le néant*.

30) Lévinas discusses the body in the following works: *De l'existence à l'existant* (Paris, Vrin, 1993); *De l'évasion*, (Paris, Fata Morgana, 1982); *Totalité et Infini. Essai sur l'extériorité* (La Haye, Martinus Nijhof, 1971); *Autrement qu'être ou Au-delà de l'essence* (La Haye, Martinus Nijhof, 1974).

31) Ricoeur, *Philosophie de la volonté. 1. Le Volontaire et l'Involontaire*; Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre*.

32) Two works are key to learning the concept of the body in Henry: *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps*; *Incarnation*.

33) Marion, *Étant donné*; Marion, *De surcroît*.

body goes beyond the traditional distinction between subjective and objective, spiritual and material. Only what is subjective can sense. The objective can only be felt. However, my body is both, it is feeling-felt, sensing and sensitive, which in French is *sentant-sensible*.³⁴ Here I am sitting in the armchair and touching the armrest with my hand. On the one hand, the arm and armchair have something in common – they belong to the same materiality and corporeality – they are things amongst things. However, there is a big difference. When I touch the armchair with my hand, the armchair does not feel anything, including my hand. Meanwhile, my hand and only it, which still remains part of the world, feels. It feels not only the armchair, but also itself.³⁵ So my body is feeling and felt at the same time.

From the above stems another feature of corporeality, closely related to it. If the body feels anything while feeling itself, it means that before the body feels anything, it first feels itself. Man could not only feel anything without feeling himself, but it is the feeling of himself that makes it possible to feel other things. So experiencing corporeality is a feeling of the self. My body gives me access to myself – so its important feature is auto-donation.³⁶ It is the point of emergence of my subjectivity. The body is not only able to be auto-affected, but even carries the ability to it. I am hungry, thirsty, I have a fever, I am angry – these phenomena are completely non-relational, they do not refer to anything but me, they are about pure auto-affection, which does not correspond to anything external. I could not be stimulated by the world if I were not internally affectable. This internal determinant for affectivity determines the original and intimate human passivity that is assigned to this property of the body that it is mine. So the body has a special feature: being mine and being affected.

In turn, my body is a phenomenalizing and even spiritualizing factor. We are touching here an amazing paradox – how can a body that is material introduce a spiritual element into the world? This truth will become clear when we realize that the objective world is not a given. When a person enters into cognitive contact with the world then it begins to appear to him, and this contact cannot take place outside the body. It is no longer an objective world, but a perceived world, a world for me. What appears to me is not an objective being, but a phenomenon of being. Meanwhile, according to Husserl's assumptions, the phenomenon appears in consciousness.³⁷ The phenomenon has nothing of material being, but is an intellectual, ideal, and spiritual quantity. And so it is my body in cognition that converts the objective world into a phenomenon, gives it to us as a phenomenon. There are no phenomena outside the body, so outside the body there is no world for me. By turning the objective world into a phenomenon, in other words into spiritual reality, my body is spiritualizing the world.³⁸ My body allows a spiritual element to exist in the world.

My body is absolutely inseparable from me. I cannot distance myself from it, take a vacation from it, escape. I could not exist outside the body. I cannot rest from the body, but on the contrary, when I rest, my body must rest. So my body is something immanent.³⁹ It is impassably mine. The body cannot be seen, because what we see in the mirror is not my body, but its image. The body is more an internal experience, it does not allow any externality or mediation. This is also accompanied by loneliness of the body. And although the human body leaps to the other in an erotic relationship, it will never cross the border of its corporeality and will never have the feeling of the corporeality of the other. My body will never feel what the other's body feels. Hence, on the ground

34) Marion, *De surcroît*, 105.

35) Marion, *La rigueur des choses*, 148–49.

36) Marion, *De surcroît*, 113.

37) Depraz, *Husserl*, 24. Huneman, Kulich, *Introduction à la phénoménologie*, 18.

38) Marion, *De surcroît*, 111–12.

39) *Ibid.*, 112.

of phenomenology of corporeality, one may speak of the “defeat of the erotic relationship”⁴⁰ and the “illusion of absolute unification.”⁴¹ This is because corporeality encloses me in immanence, in solipsism, and it is characterized by invincible ownness. In his immediate “ipseity,” corporeality gives me myself, never the other.

