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'(EVERY)BODY@HOME?[1]

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE EXPERIENCE OF INCARCERATED EXISTENCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

Based on a detailed analysis and critical discussion of Leder's book The absent Body *in which he disentangles in an insightful phenomenological manner the Cartesian dualistic heritage, this articles focuses on the experience of incarcerated existence within contemporary crime-ridden South African society, which is characterised as the "disillusionment" of exploited, forgotten and manipulated bodies. In contrast to Leder's proposal of Neo-Confucianism, the author proposes and explores the African concept of Ubuntu as well as the metaphorical significance of the Christian biblical concept of the body of Christ for the "dys-illusioned" South African society in which the social fabric has been destroyed and human dignity must be restored in order for every(body) to be at home.*

Keywords: D Leder, Bodiliness, Anthropology, Church

Introduction

"Human experience is incarnated" is the opening statement by the American physician-philosopher Drew Leder (1990:1)[2] in his book entitled *The absent body.* Although his book was published more than a decade ago, its thought-provoking content and influence is still relevant today.[3] In rephrasing and contextualising his opening statement, I would like to give an indication of the aim of this article: *In the South African context, incarnated human*

[1] I appreciate the Community Sabbatical Fellowship that was awarded to me by the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, University of Victoria Canada, where I completed my reading and research for this article. I have only the most pleasant of memories of my stay at the Centre.

[2] Since 1986, Drew Leder has held the title of Professor of Philosophy at the Loyola College in Maryland, USA. He has an MD (1986) from the Yale University School of Medicine and a PhD (1987) from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Since the publication of *The absent body*, he has also published the following books: *Spiritual passages: Embracing life's sacred journey* (1997); *Games for the soul: 40 playful ways to find fun and fulfillment in a stressful world* (1998); *The soul knows no bars: Inmates reflect on life, death and hope* (2002). His latest publication is *Sparks of the divine: Finding inspiration in our everyday world* (2004). He has also acted as editor for *The body in medical thought and practice* (1992) and as assistant editor for the *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* (1995).

[3] Leder's book was acclaimed at the time of publication. Some of the comments included the following: "Significant and original" (Richard Zaner); "uniquely original" and "markedly imaginative" (Calvin Schrag); "a daring venture in phenomenology" and "intensely illuminating" (Edward Casey). And indeed it was! Three reviews of the *Absent body* that followed closely on the publication of the book and which can be noted are: by Gulick 1991-2, Rajan 1992 and Johnson 1992. In his review, Mark Johnson (1992:103) states: "For this is a significant book for anyone in any discipline who purports to have a theory of the mind and cognition."

give an indication of the aim of this article: *In the South African context, incarnated human experience is incarcerated.*

My one-sided, sweeping (rephrased) statement should immediately and surely be qualified, motivated and explained. Firstly, I have written this article against the background of my "incarcerated perspective" on "incarnated human experience" in contemporary South African society. Secondly, I will give a thorough exposition of Leder's book *The absent Body* (1990) from which, in my opinion, such a state of "incarceration" can be critically addressed, disentangled and re-visioned, but from a (weak)[4] phenomenological perspective. I will look at the critical questions regarding the re-visioning of an "incarcerated South African experience" and the fact that these questions should cut deeper than a mere superficial probing of circumstantial landscaping and hasty perspectivism. They should cut to the ideological hearts and epistemological heads of contemporary societal discourses. With this critical undertaking, a thorough examination of Leder's book will, in my opinion, not only assist us greatly, but will allow us to address these questions from an unexpected and creative angle. Thirdly, from the critical and creative insights gained through a thorough examination of Leder's phenomenological approach, I will pursue the tentative reformulation of experiential modes of liberating and emancipatory embodiment, that is, to flesh (and blood!) out in an interdisciplinary, concrete and contextual manner the title of this article, namely, "(Every)body@home?"

Incarcerated Existence: A South African Perspective

The word "disillusionment" perhaps best describes the experiences of most (but not all) South Africans in our contemporary post-apartheid South Africa – be it black, white or brown South Africans. And the experiences themselves vary greatly – people are disillusioned for very different reasons. In capturing a few of the varied experiences and in formulating some of the reasons for disillusionment, I – as a white South African from a Reformed background –inevitably run the risk of over generalising and being one-sided. But for precisely these reasons, the risk should be taken to enable an ongoing, constructive engagement with and dialogue within the South African context – which I earlier characterised in a very sweeping manner as "incarcerated".

The feelings of exhilaration, relief and gratitude by most South Africans to be free of the brutal, intolerant and dehumanising apartheid system, is – after just more than a decade of democracy – being traumatically and systemically replaced by tidal waves of disillusionment – this despite South Africa's democratically-elected new government in 1994; the newly-formulated "people-friendly" Constitution (1996) which upholds pluralism and values tolerance; the joy of having access to housing, electricity and water; the ongoing post-Mandela euphoria; or the fact that we have a Minister of Finance who has done us proud over the last ten years. The inevitable reality is: Tidal waves of disillusionment resulting from abuse of power in political, government, trade and industry, tertiary and church circles are breaking over the beaches of democratic relief.[5] These feelings of disillusionment are

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[4] The qualification of "weak" indicates my sensitivity for much of the substantiated criticism that has been raised against phenomenological approaches, for example: Can we have a serious science of consciousness if we rely on subjective accounts of experience? Words are used in different ways to construct descriptions. We also have a propensity to substitute theory for pure description and not to realise it. Phenomenology assumes immunity to error in the process of introspection, so there are good reasons to doubt that we are always absolutely right about what we discover through reflection.

[5] The most recent Zuma-Shaik trial (2005) could serve as a good political/government example, the Mpumalanga Matric results (Dec 2004) as a tertiary example and the Krion (a pyramid scheme) debacle (2003) as an

even present in family circles.[6] Corruption, violence, unemployment,[7] criminality and racism are rampant. Many of the issues are addressed, for example, by politicians in a short-sighted statistical or superficially quantitative manner: (Be at ease!) rape is down by XXX%, violent murders by XX% and corruption by X%![8] Such "quantitative discourse" leaves the impression that politicians wish to weaken societal abhorrence of criminality and "inhumane" living conditions"! Many issues (e.g. law and order) are hastily swept from the table by blaming the legacy of apartheid without constructively and responsibly addressing them.[9] Other issues (e.g. the Aids pandemic) are handled in an irresponsible manner; Politicians, for example, are not held accountable for government's lack of constructive action. And those people who openly criticise official government policy are simply ostracised.[10] It appears that some politicians see the need to rename cities, local hospitals and schools as quickly as possibly, despite spiralling costs – this while they ignore the plight of local residents who live under inhumane conditions. The point of my argument is thus: South African society is traumatically plagued by broken, mutilated, exploited, forgotten and manipulated bodies.

Bodies? Why reformulate the incarcerated existence in terms of "the body"?[11] In the following paragraph, I would like to briefly indicate the importance of turning to and focusing on "bodily discourses", and the significance thereof in addressing the above-mentioned incarcerated existence.

In his important article entitled "The body as strategy of power in religious discourse",

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example in trade and industry. Examples of the abuse of power within church circles are as follows: White-only membership of the Afrikaanse Protestanse Kerk (political-ecclesiological issue) and the Roman Catholic Church's stance on condoms (moral issue).

