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SYMPOSIUM

Healing the enduring wound of cartesian dualism through embodied rootedness

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Abstract In this article I will take up the interlocking themes of breath, Cartesian dualism, and the transparent body as they are articulated in *The healing body: Creative responses to illness, aging, and affliction* by Drew Leder. Through an expansive reading of the breath as spirit, I contend that we can arrive at a body-concept that is still expansive and open to the world, but does not require the intermediary step of the renunciation of or distancing from the body. This preserves the porous and intersubjective openness that characterize Leder's conception of the "transparent body" but puts more daylight between the "transparent body" and what he terms the "absent body". My aim is to extend the metaphor of this embodied expansiveness to think through instances in which the body is interconnected but still manifestly consciously foregrounded, rooted, and felt.
KEYWORDS: Transparent Body; Absent Body; Cartesian Dualism; Breth; Embodied Experience; Emmanuel Lévinas

Riassunto *Guarire la ferita ancora aperta del dualismo cartesiano con il radicamento corporeo* - In questo lavoro mi occuperò di alcuni temi reciprocamente intrecciati, quali il respiro, il dualismo cartesiano e il corpo trasparente, così come vengono articolati in *The healing body: Creative responses to illness, aging, and affliction* di Drew Leder. Adottando una interpretazione estensiva del respiro come spirito, sosterrò che possiamo guadagnare un concetto di corpo che è ancora estensivo e aperto al mondo, ma che non necessita del passaggio intermedio della rinuncia o della presa di distanza dal corpo. Questo preserva la porosità e l'apertura intersoggettiva che caratterizzano la concezione del "corpo trasparente" di Leder, ponendo però in maggiore risalto il rapporto tra ciò che lui definisce "corpo trasparente" e "corpo assente". Io vorrei estendere la metafora di questa espansività incarnata per riflettere su situazioni in cui il corpo è intrecciato al tutto, ma è evidentemente ancora radicato e percepito coscientemente in primo piano.
PAROLE CHIAVE: Corpo trasparente; Corpo assente; Dualismo cartesiano; Respiro; Esperienza incarnata; Emmanuel Lévinas

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DREW LEDER'S *The healing body: Creative responses to illness, aging, and affliction* is a beautiful and moving book. The reader is invited to experiment with the healing strategies. Reading lends itself to the process of healing and positive re-embodiment. The book is also intimate, vulnerable, and honest in its autobiographical accounts both from the author and from the quoted sources. While it is dissimilar to my customary writing style, I want to honor and reflect that same spirit in this review. That said, I am not sure western philosophy as a discipline has earned such a reparative corrective, considering the historical undervaluation and disparagement of the body. From Plato's tripartite theory of the soul to Cartesian dualism's privileging of rationality, the body is often thought of as primitively animalistic, as that which stymies or imprisons the 'higher' intellect, the eternal soul, and the more divinely rational aspects of the self. The body is what negatively associates us with our brute primality whereas the mind and its capacity for rational thought aligns us with the eternal and the godlike. In addition to this theoretical exclusion and antagonistic relation to the concept of the body, the academic discipline of philosophy places deleterious demands on one's health. It requires long periods of physical inactivity, isolating study, and irregular hours.

Philosophy is not unique in academia in its demand that one's embodiment recede into the background so that one can foreground abstract thought. However, it also historically and canonically has excluded, marginalized, and devalued embodiment. It excludes specific forms of embodiment, such as bodies that are feminized, racialized, fat bodies, or disabled bodies to name a few.[1] This stubbornly persists in the expectations of the discipline and those who are pushed out of the discipline. Slight progress has been made, yet those who whose bodies are hyper visible and hyper-objectified continue to be marginalized in the field in overt and covert ways. I am hyper-aware of the kinds of bodies that are allowed to be philosophers and, likewise, the kinds of bodies that are considered the proper objects of philosophical reflection. Drew Leder is attentive to the social and political systems that keep us isolated from each other and from authentic embodied existence. These larger social and political phenomena are reproduced in academia more generally and in philosophy more specifically. One question that I think Leder's book invites is how do we heal the intersubjective or the social treatment of the body in the philosophical discipline?

