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**Between Being and Having:
Incarnation and Corporeity in Marcel, Merleau-Ponty, Artaud and Hejduk**

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A Thesis

In

The Humanities Doctoral Program

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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ABSTRACT

Between Being and Having: Incarnation and Corporeity in Marcel, Merleau-Ponty, Artaud, and Hejduk

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This thesis is an interdisciplinary investigation into the irreducible difference that resides at the heart of our experience of corporeality—the fact that one experiences one’s body as both something that one is and something that one has. The first half of the thesis explains how Gabriel Marcel came to use the distinction between *being* and *having* to investigate the nature of bodily reality in his existential philosophy and how he came to deploy the concept of *my body* as the fulcrum of his thought. This portion of the thesis also examines in detail the concepts of *corporeity* and absolute possession that Marcel used to refer to this difference between *being* and *having* that informs our experience of our own embodiment.

The second half of the thesis is an interdisciplinary investigation into the work of three different twentieth century thinkers of *corporeity*. In the case of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the thesis demonstrates how he uses the distinction between *being* and *having* to organize his first major philosophical work, *The Structure of Behavior*, and how it informs his highly original re-working of the concept of perspective. The next chapter investigates the narrative of possession and dispossession that Jacques Derrida traces through the work of Antonin Artaud and argues against Derrida’s presentation of Artaud’s thought as being informed by a metaphysics of presence by looking at how Artaud uses the distinction between being and having in his writings. Lastly, the thesis addresses the work of American architect John Hejduk and speculates on the relationship between architecture and *corporeity*. Hejduk’s work is presented by way of an investigation into Marcel’s concepts of hospitality and receptivity—concepts that inform his ontological musings on interpersonal relations—that looks at the difference between the experience of *corporeity* and that of being at home.

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A Provisional Preface

What follows, what I have called *A Provisional Preface*, was, although it appears first in the thesis, written last. As a result, it is curiously double as it marks both the beginning and the end of the thesis...While it opens the thesis, although only provisionally, it also closes the thesis, as the provisional last word written on the subject, at least for the time being. Its duplicity also inheres in its provisionality...As the last portion of the thesis to be written, it was a provision for my graduation, for the acceptance of this thesis; I passed my defense with the provision that I *properly* introduce the contents of the thesis to the reader. In this respect, this preface addresses the need for clarity and will attempt to prepare the reader before they venture into the thesis proper; it will provide the reader with the material and supplies necessary for their sojourn within the thesis. But it is also provisional in that, as the thesis onto which it has been attached or grafted, it is temporary, a temporary place-holder for a more comprehensive or definitive argument yet to come. In this respect, this preface is itself marked by the hesitation, stuttering, limping, tentativeness, or perhaps even the cautiousness that characterizes the progress of the thinking that weaves its way through the thesis onto which this preface opens, a progress based more on *perhaps* or *maybe* than on *without a doubt* or *without question*.

Throughout the research and writing process, the path of thinking laid out in this thesis was continually open to doubt, to uncertainty, to conjecture; I was always unsure of the final outcome, of where the thesis was going, of the direction that the thinking would take. But that is not to suggest that the thinking was directionless or purposeless. The thesis itself began with Merleau-Ponty and was always about his work, was always

focused on gaining access to the philosophical dimensions of his earlier work; in this respect, although Marcel would seem to be at the main figure in this thesis, I would argue that this thesis really is about Merleau-Ponty, about my attempt to read *The Structure of Behavior* and *Phenomenology of Perception* and to understand the philosophical underpinnings of these works, and for this reason I want to stress here, at the beginning, that the chapter on Merleau-Ponty is the most important, although also the most overlooked, part of the thesis.

In fact, this thesis has its beginnings in my early attempts to come to grips with *The Structure of Behavior* and *Phenomenology of Perception*, and the earliest versions of this dissertation consisted entirely of my writings on those texts. What quickly became evident as I tried to work my way through Merleau-Ponty's thought was my inability to access its philosophical framework; what continuously eluded my grasp was the vocabulary through which or in which Merleau-Ponty was trying to articulate the philosophical implications, at the level of embodiment, of the scientific findings that form such an integral part of his writing.