6 Although many disturbing examples relating to family violence can be noted, I would like to mention a recent article written by Robbie Brown for the *Daily News* (6 June 2005:5) entitled "SA 'intimate femicide' rated world's highest". In this article, Brown states: "South African women are the most likely in the world to be murdered by their partners – one dies every 12 hours according to a study released by the Medical Research Council's Gender and Health Unit".

7 See, for example, the article entitled "Growing unemployment main South African election issue" (*afrolNews*, 2 April 2005), which cites an increase in unemployment from 29% (1999) to 40% (2004). The article can be accessed on www.afrol.com/articles/12037.

8 To cite reliable percentages from published statistics is rather difficult, if not impossible. One can merely indicate or mention probable tendencies. See, for example Altbeker (2005), or the comments published in the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper (9 June 2005) on "South Africa's dilemma of measuring organized crime" which speculates about organised crime. This rings true for other statistics regarding crime in general. One "reliable" source will adamantly state: "Crime statistics show South Africans can" (Sicelo Fayo's *Street Talk* in *The Herald*, 8 June 2005) or "Violent Crime: SA turns the corner" (South Africa.*Info reporter* 21 Sept 2004), which both echo the "misplaced" statement four years earlier by the ANC on the latest crime statistics released by the SAP (14 Dec 2001): "We are winning the fight against crime", whilst other reports indicate precisely the opposite, namely, that crime is escalating at a horrendous rate. See, for example, all the "Top Rankings" regarding crime statistics on www.Nationmaster.com. See also the most recent report "Crime Statistics for South Africa (1994/1995 to 2003/2004)", which can be accessed on www.capegateway.gov.za). But then recently, the Afrikaans newspaper *Beeld*, (22 Sept 2005:1) reported: "Misdaad is minder" ("Crime is decreasing"), even though rape has increased by 4%, heists by 14,6% and indecent assaults by 8%.

9 See ANC Report: Law and Order.

10 The confusion and criticism regarding the South African Government's handling of the Aids pandemic (and those who are ostracised) is well illustrated in various documents relating to Aids. See, for example, the IOL: Health Document (www.iol.co.za) and (cited only to serve as an example) the recent commentary "HIV/AIDS causes 30% of deaths" (17 May 2005) which can be accessed on www.iafrica.com/news/sa news.

11 My focus on the "body" should not be misinterpreted. My intention is not to employ the term in a reductionistic manner, nor to impoverish our sense of humanity (as if the self were just a body). Rather, my focus on the "body" emphasises its formative role in culture and in our various discourses.

the South African New Testament scholar Johannes Vorster (1997) insightfully explains how contemporary discourses on the body and embodiment have highlighted the body as a means through which access may be gained to a better understanding of a culture and the processes involved in the realisation of change within that culture (Vorster 1997:389). Although studies on the body and bodily experiences have not always been viewed as seriously assisting the process of cultural understanding, the scene is changing and changing dramatically. In this regard, Vorster (1997:389) refers to and elaborates on the contributions of Sullivan, Williams, Cameron and Eilberg-Schwartz. From these contributions, it is clear in an increasingly illuminating manner, that it is accepted, on the one hand, that the body's practices and self-interpretations are already shaped by culture, while on the other hand, it is also accepted that culture is shaped out of the stuff of bodies, arising in response to cultural needs and desires. It is these "culturally-shaped bodies" and "bodily-shaped cultures"[12] that I would like to focus on within a South African context and which I have characterised as incarcerated existence.

Leder's book *The absent body* (1990) has contributed much to this sharper focus on the body and the significance of bodily discourses in the wake of the classics (Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty) which have laid the basis for a phenomenological approach to the body (or in short, embodiment). Since then, an avalanche of literature has followed.[13] It is important to clarify the use of the term "embodiment" before looking at the work of Leder in which he develops and refines Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment[14], since the term "embodiment" forms a focus in this article.

Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between the *objective body*, which is the physiological entity, and the *phenomenal* body, which is the body as I (or you) experience it. This distinction between the objective and phenomenal body is central to an understanding of the phenomenological treatment of embodiment. Embodiment is thus not a concept that pertains to the body grasped as a physiological entity, but rather one that pertains to the phenomenal body and to the role it plays in our object-directed experiences.[15] Or perhaps more pertinently formulated in the words of Thomas Csordas (1999:143): "If embodiment is an existential condition in which the body is the subjective source or intersubjective ground of experience, then studies under the rubric of embodiment are not 'about' the body per se. Instead they are about culture and experience insofar as these can be understood from the standpoint of bodily being-in-the-world." How then does Drew Leder develop and redefine Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment?

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[12] Since "culturally-shaped bodies" and "bodily-shaped cultures" make precisely the same crucial critical point that Leder (1990:151ff) ultimately addresses in his re-reading of Cartesian dualism, it made his work a very good choice as basic text for this article. In his own words: "The human body shapes social practices, and social practices shape our use and understanding of the body" (Leder 1990:152).

[13] In addition to the ground-breaking classics on phenomenology by Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, the works of Marcel, Straus, Jonas, Lacan, Foucault, Kristeva and Irigarey should also be mentioned. Phenomenology, in short, refers to the science of phenomena, that is, to any descriptive study of a given object. In the narrower sense, it is the name of a philosophical movement which focuses on the description of phenomena by means of direct awareness. Since the 1990s, many excellent books have been published on the body/embodiment. To name but an excellent few: *The body in the mind* (1987) and *Philosophy in the flesh* (1999) by Mark L Johnson (co-author George Lakoff); *Gender trouble* (1990) by Judith Butler; *Embodiment and experience* (1994) and *Body/meaning/healing* (2002) by Thomas J Csordas; *Perspectives on embodiment* (1999) and *Body images* (1999) by Gail Weiss; *Body and flesh* (1998) by Donn Welton.

[14] In Leder's (1990:2) own words: "Merleau-Ponty has exercised a great influence upon my thinking, and my own text, in its inevitably imperfect fashion, has sought to continue his project in certain ways."

[15] Cf the entry on "Embodiment" in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (1999).

A New Way of Looking: Leder's 'Absent Body'

> "From the most visceral of cravings to the loftiest of artistic achievements, the body plays its formative role" (Leder 1990:1).

And:

> "(I)t is the body's own tendency towards self-concealment that allows for the possibility of its neglect or depreciation" (Leder 1990:69).

The significance of a phenomenological approach[16] to the notion of a "lived body" is, according to Leder (1990:155), not only the tool for the refutation of previous philosophical positions, but also a tool for their reinterpretation and reclamation. He argues that it can provide us with genuinely new ways of looking at the world. He also argues that it can provide us with a more inclusive sense of spirit (one immanent throughout the physical world and expressing itself at all levels of nature) and an embodied self to form one body. Leder's ultimate aim is to clarify and promote this notion. There is, however, a stumbling block in our way. We are trapped – trapped in an unacceptable "previous philosophical position". And we rarely give up our picture unless we are offered a relevant and seemingly better alternative.[17] We therefore have to ask: What is this unacceptable "previous philosophical position"? What is the "picture" that we have to give up? Why is it unacceptable? How can it be "re-interpreted" to enable us to acquire "new ways of looking"?

