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HEIDEGGER, JEAN-LUC NANCY, AND THE QUESTION OF DASEIN'S EMBODIMENT. By: Sorial, Sarah. *Philosophy Today*, Summer2004, Vol. 48 Issue 2, p216-230, 25p; Abstract Analyzes the criticism made against Martin Heidegger, which maintains that Heidegger is guilty of reproducing the metaphysical subject because of his refusal to address the question of Dasein's embodiment. Role of Jean-Luc Nancy in extrapolating an ethics of embodiment from Heidegger's thinking; Philosophy and the body; Triadic relation between the body, community and meaning.; (AN 14169782)

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How can one get hold of the body? I am already speechless.<sup>1</sup>

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger engages in a radical critique of Western metaphysics, and more specifically, of the metaphysical subject in its Cartesian form.<sup>2</sup>In this "destruction" of the tradition, part of Heidegger's project is to demonstrate that the conception of the subject elaborated by metaphysics not only severs the subject from the world but also constitutes a disavowal of Dasein's relationality and dependence on the other. For Heidegger, Dasein is here [being-there], it is being-in-the-world in terms of fallenness and thrownness; it is characterized by motion and projection, anticipation and ek-staticity; it is ontologically being-with others and endowed with the possibility of care. However, despite this radical reconfiguration of the metaphysical subject, there remains a lingering sense of unease in Heidegger's analytic. This partially arises as a consequence of the lack of sustained engagement or silence on the question of Dasein's embodiment.

While *Being and Time* claims to be an existential analytic of the human subject, in which Dasein is ontologically being-in-the-world, it is difficult to see ourselves reflected back from its pages. Given Heidegger's stated aims, we would not be too demanding in expecting an account of lived experience and materiality, of grief and sorrow, of love and desire.<sup>3</sup> But as John Caputo points out, "curiously, everybody in *Being and Time* is healthy, hale and whole; they are either resolute, or irresolute, self-possessed or dissipated, and they even die, but their bodies, if they have bodies, seem never to grow ill or lame, diseased or disabled, and when some *Stimmung* or other becomes too much for them, if it does, they never break out in tears."<sup>4</sup>

As a consequence, it is possible to wonder, with Caputo, whether in the progression of *Being and Time*, Heidegger "reads the life out of Dasein."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, thinkers as diverse as Sartre<sup>6</sup> and Levinas,<sup>7</sup> and as Tina Chanter<sup>8</sup>and Patricia Huntington<sup>9</sup> also argue that Heidegger's analytic of the human subject misses its mark because of its failure to account for the human body.<sup>10</sup> For Caputo and Levinas in particular, this omission renders Heidegger's thinking explicitly and overtly unethical. If the body, and more specifically, the body in pain, creates the space for obligation, Heidegger's neglect of embodiment constitutes an ethical closure."

Or does it? In this essay, I want to again raise the question of Heidegger, embodiment and the possibility of ethics, by suggesting that these criticisms, which maintain that Heidegger is guilty of reproducing the metaphysical subject because of his refusal to address the question of Dasein's embodiment, stem from a particularly limited conception of the body or what constitutes a discourse on it.<sup>12</sup> The fact that the body is not directly addressed in Heidegger's work does not mean that it is not consistently invoked in other ways.<sup>13</sup> My argument suggests that rather than abandon the body in *Being and Time*, Heidegger inadvertently creates a space for it; a space that opens, rather than closes ethical obligation.<sup>14</sup>

Jean-Luc Nancy is helpful for the purposes of extrapolating an ethics of embodiment from Heidegger's thinking.<sup>15</sup> In this essay, I want to pursue two arguments in particular that Nancy makes. The first is the inadequacy of language/discourse when it comes to the question of embodiment. For Nancy, to generate a discourse on the body falls into the dynamic it seeks to evade because it ends up reproducing the body as an object of knowledge, rather than as an expression of meaning. That is, it conceives of the body as having meaning rather than as meaning. The second is his reconceptualization of the body in terms of the concepts of touch, spacing, and "corpus."

This tension between the sensibility of touch and spacing is, I will argue, also discernable in Heidegger's texts. By examining Heidegger's radical, albeit sparse analysis of space/place, I suggest that the phenomenology of lived space found in *Being and Time* and of practical activities involving the human body, activities of the hands such as touching and grasping, handling and holding, writing and caressing, all presuppose the body, or, as Levin points out, are not intelligible without a presupposition of the body.<sup>16</sup> Given Heidegger's dissatisfaction with the way in which the body has been conceptualized in philosophy, expressed in *Being and Time*" his Nietzsche lectures,<sup>18</sup> and the "Letter on Humanism,"<sup>19</sup> and in light of Nancy's arguments, I want to explore whether Heidegger's silence on the question of embodiment can be read as an attempt to allow the body to emerge from its objectification in more subtle and implicit ways; ways that share close affinities with Nancy's development of a corpus.