At this point, I began reading Husserl with the hope of gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of bodily reality being articulated by Merleau-Ponty in his own work. However, while reading such texts as *The Crisis of European Sciences*, and *Transcendental Philosophy* did prove helpful for clarifying certain issues, for instance, the distinction between the lived and the physical body, I was still unable to account for a great deal of the philosophical vocabulary that informs of structures the *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Structure of Behavior*. My major problem was with the latter text since Husserlean phenomenology is quite evident in the former, but, even in the case of

Phenomenology of Perception, Husserl was not helpful in the least with the distinction between being one's own body and having a body that I had begun to suspect was at the heart of Merleau-Ponty's articulation of the true nature of human embodiment against the mind/body dualism that was the Cartesian legacy of both idealism and realism. In the case of *The Structure of Behavior*, even an investigation of *Gestalt* theory failed to account for the vocabulary of presence, sensation, existence, co-existence, and the distinction between being and having that dominates the more speculative philosophical portion of the text in which Merleau-Ponty shifts from the issue of behaviour to that of perception.

At first, I began reading Marcel while waiting on Merleau-Ponty, while waiting on his work to make sense; in the early stages, I simply wanted to understand how Marcel deployed the distinction between *the body that I am* and *the body that I have* so that I could understand how that distinction operated in the chapter in *Phenomenology of Perception* entitled "The Body as Expression, and Speech." However, as I read further into Marcel's corpus, I began to suspect that Marcel's existentialism, specifically his work on sensation, was a major influence on Merleau-Ponty's thought in general and on *The Structure of Behavior* in particular.

It was also at this point that I read Merleau-Ponty's review of the second installment of Marcel's metaphysical journals, *Being and Having*. The review was crucial for two reasons. First, it convinced me that I should take Marcel's work seriously since it provided explicit evidence that Merleau-Ponty had been reading Marcel a number of years before the publication of *The Structure of Behavior*; after reading the review, I decided to work through Marcel's thought and provide as detailed an explication of his

metaphysics and ontology as possible and use this work as a way of accessing Merleau-Ponty's own writing since many of the philosophical concepts that appear in Merleau-Ponty's early work appear to originate with Marcel.

So, using a model of compare and contrast, I decided to (1) present a coherent reading of Marcel's notion of incarnation, his theory of sensation, and his understanding of the relationship between the levels of existence and Being in order to familiarize the reader with Marcel's vocabulary and then (2) show how Merleau-Ponty employs that vocabulary in *The Structure of Behavior*. Little did I realize at the time that this model of compare and contrast centred on Marcel's thought would become the dominant model or methodology for the entire thesis—I would later bring the work of Antonin Artaud, John Hejduk and Jacques Derrida into proximity with Marcel and focus on the similar vocabulary but radically different understanding of embodiment present within their works.

The review was also critical for the thesis for another reason. Read in relation to other interpretations of Marcel, especially critical commentaries, such as those of Emanuel Levinas, that work to highlight the relationship between Marcel's development of a metaphysics of incarnation, his theory of sensation, and his ontological writings on the relationship between the I and the other as Thou, I began to suspect that the final test of reading Marcel depended on how one 'disposes' of the body in his work¹. What I found upon reading Merleau-Ponty's review was a rather glaring disjunction between (1) the argument put forward in the vast majority of the secondary literature on Marcel that

¹ This idea is drawn from the work of Paul de Man who, in an essay on Shelley's final work, *The Triumph of Life*, argues that "the final test of reading...depends on how one reads the textuality of the event [of Shelley's death], how one disposes of Shelley's body" (*Rhetoric of Romaniticism* 121).

argued that incarnation was the foundation for Marcel's ontological speculations on the I-Thou relationship, that Marcel's ethics was founded upon his metaphysics of incarnation, that his ethics was incarnate and bodily in nature, and (2) Merleau-Ponty's claim that Marcel's ethics was ungrounded and unbinding, lacked any obligatory force or objectivity, because Marcel had, in his later work, abandoned the body and any hope of grounding his ethics in the structures or reality of incarnation.