To come to a new and alternative way of looking "with" the notion of a "lived body", we – according to Leder – will have to critically address our Cartesian epistemological distrust and come to terms with our Cartesian dualistic ontological heritage, that is, the division of labour between *res extensa* and *res cogitans.* In other words, we will have to come to terms with a heritage in which the human mind is viewed as an island of awareness afloat in a vast sea of insensate matter (Leder 1990:8) – a heritage that has left our self-understanding incomplete; that has "de-corporealised" our existence; that has relegated bodies to secondary or oppositional roles; that has valorised incorporeal reason; and that has, as ontology, far-reaching social effects (e.g. hierarchical dualism has been used to subserve projects of oppression directed towards women, nature and others). It is only by shattering this rigid model of Cartesianism that we can clear the way for expanded ontologies.[18] But Leder has a very specific approach in mind for shattering this rigid model. In my opinion, the importance of Leder's contribution lies precisely in this carefully qualified and considered approach. He does not underwrite the assumption that the Cartesian paradigm is shaped by ontological commitments at the expense of attending to lived experience. Instead, he argues that experience plays a vital role in encouraging and supporting this dualism. It is these very experiences (i.e. of bodily absence) that, according to him, seem to support the doctrine of an immaterial mind trapped inside an alien body. Exposing the "misleading" persuasiveness of these experiences is Leder's first task. His project is clearly captured in the question: "Why does the body, as ground of experience, tend to recede from direct experience?" (Leder 1990:169). In answering this question, he approaches his task and pursues his aim from the notion of the "lived body", that is, as embodied person witnessed from the third-person (articulated by science) and first-person alike (life-world gaze).

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[16] In following the phenomenological method of Husserl, Leder (1990:150) deviates from one important point. Whereas Husserl sought through a process of variation to uncover the essences underlying the constitution of experience, Leder seeks out existential/biological invariants that shape human experience.

[17] As Leder (1990:155) puts it towards the end of his book: "We cannot escape from a picture until we understand the mechanisms whereby it has maintained its hold."

[18] See Leder's (1990:108) two reasons for choosing Descartes as an exemplary site for his phenomenological rereading.

Phenomenological Investigations

In the first part of his book, entitled "Phenomenological investigations", Leder (1990:11-99) pursues detailed descriptions of the body and of the experiential and physical arenas in which the body exhibits what he terms "modes of absence". From the surface of the human body, depicted as the ecstatic body (1990:11-35) (the body which projects outside itself into the world), he moves to the bodily depths, depicted as the recessive body (1990:36-68) (the body which falls back from its own conscious perception and control) to a mode of presence-absence as correlative of the previous two, depicted as the disappearing body (1990:69-99) (i.e. the body in its problematic presencings). Leder moves in his phenomenological anatomy from the simple to the progressively complex, from a portrayal of the body as static to an understanding of the body as a living process. We will now turn to these distinctions and movements.

Ecstatic Body

For Leder (1990:11ff), the term "ecstatic body" (from the Greek *ek* + *stasis* = to stand out) describes the operation of the "lived body" admirably. We first engage our world through the bodily surface. The surface is where the self meets what is other than the self. Our powers of perception, motility and expression project from a physical surface that is open to the world. With regard to perception, I have discovered that as I perceive (see, smell, hear, taste, touch) through an organ, it necessarily recedes from the perceptual field it discloses (e.g. I cannot see my own eyes). Consequently, although it may not manifest within the perceptual field, my body is indicated as the orientational centre in relation to which everything else takes its place. I have discovered that I am a perspectival being, that is, that things only present themselves from a particular angle and through a limited set of profiles. Leder, following Polanyi, calls it the "from" and the "to" structure of experience. Moreover, I have discovered the "uncertainty principle" of embodiment. In other words, by thematising a part of the body, we change its phenomenological status. This very structure, given the deep interpenetration of perception and motility, also characterises the latter. Our sensory world involves a constant reference to our possibilities of active response. The response or action taken is motivated and organised by outer-directed concerns.[19] But in each case that I act from an organ (e.g. mouth) to the affected object (e.g. eating an apple), the very means whereby I act, constitutes a null point[20] within the actional field. For Leder (1990:20), perception and motility are modulations of a singular power, the "from-to" structure of bodily engagement. We can thus say: The ecstatic body is that which stands out. In Leder's (1990:21-2) own words: "The body always has a determinate stance – it is that whereby we are located and defined. But the very nature of the body is to project outward from its place of standing. From the 'here' arises a perceptual world of near and far distances. From the 'now' we inhibit a meaningful past and a futural realm of projects and goals."

We can also say that the body conceals itself precisely in the act of revealing what is other. Or to put it differently: The very presencing of the world and of the body as an object within it is always correlative with this primordial absence. This is why the body is forgot-

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[19] See Leder (1990:18-20) for the threefold *telos* of motility: the physical, attentional and functional *telos*. In his own words: "Physically, we act from a surface organ that itself is a lacuna in its actional field. In attentional terms, we ordinarily focus upon the goal of activity, not on our corporeal means of accomplishment. Functionally, we rely upon a set of abilities we cannot fully thematize" (Leder 1990:20).

[20] Whereas Merleau-Ponty employed the term "horizon" to indicate the limits of our perceiving, Leder follows Husserl's closely aligned term "Nullpoint". Leder (1990:22ff) does, however, later criticise it as follows: "Precisely insofar as the corporeal nullpoint is like a point it could not be a total nullity; a point is that which has definite location."

ten in experience! Against this background we can already begin to make sense of the title of Leder's book *The absent body* in which the word "absence" (Latin: *ab* + *esse* = being away) is used in an etymologically playful, but significant manner. In his own words: "The lived body, as ecstatic in nature, is that which is away from itself" (Leder 1990:22).

The term "absence" as it is employed by Leder in the title of his book *The absent body* neither implies a simple void nor a lack of being; rather, it refers to the modes of presence one's own body retains – even though it is almost eradicated from the experiential world. While Leder uses the term "absence" in a more general sense, the word "disappearance" is understood as a form of absence (see Leder 1990:26), that is, to "not-appear". In order to achieve a fuller understanding of the "absent body" and its disappearances, Leder (1990:24ff) broadens his discussion from the perceptual field to the corporeal field,[21] and then introduces the notion of the figure-ground Gestalt. The latter is introduced to characterise not only the field of experience, but also the structure of the experiencing body itself. Leder, subsequently identifies two complementary forms of self-concealment that mark the surface body, namely, focal and background disappearances. The former refers to the self-effacement of bodily organs when they form the focal origin of a perceptional or actional field,[22] while the latter refers to the bodily regions that disappear because they are not the focal origin of our sensorimotor engagements, but are back-grounded in the corporeal Gestalt.[23]

But now Leder urges us to move on – to focus only on the surface body is not enough and to leave the impression that the body is static is simply incorrect. We have to move on to the complex, to the deeper than the surface, to the body as living process, to the "I can". Leder (1990:30) subsequently introduces the term "incorporation" (Latin: *corpus* = "to bring within a body") as designation for the acquisition of skills[24], which is characterised by the very same process of progressive experiential disappearances, that is, the successful acquisition of a new ability that coincides with a phenomenological effacement of a complex series of thematisations.[25] Leder (1990:31) summarises his point in the following words: "If absence lies at the heart of the lived body, then any extension of its sensorimotor powers must necessarily involve an extension of absence. This then explains the experiential disappearance that accompanies the incorporation of skills."