### Philosophy and the Body

Philosophy, according to both Nancy and Heidegger, has had a somewhat uneasy relation to the body. In his essay "Corpus," Nancy argues that "there has never been any body in philosophy" (Corpus: 193), only an objectified body caught in the structure of sign and signification/meaning. While we have seen a proliferation of the possible meanings that have been attached to this sign we call the body, we have failed to understand the body as an expression of meaning, or the body as the site of singularity, uniqueness and alterity. Instead, we have attempted to understand it through a series of ever changing, though equally problematic metaphors. The body has been conceptualized as a cave where images and representations are formed and projected, a machine, a prison cell, a glory or a plague.<sup>20</sup> This suggests that the structure or framework of sign/signification born of Plato's cave, in which the body functions as a sign or an object to which meaning or signification is ascribed has merely been perpetuated by philosophical discourse/Western culture. Nancy writes:

from the body-cave to the glorious body, signs have become inverted, just as they have been turned around and displaced over and over again, in hylemorphism, in the sinner-body, in the body-machine or in the "body proper" of phenomenology. But the philosophico-theological corpus of bodies is still supported by the spine of mimesis, of representation, and of the sign. (Corpus: 192)

Heidegger expresses a similar dissatisfaction with the way in which the body has been conceptualized in Western philosophy. In the Zollikon Seminars, he states: "the French

psychologists also misinterpret everything as an expression of something interior instead of seeing the phenomenon of the body in the context by which men are in relationship to each other"21 and "as to the French authors, I am always still disturbed by the misinterpretation of being-in-the-world where it is either conceived as being present-at-hand or else as intentionality of subjective consciousness."22 In his Nietzsche lectures, Heidegger writes: "Most of what we know from the natural sciences about the body and the way it embodies are specifications based on the established misinterpretation of the body as a mere natural body."23 he further contends that "bodily being does not mean that the soul is burdened by a hulk we call the body ... we do not 'have' a body; rather, we 'are' bodily" and "every feeling... is an embodiment attuned in this or that way, a mood that embodies in this or that way."24

The point, it would seem, for Nancy and perhaps implicitly for Heidegger, is that irrespective of the perspective used, "dualism of body and soul, monism of the flesh, symbolic deciphering of bodies" (Corpus: 192) the body remains an instrument or mechanism that attaches itself to meaning/sense, rather than being conceived of as an expression of meaning. That is, the body is not conceived of as meaning, but meaning is something that "rushes" into the body, presents itself to it, makes itself known to it, or wants to articulate itself there. Consequently, in philosophy: "the body remains the dark reserve of sense, and the dark sign of this reserve. But in this way, the body is absolutely trapped by the sign and by sense" (Corpus: 193). But what does it mean to conceive of a body as meaning rather than as having meaning? In what way does a body express meaning? And why, for Nancy, is philosophy's conceptualization of the body ethically problematic?

The Triadic Relation Between the Body, Community, and Meaning: An Ethics of Touch and Spacing.

In his essay "Corpus" and in *Being Singular Plural*,25 Nancy develops the relation between embodiment, meaning and ethical obligation in terms of the concepts of touch and spacing. he posits the uniqueness of the body at the origin of meaning and at the origin of ethics by not only conceiving the body as meaning as opposed to having meaning, but by thinking it in terms of community or being-with, and the tension between touch and spacing that this entails. For Nancy, the body is able to express meaning or signification because of the singularity, uniqueness or radical alterity it contains. However, this singularity/alterity is only expressed and exposed in its being-with or in the context of community.26

Nancy develops Heidegger's idea of being-with as constitutive of Dasein's ontological structure into the paradoxical logic of "being singular plural." he states: "the singular-plural constitutes the essence of Being, a constitution that undoes or dislocates every single, substantial essence of Being itself (BSP: 28-29). Each Dasein is singular in the sense that we each possess a body and face, a voice and a death. Each of us has a specific pattern of comportment, a silhouette, and a different narrative:

from faces to voices, gestures, attitudes, dress and conduct, whatever the "typical" traits are, everyone distinguishes himself by a sort of sudden and headlong precipitation where the strangeness of a singularity is concentrated. Without this precipitation there would be, quite simply, no "someone." And there would be no more interest or hospitality, desire or disgust, no matter who or what it might be for. (BSP: 8)

However, my singularity and my uniqueness as a comportment towards the world is only expressed and exposed in my being-with. For Nancy:

We can never simply be "the we," understood as a unique subject, or understood as an indistinct "we" that is like a diffuse generality. "We" always expresses a plurality, expresses "our" being divided and entangled: "one" is not "with" in some general sort of way, but each time according to

determined modes that are themselves multiple and simultaneous. . . . What is presented in this way, each time, is a stage on which several [people] can say "I," each on his own account, each in turn. But a "we" is not the adding together or juxtaposition of these "Fs." A "we," even one that is not articulated, is the condition for the possibility of each "I." No "I" can designate itself without there being a space-time of "self-referentiality." (BSP: 65)

Singularity refers to a subject's alterity, her difference that cannot be captured, subsumed or understood. A singularity is remarkable and unique, a point of origin which is marked as different from everything else around it. However, this difference does not close it off from others or community; singularity does not isolate the subject in her difference because the singular being is ecstatic-it is exposed, open and vulnerable to the other, always affected, touched, and invaded by the other. This openness that lies at the heart of singularity is one that propels the subject into relations with others and entangles it with others. This is why, as Georges van den Abbeele argues, despite the radical difference contained in singularity, there exists something common or universal in its dispersal.<sup>27</sup>

There is a commonality about our experiences; our bodies are all capable of feeling pain when hurt, we all fall in love and desire, weep and grieve; we all share Being and the experience of being-toward-death and we share a horizon of possible meanings/interpretations. These shared experiences are what constitute the "we"; they are what divide us as subjects, shatter our attempts at mastery and self-certainty and force us into relations with others; they are what "entangle" us with the other. It is only in relation to the "we," to community or to the other that I can refer to myself as an "I." It is only in the mode of being-with that my remarkableness or my uniqueness can be inscribed; that is, the singular can only occur as what remarks itself from the plural.<sup>28</sup>

However, this community of which Nancy writes is not an immanent self-enclosed circle of meanings, in which subjects are fused into a collective; rather, it is a sharing of words and senses, voices and subjectivities.<sup>29</sup> It is a community that remains porous and malleable, where singularities touch and are touched. The body, as an expression of meaning by virtue of its singularity or alterity, is the site where both ethics and community take place. Paramount to this is the sensibility of touch.