The body is therefore the principle of my individuality. Thanks to it I can feel myself, a unique individual, not a copy of the *Homo sapiens* species. Here you can see the difference between body and mind. Reason is universal and transcendental. Boethius defined a person by pointing to reason as a common species quality of the human: a person is an individual substance of rational nature. A person is an individual, but it shares what is universal, that is rationality. We see the universality and generality of reason in science. Its language must be intersubjectively communicable. Scientific laws are always and everywhere, in the same conditions and in the same respect give the same results. But not only in science. Let us look at any, even the most colloquial conversation – for it to be possible there must be some common elements well known to both parties, all these inferences, mental shortcuts, allusions, hidden meanings between lines, the meaning of silence, and so forth. Without knowing all this conversation would be practically impossible. Reason incurs us constantly in universality. It is different with the body. Only it allows me to feel myself as an individual.⁴²

Finally, my body is also a place of my temporalization. It can be said that I have the only access to time through my body.⁴³ It makes me aware of my immersion in time and only thanks to it I can get to know the nature of time. One of the most common images of time is the flowing river. In this concept, time is something objective and flows regardless of the state of affairs. However, the body teaches me that it is different. Time does not pass because if it passed and passed I would not have any cognitive access to it. It would be one great past, hidden in the darkness of what is unknown. Time does not flow, but rather piles up (fr. *s'entasse*) and accumulates. Where? In my own body. Time phenomenologically reveals to us as the phenomenon of aging. The past piles up and accumulates in our body, in our members, in muscles, bones, which under its weight bend, slack or harden, lose their earlier look. The weight of time accumulates especially where my body is most open – on my face. It is a privileged place of time. It likes to leave its marks and furrows here. It seems that time is passing – meanwhile it is constantly appearing. It appears as an accumulation of its signs that mark damaged bodies, and most of all the corporeality of my face. In this way the past is manifested only by taking the body in my corporeality, which it destroys and marks. Time takes the body in me. I do not have access to any other time than it is revealed in my body.

Conclusions

To sum up, it should be stated that phenomenological studies and descriptions have shown us that the body is neither a pure object nor a full subjectivity. The body is a paradoxical and ambiguous being in the full sense of the word. It is a source and original category that cannot be reduced to either the object or the subject. We should agree on the uniqueness of the body as a completely different and irreducible type of experience. You cannot express relationships with your body clearly with the verbs “to be” or “to have.” Along with phenomenology, a whole palette of categories appeared describing the body as internal and external, active and passive, conscious and unconscious, subjective and objective, material and spiritual, immanent and transcendent, experiencing and intentional.

40) Henry, *Incarnation*, 298.

41) Marion, *Le phénomène érotique*, 228.

42) Marion, *De surcroît*, 123.

43) *Ibid.*, 119.

Also, the relationships between *ego* and one's own body can be described in various ways. It is the feeling of yourself, but also of other things. It is an internal bond and mooring to the body, the inability to escape from it, but at the same time distance and non-identification with the body. The relationship with the body allows you to receive yourself, but also allows you to enter the world. It is time-generating and action-enabling, but it also requires exceeding it, in other words transcending. Is it possible to define the relationship of *ego* and its own body in general?

Exceeding eidetic descriptions and searching for one principle in relation to one's own body means leaving phenomenology and trying to construct metaphysics. We ask, therefore, whether any metaphysics of relations with one's own body is possible. The metaphysically comprehended relation is any assignment of anything to anything,⁴⁴ where the subject of the relation (what is assigned), the end of the relation (why it is assigned) and the reason for the relation (due to which the assignment occurred) stand out. Relations are divided into mental and real, and the latter into necessary and unnecessary. For Aristotle, relation is one of the categories by which being can be described.⁴⁵ In turn, Kant's relation is one of the groups of categories that consists of: substance, cause and community.⁴⁶ After our analysis, the possibility of metaphysical explorations should be rejected, because they would make each of the relationship members a separate entity or a sub-entity. Treating the body as a substance would put us in the troublesome dualism of soul and body. I am also not the cause of the body and conversely, and my relationship with it does not establish an ordinary community, but a singular and unique one that creates and permeates both members.