In concluding his description of the ecstatic body, Leder refers to two manifestations of the incorporation of skills, namely, the temporal (i.e. over a period of time) as well as the spatial reach.[26] He is, however, careful to note that the process of incorporation is the result of a rich dialectic wherein the world transforms my body, even as my body transforms its world.[27]

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[21] In his understanding of the highly complex concept of "corporeal field", Leder (1990:24-6) takes up the explanation by Goldstein and Zaner in which it is understood that the use of any organ necessarily involves the enlistment of the rest of the body in a "background attitude".

[22] For example: The invisibility of the eye within the visual field it generates.

[23] For example: The muscle group that supports the head, enabling vision.

[24] For example: Learning to swim. This also holds true for the acquisition of higher cognitive skills such as the learning of a new language. In Polanyi's terms it is called the process in which the "to" over time can become the "from". Leder describes these processes as something akin to a sedimentary process.

[25] In Leder's (1990:31) own words: "The thematization of rules, of examples, of my own embodiment, falls away once I truly know how to swim. I no longer need think about cupping my hands or the right style of breathing. This now comes without conscious effort ..."

[26] Spatial reach refers to the capability of the body to incorporate within its phenomenological domain objects that remain spatially discrete. See the discussion by Leder (1990:33) of the "tool", or in the words of Heidegger: that which is "ready-to-hand".

[27] Leder (1990:34) puts it as follows: "The form to movement of the ecstatic body opens us to reciprocal exchange. I go from my tacit embodiment to a thematically present world. However, the world I discover leads

Recessive Body

Since the phenomenologist of the body is, according to Leder (1990:37), already and necessarily a hermeneut, the exploration of the region of the body most hidden from awareness, is merely to extend this hermeneutical approach. To extend his approach, he turns to what he calls the *recessive body*.

In his description of the *recessive body* (etymologically "re-cede" means to "go or fall back"), Leder (1990:36ff) shifts his attention to the bodily depths.[28] He explores the way in which the visceral organs,[29] along with certain of the body's temporal modes, recede from personal apprehension and control. He argues that the sort of absence involved is important, but different from and intertwined with that which characterises the surface body.[30] In a conceptual parallelism to his exploration of the "surface body", Leder describes the perceptual characteristics of the "inner body" and subsequently its motor form in which the deep unity of experience and action is confirmed. Choosing "digestion" as his phenomenological example, Leder (1990:38-45) indicates a series of diverse ways in which the viscera disappear from perceptual awareness. With regard to the interopceptive field,[31] that is, my perception of the inner body, the perceptual awareness is characterised as limited, ambiguous and highly discontinuous.[32] With regard to visceral motility, an equivalent principle is indicated which can be captured in the simple formulation: At this level, the body exhibits as "it can" more than as "I can".[33] But it also gives rise to an "I must"[34] and an "I cannot".[35] The point that Leder wants to make is that the inner body manifests a motoric withdrawal similar to that of perception – just as the viscera retreat from conscious experience, so they recede from volitional control (cf Leder 1990:49).[36] Leder refers to this visceral withdrawal as "depth disappearance" to distinguish it from the sort of disappearance characteristic of the surface body (focal and background disappearance). Whereas the body projects out-

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me to redesign the body itself. Just as the 'from' incorporates what once was 'to', the 'to' rebounds to transform the 'from'".

28 In the use of the word "depth" Leder (1990:36) signifies both a physical locale and a phenomenological style. "Depth" signifies not only the body in physical terms (the body surface which envelops a hidden mass of internal organs and processes), but also the visceral functions that unfold in these bodily depths and which are life sustaining. The latter are largely unavailable to my conscious awareness and command.

29 For Leder (1990:37), the category of the visceral (understood broadly) includes not only the organs of the digestive system but of the respiratory, cardiovascular, urogenital and endocrine systems, along with the spleen.

30 On this point, Leder (1990:36) states that "he is "completing" the reflection on the lived body by Merleau-Ponty which still bears a distant resemblance to its Cartesian predecessor, but "never fully fleshed out with bone and guts".

31 In physiology, the body's sensory powers are divided into three categories, namely, interoception, exteroception and proprioception. The former refers to all sensation of the viscera, that is, the internal organs of the body. The latter refers to our sense of balance, position and muscular tension, whereas exteroception refers to our five senses that open to the external world (cf Leder 1990:39).

32 The three features, namely, limited, ambiguous and discontinuous are discussed by Leder (1990:39-45) under the respective rubrics of qualitative reduction, spatial ambiguity and spatiotemporal discontinuity.

33 For example: In eating an apple, the action arises out of my corporeal structure of the "I can". Once swallowed, the apple enters a very different volitional space, a space in which "automatic" processes take over, that is, the "it can" of the body.

34 For example: I must sleep and breathe; the demanding character of the inner body.

35 For example: I do not have control over my liver, that is, I cannot act from that organ.

36 Leder (1990:49ff), in his discussion of the withdrawal of the inner body, elaborates on the phenomenon of "indirection", that is, indirect modes of self-apprehension. Since his discussion of "indirection" is not crucial for my exposition of the core of his argument, I will not pursue it any further.

ward in experience as ecstatic body, it – as recessive body – "falls back" into unexperienceable depths. However, as previously indicated, a phenomenological anatomy cannot remain static; Leder (1990:57) thus moves from his spatialised analysis to a recognition of the temporal, that is, the phenomena of sleep and birth in which the body participates in all aspects of depth disappearances in a temporal manner. To conclude his discussion of the ecstatic and recessive body, Leder (1990:65ff) turns to an elucidation of the phrase "flesh and blood" to describe his contribution in "completing" Merleau-Ponty's incomplete understanding of the body as lived body. For Leder (1990:66), the phrase "flesh and blood"[37] suggests a dimension of depth hitherto unspoken. In his own words: "Beneath the surface flesh, visible and tangible, lies a hidden vitality that courses within me. *Blood* is my metaphoric term for this viscerality. 'Flesh and blood' expresses well the chiasmatic identity-indifference of perceptual and visceral life" (Leder 1990:66).

In this formulation, Leder has thus indicated his response to his opening question, namely: "Why does the body, as ground of experience, yet tends to recede from direct experience?" Simply because certain modes of disappearances are essential to the body's functioning. In his own words: "As ecstatic/recessive being in the world, the lived body is necessarily self-effacing" (Leder 1990:69).

For Leder, however, this is not the last word on the "absent body" in its withdrawal from experience and its modes of disappearance. Rather, he turns to the question of the "problematic presencing" of the body. Insofar as the body tends to disappear when functioning unproblematically, it often seizes our attention most strongly at times of dysfunction. It is thus to Leder's identification of the *dys-appearing body* that we now have to turn.

Dys-appearing Body

Whereas the ecstatic-recessive awayness of the body accounts for its withdrawal (i.e. its disappearances) from experience, we also have the character of "being away" as ingredient in many experiences that we do have of our own bodies, according to Leder (cf 1990:70ff). In his words: "My own body may feel away from me, something problematic and foreign, even at moments of its most intimate disclosure."

In his description of the *dys-appearing body* (from the Greek prefix "dys" signifying "bad", hard" or "ill"), Leder (1990:69ff) turns his focus to the body in its manifestation of being problematic or disharmonious, that is, the body experienced as "being away", "apart", "asunder" from itself. The body consequently becomes the thematic focus, but in its "dys" state, the "I can" of bodily ecstasis is disturbed and turns into "I no longer can", and I no longer experience "from" my body but "to" my body. In short, it is the problematic alien presencing of the body. In its problematic presencing (e.g. physical pain, disease, social breakdown), the body seizes our awareness and we experience the body as the very absence of a desired or ordinary state. It (the "body") comes to appear "Other" and opposed to the self.[38]

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[37] See Leder (1990:66ff) for a short but insightful elaboration on his understanding of "flesh and blood" with regard to the relationship between body and world, self and the Other, and the visible and the invisible.