As open or ecstatic, my body expresses meaning, a meaning that touches the other, in the same way that the other's body expresses a meaning that touches me. Nancy writes: "The absoluteness [l'absoluite] of [the body's] sense, and the absoluteness of sense ... is not kept "within" it, since it is itself nothing but the being-exposed, the being-touched of this 'inside'" (Corpus: 204). This meaning/signification that a body expresses by virtue of its uniqueness or radical alterity is what creates a network of connections between one body and another, or it is the thread that connects one body to another. I am able to respond to the body of the other and be affected by that body because of the meaning it expresses, or because of its specificity. The other's body expresses meaning by virtue of its unique face and voice, its familiar pattern of gestures, mannerisms, and traits, or its particular relation to me.

Nancy singles out the sensibility of touch as the way in which bodies/singularities express their meaning because the touch not only lies outside of language, but it is also a unique sensibility; one that opens us up to an experience of the sublime. he states: "at the body, there is the sense of touch, the touch of the thing, which touches 'itself without an 'itself where it can get at itself, and which is touched and moved in this unbound sense of touch, and so separated from itself, shared out of itself' (Corpus: 203).

However, as Derrida points out, the figure of touch is also a slippery concept because Nancy blurs or confuses the line between the thematic meaning of touch and its operative function; that

is, the line between the proper or literal sense of touch and all its "tropic turns of phrase."<sup>30</sup> That is, there are times when he uses the figure of touch in a literal sense, and other times when he suggests that there is in fact, no such thing as touching. What then, are we to make of this figure of touch discernable not only in "Corpus," but a figure that litters Nancy's oeuvre? How does Nancy use this concept as an alternative to thinking the body by generating a discourse on it? What does it mean to reconceptualize reading and writing as matters of tact? How does this create a space for an ethics that respects the alterity of the other? What is the relation between touch and spacing, touch and distance? Derrida asks, in relation to Nancy's writing:

is it touching upon something or is it touching upon touching itself, there where, having more or less surreptitiously drawn our attention to the irreducible figure of touching, this writing makes us put our finger on language, touching itself by touching us and making us notice what is going on with touching, to be sure in a manner that is as obscure as it is aporetic, but above all, in a touching manner to the point where all affect, all desire, all fascination, all experience of the other seems to be involved?<sup>31</sup>

For Derrida, the figure of touch takes on an aporetic structure in Nancy's texts in accordance with the law of tact; a law that dictates or commands us to touch without touching. To not touch the other is to lack tact, but to touch her, and touch her too much is also tactless. We are thus divided by this contradictory injunction: "to touch without touching, to press without pressing, always more, always too much, never enough."<sup>32</sup> This implies that the figure of touch is not necessarily reducible to physical contact; rather, there is something intangible about "tacticity." Derrida uses the metaphor/trope of eyes touching or kissing to illustrate the intangibility of touch. he asks: can it ever happen that eyes can press against each other, touch each other in the same way lips can given that there are similarities in their surfaces? What does it mean to touch eyes? To touch another's eyes in a physical and tangible sense is certainly possible. I can touch the other's eyes with my fingers, my lips, or even with my lashes and eyelids by coming near to the other. But this, while not impossible, rarely happens. Eyes can however, touch/meet by looking at each other, a meeting that enables me to see "both your look and your eyes, love in fascination, and your eyes are not only seeing, but visible."<sup>33</sup> This enables me to touch the eyes of the other with my own eyes in such a way that I can see while losing my sight; that is, I see the other without fixing her, reducing her to an object status as vision has a tendency to do.

Derrida's trope of eyes touching through sight collapses the distinction between vision and touch. It captures the tension between the need to intangibly touch the other, while maintaining a respectful distance from her. The intangible touch is not one that does violence to the other by violating her corporeal boundaries; rather, it is a reciprocal touch that gives me access to the other's limit, the borders of her body. This access is at once transgressive, one that exceeds the border because "it breaks with immediacy, with the immediate given associated with touch,"<sup>34</sup> while remaining at the limit of the border. To touch the other is to interrupt a logic that attempts to know the other by subsuming her into categories of the same, a logic that attempts to fix the other, confer an identity on her, an identity that renders her body either meaningful or worthless. To touch the other, in both a tangible and intangible sense, is to gain access to her specificity, to be exposed to it, to be affected by it and to respond to it, but not to subsume it or annihilate it. As Nancy states, the touch opens up an irreducible and inassimilable strangeness of the other (BSP: 29). In this way, the figure of the touch, because it opens me up to the strangeness of the other, her alterity or singularity, also creates a space for ethical obligation.