Both Leder and I draw on phenomenology in our philosophical practices, which directly theorizes the body. However, in canonical texts this sometimes reinforces the tendency to abstract from experience, to universalize an ahistorical white male subjective vantage, to dematerialize the body and to bracket experience in order to objectify it. This is decidedly not Drew Leder's project. Nevertheless, I am circumspect on the matter of whether a philosophy that so often demeans the body has earned an account of how to better inhabit the body through the inevitable changes of illness, aging, and affliction? It is, of course, not so simple, and resources of aging better and insights into living with illness or affliction lift all boats. I am here underlining Leder's own claims that social and political change is necessary to heal society. I would go further that this change is likewise necessary to heal the discipline of philosophy (LEDER 2024, pp. 31-32; this passage in Leder's book acknowledges the work of Young, Weiss, Fanon, Gordon, Alcoff, Yancy, Lee, Sekimoto, Brown Kafer, and Clare). If healing happens socially but is only available to a privileged few (the same few that are supported in the exclusionary discipline of academic philosophy), I am not sure that healing is genuine, earned, or authentic. As Leder (2024) states «a shadow-side of any over-exclusive focus on inside insights is that these can be used to distract us from the political reform needed to create a healthy supportive world» (p. 168). In these instances, the focus on individual healing can sometimes distract us from the necessary social and intersubjective healing that is likewise necessary.

My response to Leder's book aims to build on the generous foundation it provides, to further inhabit its ideas, and to think through how this book can be placed into dialogue with different experiences of embodiment. I aim to think through possibilities to create a capacious and inclusive healthy supportive world both inside and outside of the discipline of philosophy.

1 Philosophy's body problem made manifest by inhabiting a problem body

Leder (2024) notes that,

> Women in a sexist society are often conditioned to experience their body as an object to be judged by others according to its appearance. The result is an internal alienation, and limitation on the exercise of one's full subjective freedom. One learns to be an object. [...] In a racist society, people of color also find themselves associated with a body-object, and one that is viewed as inherently deficient or dangerous [...] Then too, persons with "disabilities" are often viewed as aberrant and lesser simply by virtue of their non-normative body type. (pp. 31-32)

Drew Leder's earlier book *The absent body* (1990) gives a robust phenomenological account of how when one is in good health, the body often disappears from experiences and «surfaces when things become problematic» (p. 8). When one has

a problematic body, an objectified body, a racialized body, a "non-ideal" body, or when one's body is considered a problem in one's professional field, then it does not disappear. Likewise, if one has a lifetime of chronic pain or disability, then the body does not suddenly become a problem or a novel inconvenience to navigate. The experience of the body suddenly becoming a problem, or of only navigating the obstinance of the body later in life is an experience of privilege.

The world is not built for certain bodies. If you live in one of these bodies, adjusting to a world that is built for a different kind of body imparts a wealth of knowledge that can be beneficial to those who are just coming into these experiences later in life. It is critical to acknowledge that illness, aging, and disability are not equivocal or interchangeable terms. Likewise, disability itself encompasses a myriad of divergent conditions and experiences. One common misconception is that living with a chronic condition or disability is negative. This experience is wrongly imagined as a deficient experience of living in a "healthy" body. Disability is value neutral, neither positive nor negative, it just is. For example, being blind is not merely the experience of the absence or loss of sight, but is also several positive capacities, such that Georgina Kleege, author who has been blind since childhood refers to it as "gaining blindness" (GISSEN & KLEEGE 2019, p. 57).

Drew Leder draws on a myriad of accounts from individuals who have learned or are learning to adjust to recent disabling experiences and even some accounts from those who have always lived with disabilities (there are several phenomenal texts by philosophers of disability such as Kay Toombs, Eva Kittay, Christina Crosy, etc. I recommend them all, and especially: GARLAND-THOMSON 2016; BARNES 2015). Sharing this knowledge often means assisting those who have historically excluded one's own subjective and embodied positions. What is the price for this openness? Having vibrant, alternate, and inclusive modalities of shared embodied existence is both a philosophical and political project. This shift necessarily would include an augmentation of the default universal subject.