[38] See Leder's (1990:71ff) vivid description of a tennis player who suffers a heart attack. In a very original and terminological significant manner, Leder, in his description of the heart attack, moves from pain as sensory intensification to the episodic structure thereof and then to the affective call ("it hurts"). The effect of the pain is subsequently set within a broader phenomenological context that is characterised as intentional disruption, spatio-temporal constriction and telic demand. The latter, namely, the telic demand, includes what Leder calls a hermeneutical (I want to understand what is going on) and pragmatic (I want to get rid of or master the pain) moment. For Leder (1990:84), this "dys-appearance" not only characterises our vital functioning, but also those of affectivity (e.g. anger and anxiety) and motility (e.g. to stumble).

Leder (1990:86-7; 90ff), however, takes great care to explain the difference and relationship between the newly introduced term "dys-appearing" and the previously employed term "dis-appearing" (focal, background and depth dis-appearance). For Leder, the two terms are not only antonymically significant, but also stand in a relation of correlativity. In the various modes of disappearances as described earlier, the ecstatic-recessive body is "away from" direct experience. However, in "dys-appearance", the body folds back upon itself. "Dys-appearance" effects an attentional reversal of "dis-appearance", that is, precisely because the normal and healthy body largely disappears, the direct experience of the body is skewed (negatively) towards times of dysfunction. Thus in short: The "Dys-appearing body" is a presencing of the body that is born from the absence of an absence!

But for Leder (1990:92ff), the last words – although not the only words – on the phenomenology of dys-appearance belongs to the pivotal role of the Other, since our awareness of our bodies is a profoundly social thing.[39] However, in using Sartre as interlocutor,[40] Leder (1990:93) argues that it is not only the gaze of the Other that is determinate for my own self-awareness. Through mutual incorporation, my experience of the self as "lived body" is supplemented and extended through the lived body of the Other. For Leder, intersubjectivity is intimately linked to intercorporeity. In an insightful manner, Leder highlights the forms that social dys-appearance can take on, making clear that the body is a place of vulnerability, not only biologically (e.g. pain, disease), but also to sociopolitical forces.[41] He concludes: "The body is at once a biological organism, a ground of personal identity and a social construct" (Leder 1990:99).

But what are we now to make of these critical insights regarding the notion of the "lived body"? What are we to make of the distinction between an ecstatic, recessive and dys-appearing body and the various modes of dis-appearances? As indicated earlier, the significance of his phenomenological approach to the notion of the "lived body" is not only a tool for the refutation of previous philosophical positions, but also for their reinterpretation and reclamation. To this we now turn.

Philosophical Consequences

In the second part of his book, entitled *Philosophical Consequences*, Leder (1990:103-173) pursues the significance of the above-mentioned findings vis-à-vis the history of ideas. Under the rubric "The immaterial body", he explores Descartes' account of the immateriality of the mind, tracing out its dependence on the modes of bodily disappearance (Leder 1990:103-125). He then addresses the Cartesian portrayal of the body as the negative or oppositional moment within the self, arguing that the experiential prominence of the body during times of breakdown and dysfunction help to foster this negative view (Leder 1990:126-148). In concluding with the caption "To form one body", he turns his attention to questions of an ethical nature and addresses the values that might be associated with the new paradigm of embodiment. For the latter, he takes his cue from a neo-Confucian notion

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[39] In Leder's (1990:92) own words: "My self-understanding always involves the seeing of what others see in me."

[40] The qualified objection that Leder wants to raise against Sartre's standpoint is that in the understanding of Sartre, there is no true thematisation of one's body prior to the encounter with the Other. For Leder, an explicit thematisation of the body can arise independently of the Other's gaze. And also: My own subjectivity does not force the Other into a position of object, nor vice versa.

[41] In an insightful discussion regarding social dys-appearance, Leder (1990:97-99) looks at physical and cultural divergences, dys-appearance in an aesthetic mode and within a technical context.

of the body, and he adapts it for contemporary use, that is, the notion that we "form one body" with all things (Leder 1990:149-173).

The immaterial Body

With regard to the Cartesian legacy of a mind-body dualism, depicted by Leder as "The immaterial body", he explicitly chooses to focus on the reconstruction function of his phenomenological approach in critically addressing this legacy. He argues that the hold over our consciousness of such a previous philosophical position is never broken as long as its own domain of evidence is not admitted or explained.[42] From reconstruction, Leder (1990:107) explains that we can then move to the project of reclamation of the "living fruit" that rests "within its overly hard ontological husk". What is this very "own domain of evidence" and what are the "living fruits" that we can reclaim? The former refers to the Cartesian "placelessness of the immaterial mind", that is, the mind as a substance entirely opposed in nature to *res extensa* and which has no extension in space. For Leder, the persuasive evidence that has given rise to this Cartesian dualism and phenomenological neglect of the brain, stems *anatomically* from the very "disappearance of the brain", that is, the lived experience that this organ is never present as an object of direct perception or control.[43] The brain does not act upon the world directly, yet it lies at the seat of embodied thought, sensory experience[44] and voluntary movement. For this reason, Leder (1990:115) states: "This invisibility of the brain is one experiential source for the notion of the human mind as immaterial. Our principal organ of mentality seems nowhere to register in the physical world."

Thus, an experiential disappearance is read in ontological terms! But the persuasive Cartesian evidence stems *functionally* from his viewpoint regarding the intellectual faculty of "understanding", namely, "understanding" as the rational mind operating independently of all bodily influences. Focusing on the constitutive role of language in thought, Leder (1990:121ff) turns to its modes of embodiment, arguing that the public uses of language (writing and speech) involve structures of bodily disappearances,[45] and that these disappearances intensify when language is interiorised into silent thought. Herein lies for Leder the "persuasive Cartesian evidence" for the existence of the reasoning mind as a separate, immaterial order of being, encouraged by the body's style of absence. It is the very experience of abstract thought that thus provides one with the more powerful derivations for the notion of the ra-

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[42] Almost light-heartedly Leder (1990:107) states: "Let it … be assumed that the philosophers of other centuries or persuasions are no dolts. One's own position will be most persuasive if it can provide an explanation, derived from its own internal presuppositions, for why intelligent people would have found it plausible or even compelling to hold a contrasting view."

[43] The brain is of course available in certain limited ways such as at an autopsy, through diagnostic imaging techniques, or pictured in textbooks. The point is: In the everyday life-world it is highly unusual to encounter a brain (cf Leder 1990:111).

[44] It is from his exposition of Descartes' understanding of perception – "the noblest and most comprehensive of the senses" – that Leder concludes that with regard to his theory of perception, that Descartes is in a sense more of a trialist than a dualist (cf Leder 1990:119). In Descartes assertion of "thought" as substance of mind lies, according to Leder, a masked but crucial ambiguity. Put simply: In Descartes' standpoint: Thought = conscious experience, and consciousness = gaze of an immaterial mind. But the gaze, that is, perception, is on the one hand a mode of thought (hence as belonging to *res cogitans*), and on the other hand, necessarily involves the body (hence as intimately part of the *res extensa*). For this reason, Leder argues that the experiential core of Descartes' conviction regarding the immaterial essence of the mind is not to be found in his theory regarding our sensory faculties.