Perhaps the most stunning example, in part because of the later essays written by Levinas concerning the issue of intersubjectivity in Merleau-Ponty², is the disjunction between Merleau-Ponty's review and Levinas' essay on Marcel and Buber, which I draw on quite heavily in the fourth chapter. In that chapter, I argue that, according to Levinas, it is incarnation that infects Marcel's theory of sociality with Being, that places the relation between the I and Thou within the sphere of sameness and presence, a reading of Marcel's philosophy that I would argue—although I do not in any way demonstrate this in this thesis—has a profound effect on the role of embodiment in Levinas' own theory of ethics. Levinas' reading—or mis-reading, as I present it—is in marked contrast to Merleau-Ponty's argument that Marcel's ethics is actually predicated on his abandonment of incarnation and subsequent substitution of *my life* for *my body* as the fulcrum of his metaphysical thought, an argument that underwrites the first half of this thesis.

In this respect, Merleau-Ponty truly is at the centre of this dissertation since the first half of this thesis is entirely taken up with proving or demonstrating the accuracy of Merleau-Ponty's critique of Marcel as laid out in his review of *Being and Having*. The

² Although I present neither a reading of these essay nor an investigation of the relationship between Merleau-Ponty and Levinas in this thesis, I would argue that any reading of Levinas' essays on intersubjectivity and sense in Merleau-Ponty must necessarily take their various (mis)readings of Marcel into account.

three chapters on Marcel are, in large measure an attempt to demonstrate Merleau-Ponty's contention that Marcel's ontological speculations on intersubjectivity are realized in spite of the body, that it was necessary for Marcel to overlook his metaphysical insights into the nature of bodily reality in order to actualize his ethics.

Accordingly, it would have been more accurate to have stated earlier that the final test of reading Marcel depends not on how one disposes of the body in Marcel but more accurately on how one reads—or mis-reads—how Marcel himself goes about disposing of the body in his philosophy. In the case of Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, their divergent readings lead to completely different interpretations of the nature of bodily reality as put forward by Marcel. What Levinas overlooks when he fails to realize that Marcel abandoned the body in order to articulate his theory of sociality is the radical nature of the body as existing on the border zone between being and having, and this is exactly what Merleau-Ponty uncovers in his review and what I attempt to bring to light in the opening chapters of the thesis.

And, because I decided to take up Merleau-Ponty's reading of Marcel, the thesis is almost absolutely silent about the Christian aspect of Marcel's existentialism since, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, the religiously based ethics in Marcel is quite radically disengaged from the body, from any sense of incarnation. Although the issue is not broached within the dissertation, I would argue that labeling Marcel a Christian Existentialist is somewhat of a misnomer. Since his earliest existentialist insights and his concrete philosophy are anchored in the intimate experience of incarnation and since these insights could not support his ethics of intersubjectivity, I would go so far as to suggest that Marcel is more of a Christian Ontologist than Existentialist. And this thesis

dwells precisely in the space of this disjunction between his existentialist findings concerning concrete existence and his religiously based theory of intersubjectivity and the I-Thou relation as it tries to sort out exactly what it was about the nature of body that made it a threat to Marcel's theory of sociality—a threat that required immediate disposal. Similarly, I also think that it is likely that Marcel decided to replace the term incarnation with the far less suggestive concept of *corporeity* to designate the structure of human embodiment because his insights into the nature of bodily reality turned out, in the end, to be so *irreligious* in nature.

Following Merleau-Ponty's lead, I approached Marcel's work with the idea that, at some point, Marcel abandons the body as the fulcrum of his metaphysics. My aim was to locate that moment in Marcel's thought where he disposes of the body so that I could try to figure out why he had to abandon incarnation, to understand what it was about the body, what he had discovered about body reality, that caused him to abandon incarnation as the ground or foundation for his theory of intersubjectivity.

As a result, I had to work both forwards and backwards through Marcel's thought: on the one hand,(1) I had work chronologically through his corpus to find the moment in his argument where he abandons the body, and, on the other hand, (2) in order to understand what it was about the body that threatened his theory of intersubjectivity and sociality, I had to work backwards in order to gain an understanding of the I-Thou relationship in Marcel, especially the terms—such as Being and co-presence—in which that relationship is articulated in his work. Curiously, what I found was that Marcel disposes of the body in *Being and Having* at exactly that moment in the text where he talks about how the body, as an absolute possession, is not at our disposal because it is

the very possibility of having something at one's disposal...but now I am getting ahead of myself.