The touch creates a space for ethical obligation by virtue of the spacing it opens up. The tension between the figures of touch and spacing suggests that the uniqueness that can only be expressed in community is also one that presents a limit to community. It is a limit in the sense

that while my singular being is intertwined or interlaced with that of the other and with community such that uniqueness is always bound up with multiplicity, there is a sense in which this closeness to the other opens up a space or a distance between my body and the body of the other. Nancy writes: "from one singular to the other, there is contiguity but not continuity. There is proximity, but only to the extent that extreme closeness emphasizes the distancing it opens up. all of being is in touch with all of being, but the law of touch is separation" (BSP: 5). This distance is insurmountable because irrespective of how close I am to the other, her body signifies a limit that I cannot cross. The other's body signifies her singularity or alterity that I cannot access, a meaning I cannot capture. Nancy writes: "it is a matter of one or the other, one and the other, one with the other, but by no means the one in the other, which would be something other than one or the other (another essence, another diffuse or infuse generality)" (BSP: 6). While I can touch this origin (the other's singularity), be exposed to it, stand before it, it will evade my grasp, vanish the moment I touch it and conceal itself from me:

"Strangeness" refers to the fact that each singularity is another access to the world. At the point where we would expect "something," a substance or a procedure, a principle or an end, a signification, there is nothing but the manner, the turn of the other access, which conceals itself in the very gesture wherein it offers itself to us... . In the singularity that he exposes, each child that is born has already concealed the access that he is "for himself and in which he will conceal himself "within himself." (BSP: 14)

The attempt to appropriate the other's origin by traversing the space that the touch opens up, transforms the curiosity we have of the other's strangeness into a "destructive rage" in which the other's singularity is either adopted or rejected. This constitutes an ethical closure because in abolishing the limit that the other's body represents, we transform the "other" into an "Other," and fix the other as either divine, worthy of glorification, or as evil, an Other that must be excluded or exterminated. The desire to fix the other is a "desire for murder . for an increase of cruelty and horror ... it is mutilation, carving up, relentlessness, meticulous execution, the joy of agony" (BSP: 21). We are able to inflict cruelty on the Other because it no longer constitutes a point of origin, or a uniqueness.

This suggests that the law of an ethical touch is separation, space and distance because the moment I physically touch the body of the other, I am made aware of its separateness, its uniqueness, and the limit it presents to what I can know. The attempt to conquer this space that the touch creates is also the attempt to conquer the alterity of the other:

Bodies run the risk of resisting one another in an impenetrable fashion, but they also run the risk of meeting and dissolving into one another. This double risk comes down to the same thing: abolishing the limit, the touch, the absolute, becoming substance, becoming God, becoming the Subject of speculative subjectivity. This is no longer the ab-solute, but saturated totality. But as long as there is something, there is also something else, other bodies whose limits expose them to each other's touch, between repulsion and dissolution. (Corpus: 206)

The other's body thus represents a limit to what I can know because of the way in which it opens up a space or distance that needs to be maintained rather than traversed, irrespective of how close I am to the other. This space means that "two bodies cannot occupy the same space simultaneously. Not you at the same time in the space where I speak, in the place where you listen" (Corpus: 189). My body is an expression of my singularity, my finitude and my specific being-in-the-world. I cannot speak for the other, nor listen for the other.

For this reason, language fails us when it comes to the question of embodiment. The body of the other is not something that we can capture by language, nor is it something that can be made to conform to our conceptual categories. If I were to generate a discourse on the body, I would

become the condition for the possibility of this discourse, or its point of utterance. Whom I am talking about becomes the object of my discourse. This is why "I will never be able to speak from where you listen, nor will you be able to listen from where I speak" (Corpus: 189). The insurmountable distance between my-self and the other means that I will never be able to understand the other's embodied existence. To speak on her behalf would constitute an ethical closure or would be an injustice to the other because I would have to subsume the other into my own categories in an attempt to understand her.

This raises the problem, for Nancy, and perhaps implicitly for Heidegger, of how to think the body or our embodiment without reducing the body to an object of discourse/knowledge, given that any attempt to think/speak/write the body falls into the same dynamic it seeks to evade; that is, it reduces the body to an object of knowledge. As Nancy states, we are caught in a double bind, or a failure, because "when one puts the body on the program, on whatever program, one has already set it aside" (Corpus: 190). Could this problematic Nancy identifies in discourses on the body also have plagued Heidegger, rendering him silent or speechless on the question of Dasein's embodiment? Could this be a possible explanation as to why Heidegger deflects, avoids and evades the question of embodiment at the moments where his thinking inevitably begins to touch on this contentious issue?<sup>35</sup> For Nancy, given this difficulty in thinking the body, and given the centrality of the body for ethics, it becomes all the more pressing to find alternative ways of conceptualizing the body in such a way that does not reduce it to an object of discourse.

For Nancy, it is not a question of producing more discourse on the body, but to stop discoursing altogether, to "cut into discourse" and learn how to touch instead. We need to stop talking because there is essentially nothing to say about the body. The body is not an object of knowledge, but an experience in and of itself. For Nancy, bodies are there-given-as weight, resistance, and extension. These attributes are first and foremost experiences that come prior to any knowledge we may procure on the subject of embodiment. Bodies are resistances to both knowledge and ignorance; they are simply given, to be touched and to touch. The body offers itself as a weighty mass, a mass "without anything to articulate, without anything to discourse about, without anything to add to them" (Corpus: 197). The body is simply there, "given, abandoned .. simply posited, weighed, weighty... existence does not presuppose itself and does not presuppose anything: it is posited, imposed, weighed, laid down, exposed" (Corpus: 200). The body is weight and mass, density and substance; a substance that touches on other substances, a mass that weighs against other bodies, one that touches other bodies.