[45] In his exposition of the disappearances, Leder (1990:124-5) refers to the body of the thinker, that of the sign-body as well as the body of the referent that are all experientially effaced! He concludes: "This strongly encourages the characterization of thought as a disembodied activity engaged in by an immaterial soul."

tional mind as incorporeal. This very experiential disappearance is not, however, read only in ontological terms. Leder (1990:127ff) argues that it is also read in valuational terms, that is, the body as a force of negativity, an obstacle to the soul's attempt to secure knowledge, virtue or eternal life! It is now to Leder's depiction of "the threatening body" that we now turn.

The threatening Body

In his exposition of "the threatening body", Leder (1990:127ff) argues that the natural bias of attention toward the negative has already been laid by lived experience, and can be illustrated in relation to three images of embodiment that have played a central role in the Western tradition: (1) the body understood as the scene of epistemological error, that is, the body as locus of limited and fallible sense perception, and thus as primary source of deception;[46] (2) moral error, that is, the distrust of bodily passions;[47] and (3) mortality, that is, the identification of the body with disease and death.[48] In each case, it is the role played by the body in surfacing in "dys-appearance" that encourages negative portrayals.[49] The alien body surfaces as something negative and disvalued. Put differently: The self is seen as fractured by an onto-valuational opposition. While experientially motivated, this interpretation remains a misreading. In Leder's (1990:133) words: "Onto-valuational dualism captures in a conceptual system what is first suggested by immediate experience." And: "The onto-valuational opposition of rational mind and body may be a misreading, but one motivated by the lived body itself" (Leder 1990:149).

But why is it important that this misreading be addressed? Because it is exploitive, manipulating, hurtful and oppressive for women, labourers, "primitive" cultures, animals, nature. Leder (1990:154-5) argues that the hierarchical structure of onto-valuational dualism is used to validate modes of oppression.[50] This is why we should seriously seek an alternative "reading".

Having thus disentangled the evidence for the "persuasive Cartesian dualism"[51] the question is now how to reclaim the "living fruits" within this "overly hard ontological husk". How are we to free ourselves from the entrapment of onto-valuational dualism? How are we to understand the mind and body as intertwined aspects of one living organism? As mentalised embodiment? At this point Leder (1990:156ff) introduces and suggests

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[46] The negative Cartesian *epistemological* kernel: The body constitutes the primary force that clouds the intellect and seduces the will to error. Mistakes are therefore not so much a matter of the mind positively choosing to err, as it is to failing to undo the distortions that the body has introduced. For Leder, Descartes' motivated misreading stems from the philosophical attention to the body at times of perceptual error, injury, madness, disease, and so on that encourage a dualist reading.

[47] The negative Cartesian *moral* kernel: The prism of body-based emotion distorts the true nature and import of objects in our life.

[48] The negative Cartesian *mortality* kernel: The body as prison of the immortal, immaterial rational soul.

[49] The Cartesian onto-valuational conclusion can be summarised as follow: It is intellectual reason that overcomes sense deception and masters the pull of the passions. It is reason that forms the core of the soul destined to outlive the perishable body.

[50] See Leder (1990:154-5) for a brief discussion of a few examples from cultural hermeneutics.

[51] Leder (1990:150) argues that Cartesian dualism rests upon what he calls a phenomenological vector, that is, a structure of experience that makes possible and encourages the subject in certain practical or interpretative directions, while never mandating them as invariants. In his own words: "A phenomenological vector, in my usage, involves an ambiguous set of possibilities and tendencies that take on definite shape only within a cultural context" (Leder 1990:151).

an alternative notion from Neo-Confucianism,[52] namely, "to form one body" as interpretative vector (see previous footnote).

To form One Body

For Leder (1990:156), the notion "to form one body" (*t'i*) is not simply an ontological statement, but a moral/spiritual ideal meant to guide self-development and an ethic appropriate to the recognition of the lived body. An onto-valuational concept is needed, however, to "form one body" – speaking both of what is and how things should be. But what does it entail?

From his brief exposition of Neo-Confucianism,[53] it becomes clear that Leder's (cf 1990:158ff) main aim is not to focus on the identified convergences between the latter and his phenomenological account, but rather on the suggestiveness of this comparison *vis-à-vis* the domain of values.[54] It is the life of the "sage"[55] that intrigues him and how we can realise the truth of universal interconnectedness. Leder (1990:161ff) explores three modalities through which this principle can be realised, namely, through *compassion* (Latin: *cum+ patior* = to suffer with) in the moral sphere, through aesthetic openness (referred to by the term *absorption*; Latin root: *sorbere* = to suck in, to swallow) to the world, and lastly, through *communion* within the spiritual sphere.

With the term "compassion", Leder (1990:161-164) is referring to emphatic identification with the Other through which I/we can assert the truth of relation (i.e. that we belong to one flesh and blood) and which finds expression in concrete service. It is a service that expands outwards – in concentric circles – until it ultimately forms one body with all things. With the term "absorption", Leder (1990:164-167) is referring to bidirectional incorporation, that is, to be "swallowed" into a larger body (e.g. landscape, work of art, sport) and to "swallow" the "context of our experience" into our embodiment.[56] It is an "inspiring" ("breathed in") experience with ecstatic quality that brings a feeling of joyful release. Such experiences should cultivate within us a world that encourages our involvement. With the term "communion", Leder (1990:167-173) is referring to practices expressly designed to facilitate a sense of involvement with the All, that is, the practices that are to be found at the heart of the world's spiritual traditions and that take the form of ritual, prayer, meditation, and so on. It is to realise a relationship to that which is felt to be the ground of being.[57]

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[52] See Leder's (1990:156ff) brief elucidation on the historical and philosophical background to Neo-Confucianism.

[53] In his brief elucidation of Neo-Confucianism, Leder emphasises the embodied unity of all things (connectedness of all), the "vital force" (*ch'i*) that the world and we are composed of, the continuity between ourselves and all things, and the mind-heart awareness (*hsin*) through which we can experience and hence embody all things.

[54] The reason for his intent, as explained by Leder, is that Neo-Confucian ontology is always embedded within a matrix of moral/spiritual concerns.

[55] The "sage" is the fully realised person. It is only the sage that truly realises the moral imperative to live according to the principle of "forming one body" with the universe. It is the sage that realizes the clearing away of selfish desire, and to enable innate knowledge and compassion to re-emerge. Therefore Leder (1990:160) states: "Through a loving identification with the nurturance of all things, the sage then forms one body with the universe."

[56] An example can perhaps help to clarify this short description of absorption as bidirectional incorporation. If I am enjoying the beauty of a landscape, it is as if I am swallowed into a larger body. At the same time, however, this landscape is swallowed into our embodiment, transforming it from within (cf Leder 1990:165).

[57] This "ground of being" in Leder's (1990:168) exposition can be called God, Brahman, Suchness, Tao, or any of an indefinite list of names.

It is to understand that corporeality is not simply an obstacle to spiritual experience, but central to its realisation.[58] It is to understand that the body is a way in which we as part of the universe mirror the universe.