In small and large ways, I have never been afforded having an absent body. Much of the built world is made to most accommodate the "average male subject". I need to get a stepstool every morning to open the window blinds or to reach the second shelves in my kitchen. This is mildly annoying. However, if I were in a serious car accident, the fact that car safety features are tested on crash dummies modeled on the average male build, could be deadly. The fact that the discipline of philosophy is only roughly twenty percent women means that doing philosophy publicly, I am often acutely aware of my body and the way it is perceived. While white women are still a minority, the statistic for femme and non-binary Black, Latinx/a, or Indigenous scholars of philosophy are even more dispiriting. This is not to say that embodied awareness is a zero-sum game. Nobody is either totally aware of or totally oblivious to their body at all times. Rather, awareness or obliviousness are different modes of inhabitation. If many of the strategies for healing have to do with finding one's way back into one's body, those who have a shorter distance may be more equipped to inhabit the body in modes of awareness. As Drew mentions, one of the easiest paths towards embodied awareness, is through the breath. I am drawn to the commodious possibilities for this in a re-centering of the breath.

2 Breath

Despite the overwhelming Cartesian tradition of mind-body dualism, there is a separate history of philosophy that foregrounds breath. William James (2016) observed:

> I am as confident as I am of anything that, in myself, the stream of thinking (which I recognize emphatically as a phenomenon) is only a careless name for what, when scrutinized, reveals itself to consist chiefly of the stream of my breathing. The "I think" which Kant said must be able to accompany all my objects, is the "I breathe" which actually does accompany them. There are other internal facts besides breathing (intracephalic muscular adjustments, etc., of which I have said a word in my larger Psychology), and these increase the assets of "consciousness", so far as the latter is subject to immediate perception; but breath, which was ever the original of "spirit", breath moving outwards, between the glottis and the nostrils, is, I am persuaded, the essence out of which philosophers have constructed the entity known to them as consciousness (p. 131).

The breath is an ongoing process and a continuous rearticulation of the body's threshold. As this physical borderland, the concept does not easily dualistically bifurcate lived physiological experience on the one hand, and psyche or mind on the other, but yokes them together and speaks of an intertwining or enmeshment. As stated by Theresa Silow, healing involves reminding ourselves that «the body is not a thing we have, but an experience we are» (as quoted in CALDWELL 2014, p. 76. However, this distancing from the body is also present in many Eastern meditative techniques as well). The experience of the breath is the most basic feeling of aliveness, and that aliveness is constitutive to the feeling of wholeness that Drew Leder considers constitutive of healing. To wit,

breathing is not something that one does, but something that one *is*.

I want to drill down and expand on the spiritual aspect of the breath and the breath as the foundation of the conscious subject. Leder (2024) points out that:

> the Greek word *psyche,* and the Latin *anima* and *spiritus,* which could be translated as "soul" or "spirit," all derive from the word for "breath" [...] Any detailed analysis of this is beyond the bounds of this work. Suffice it to say that the soul can be conceptualized either as the living principle that animates a body, or as what we might call "mind" or "spirit," which is potentially separable from the body, and eternal. From whence comes this sense of a soul-body split? It is reasonable to infer that *respiration* – so integral to life, and yet invisible, almost immaterial – was one phenomenological *inspiration* leading to Greco-Christian, and the Cartesian, modes of dualism with the notion of a spirit that animates, but which is also separatable from, the body. (p. 183)

I would like to expand this analysis slightly. In classic philosophy *Psyche* means breath of life, spirit, or soul, and *pneuma* denotes breath (in ancient Greek). For the Stoics *pneuma* is the animating element of vitality. For the Stoics this term *pneuma* in its highest form constitutes the human soul (*psyche)* as the *pneuma* is the fractured breath or soul of the Deity. This does not mean that it is necessarily immaterial just because it is invisible. The Greek Gods (unlike Roman Gods) had a physical form and had anatomy, albeit perfected anatomy. All this is to say that the breath, equated with the soul, does not mean that both or either are immaterial, nor does it necessarily slot spirit into the privileged term in Cartesian mind/body dualism.