To further this project of finding alternative ways of conceptualizing the body, Nancy introduces the idea of a "corpus." This is a way of cataloguing the different modes of the body and its ways of being in the world, such that the body implicitly emerges. A corpus is a reconceptualization of reading and writing as matters of tact, as different ways of touching and being touched. A corpus is a "catalog, the recitation of an empirical logos that, without transcendental reason, would be a gleaned list, random in its order or in its degree of completion" (Corpus: 189). It is an attempt to capture "a body touched, touching, and the tract of this tact" (Corpus; 189). In this way, Nancy negotiates the tension between the need to recreate the body in discourse and the problems associated with representing something that is otherwise unrepresentable.<sup>36</sup>

The discussion of Nancy illustrated the following: firstly, the ethical and ontological problem of discoursing on the body, given that this reproduces the body as an object of knowledge, and fails to examine the body in its ontological condition as being-with. secondly, it fleshed out the relation between the body, meaning and ethical obligation. As we saw, Nancy puts the uniqueness of the body at the origin of meaning and at the origin of ethics. However, the body as an expression of meaning can only emerge in the context of being-with-others or community. This relation between

the body and community gives rise to an ethical obligation based on the tension between touch and spacing. The relation developed between embodiment, meaning and ethical obligation based on touch and spacing is intended to frame my discussion of Heidegger, ethics and embodiment. Nancy's arguments provide a way of understanding Heidegger's apparent silence on the body as such. If Heidegger's ontology opens a place for the body and ethics, this cannot be achieved through an account of the body as an empirical object. Rather, I argue that through his account of being-with-others, and through an account of touch and spacing, a place for the body is created.

### Retrieving Dasein's Body

In the previous section, Heidegger's dissatisfaction with the way in which the body has been conceptualized in philosophy was briefly noted. For Heidegger, the problem lies in the fact that the body is treated as an object, thing or substance, or in his terminology as something "present-at-hand." By conceiving of Dasein as if it were an entity amongst other entities in the world, the ontological dimension of Dasein becomes obscured. That is, the way in which the world matters to Dasein, and the way in which it cares about not only its own existence, but also the world and the others it encounters is obscured. It is this relation between meaning, Dasein and being-in-the-world as being-with that I want to reconstruct in this section through an account of Heidegger's analysis of equipment, spatiality and being-with, keeping in mind Nancy's arguments about the failure of language to explain our embodiment, and the concepts of touch, spacing and corpus.

A fundamental aspect of Heidegger's "destruction" of the metaphysical tradition is the consistent preoccupation with demonstrating that Dasein is not an object, a thing or a substance that is "present-at-hand"; nor is it an self-given "I" or ego, that must mediate a relation to the world and others. Rather, the fundamental or ontological structure of Dasein is being-in-the-world and being-with-others. Dasein's interaction in the world is characterised by touching and handling, grasping and holding. Its engagement begins at the level of the corporeal, without which, the ontology of Being and Time would make little sense.<sup>37</sup>

The disavowal of the body by traditional metaphysics, epitomized in the thought of Descartes, is particularly contentious for Heidegger, because it distorts the way in which Dasein engages in the world or the way in which "one feels one's way by touch" (BT: 96). For Heidegger, the only way we can know anything about the world is through the sensibility of touch. he writes, "the kind of dealing which is closest to us is ... not a bare perceptual cognition, but rather that kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use; and this has its own kind of 'knowledge'" (BT: 67). To illustrate, Heidegger draws on examples from the world of equipment. In Being and Time, he argues that "the less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become" (BT: 69). Dasein does not procure knowledge by standing back from the object in question and apprehending it theoretically or speculatively; rather, it can only come to have knowledge of its world by an engaged and active immersion in it. Such an engaged immersion presupposes Dasein's embodiment.<sup>38</sup>

Heidegger's account of Dasein's engagement with equipment suggests that the space of human experience is not the space of objects "outside" the subject, or objects intuited by our outer sense. Rather, human being is the outside in the sense that it is always being in the world.<sup>39</sup>As Krell points out, Dasein does not exist in terms of an "inner sense," trapped in a body which functions as a window to the outside. Its relation to the world is one of use, of getting in hand, of touch, of approach and withdrawal, of nearing and passing away, distancing and undistancing.<sup>40</sup>Its relation to the world is thus one of a meaningful spacing. This becomes apparent in Heidegger's discussion of spatiality. The following analysis will introduce the concept of embodiment in the relation between spacing and meaning.



In exploring the manner in which entities subsist in space and Dasein's relation to them, Heidegger begins his analysis in the world of equipment, or the function of the ready-to-hand. These are entities which are close by, or which have the character of equipment. These entities do not exist randomly in space, but have a place; they are "essentially fitted up and installed, set-up . and put to rights" (BT: 102). Equipment is thus ordered and always exists in a particular context: "such a place and such a multiplicity of places are not to be interpreted as the 'where' of some random Being-present-at-hand of Things. In each case the place is the definite 'there' or 'yonder' of an item of equipment which belongs somewhere" (BT: 102). The distance of things is not measured in terms of what is farthest or closest to us, but measured in terms of proximity, which refers to the level of use of the equipment to Dasein. Things are arranged on my desk in a particular order, pen, notepad, and computer. Each has its place on the space that is the desk; each, while equidistant from the other objects and myself, has a different proximity depending on its relation to me:

What is available in our everyday dealings has the character of nearness. To be exact, this nearness of equipment has already been intimated in the term "availableness" which expresses the being of equipment. Every entity that is "to hand" has a different nearness, which is not to be ascertained by measuring distances. This nearness regulates itself in terms of circumspective "calculative" manipulating and using. (BT: 102)

"Nearness" and "proximity" are not distances that can be calculated; rather, the meaning each object has in relation to Dasein is what determines its proximity. Dasein's relation to space is not only one of meaning, but one of touching and manipulating, handling and holding. Such a relation to space presupposes Dasein's embodiment.