Everything seems to indicate that one should not introduce the concept of relationship into the experience of one's own body. A much better term is the concept of character. The body is the character of myself. As Heidegger writes: "The individual ego can be experienced as such only in terms of this relation. The human ego as the individual self completing itself can only will itself in the light of the relation of the will to will, as yet unknown, to this ego. No ego is there 'in itself,' but rather is 'in itself' always only as appearing 'within itself,' that is, as egoity."⁴⁷

Ricoeur also refers to character when he talks about *idem*-identity,⁴⁸ or that is my body gives me character and thus allows me to build an identity, no longer metaphysical, but much more moral.

44) Foulquié, *Dictionnaire de la langue philosophique*, 626–627. Baraquin and others, *Dictionnaire de philosophie*, 256.

45) Aristotle, *Les Catégories*, ch. 7, 6a, 35.

46) Kant, *Critique de la raison pure*, 94.

47) Heidegger, *Overcoming Metaphysics*, 98.

48) Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre*, 143.

Bibliography:

- Aristotle. *Les Catégories*. Translated by Jules Tricot. Paris: Vrin, 1994.
- Baraquin, Noëlla et al. *Dictionnaire de philosophie*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1995.
- Barbaras, Renaud. “De la phénoménologie du corps à l’ontologie de la chair. M. Henry, M. Merleau-Ponty”. In *Le corps*, edited by Jean-Christophe Goddard, Monique Labrune, 242–80. Paris: Vrin, 1992.
- Carman, Taylor. *Merleau-Ponty*. London and New York: Routledge, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203461853>.
- Depraz, Natalie. *Husserl*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1999.
- Descartes, René. “Meditations on First Philosophy.” In *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*. Translated by Elizabeth S. Haldane. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911.
- Foulquié, Paul. *Dictionnaire de la langue philosophique*. Paris: PUF, 1962.
- Franck, Didier. *Chair et corps: Sur la phénoménologie de Husserl*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1981.
- Garivier, Pierre. “Le corps dans l’esprit grec”. In *Analyses et réflexions sur le corps*. Vol. I., edited by Jean Labesse, 14–18. Paris: Ellipses, 1992.
- Heidegger, Martin. “Overcoming Metaphysics”. In *The End of Philosophy*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973.
- Henry, Michel. *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000.
- . *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps. Essai sur l’ontologie biranienne*. Paris: PUF, 1965.
- Huneman, Philippe. Kulich, Estelle. *Introduction à la phénoménologie*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1997.
- Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Translated by Dorion Cairns. Springer Netherlands, 2011.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique de la raison pure*. Translated by André Tremesaygues and Bernard Pacaud. Paris: PUF, 2012.
- Lévinas, Emmanuel. *Autrement qu’être ou Au-delà de l’essence*. La Haye: Martinus Nijhof, 1974. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-1111-7>.
- . *De l’existence à l’existant*. Paris: Vrin, 1993.
- . *De l’évasion*. Paris: Fata Morgana, 1982.
- . *Totalité et Infini. Essai sur l’extériorité*. La Haye: Martinus Nijhof, 1971.
- Marion, Jean-Luc. *Étant donné. Essai d’une phénoménologie de la donation*. Paris: PUF, 1997.
- . *La rigueur des choses. Entretiens avec Dan Arbib*. Paris: Flammarion, 2012.
- . *De surcroît*. Paris: PUF, 2001.
- . *Le Phénomène érotique*. Paris: Grasset, 2003.
- Marzano, Michela. *La philosophie du corps*. Paris: PUF, 2007.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *La structure du comportement*. Paris: PUF, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.3917/puf.ponty.2013.01>.

—. *Le visible et l'invisible*. Paris: Galimard, 1964.

—. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Colin Smith. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

Richir, Marc. *Le corps. Essai sur l'interiorité*. Paris: Éditions Hatier, 1993.

Ricoeur, Paul. *À l'école de la phénoménologie*. Paris: Vrin, 2004.

—. "Lectio magistralis". In Jervolino, Domenico. *Une herméneutique de la condition humaine*, 75–91. Paris: Ellipses, 2002.

—. *Philosophie de la volonté. 1. Le Volontaire et l'Involontaire*. Paris: Éditions Points, 2009.

—. *Soi-même comme un autre*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1990.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *L'être et le néant. Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*. Paris: Galimard, 1943.

Schaal, Jean-François. *Le corps*. Paris: Ellipses, 1993.