Having thus explored Leder's contribution and understanding of the "absent body" and his proposed alternative notion of the "lived body", I now finally turn to a critical-contextual evaluation of his viewpoint.

Every(Body)@Home?

If, as I stated in the introductory paragraph, "incarnated human experience is incarcerated" within the South African contexts and characterised by "disillusionment", how then does Leder's "new way of looking" assist us in disentangling and refuting the so-called "misreading of an onto-valuational opposition of mind and body"? How then does it help us to reclaim the notion of the "lived body" and the embodied self? For me the ultimate question is: "Can every(body) be @ home?" in a post-apartheid South African society which, in my opinion, is traumatically plagued by broken, mutilated, exploited, forgotten and manipulated bodies. It is a question that echoes the prophetic words of the ANC freedom fighter Albert Luthili in *Let my people go* (1962).

> The task is not finished. South Africa is not yet a home for all her sons and daughters … There remains before us the building of a new land, a home for men (and women – DPV) who are black, white, brown, from the ruins of the old narrow groups, a synthesis of the rich cultural strains which we have inherited.

In the light of this exposition, I would like to critically address this question in two phases: Firstly by assessing Leder's contribution and secondly, by translating his contribution into the South African contextual vernacular.

Leder's Contribution: Disentangling the Entrapment

For me, Leder's most important contribution lies in his insightful disentangling of the Western entrapment within the Cartesian dualistic ontological heritage, that is, the division of labour between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*. He has indicated, in a convincing manner, why the body – as ground of experience – tends to recede from direct experience. In its very presencings (as ecstatic, recessive and as dys-appearing body), it exhibits, as Leder persuasively argues, modes of absence – bodily modes of absence stemming from anatomical and functional evidence that have de-corporealised our existence and that have subsequently valorised incorporeal reason. Put differently, experiential disappearances (mis) read not only in ontological terms, but also in valuational terms, that is, the suggestiveness of immediate experience which is as an onto-valuational dualism in a conceptual system. While thus experientially motivated, this interpretation remains a misreading. Beyond this point in his argumentation, however, Leder's contribution becomes questionable and speculative. Firstly, in my opinion, Leder is too hasty in suggesting that in his choice for Neo-Confucianism, he has completed the incomplete self-understanding which has been lacking thus far. And secondly, I could find no good reason to accept that it is precisely the hierar-

[58] In this formulation, Leder is referring to spiritual experience in the West that has often been thought of as divorced from, or opposed to, the bodily sphere. He therefore gives an insightful illustration of the Christian ritual of the Eucharist and of Zen meditation as – albeit two very different practices – examples of one-body communion. In the former ritual, the eating and drinking become vehicles for incorporating the divine. In the latter ritual, an embodiment of stillness and breath helps throw one beyond ego-identification.

chical structure of onto-valuational dualism which is used to validate modes of oppression. With the following critical questions, I would like to justify my suspicion and discomfort with regard to the two points that I have raised.

If the (Western) Cartesian epistemological stance (read: perspective) has made it possible for Leder to insightfully expose the "misreading" of persuasive experiential evidence, that is, by objectifying the "experientially reading of bodily experience" and by indicating how the reading has mistakenly been captured in an onto-valuational opposition of mind and body, the critical question to Leder becomes: Is it possible at all to simply exchange one (Western) worldview – which is an evolutionary and demographically grown "product" over many centuries – for another (Eastern) worldview? Is this a responsible way of expanding different ontologies? Are there not important differences in the respective worldviews' "epistemological make-ups" (i.e. the "stuff" that makes up the worldview) which defies such an easy exchange, which defies such an "easy" expansion? Is it not a growth process of exposure which can only be (weakly) directed? What has now happened to the so-called "phenomenological vector" which, according to Leder himself, involves an ambiguous set of possibilities and tendencies that take on definite shape only within a cultural context (see Leder 1990:151)? Put differently: Is (Western) "sight" (i.e. the Gnostic prevalence) now not confused with the (Eastern) "face" (i.e. moral/spiritual concerns) in such an easy exchange? If however such a choice (read: exchange) can be justified in one way or the other in search of universal connectedness and ultimately a cultivation of embodied relations, then my question will be: Why then opt for Neo-Confucianism[59] and not, for example, the African philosophy of "ubuntu" (translated as "humaneness"/"humanity"/"participatory humanism")[60] which finds expression in a traditional African aphorism, namely, *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (Zulu) and *Motho ke motho ka batho* (Sotho)? It is often translated as a "person is a person through other persons" (see Louw 2002:5; Nussbaum 2003:1). Is there any specific other reason(s) for the choice apart from the fact that Neo-Confucianism intrigues the author (see page 15)?

Within the African philosophy of "ubuntu" the very universal connectedness finds expression which Leder is in search of, as well as the modalities of compassion absorption and communion (see for example Louw 1999, 2002; Nussbaum 2003:2). As Dandala poignantly states: "Ubuntu … is a bedrock of a specific lifestyle or culture that seeks to honour human relationships as primary in any social, communal or corporate activity (in Nussbaum 2003:2). Ubuntu acknowledges among other things: "Your pain is My pain, My wealth is Your wealth, Your salvation is My salvation" (Nussbaum 2003:2). But also, true ubuntu takes plurality seriously (Louw 2002:11). While it constitutes personhood through other persons, it appreciates the fact that "other persons" are so called precisely because we can ultimately never quite "stand in their shoes" or completely "see through their eyes" (Louw 2002:11). Ubuntu's respect for the particularity of the other links up closely – according to Louw (2002:14) – to its respect for individuality. But then, individuality that is not of Cartesian making.[61] Is this not perhaps a more exciting and promising direction?

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[59] My question arises from the general understanding that selfhood in the East is defined less strongly by one's relationship to the group or community than in African communities. See Nussbaum 2003:7-8 where she discusses the viewpoints of Schieffer and Lessem in this regard.

[60] Many definitions of "Ubuntu" have already been given. See Louw 2002:5 and also various quotes by Nussbaum (2003:2ff) regarding descriptions of "Ubuntu".

[61] Louw (2002:14) argues that "ubuntu" directly contradicts the Cartesian conception of individuality in terms of which the individual or self can be conceived without necessarily conceiving the other. In his understanding, the Cartesian individual exits prior to, or separately and independently from the rest of community or society.

However, this question can only be pursued if other urgent questions are addressed which have sprung up over the last four centuries from the South African experience of the encounter of "Western" and "African" worldviews[62]. These are questions which have to address the characterisation of this encounter as "incarcerated existence" and as "disillusionment". Does then the crime and violence in contemporary South African society not present an anomaly which refutes all of the preceding as idealistically-held values but which are not lived? Or has Ubuntu derailed? I now finally turn to these questions in the concluding section on the translation of cultural possibilities.

Translating the Keyboard of Cultural Possibilities: Completing the Incomplete Self-Understanding

> To transcend together to a common world, sharing the forest in which we walk (Leder 1990:94).

Since our awareness of our bodies is a profoundly social thing, arising out of experiences of the corporeality of other people and their gaze directed towards me/us, it follows that my/our self-understanding always involves the seeing of what others see in me/us. Following Leder's emphasis on dys-appearance (see Leder 1990:86ff), I would like to argue that the "incarcerated existence" within South Africa which I mentioned in the introduction, can now be characterised as "dys-illusionment", that is, a thematisation of bodies which accompanies dysfunction and problematic states. In my argument, I will also question Leder's conviction that the hierarchical structure of onto-valuational *dualism* – with his Cartesian emphasis on *dualism* – validates modes of oppression.

