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FROM THE ARCHEOLOGY OF HAPPENINGS...THE MATTER OF CORPREALITY

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Life in front of the mystery of death¹

When daily we go into the vibrating movement of a road, we can expect at any moment that our soft body, consisting mostly of water, will be torn by steel, will brutally collide with hard asphalt, so that we will lose our life. But then, how the feeling of existence increases when we are successful in crossing the road, without injury reaching the other side of the street. As if to have had the experience of the possibility of death brings on the effect of a sort of holiday, by which existence manifests its force...

Thinkers from the European philosophical tradition discern the human way of experiencing the world as occurring in a sphere, a sphere of distance, which frees the human being from the pressures of an eternally changing reality. Since Heraclitean times, we, the people of Europe have been astonished at the pendulum of life and death in the river of reality, which was later named the dialectic of the entity.

However, the death of a human being is special, because it is not only the ordinary end of a life, but it means that human life is exceptional.

¹The under-mentioned fragment appears in other contexts in the next text: *From the Archeology of Happening...The Matter of Death.*

I would like to consider some interesting and intertwining aspects of the mystery of death, taking into account statements from M. Merleau-Ponty, M. Heidegger, and H.-G. Gadamer.

A few words about method²

Who among us does not stand before the task of having to interpret happenings occurring in life? However, not many people are interested in the methodological constitution of interpreting such activities. In our culture we use language formed in philosophical disputations about the riddle of relationships: the human being-the world, also of philosophical considerations trying to solve the problem of an undoubting knowledge. Therefore, of interest to us is the zone of human learning which embraces these epistemological, often named transcendental, trends, which have been developed in the modern period of European philosophy.

When we look at our philosophical tradition, we can say that Descartes has encouraged us to follow a meditational route to learning. On the one hand, Descartes grasped reality as based on two, irreducible to one another, elements of reality: *res extensa*, and *res cogitans*. On the other hand, he noticed that the sphere of *ego cogito* is the spring of evidence and truth. However, it is to Kant's merit that he noticed that authentic learning acts and processes cannot be grasped out of human sensuality. But this sensuality, in opposition to the naivety of English empiricism and according to the philosopher from Königsberg, could be grasped critically, as being richer than the aforementioned empirical schemes, named a priori forms of human sensuality (visuality). Let us notice here that Kant also writes about a sensitive (of the senses) intuition, as if providing concepts with "objective reality"³, and in this case he also transcended the naivety of English empiricism.

The transcendental motif of philosophical reflection promoted by Descartes and Kant was continued by Husserl, and Descartes' accent on meditation brings, as a result, phenomenological meditation, which is crucial for contemporary philosophy. In the

²The under-mentioned fragment appears in the next text: *From the Archeology of Happening...The Matter of Death*, in the context of Levinas' philosophy.

³As we read in Kant's work: *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, Cambridge, 2002, p. 385: "... all concepts must be capable of resting upon an intuition of some sort, to provide them with objective reality; but all our intuition is sensuous."

framework of phenomenological activity, the learning subject rises to the rank of consciousness, giving total sense to the world. Husserlian considerations are the basis from which to speak about events, and from which archeology escapes the phenomenological method. It is this kind of archeology that E. Levinas wants to reach in order to consider the mystery of time. He notices that to enter into the question of what time as time is, it is necessary to move outside of phenomenology.⁴

It may well be necessary to pay attention to a new kind of philosophical narration, irrespective of whether we consider the possibility of the realization of Levinas' task to be outside of phenomenology. Namely, the European epistemological tradition is enriched by Levinas moral reflection. The French philosopher treats the transcendental ability of the learning consciousness as a kind of transformation, as something given from the world "wound" into a rational game of The Same. Among French thinkers, G. Bataille also accents the corporal side of human existence, revealing it as pain, suffering, delight, decay, putrefaction, and so on.

On the other hand, it may also be necessary to notice that analysis of the world's occurrences happens in the framework of a learning model of the possibilities of human learning. In such a case, every expression, as a result of the human sensibility of the world, finds its place in description within epistemological borders.

Thus, one can assert that transcendental reflection, starting with Descartes' philosophy, developing in Kant's critical analysis, and culminating in Husserlian phenomenology, describes, in substance, the framework of the learning power of the human being. On the one hand, one cannot transcend this framework, but on the other, it guarantees, theoretically, infinite interpretations of events which humans can meet in the world.