This idea of the divine breath as soul is similarly present in Judaism in which Ruach (**רוּחַ**), is the fractured breath of God that animates each of us (Benso 2008, pp. 13-14; Sedley 1998, p. 145; Sedley 2008, p. 388; Sellars 2006, pp. 98-104). This animating spirit is not breathed into the infant the moment it is born, but is continually breathed in, one is sustained by this holy breath, meaning it is not a fixed essential entity but is a living unfolding process in which the self or the soul is continually remade or sustained.

This model of continual unfolding and the process of being made and remade as the shoreline is redrawn with each crashing wave, is integral for Lévinas, and his conception of intersubjectivity, the holy, and the ongoing responsibility and identity-founding relation to the other. Lévinas (1998) states,

> the psyche is the form of a peculiar dephasing, a loosening up or unclamping of identity the same prevented from coinciding with itself, at odds, torn up from its rest, between sleep and insomnia, panting shivering [...] The animation, the very pneuma of the psyche, alterity in identity, is the identity of a body exposed to the other, becoming "for the other," the possibility of giving. (p. 68-69)

For Lévinas, the self comes into being in and through the other, subjectivity is always being established and re-established intersubjectively. This vulnerability and hospitality are the openness of being, and ground the possibility of the subject. A pernicious notion of the body as an object or possession to be mastered, disciplined, subjugated, and suppressed aligns with the traditional male white western philosophical perspective. Lévinas's philosophy with its repeated stresses on speaking, breathing, eating, resting, *jouissance* and inherent openness, is indicative of an alternate conception of embodiment.

The self is always in this process of becoming, is always precariously sustained through change. This is a very different notion of the subject, identity, the self, and the soul. On this blurring of dualities Lévinas scholar Megan Craig (2010) states, «but physical exposure also lays bare the subject's psychological vulnerability, revealing the degree to which impact compounds and complicates every attempt to distinguish between mind and body, between intellect and sensibility. Rather than mind *or* body, the subject Lévinas describes is an ambiguous zone of vulnerability – a sensitive skin from the inside out» (p. 14). This idea of the vibratory self, the necessary permeability of the self and the body is found in Judaism, in which the body is necessarily porous.

Much of Western philosophy, or at least the historical canon, conceives of the body in terms of master, sovereignty, solidity, and wholeness. To be penetrated or permeable is feminized, and a threat to phallocentric subject. The Jewish body, as permeable, is evinced, for instance the Jewish prayer Asher Yatzar which is translated as:

> *Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, King of the universe, who formed man with wisdom and created within him many openings and many hollow spaces. It is obvious and known before Your Seat of Honor that if even one of them would be opened, or if even one of them would be sealed, it would be impossible to survive and to stand before You even for one hour. Blessed are You, Adonai, who heals all flesh and acts wondrously.*[2]

This is obviously not a question of masculinity or sovereignty but that the body is inherently penetrable.

Conceiving of embodiment differently allows more honest and authentic modes of inhabitation.

Indeed, only considering the body in terms of capacity, agency, mastery, cognition, and utility can inaugurate a crisis when these modes of being are stymied. The porosity of the body is necessary for one's survival. When we fear being imprisoned by the body, or the isolation of the body, perhaps we can find some solace in the inherent openness of embodiment, especially embodiment that is taken up intersubjectively. A prison is a prison because the door is locked, but the body is necessarily open to the world, and is in an ongoing mutable process of incorporating and shedding literal and metaphorical aspects and parts of itself. This is made evident by the process of breathing, where we continually incorporate the outside into the inside in this ongoing confluence. This porousness is the cornerstone of Drew Leder's delineation of the transparent body, «to speak of the "transparent body" implies a body that has become porous, and open to the non-dual experience that transcends the rigidity of self-other separation» (LEDER 2024, p. 205). I want to preserve this porosity without passing through a renunciation of the body or the Lévinasian intersubjective consciousness.

Being connected to a feeling of aliveness also connects us to others. As Leder states,

> for Zen Buddhists, the simple awareness of breath flow can help us awaken from the delusion of the isolated self, that fundamental source of our suffering. In attending to the hinge of the in-breath and out-breath, we see that all is in flux and interconnected at every moment. There simply is no solid, stable, and separate "I" (p. 178).