Dasein's ontological structure as being-in means that it deals with other entities "concernfully" and with "familiarity." Dasein's spatiality is one where it is actively engaged in the world/space in which it is thrown. In the above description, Heidegger captures the tension between Dasein's active and passive relation to the world. As Casey argues, Heidegger captures the tension of being-in a world that Dasein has not created—a public shared world-in which it nevertheless has to make a difference in the way in which its being-in-the-world is shaped.<sup>41</sup>

Heidegger refers to this concerned interaction in/with space as "de-severance" and "directionality." This is important, as it not only illustrates Dasein's relation to meaning, but also makes apparent the importance of embodiment in Dasein's relation to space. De-severance does not refer to the manner in which an object may be remote or close to Dasein in a physical, tangible sense. Rather, the phenomena of "de-severance" refers to a mode of Being (an *existentiale*) in which distance or remoteness is eradicated, such that entities and the world itself is brought closer to Dasein:

Proximally and for the most part, de-severing is a circumspective bringing-close-bringing something close in the sense of procuring it, putting it in readiness, having it to hand. But certain ways in which entities are discovered in a purely cognitive manner also have the character of bringing them close. In Dasein there lies an essential tendency towards closeness. All the ways in which we speed things up, as we are more or less compelled to do today, push us on towards the conquest of remoteness. (BT: 105)

The radio, television, and internet are illustrative of this attempt to conquer space by bringing the world to Dasein. I can watch, read, and listen to events as they unfold in a different place, on the other side of the world. These places and events are brought closer to me, in the sense that they inhabit my world/space/place in a tangible sense. De-severance thus opens up a nearness or remoteness, accessibility or inaccessibility of equipment, objects, and the world. De-severance is a paradoxical phenomenon because it renders space as at once extended and brought close in

the sense that remote places and spaces are brought close to Dasein. The concept of spacing that emerges in the phenomenon of de-severance is premised on the fact that Dasein cares about its world; that is, its relation is one of meaning, care, and hence ethics.

De-severance thus refers to Dasein's idiosyncratic relation to space, a relation that makes apparent the existential dimension inherent to space. For Heidegger, the manner in which Dasein talks of space illustrates that Dasein has its own language that is intelligible to it and others. We do not always measure space in precise terms, but use expressions such as "over yonder" a "good walk," "a stone's throw" or "as long as it takes to smoke a pipe" to express spatial distance (BT: 106). This metaphorical way in which we engage with space illustrates the manner in which Dasein makes the world meaningful to it, and the way in which the world matters to it: "these measure express not only that they are not intended to 'measure' anything but also that remoteness here estimated belongs to some entity to which one goes with concerned circumspection" (BT: 106). Dasein's relation to the world and to space is always one of meaning because the world matters to Dasein: "as Dasein goes along its ways, it does not measure off a stretch of space as a Corporeal Thing which is present-at-hand; it does not 'devour in kilometres'; bringing-close or de-severance is always a kind of concerned Being towards what is brought close and de-severed"(BT: 106).

In defining Dasein's relation to space in terms of de-severance, Heidegger begins to gesture toward a subtle and implicit account of corporeality. To have things close to us, we need to reach out for the object, touch, grasp, or look at it. An object or entity can only be close if an embodied Dasein renders it so or engages with it. While this embodied engagement is not made explicit, it is presupposed because if Dasein is to procure something, or make something meaningful, it needs to touch it, see it, or listen to it. Bringing something close through a process of de-severance is thus intimately bound to Dasein's lived body.

Heidegger isolates seeing and hearing as the two senses that demonstrate the corporeal dimension to de-severance. For Heidegger, seeing and hearing are "distance-senses not because they are far-reaching, but because it is in them that Dasein as de-severant mainly dwells" (BT: 107). They are the two senses that enable Dasein to conquer distance, to bring something close within its specific environment in such a way that renders it meaningful. For example, the spectacles resting on my nose that are close to me "distantially" are environmentally more remote from me than the painting on the other side of the room. The spectacles, while close, are only instrumental in rendering the painting meaningful by bringing it close in terms of de-severance. Similarly, a telephone, while close to my ear is more distant to me than the voice from another place that it brings close to me. The street upon which I walk seems as if though "it is the closest and Realist of all that is ready-to-hand, and it slides itself, as it were, along certain positions of one's body-the soles of one's feet" (BT: 107). But the street is more remote than the friend whom I encounter on the street; that is, the friend is closer than the street because she is more meaningful to me than the street with which I have primary contact. In this way, spatiality is always bound up with meaning and corporeality: "circumspective concern decides as to the closeness and farness of what is potentially ready-to-hand environmentally" (BT: 107). The body, it would appear, is presupposed in this de-severance; for Dasein to meet a friend, to listen to a voice, to immerse itself in a painting means it has to have a body.