However, I decided to take a different approach to Marcel's existential philosophy when it came time to write the thesis. In order to help facilitate the reader's understanding of Marcel, I decided to begin with an explanation of the different levels or stages of human reality—existence, objectivity, and Being—in Marcel's work and then to elaborate on the various binary distinctions—sensation/communication, observation/testimony or bearing witness to..., problem/mystery, and being/having—through which Marcel articulates the interrelationships between these levels. The movements or relationships that Marcel traces out between the levels of existence and objectivity, for example, how the reality of sensation is covered over if sensation is simply understood as a form of communication, and objectivity and Being, how an understanding of the world and others in terms of problems de-natures their ontological reality, are quite elegant, but the problem arises in his philosophy when he attempts to bridge the gap between existence and Being, when he tries to ground his ontological insights into intersubjectivity in his existential and concrete explorations into existence as an incarnate being.

One discovers that Marcel is continuously unable to find the profile or outline of an intersubjectivity understood in terms of absolute disposal, availability, and co-presence within the intimate experience of existence as incarnate. And what frustrates his attempts to ground his ontology in his concrete metaphysics is the body, is the body's dual nature as both something that one is and something that one has—that aspect or trait of incarnate existence that he comes to refer to as *corporeity*.

And, once the nature of bodily reality as *corporeity* is unearthed in the thesis, I turn my attention to three thinkers whose work, I argue, is rooted in, or originates with, the irreducibility of the distinction between being and having as it appears within the intimate experience of human embodiment. Therefore, after mining Marcel's work for the true structure of bodily reality, the thesis investigates various philosophical, poetic, and architectural works that are rooted in the irreducibility of *corporeity*, that are fueled by the irreducible distinction between being one's body and having a body that Marcel uncovered and then from which he quickly turned away.

What is at issue in the second half of the thesis is how Merleau-Ponty, Artaud, and Hejduk put the irreducible tension at the heart of embodied existence into play in their own works, how *corporeity* comes to function as the engine that drives their respective projects.

Finally, in the last chapter, I have tried to briefly sketch out what I have yet to write...the work onto which this thesis opens...the work that I have been waiting on...While working on my conclusion, I came to realize that what I had thought was an isolated filial relationship between Marcel and Merleau-Ponty actually tied into the larger philosophical tradition and would provide me with a way of access the work of such figures in that tradition as Heidegger, Derrida, Husserl and Levinas. At this moment in the writing, what was foregrounded for me was the fact that, beyond the rather narrow and isolated legacy on which this thesis is focused, the relationship between being and having is of central importance within the Western philosophic tradition in general.

Once I realized the implications of my research, my apprenticeship ended...What had begun as an attempt to pry open the thought of Merleau-Ponty, to make his work

accessible, has ended with my entrance into philosophy proper, has opened me onto the tradition at large and onto the work to come...

CHAPTER 1: The Troublesome Footnote

It seems strange to think that the following interdisciplinary attempt to flesh out the nature of human corporeity—the difference between being and having a body, between the body that one is and the body that one has that is fundamental to the experience of embodiment—originated in a footnote found at the beginning of the chapter entitled “The Body as Expression, and Speech” in the *Phenomenology of Perception* by the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In the footnote, Merleau-Ponty makes reference to the distinction between being and having developed by the French Existentialist Gabriel Marcel in *Being and Having* and then proceeds to explain that he has reversed the meaning of the terms in his own writing, stating simply that, in the context of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, the reader must understand that “our ‘having’ corresponds roughly to M. Marcel's being, and our being to his ‘having’” (*Phenomenology* 174). It all seems so simple. In fact, since Merleau-Ponty announces this difference in terminology in a footnote, his explanation of his reversal of the distinction between being and having seems insignificant in relation to the line of argument in the chapter. In order to enable the reader to hear exactly what he has to say about his use of the distinction, I present the contents of the footnote in their entirety:

This distinction of having and being does not coincide with M. G. Marcel's (*Etre et Avoir*), although not incompatible with it. M. Marcel takes having in the weak sense which the word has when it designates a proprietary relationship (I have a house, I have a hat) and immediately takes being in the existential sense of belonging to..., or taking up (I am my body, I am my life). We prefer to take account of the usage which gives the term ‘being’ the weak sense of existence as thing, or that of predication (the table is, or is big), and which reserves ‘having’ for the relation which the subject bears to the term into which it projects itself (I have an idea, I have a desire, I have fears). Hence our ‘having’ corresponds roughly to M. Marcel's being, and our being to his ‘having.’ (*Phenomenology* 174)

Although Merleau-Ponty's explanation of the reversal seems straightforward enough, the footnote left me wondering about how the distinction between being and having operates in the context of Marcel's philosophy, especially in relation to how the distinction enables Marcel to articulate the reality of human embodiment. And, the further I read in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, the more convinced I became that I could not truly understand Merleau-Ponty's argument without understanding exactly how, in relation to Marcel, he was deploying the distinction between being and having. In the end, my curiosity got the better of me and I began to make my way through Marcel's writings in the hope of eventually equipping myself with the conceptual background necessary to bring Merleau-Ponty's argument into relief.

1.1 The Distinction between Being and Having and the Issue of Existential Style

Looking back, I am at a loss to explain my initial refusal to simply accept the footnote as nothing more than an afterthought on Merleau-Ponty's part that was meant to help clarify his rather unconventional deployment of the terms being and having in relation to one's experience of embodiment. As Merleau-Ponty explains in the footnote, the words being and having possess both a strong and a weak sense and the primary difference between the ways in which he and Marcel intend the distinction depends on the sense that each is working to evoke in the context of their own work; while Marcel uses being according to its strong existential sense and having according to its weak proprietary meaning, Merleau-Ponty has chosen to take up having in the strong existential sense of projecting into and being in the weak sense of predication. But, upon

first reading the note, I was unable to accept Merleau-Ponty's rather hasty explanation and move on; instead, the footnote forced me, first, to seriously delve into the thought of Gabriel Marcel in order to understand how he structured his own philosophical project around the distinction between being and having and, second, to return to Merleau-Ponty's earlier writings—in particular, to *The Structure of Behavior*—to see the extent to which Merleau-Ponty's early thoughts on embodiment are themselves informed by Marcel's distinction between being and having.

Later, when I returned to re-read the *Phenomenology of Perception* in order to write a paper on the text, I realized that it was actually Merleau-Ponty himself who was insisting that there was more to his taking up of Marcel's distinction between being and having than met the eye. In the chapter of the *Phenomenology of Perception* in which the footnote appears, Merleau-Ponty, while working out the relationship between thought, expression, and the problem of understanding others, makes a claim concerning the style or affective value of a writer's words that forces one to wonder about the significance of his own use of the distinction between being and having: "But, in fact, it is less the case that the sense of a literary work is provided by the common property meaning of words, than that it contributes to changing that accepted meaning. There is thus, either in the man who listens or reads, or in the one who speaks or writes, *a thought in speech*" (*Phenomenology* 179). According to this claim, the sense or meaning of what he refers to as literary work is supplied, not by the common accepted meaning that the words in the text possess, but by the way in which the work changes the accepted meaning of those words, by the way the words are used or employed in the text and the manner in which that usage transforms the common accepted meaning of those words.

The above contention is meaningful in the context of these investigations for two reasons. First, it makes it legitimate to claim that part of the sense of the *Phenomenology of Perception* must reside in how it goes about changing the accepted meaning that the words *being* and *having* possess for anyone who is familiar with Marcel's thought; part of understanding Merleau-Ponty's philosophical undertaking requires becoming attuned to the meaning that his work secretes through the vocabulary that he uses and, as a result of this putting to use, that he transforms in the process. Second, because Merleau-Ponty uses the very vocabulary of being and having that is at issue in this thesis in order to structure his claims about a '*thought in speech*', it provides some insight into how one is meant to read the distinction between being and having as deployed by Merleau-Ponty. In the context of literary work, the work involves transforming or changing the standard meaning—or, the predicated meaning—of words; literary work, in other words, involves a relationship of *having*, not of *being*, between the speaker/writer or the listener/reader and their language because it involves a relationship in which one has a language into which one projects oneself, a language that one does not belong to in the existential sense of being-at-home-in but which one is perhaps able to take up but never appropriate in the sense of it being my own—a language of accepted and reified meanings. Literary work, in other words, is a function of a relationship in which, instead of being one's own and trading in common property meanings, one's language is something one has as a means of expressing oneself by transforming and changing accepted meanings. Instead of working with a language of accepted and reified meanings and expressing oneself in terms of those meanings, instead of trafficking in the common meanings of words,