In the above context we can introduce a new view of the hermeneutical interpretative attempt as a kind of archeology of happening. This kind of hermeneutics, developed from a phenomenological background, gives to the astonished human being a hint of how to understand the essence of the state of affairs which are revealed on the path of human existence. The human being, as the meditating power over the world of consciousness, tries to grasp the sense of that which is happening in the world. And the world is here, as the Heraclitean logos (Logos), drawing into conversation the searching sense of the human being.

⁴See E. Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre*, PUF, 1998.

Let us notice that Gadamer's project, which grasps philosophy as a kind of notional history, is a kind of meditating entry into the meanings of notions, and can be named a notional archeology.

So, in this outline, we use hermeneutics as the archeology of happening, to consider the crucial characteristics of human existence, such as: corporeality in the context of language gestures, death, human creativity and sovereignty (freedom).

Archeology of the body⁵

Since we exist in perfect harmony with *the corporeality of the world*, we can only experience it in the way *our bodies* permit us. To some extent, the corporeality of existence as a whole 'lines' the private worlds of every one of us, turning them into something familiar to us all. Given that, one should not forget that the body can constitute a source of incomparable bliss (G. Bataille)⁶ but, when hurt, can also be a mass of suffering tissue (M. Merleau-Ponty). When we look at the issue of the body from yet another perspective, it would appear that it can also serve as a language of meaningful gestures and hence a source of preverbal meanings. Human body movements can themselves be meaningful because, as Merleau-Ponty shows, the human body is a sort of condensation, or clot of *scattered corporeality (la chair)*, which, in his view, is the essence of existence, a rule transformed into action, also described as a "clump" or "pulp of body tissue"⁷. Therefore *la chair* here would appear to be a kind of scattered corporeality of the universe, a certain manner adopted by the world, also incorporating the impulses of logos, possibly even being the logos itself, in the ancient meaning of the word ...

The joy that accompanies comprehension of the world logos would also significantly connect with the joy experienced in a corporeal manner...

Merleau-Ponty's philosophical thought introduces us to the atmosphere of existence in

⁵The under-mentioned fragment is an introduction to the text: *Archeology of the Body and Womanhood*, and there is an interpretive background for a metaphysical consideration on womanhood.

⁶See G. Bataille, *L'Histoire de l'erotisme*, Paris, 1976.

⁷See. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l'Invisible suivi de notes de travail*, 1964.

the world of scattered corporeality, a corporeality which is streaked with meaning as it were, into the atmosphere of meaning-laden corporeality, which by ‘padding’ the world becomes a world in itself. Our body in this world is a sort of eruption, a temporary condensation of this scattered vibrant element and here for us it is also the measure of this world. It is therefore our body which sets the measure to events in the porous horizon of corporeal existence...

The body is a symbol of finiteness, an end sign with the stench of corruption (Bataille), a symptom of death in which the qualities of the corporeal world, similar to the particles mentioned by Anaxagoras, i. e. blood, hair, muscles, bones etc., undergo the process of decomposition thereby becoming visible signs of finiteness.

The mere reading of the body itself as a sign evokes a perception and a concept of the world, revealing it in its primordial state of unity. At the ontic level one may speak about an ontic metaphor (J. Derrida), “expressing motion in terms of what it facilitates”⁸. and, as such, *combining* the temporal with the spatial, external and corporeal... An ontic metaphor can also be treated as a manifestation of the motion of *dissimilarity*, a dissimilarity between two orders: the order of temporariness and the order of objects facilitated by temporariness. But then each of the above terms accentuates man’s indirect access to the motion of existence itself, which becomes obscured by the span of spatial entities and their corporeality.

The body can also be construed as a revelation, a symptom, a disclosure of the invisible, yet which constitutes the motion of time itself. In the motion of the metaphor (unifying or differentiating) described above, the invisible can be called the lining (to use Merleau-Ponty’s definition) to that which is visible, tangible and generally discernible. Therefore, from the context outlined above, it becomes clear that without a body and without the corporeal emergence of the ‘happening’ of time we would be totally unable to experience the invisible pulse of existence or to take part in the mystery of being... Contemplation would serve as a trap for catching the scattered germs of meaning offered to man by the corporeal logos of the world.