Heidegger's account of equipment, being-with and spatiality suggests, as Levin argues, that the ontology of Being and Time is not possible except for embodied beings; that is, beings that are endowed with eyes and ears, arms and hands, throat and lips.<sup>42</sup>As Heidegger states: "bringing-close is not oriented towards the I-Thing encumbered with a body, but towards concerned Being-

in-the-world-that is, towards whatever is proximally encountered in such Being. It follows, moreover, that Dasein's spatiality is not to be defined by citing the position at which some corporeal Thing is present-at-hand" (BT: 107). This suggests that being-in-the-world is not to exist as a mind encumbered with a body. The body is not an appendage or an object that has meaning imposed upon it; rather, to be in the world is to have a bodily comportment towards the world, it is to be affected by the world at the level of the corporeal, which is first and foremost an expression of meaning. Heidegger, it would appear, is objecting to the body as an object that has meaning rather than as an expression of meaning in and of itself.

This presupposition of embodiment is also apparent in Heidegger's discussion of being-with. We have seen the way in which Dasein is ontologically being-with for Heidegger and how this has been appropriated and radicalized by Nancy into the logic of being-singular plural; that is, our singularity and uniqueness is only expressed and exposed in the context of community or being-with. By implication, it suggests that meaning is something that emerges in our interactions with others. A similar triadic relation between meaning, embodiment and community emerges in Heidegger's discussion of being-with and spatiality. In his account of being-with, Heidegger is at pains to emphasise the way in which people or other Daseins are not encountered as present-at-hand in the same way the world of equipment is; rather, we encounter others as lived bodies in situation, or "environmentally."

These bodies express a particular meaning by virtue of this situation. The people we encounter matter to us because their bodies express a certain meaning-they are the bookshop owners from whom Dasein buys its books, the person who owns the boat anchored by the shore, the person who owns the field upon which Dasein walks, or they are people closer to Dasein-its colleagues and family, friends and lovers (BT: 118). However, this is not to say that these bodies are instrumental in the sense that they are only meaningful to Dasein in so far as they provide a particular service to it. As Heidegger makes quite explicit, others are "neither present-at-hand nor ready-to-hand; on the contrary, they are like the very Dasein which frees them, in that they are there too, and there with it" (BT: 118). We meet others "at work" or in their being-in-the-world, we see others "standing around," but do not apprehend them as a present-at-hand, but always apprehend them in their existential mode of being (BT: 118).

So while the world is mine, it is also one that is shared by other Daseins, and the equipment that is there for me to use is also there for others in the same way. To say that others are not encountered in the same way that other objects are suggests that the others one encounters are expressions of meaning by virtue of their singularity; a singularity contained in their bodies. This meaning however, can only be expressed in relation to others with whom Dasein shares its world. It therefore becomes apparent that in Heidegger's analysis of being-with the body is always presupposed. When we encounter people, we encounter them as embodied beings, beings with a body that expresses a particular meaning in the context of community. This meaning that the body of the other represents is one that extends towards me, touches me, and imposes an obligation on me to respond to the other. However, Heidegger, like Nancy, is at pains to emphasize that the space that the touch creates is one that needs to be maintained for the ethical relation.

In his brief account of authentic being-with, he states that we should not "leap in" for the other, but "leap ahead," not in such a way that appropriates the other's ability to 'care' or her potentiality-for-being, but in such a way that "helps the Other to become transparent to [her] self in [her] care and to become free for it" (BT: 122). Leaping in for the other eradicates the space between my body and that of the other. It would mean subsuming the other into my categories, or conferring an identity upon her. Leaping ahead however, maintains a space in which the other is left free "to

be" to pursue her projects. This "letting be" is not however, a form of apathy or ambivalence toward the other; it is not a "letting be" of the other in the face of her oppression; rather, it is assisting the other to become free to pursue her projects.

If we recall, Nancy argues that producing more discourse on the body merely perpetuates a logic that conceives of the body as an empirical object of discourse rather than an expression of meaning, and that the meaning expressed by the body is one that touches the other in both a tangible and intangible sense. Transposing these arguments onto Heidegger, it is possible to extrapolate that implicit in Heidegger's account of spatiality is a body that is inscribed with meaning, a meaning that comes before or prior to an articulation or a discourse on the body; a meaning that is tactilely created and reproduced in Dasein's relation to spatiality and spacing, and its engagement with objects and others in that space. As Casey points out, while it appears that Heidegger neglected the role of the body in his analysis of space, it is precisely this deliberate refusal to invoke the body, along with consciousness, that led to Heidegger's radical account of spatiality, and inadvertently, created a space for the body. For Casey, both mind and body are suspended in order to explore what happens in the space between them.<sup>43</sup> While the body is suspended in this analysis, it remains the condition for the possibility of Heidegger's existential analytic; that is, the body, while apparently absent, is always presupposed.