literary work entails a relation of having in which one is able to take up language and express oneself through transformations in meaning.

Let us consider for a moment what this means in the case of reading. What Merleau-Ponty is actually challenging is our common sense notion of reading in which the reader already possesses within himself/herself the interpretative tools necessary for understanding any text—namely a bank, reserve or stock of common property meanings of words. Based on this model, all that is required is for the reader to match up the words they read with their accepted meaning in order to read any text whatsoever, and this model is based in the illusion that we have “of already possessing within ourselves, in the shape of the common property meaning of words, what is required for understanding any text whatsoever” (*Phenomenology* 179). Instead, reading that is part of literary work, according to Merleau-Ponty, involves looking for the thought behind the words, the thought that lives in the words; as he explains, “I begin to understand a philosophy by feeling my way into its existential manner, by reproducing the tone and accent of the philosopher,” and it is this existential style of a text that comes to possess us and through which its meaning is secreted (*Phenomenology* 179-80). In contrast to the illusion that the reader possesses the meaning of a work by way of the common stock of words that they possess, Merleau-Ponty argues that the meaning of literary work arises from the fact that the text comes to possess the reader and then to secrete the meaning in the reader by way of the *difference* between the common property meaning of words and the way in which the words are employed in the text, which Merleau-Ponty refers to as the existential manner of the text.

From this, it should be clear that the central concern for Merleau-Ponty in this chapter is how one possesses language. Against the idea that language *is* a stock of words, Merleau-Ponty argues that *having* a language both enables one to have access to the existential meaning, or existential manner, of any text and provides one with “an ability to think *according to others* which enriches one’s own thoughts” (*Phenomenology* 179). Thus, the relation that one has with language in the context of literary work is less a relation of being, in which one’s language is one’s own, is one’s mother tongue, than one of having that refers to

the near-presence of the words I know: they are behind me, like things behind my back, or like the city’s horizon round my house, I reckon with them or rely on them, but without having any ‘verbal image’...What remains to me of a word once learnt is its style as constituted by its formation and sound...It is enough that they exist for me, and that they form a certain field of action spread out around me. (*Phenomenology* 180)

And, it is the proximity of the words to me, the fact that they exist for me, that enables me to take up words and use them, to project myself by way of my body into the field of action that is language and express myself:

It is enough that I possess [a word’s] articulatory and acoustic style as one of the modulations, one of the possible uses of my body. I reach back for the word as my hand reaches towards the part of my body which is being pricked; the word has a certain location in my linguistic world, and is part of my equipment. I have only one means of representing it, which is uttering it, just as the artist has only one means of representing the work on which he is engaged: by doing it. (*Phenomenology* 180)

The fact that I have words at my disposal, that I am able to use words and to express myself through words is based in a more general global form of possession—namely the fact that I possess a language as something that I have as a certain field of action into which I am able, by way of my body through which I will articulate the words within that language, to project my intentions and make use of the words contained in that language.

As Merleau-Ponty explains, expression begins when “the body converts a certain motor essence into vocal form, spreads out the articulatory style of a word into audible phenomena, and arrays the former attitude, which is resumed, into the panorama of the past, projecting an intention to move into actual movement, because the body is a power of natural expression” (*Phenomenology* 181).