Delight and suffering written in the body⁹

⁸See. J. Derrida, *La voix et la phenomene. Introduction au probleme du signe dans la phenomenologie de Husserl*, 1967.

⁹The three under-mentioned fragments appear in the text: *Archeology of the Body and Womanhood*, in the context of human creativity as participation in the divine logos.

It can be said that the human body is an open wound, as nothing can compare to physical pain and, as E. Levinas indicates, no means exist with which one's own perception of pain could be transferred to another human being¹⁰. Physical pain is torn tissues and the suffering which constitutes the ultimate fate.

One should not forget, however, that the body is also a previously-mentioned source of elation and joy of existence, a fact which then seems all the more miraculous. It is not only about acknowledging a dialectic supplement, however, but about the struggle to identify the nature of corporeality itself, taking us towards the existence of pain and bliss, it is about recognizing that only thanks to the body can we experience being at all...

All the writing and talking about pain is simply writing and talking, because through the medium of language (be it spoken or written) the indirectness of sensation undergoes a significant metamorphosis. Through this metamorphosis, a knot of mysterious unification reveals itself, the unification of what exists now with what has passed in time: this is how the matter is perceived at the level of the form of temporal change. By contrast, in the realm of real events permeating this form, we encounter a dimension where the sternness of the inevitability of universal change will dominate, bringing with it a boundless, almost barbarian pain, which will eventually end...

The subtle corporeality of language tissue. The scar of a word

Let us now examine the level of the form of worldly events, which can also constitute the level of language and, therefore, a level on which a subtle corporeality will dominate, 'the less weighty' corporeal tissue, as Merleau-Ponty chooses to name it; namely- the corporeal tissue of language¹¹. Let us consider yet again that the merging of dimensions – the form and the events contained within the form – contains in itself a mystery of a kind which accompanies every transformation of the scattered corporeality of the world from a given body's experience of pain into flashes of meaning captured within words. The bond between words and experience seems fundamental to an appropriate interpretation of the human condition.

¹⁰See E. Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre*, PUF, 1998.

¹¹See M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible...*

For it seems that a gesture can be a word, as it emerges from the environment of the corporeal logos, as if saturated by seed-germs of meaning which possess the power to free man from the conditioning of change, but not the power to eliminate this conditioning. Therefore, the creation of the dimension of the world of subtle corporeality (i.e. language) becomes a scar from the laceration of intense corporeality and a special memory of the pain from ripped muscles. The scars are no longer the pain itself but a memory of the pain and as such can be viewed as words describing pain but not the pain per se.

The distance of a word vs freedom

Creating a relative distance from the pressure of the eternal, universal change allows the possibility of escape outside the bounds of the stream of change. It would seem that in the light of Merleau-Ponty's corporeal ontology the chance to acquire distance is rooted in the condition of the corporeal world, based on the aforementioned germs of meaning yielded by the corporeal element. Only in the context of a still pulsating bodily tissue do these germs have any power to incorporate a niche for the peace of thought into fluidity itself; a niche which is also a word zone and a kind of ideal in relation to the things which pulse with changeability. Escape outside changeability is only relative, but appears to introduce a new quality into human existence in the corporeal world.

Namely, it brings new words to the world, which narrate the world itself and constitute a source of freedom for the one who speaks against the backdrop of what he/she speaks about. The very act of spinning a tale about the world makes the changeability of reality unreal to the extent that the tale acquires somewhat ineffable undertones. It should be stressed here that the disassociation of the word itself, whilst generating the freedom from being crushed by inevitable changeability, simultaneously signifies the loss of direct contact with the fertile 'soil' of corporeal existence.

Reign by corporeality

The human world of temporality is here a homely feeling turned into corporeality, revealed by bodily ageing, which has emerged from the otherness of that which is out at the edge, and beyond this edge will come back...

The eternity of that which is different and not changing, not ageing, namely, the

mysterious difference of immortal death, the eternal death corpse, is here a stigmata of the cosmic element running through the world's corporeality, which has a part in every entity, tempting every human to attempt to be a creator, to espouse a clearness of the body and of understanding, a clearness in opposition to an all absorbing darkness, the darkness fettering the miracle of the happening of existence...