The criticisms of Heidegger with which this essay began claimed that Heidegger's silence on the question of Dasein's embodiment not only reproduces the allegedly disembodied subject of metaphysics, but also constitutes an ethical closure. By tracing the way in which the body implicitly emerges from its objectification in Heidegger's work, I argued that the fact that the body is not directly addressed by Heidegger does not mean that it is not consistently invoked in other ways. Using the arguments presented by Nancy, this paper challenges the view that the solution to the traditional disavowal of the body in metaphysics is to generate and proliferate discourses on it. The ethical relation that Nancy develops is not one based on language, but is one based on the concepts of touch and the spacing that this creates. These concepts are also discernable in Heidegger's thinking, and provide a way of understanding Heidegger's apparent silence on the body. In the opening section of his essay "Corpus" Nancy writes: "How can one get hold of the body?" then, "I am already speechless" (Corpus: 190). Perhaps what we need in cultivating an ethical relation to the other is to stop discoursing on the body, to concede that we cannot capture it by language because of its ineffable and elusive nature, and to grant a place for this silence; a space where the body, in its singularity, alterity, even its strangeness, is left free "to be."<sup>44</sup>

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#### ENDNOTES

1. Jean-Luc Nancy, "Corpus," in *The Birth to Presence*, trans. Brian Holmes et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 190. Cited as Corpus.
2. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1962). Hereafter cited as BT.
3. John Caputo, "The Absence of Monica: Heidegger, Derrida, and Augustine's Confessions," in Nancy J. Holland and Patricia Huntington, eds., *Feminist Interpretations of Martin Heidegger* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press 2001), 151-52, 159, 161.
4. *Ibid.*, 154.
5. John Caputo, *Demythologising Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 125.
6. see Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London: Methuen, 1957), 323.
7. Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonse Lingis (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1978), 97.

8. see Tina Chanter, *Time, Death and the Feminine: Levinas with Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), for a critique of Heidegger's alleged disavowal of the body and its implications for feminist theory.
9. Patricia Huntington, *Ecstatic Subjects, Utopia and Recognition: Kristeva, Heidegger and Irigaray* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).
10. see Caputo, *Demythologising Heidegger*, 129.
11. For a detailed account of the way in which a body in pain creates the space for obligation see Caputo's insightful appropriation of Levinas, in *ibid.*
12. For a detailed account of the inadequacies of what constitutes a "discourse on the body," see David Michael Levin, "The Ontological Dimension of Embodiment: Heidegger's Thinking of Being," in Welton Donn, ed., *The Body: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Maiden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 125.
13. *Ibid.*
14. For other interpretations of Heidegger's alleged neglect of Dasein's embodiment see Seamus Carey, "Cultivating Ethos through the Body," *Human Studies* 23 (2000): 29-33 and "Embodying Original Ethics: A Response to the Levinasian Critique of Heidegger," *Philosophy Today* 41 (1995): 449-51. Carey develops Heidegger's account of embodiment through the work of Merleau-Ponty. Also see Richard R. Askay, "Heidegger, the Body, and the French philosophers," *Continental Philosophy Review* 32 (1999): 32-33.
15. see Rosalyn Diprose, "The Hand that Writes Community in Blood," *Cultural Studies Review* 9 (2003): 44-48, for a further discussion on the question of embodiment and community in Jean-Luc Nancy's work.
16. see both Levin, "The Ontological Dimension of Embodiment: Heidegger's Thinking of Being," and David Farrell Krell, *Archetecture: Ecstasies of Space, Time, and the Human Body* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).
17. *Being and Time*, 23.
18. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Vol. 1, The Will to Power as Art*, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1997), 209.
19. Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 2000), 228.
20. see Krell *Archetecture*, 4.
21. Martin Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols, Conversations, Letters*, ed. Medard Boss (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 117.
22. *Ibid*, 339.
23. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 98-99.
24. *Ibid*, 100.
25. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000). Hereafter cited as BSP.
26. see Diprose, "The Hand that Writes Community in Blood."
27. Georges van den Abbeele, "Singular Remarks," *Paragraph* 16:2(1993): 184.
28. *Ibid.*
29. see Gary Shapiro, "Jean-Luc Nancy and the Corpus of Philosophy," in *Thinking Bodies*, ed. Juliet Flower MacCannell & Laura Zakarin (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 53-54.
30. Jacques Derrida, "Le toucher Touch/to touch him," *Paragraph* 16:2(1993): 132.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*, 124.

33. Ibid., 122.

34. Ibid., p.141.

35. For example, in *Being and Time*, he says: "This 'bodily nature' hides a whole problematic of its own, though we shall not treat it here" (143). Thirty-seven years later in a reply to Eugen Fink, he once again claims that the body cannot be thought through ontologically and remarks that the "body phenomenon is the most difficult problem." Martin Heidegger, *Heraclitus Seminar*, trans. Charles H. Seibert (Evanston: Northwestern University press, 1992), 146.

36. see Shapiro, "Jean-Luc Nancy and the Corpus of Philosophy," 61 for a detailed discussion of corpus as a way of representing the unrepresentable, and see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak "Response to Jean-Luc Nancy" in *Thinking Bodies*, 33, 35, 36, for a critique of the paradoxical nature of a corpus.

37. see Levin, "The Ontological Dimension of Embodiment."

38. For an extended discussion on touch and knowledge, see Heidegger's discussion in *What is Called Thinking?* trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 23. Also see Levin, "The Ontological Dimension of Embodiment," who gives a superb and detailed account of this text (138-40). To illustrate the extent to which thinking is an embodied practice, something that we are drawn to by virtue of our embodiment, and something that we perform corporeally, Heidegger uses the example of the cabinetmaker's apprentice learning to build a cabinet. To learn how to build a cabinet, the cabinetmaker does not merely gather knowledge or information about how to build and the different tools required; rather, the handicraft is learned by answering and responding to different materials, types and shapes of wood, by touching and handling the material.

39. Krell, *Architecture: Ecstasies of Space, Time, and the Human Body*, 53.

40. Ibid.

41. Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 249.

42. Levin, "The Ontological Dimension of Embodiment," 129.

43. Casey, *The Fate of Place*, 244.

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