During South Africa's era of apartheid, a political system based on a very liberal (nationalistic collective) anthropology for that time, cemented a (onto-valuational) foreign gaze within the society[63] – a (objectifying) white foreign gaze, springing from a heart (subconsciously) permeated by fear, but religiously tinted in a manner that created the (legitimate) impression of a God-willed recognition of diversity (a superficial but persuasive impression of social equivalence, but not of equality). Protest against the established political-religiously inspired system was seen by most white (Afrikaans and English speaking) churches and the white minority government, as protest against God himself. Racism was not a fruit of this ideology, but its very essence was racist in the total (biological) structuring of the world, and thus defined your being not by what you could become and achieve, but who you were "by nature". It is this onto-valuational gaze (read: ideological illusion) in which humaneness was turned into manipulative matter, in which a socio-political dream was lived as reality. And the fruits of the onto-valuational gaze? The destruction of (harmonious) connectedness, social cohesion and human dignity, and, consequently, the socio-moral creation of "dys-illusionment" – that is, not the so-called dualism as alleged by Leder, but rather the onto-valuational gaze germinated by oppressive and exploitive (hierarchical) structures. Structures that brought about an experience chasm between white and "non-whites" – structures which socially polluted the banks of the river of experience with

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This however does not imply that the philosophy of *ubuntu* does not have grave dangers lurking within its folds. See Louw (2002:16) for a brief discussion of the dangers of oppressive collectivism.

62 For the sake of the argument, "worldviews" are not closely and clearly distinguished – they should as they do not represent a monolithic whole.

63 For the following exposition of the political system of apartheid, I gratefully make use of one of the most outstanding and thorough studies of this complex history, namely, Johann Kinghorn's (1990) *'n Tuiste vir almal*. He poignantly characterises this history as a "tragic-comedy".

an unearthing, destructive and de-humanising self-understanding on the "non-white" bank, and a privileged, exploitive and racist self-understanding on the "white" bank. And it left behind manipulated, mutilated, exploited and forgotten bodies in its socio-economic political wake.[64]

Is it not this chasm and the loss of human dignity (and not poverty as such[65]) that has given rise to rape, murder, hijacking, theft, the Aids-pandemic, and so on, and so on being (inhumanely and insensitively) reduced to mere statistics by government officials, politicians and even official church bodies? Is it true that (no)bodies care? In my opinion, this is where the Christian-theological concept of the "body of Christ" should forcefully and significantly, and interpretively and constructive-concretely, come into (onto-valuational) play; it should seriously pursue the notion of the body as a "lived body". This is not an exegetical-hermeneutical luxury for the churches in South Africa, but rather an incarnational necessity (thereby opposing all forms of docetic spirituality) if it is to pursue the (systemic) restoration of human dignity in our country, and the healing of unfathomable hurt. If we are, following Leder's (1990:94) words, to "transcend together to a common world, sharing the forest in which we walk", then we have to (theological-existentially) submerge to visceral depths if we are to address the "dys-illusionment"! Put differently: A new way of looking at the body can create a new, exciting way of being "body of Christ" in South Africa today.[66]

Moving thus from the vantage point of the "lived body", as explicated in the previous sections,[67] to the "body" of New Testament literature, we find in the writings of Paul (e.g. Rom 12; 1 Cor 6, 10 and 12; Eph 1, 4; Col 1) that the image (metaphor) of the "body of Christ" is resolutely a communal concept, determined by the life that flows forth from the death of Christ, and (concretely) motivated to triumph over the hubris, egoism and smugness of humans – biblically characterised as "in Adam" (e.g. Rom 5-8). Acknowledging Leder's (1990:3) dictum that "cultural variations are always played out upon the keyboard of possibilities presented by our corporeal structure", I am of the opinion that this implies the following for the South African church as the body of Christ and as an integral part of the body of the world:

1) The fundamental revision of their understanding of "being human as body" in inter-disciplinary collaboration in order to broaden and deepen the cultural keyboard. Without such radical revision, the established and de-humanising (racist) "foreign (onto-valuational) gaze" will not be deconstructed.
2) The creative, imagining of being "body of Christ" as an extension of our understanding of our corporeal existence, enabling us to explore and (reflectively) submerge to visceral depths.

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64 There are so many examples. Just to mention a few: Population register, exclusively based on race; the well-known apartheid laws (e.g. on mixed marriages, job reservation; sport segregation); re-settlement of more than 4 million "non-whites" in Homelands; lack of education; landlessness; the later state of emergency; detention without trial, etc. See also the insightful analysis of the so called (economic) Midas-myth as discussed by Kinghorn (1990: 52ff).

65 I beg to differ from Nussbaum (2003:10) when she states that the roots of poverty are the very same roots of terrorism.

66 In this formulation, I am not only following Leder's (1990:125) conviction that philosophical doctrines arise out of the life-world and attain popularity and credibility only to the extent that they harmonise with lived experience, but also the insightful interpretation of Beaudoin (2001:11ff) in this regard, stating: "Only after we know what it means to be a body can we meaningfully interpret the doctrine of the body of Christ and its implications for Christian discipleship today."

67 In other words, the "body" as radical origins of all knowing and being, mediating all consciousness (cf Beaudoin 2001:11).

3) To reconstruct and proclaim together through intuitive integration and contextual comprehension (Kinghorn) a "liberating gaze" to transcend together to a common world, sharing not only the forest in which we walk (Leder), but also sharing the memories of the roads travelled up to this point.

Once the body of Christ accepts the challenge and task of "healing the foreign gaze" in South African society, it will be able to *hear* the cries of the rape victims, the exploited workers, the weeping of the next-of-kin of those who have been murdered; to *smell* the odour coming from shallow graves or ill-managed hospital wards (the hospitals at least will have been re-named at great cost); to *see* the emaciated bodies of the hungry and those dying of Aids; to *taste* the bitterness of those who have lost everything (their homes, their land); and to *feel* the anxiety and disillusionment of those who are victims of contemporary society; but also to infectiously, consciously and reflectively submerge from the ecstatic to visceral depths, that is, to constructively – from the vulnerable site of the body as vantage point – demolish the (ideological) walls that presently (safely) divide the church from the streets so that the church as the body of Christ can become the meeting place for the moods and thoughts of "flesh and blood". In this regard, Beaudion (2001:13) insightfully remarks regarding the body of Christ: "The body of Christ, if it is truly thought through the lived body, is a body dependent upon absent regions and processes we cannot control, but they themselves complicate us with the world".

The challenge for the South African church is thus to address the permeating societal disillusionment that many experience. It needs to take into account the dys-illusionment of the broken, exploited, mutilated, forgotten and manipulated bodies in our society and to find ways to heal our human dignity. In its constructive (incorporating) engagement, the church will have to identify the plank in its own eye (Mt 7:3) and search for the enlightenment of the lamp of the body (Lk 11:34) in order to come face-to-face with an Other. It is only then that we will come close to a (sacred)[68] meeting place (of bodies) where everybody is invited, everybody is welcome and everybody is at home.

[68] My choice for the word "sacred" in this concrete context springs directly – but now in a positive sense – from Leder's (1990:125) formulation: "Our interior monologues and abstract rationality are not the stuff of which the sacred is made."

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