The gradual coldness of the body...¹²

Corporeal proximity to the grand universal change is so intimate that every act of detachment is a heart-rending cry of sorrow; it is a lack of the beloved body which pains most sorely... Therefore, the other side of the unspeakable joy which corporeal proximity to existence brings with it, as an expression of its own self-generating power, proves to be a maddening pain after the loss of a warm tender body, a body which is growing cold...

And then the otherness of the forever untamed coldness, which deals a blow to the pulsating corporeal rule over existence, only, in the next moment of change, to paralyze with its longing for peace and stillness, at the same time leading man into a time lapse, into a zone of thought or creation, which for the human being turns out to be a relative, yet liberating escape beyond the realms of time.

Creativity in front of death

Death, as the essence of the human world, frightens and at the same moment, like a spur, tempts the human being into life, to take risks to enter into the strange dimension of time. It is as if carrying within himself death, the human being can call on the power of existence, which carries him into life and forces him to reveal himself (M. Heidegger¹³), in order, in a twinkling, to make clear the flickering sense of life, a sense which is sometimes forced through an accumulation of happenings...

Breaking into the uncanny dimension of the time of the work of art is an incitement to

¹²The under-mentioned fragment appears in the text: *Archeology of the Body and Womanhood*, in the context of characterizing specificity of womanhood.

¹³See M. Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, Tübingen 1987.

life, an attempt to save the truth about human existence. Human existence as sailing upon the ocean of life and death, is a call to the learning endowment to grasp that which is inexpressible, but also that which is the salt of existence. Balancing on the edge of life and death, the human being attempts to learn, as if by the architectonic sculptures of his world, the world, washing away into every day changeability, as if demanding the human grasp, which can rely on bewitching the truth of the world in the crystal work of art ...

Creativity as a life and death symphony

Therefore in the work of art, as the effect of the attempt at human creativity, we are dealing with the revealing of the still hidden sense of human existence – a burning fire, a continuous life and death symphony. Thus, the work of art is contained in an area of continuous transcendence of a diametrically different state: life and death; as if a fruit of transgression has pushed the human being into this area. It also seems as if the work of art brings a new type of temporality into the game of realizing existential time –stopped “portions of eternity” as it were, a kind of quantum temporality, which, grasping and stopping drops away from the sense of the existing world¹⁴...

The consolidated transgression of the mystery of passage – the work of art¹⁵

It is possible for the human being to creatively penetrate the tissue of existence pulsating through death and life, as a result of which the time of human death is concealed. Considering a reinterpretation of the myth about Prometeos by Aischylos, Gadamer notices: “Before Prometeos brought the gift of concealment, his people lived in a miserable and passive way in caves, not creating any consolidated works of culture, which distinguished them from among the other living creatures.”¹⁶ So, balancing on the border of the excluded spheres of reality, spheres separated from each other by the secret mystery of passing is, here, the real way that humans realize existence. Existence distinguished by the attempt at creativity, by which the human being measures up to, on the one hand, the unusual impetus and impulse of life, and on the other hand, the dark abyss of nonexistence...

¹⁴In this case see: A. Pawliszyn, *Krajobrazy czasu. Obecne dociekania egzystencjalnej wartości czasu*, Gdańsk 1996.

¹⁵This fragment is also used in the text: *Transgressive aspects of the work of art*.

¹⁶See: H.-G. Gadamer, *Die Erfahrung des Todes* (1983), in: *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd.4, p. 288-294.

Grief, the heroism of extorting from existence an enclave of immortality¹⁷

In this context, the work of art appears as an expression of human infirmity in front of an unexpected future. An infirmity that causes an expected loneliness for such an irresponsible state, as well as for the heroic deed of tearing out of existence an enclave of immortality. In this way, the tearing out of the work of art is a shrinking on the rim of space and efflorescence in the center of time; it is the human being crying out in pain, when she/he tears out of uninhabited spaces a shelter of fulfilled sense, a household retreat, where after the exertions of battle a wearied warrior can rest...

¹⁷The under-mentioned fragment appears in the texts: *Eroticism, love, death, and Transgressive aspects of the work of art.*