An over-identification with the mind as something separate and apart from the body can lead to this feeling of disassociation with the world and one's body. Leder claims that breathing has the positive capacity to «dissolve identification with the separate self» (p. 171).

Moreover, this dualism can be both the root cause of the suffering of the isolated or alienated self and a symptom of it. Indeed, I described this Cartesian bifurcation to a friend, and embodied somatic therapist, and she stated this dualism and lack of identification with the body resembles the trauma response of disassociation.

3 Transparent body/embodied connection and intersubjectivity

In this section I will draw out the phenomenology of embodied aliveness within Drew Leder's account of the transparent body. After his section on the breath titled, *Breath as the hinge of dis-ease and healing* Drew Leder chooses to end the text with a concept he terms *The transparent body*. This is slightly confusing as Hari Carel, in her book *The phenomenology of illness* (2018) has a section termed *The transparency of the body* which she aligns with Leder's earlier concept of the absent body. She states:

> In the smooth everyday experience of a healthy body, the body as object and the body as subject are aligned and experienced harmoniously. We do not experience the difference between the two orders most of the time; they cohere and make sense as a whole. [...] This has led some authors to describe the healthy body as *transparent:* we do not experience it explicitly [...] or thematize it as an object of our attention, nor does it play centre stage in our action, even if those actions are explicitly physical. When writing a letter, we do not pay attention to the pen as long as it is functioning. Similarly, we do not normally pay attention to the hand gripping the pen and writing [...] Sartre and Leder describe the healthy body as transparent (SARTRE 2003) or even absent (LEDER 1990) (p. 55).

Carel is deploying Leder's concept of the absent body and terming this the transparency of the body. To assuage this confusion, in my mind, I designated Leder's conception of the transparent body as the *healing body.* This made it more accessible and did not have the connotations that the body needed to necessarily disappear (In this article I will continue to use the term "transparent body" to eliminate confusion). This is the body as it recedes from consciousness in health, the body that we fail to notice in that it is functioning well.

I would push back gently on this mapped duality, in that health is not just the absence of illness, and that one can experience health in a multitude of ways some that foreground the body. For instance, as mentioned above, the healthy body in a society that objectifies and derides specific racialized and gendered bodies can induce a hyperawareness of the body that has nothing to do with illness. A body that is disabled is not necessarily sick, one can be both deaf and perfectly healthy. In this same vein, the experience of pregnancy does not really fit into the healthy/ill paradigm but is usually accompanied by intense attention to the body.[3] The overarching point being that this health/illness binary is much more complex, and additionally cannot be neatly mapped on to an experience of an absent/present body.[4] While we may not pay attention to the hand that writes, the reason a handwritten note feels more personal than a typed one is because of that presence and proximity to the unique expression of embodiment.

In terms of the Zen practice Leder references, there is an akin aim to dissociate from the body. As Leder quotes from Sri Nisargardatta Maharaj, «so long as you identify yourself as the body, your experience of pain and sorrow will increase day by day.

That is why you must give up this identification, and you should take yourself as the consciousness. If you take yourself as the body, it means you have forgotten your true Self, which is the *atman*» (as quoted in LEDER 2024, p. 196, originally in NISARGADATTA 2001, p. 65). The danger of this renunciation of both individual consciousness and the body is that the renunciation is sometimes deployed as a sort of spiritual bypassing to avoid our responsibilities to others and ourselves.

Leder cautions that this reading of the body can produce an overly negative conception of embodiment, and I wholly agree (LEDER 2024, p. 197). Moreover, this bodily renunciation is not currently available to me. In response, I will articulate another pathway towards this transcendent experience rooted in the pleasure and joy of embodied intersubjective aliveness. It is not coincident that the majority of cited and known Buddhist spiritualists in this book are male, and that many societies our own included, isolate and alienate men from authentic positive embodied relationships and practices of care (both self-care and care for others). Within this social matrix needing care is avoided and feared. This renunciation of the body and individuated consciousness is one route, but even in Mahayana Buddhism this is not the ultimate aim.[5] Bodily renunciation, as a necessary step towards liberatory healing, is not open to those who do not have the privilege of abandoning their embodied responsibilities to others. Leder and I share this critique of these renunciation practices as the telos of embodied healing, albeit possibly for different reasons and to different degrees.

It is not accurate to paint the dualism of philosophy, or the negative construal of the body too widely. Emmanuel Lévinas (1969) writes of pleasure, *jouissanc*e, stating that:

> We live from "good soup", air, light, spectacles, work, ideas, sleep, etc. ... These are not objects of representations. We live from them. Nor is what we live from a "means of life". As the pen is a means with respect to the letter it permits us to write – nor a goal of life ... The things we live from are not tools, nor even implements, in the Heideggerian sense of the term [...] They are always in a certain measure [...] objects of enjoyment [...] living from [...] delineates independence itself, the independence of enjoyment and of its happiness. [...] Conversely, the independence of happiness always depend on a content: it is the joy or the pain of breathing, looking eating, working, handling the hammer and the machine, etc. (p. 110).

It is interesting, but perhaps for another text, that both Havi Carel and Emmanuel Lévinas compare the body in health or enjoyment to a pen. Here we have an account in which enjoyment, of good soup, the feeling of embodiment is articulated as living from. This feeling of enjoyment is enjoyment of the physical realm and is necessarily physically enjoyed. To wit, enjoyment is rooted in the body, not in the sense that a pen is that through which it can be used to write a letter. Enjoyment in the body is what we live *from*.

Whereas we may seek communion with the eternal in order to transcend this life, or transcend the body in pain, «being fully connected to the body is about being fully alive [...] The body is the only way we have to move through life» (MCBRIDE 2021, pp. 5-6). Leder (2024) warns about the risk of disassociating from the lived body which may occur in his rubric of "escaping the body" which includes" modes of *ignoring* bodily messages for example, ones of pain or impairment; *refusing* to be limited by them; and *objectifying* and *transcending* them in a kind of lived dualism whereby the essential self separates from the troublesome body (p. 166). Leder also confesses that at the age of 68 (now 69) when he has written this book, escaping the body, or finding refuge in a potentially disembodied soul, has a certain appeal especially when dealing with the aches and pains of old age.

Leder asserts that the transparent body' is «no longer considered as the bedrock of a separate identity so much as a conduit to a transpersonal Whole, drawing fully on the body's "inside-out" nature». He continues, «in many spiritual and philosophic traditions, this awareness [of the "illusionary" nature of "illness, impairment, and mortality"] is considered the ultimate healing, not only *of* the body but *from* the body» (p. 185). This healing *from* the body allows the self to dissolve the loneliness of individuated ego to rejoin this "transpersonal Whole". Leder insightfully points out the pain of these binary logics that demarcate mind and body or self and other, or even the spiritual division between the individual soul and the larger spiritual whole. I understand this impulse, and if we are – in the Greek or Judaic telling – the fractured breath of a God or Deity, if we arise from dust and return to dust, then this dissolution into wholeness is returning to the unindividuated divine spiritual whole and dissolving into the unindividuated material whole. And yet, I want to carve out another path.

I have experienced the beauty and profundity of the coming into being and coming out of being through my work as a birth and death doula. The body feels particularly permeable in this liminal time leading up to these transitions. Yet, partially because of the intense embodied aspect of these experiences, I am presently resistant to healing *from* my body. This is in part because laboring in those liminal spaces, has further positively tethered me to my own embodiment. This sentiment is beautifully expressed by therapist, author, and

researcher Hilary McBride in her book *The wisdom of your body: Finding healing, wholeness, and connection through embodied living* (2021):

> When I think about being human, the fragile, precious, and mysterious journey we each take from birth to death, I think about the body. The body is the place where all this happens. We know this when we are young [...] Yet so many of us have forgotten about this mystery [...] forgetting the body also costs us something – individually and collectively. We lose the fundamental building blocks of human thriving, connection to ourselves and others, and the fullness of pleasure, wisdom, empathy, and justice. Connection to our bodily selves allows us to internalize a sense of safety and connection that tells us who we are, what we long for, and how to be most fully alive (p. 1).

McBride describes this re-embodiment as a radical act, and it has echoes of Audre Lorde's assertion that, «caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare» (LORDE 2017, p. 95). Residing in the body, privileging it, caring for one's own body and the body of others is a radical political act. This feeling of aliveness and connection feels adjacent but also in some ways distinct from a transcendence of the body.

While I fully believe in this transcendent transparent body, it is not currently available to me, specifically, the registers of the transcendent body that are focused on a healing *from* the body, an escape from the body, an experience of the body as a conduit, or the dissolution of embodied particularity. I have a child that I grew in my body that cannot yet grasp our physical individuation even now that she has existed outside my body for almost two whole years. I decided to have a child after resisting the idea my whole life. I changed my mind in the wake of a string of devastating losses of loved ones. When these loved ones died, I could not say, "oh but it is only their body that is lost". Devastatingly, I lost all of them, which is another way to say the body is not merely the conduit or a container of the self or a false notion of an individuated consciousness. This assertion is clear in our relationship to the death of a friend or a loved one. It may be the case that their soul or self exists independent of their body, but this is a self to which I no longer have access. What remains is the aspects of them that I have internalized. And while I may miss my friend's perspective, I also miss the sound of her voice, the feeling of dancing with her, the feeling of laughing together, the weight and pressure of her body against mine in a tight hug. I cannot miss her without missing her body, and I cannot experience her now that her body is no longer alive. All this is to say, that even if the soul survives, I no longer have access to it. This is what it means to grieve someone (Derrida speaks of this in the collected book of essays on mourning). These losses made me want to draw as close to life as possible. I felt a strong drive to be fully in this world. Toiling to bring about a better world and having a child allowed me to draw as close to the acutely physical vibratory pulse of life.

I am grateful for Leder's position, and I do not think it is false, but this form of renunciation or this idea of the body as something that I control, master, escape, transcend, and possess is not available to me. This is not just because I inhabit a body that has bestowed the knowledge of chronic illness or because I am a feminized body and as such have lived a life in which I am consistently objectified and reduced to my body. It is because I am the parent of a young child, a child who I recently grew in my body, and who I love fully and overwhelmingly even though she is too young to exhibit much of her intellectual or minded self. I can only love her body and her embodied expression at this point as that is the self that I have access to, and this love must necessarily be expressed in embodied ways. I can tell her I love her, but she only knows the meaning of that from the tone of my voice. I must express my love to her physically, with my body by lovingly caring for hers. This is another way of decoupling sickness and health. My child is thankfully healthy, but needs the care associated with a sick adult. This is not to frame this embodied relation such that embodiment is a mere conduit for love and care. It is also her body that I love.

Leder (2024) stipulates «re-possibilizing the ill and disabled body is an *intersubjective* endeavor» (p. 17). Yet, he continues, «it should be noted that *chronic healing* is not done alone». And yet, he goes on to stipulate that «for the sake of simplicity, I have confined myself largely to references that emphasize a kind of individual work» (p. 74). In sickness we enter back into this intimate relation with the other, and with one's community through the need for care. Those who have lifelong disabilities or chronic illnesses have the most knowledge on setting up and sustaining care communities (Here I am thinking of *Care Webs* from PIEPZNA-SAMARASINHA 2018). The way in which we characterize what is considered "normal bodies" and the shame that generally surrounds bodily functions can stymie authentic care relations. The disparaging of dependence and interdependence (as often noted by care ethicist Eva Kittay) is another formidable obstacle to authentic care. Often being dependent and needing care are fears associated with illness, which illustrates what Leder terms a dis-ease of society. I think this intimate care relation can be another inroad to the physical, spiritual, and social chronic healing that Drew Leder articulates in the book.

In his articulation of the transparent body Leder

draws on «the "ecstatic" dimension of lived embodiment» stating «the body is self-transcendent, ever leaping beyond itself. Those who are spiritually inclined may seek extraordinary "out of body" experiences» (LEDER 2024, p. 199). In my above descriptions of my own embodied awareness and rootedness I would term these profound "in body" experiences. This would include the profound experience of the care relationship with a dependent or interdependent other such as, but not limited to, the co-constitutive relationships that occur at the beginning and end of life.

4 Concluding remarks

While this book, *The healing body,* is written for a general audience, I would argue that philosophers and academics might benefit from reading it the most. Academia is hard on one's body. Not hard in the way that being a roofer or commercial fisherperson is hard on one's body, but hard out of neglect and avoidance. Historically speaking the body is philosophically construed as the machine operated by the soul, or it is the aspect of human existence that is the most animalistic and thus lowly, the furthest from our higher intellectual pursuits.

Leder is always careful to note the way in which the discomfort, unease, and general unpleasantness of illness, disabilities, and aging are exacerbated by marginalizing social power structures. The injustice of it all, of these individualistic solutions that are necessary to make life livable in the face of debilitating social and political structures is palpable. I feel the poignancy of the American treatment and response to illness, aging, and affliction that necessitate such a book. While we cannot expect the healing strategies to include burning down the state, or taking the discipline of philosophy to task, there is comfort in the ways in which these forms of care, healing, and sickness, can be fundamental relational as a political strategy against the social forms that individuate and thus alienate us from each other. There is a profuse abundance of tactics, comportments, approaches, and modalities of being a body. For me, one critical aspect of the healing of my own body, is healing from an expectation that it could or should be otherwise.

I am particularly interested in the ways in which this book can be applied to philosophy itself, a discipline that neglects and historically marginalizes the body, treats it as the servant to the mind. In the last class that phenomenologist Donn Welton taught before his retirement he read a list of the ailments of the lifestyle of scholarly pursuits, near sightedness, poor digestion, back problems, poor posture, the entropy of long hours of sitting and reading, etc. While amusing it is also the case that academia, and philosophy in particular, does not accommodate the embodiment of the persons that practice it, nor does it capaciously accommodate the intersubjective care relationships that sustain bodies. In practice the closer one approximates and comports oneself as a brain in a vat, the more successful one may be, or at least that is the culture of the institution.

Reading Leder's book, I found myself making small adjustments, slowing my breath, and trying out several of the myriad of possible tactics that he articulates. While this is not explicitly said, one possible consequence could be the healing of the relationship between theory and praxis, or theory and the living finite creatures who practice it. This form of relational repair could be enacted, by healing the canonical exclusion of the body from theoretical concerns, but likewise the exclusion of bodies that deviate from the disciplinary norm. In this I can imagine two futures or afterlives for this book. The first is a healing from a discourse that compounds the pain and isolation of illness, aging, and affliction in its underlying marginalization and disdain for embodiment. This is a field where your body is often treated as if it is for others, and a mark of inferiority. The second is a demand for plurality and to capaciously make space for embodied aliveness construed as wholeness as opposed to duality. This would entail curiosity about different model of corporality, relation, and identity that is less individual, fixed, and demarcated, and more relational and based in flux and centered on the porous, breathing, relational self.

Notes

[1] What is most interesting is that at every stage from first year undergraduates to bachelor's degree holders, to students who completed their PhD the field gets more white and male. Cf. SCHWITZGEBEL *et alii* 2021. A contemporary account of this in terms of the fat-phobia of the discipline and the metaphor of leanness in arguments can be found in MANNE 2022.

[2] *How to Say the Asher Yatzar Blessing, My Jewish Learning* (blog), accessed October 6, 2019, available at the URL https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/how-to-say-the-asher-yatzar-blessing/.

[3] While pregnancy is not a universal experience, it is a paradigm of a certain kind of experience that disintegrates a dualistic construal of health and sickness, or bodily attention and bodily obliviousness. Moreover, being born of a pregnant person is universal even if it is just as unknowable as death. Despite its unknowability, death is a prominent philosophical motif, whereas birth and pregnancy are frequently dismissed.

[4] It is interesting that Carel argues that the body in health is "transparent" as most of the individuals I know who have suddenly discovered the body's opacity where white and male, and only came to it late in life through the experience of intense illness, or through witnessing and caring for a loved one who was experiencing an intense illness.

[5] Mahayana Buddhism has a spiritual aim of returning to the world and integrating these practices into everyday life and into everyday relationships with others.

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