Thus the question of possession is at the heart of the relation between oneself and one’s own language, the language that one calls one’s own. According to the above, since language is irreducible to a common stock of words, it is not a simple possession; instead, it is a field of action that one has in such a way that one is able to project oneself into it and use it to express oneself by way of one’s body. And it is one’s body that opens one onto language and enables one to use language and express oneself within language. In fact, as that through which one takes up language, through which one comes to belong to language, through which one is able to use language, it is by way of the *difference* between the common property meaning of words and the way in which one articulates words by way of one’s body, the existential manner in which one takes up words by way of one’s body, that the meaning of a text is secreted. So, if one takes Merleau-Ponty at his word, then the sense or meaning of his work resides not in the common meaning of the words that make up the text but in the living thought which the words, through the existential meaning that inhabits them, “present...as a style, an affective value, a piece of existential mimicry, rather than as a conceptual statement” (*Phenomenology* 182). However, as something that one has, one’s language is never something that is one’s own in the strong sense. The language that one has at one’s disposal as a field of action is a field of possibility in which one can take up words according to their acoustic style; as a

possible way of using one's body, language is thus something that one has in the sense in which Merleau-Ponty defines relations of having in the footnote—as something that the subject can take up with its body, as something into which the subject can project itself by way of its body.

In light of such contentions concerning language in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, I was surprised to discover throughout my research that readers of Merleau-Ponty's work either simply accept his reversal of Marcel's usage of the terms being and having at face value³ or simply overlook it as an irrelevant detail and remain silent on the subject⁴. Although numerous commentators have investigated the centrality of the distinction between being and having for Marcel, no one, to my knowledge, has as yet brought the same attention to bear on how Merleau-Ponty deploys the same distinction and on the meaning that this distinction comes to secrete in his own work; no one has yet consented to feeling their way into the existential manner of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, at least as it pertains to the distinction between being and having. In part, what I want to demonstrate in the context of this thesis is how Merleau-Ponty works to change the accepted meaning of the terms being and having as he uses them in his first major work,

³ For example, in *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty: A Search for the Limits of Consciousness*, Gary Madison states that Merleau-Ponty's use of the term having instead of being is simply a case of preference: "The perceiving subject is for [Merleau-Ponty] a worldly subject, and essentially so. The relation between the subject and his body is so to speak, an inner relationship: at the level of perception the subject *is* his body. One could thus say, as does Marcel, that 'I am my body,' or, as Merleau-Ponty prefers, that 'I have a body,' that is, that *qua consciousness* I have a body. My body properly belongs to me. The body of which science and objectivistic philosophy speak is a secondary, thematized body, and that body does not *exist*; it is but a thought body" (Madison 23-4)

⁴ For, example, in *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception: A Guide and Commentary*, Monika M. Langer never mentions the distinction between being and having, not even in the chapter that specifically comments on the chapter on expression and speech in which the footnote appears.

The Structure of Behavior, and how this change reflects the style of his own thinking. So the only way to gauge the existential meaning that inhabits the distinction as Merleau-Ponty uses it is to investigate how *The Structure of Behavior* contributes towards changing the accepted meaning of the terms being and having and the relations that they are meant to express.

So, it is fair to say that it was in the space opened by the initial distinction and its subsequent reversal, and its implications for the concept of embodiment, that my thesis originated⁵. But before I could try to make my way through Merleau-Ponty's early thought, I had to first turn my attention to the work of Gabriel Marcel, especially to how he framed the experience of the reality of human incarnation in terms of the distinction between being and having. Unfortunately, until I read *Phenomenology of Perception*, I had never come across the proper name 'Gabriel Marcel' even though I had taken numerous courses on existential philosophy, so I had to start from scratch. I began by reading his philosophical journals as well as secondary literature on his work and then to slowly form a somewhat coherent and systematic picture of his thought, especially as it pertained to the experience of human incarnation⁶. The first three chapters of this thesis are the result of my research and present a detailed reading of the various distinctions that structure Marcel's thought. Although my primary concern is with the distinction between being and having as it pertains to the reality of incarnation, I eventually found it

⁵ Although this is beyond the scope of this thesis, I often wondered whether or not the way in which Marcel and Merleau-Ponty each deployed the distinction between being and having in their work would be a helpful tool for articulating the difference between existentialism and phenomenology.

⁶ Throughout my research, I was solely concerned with unearthing how Marcel worked to articulate the reality of human incarnation in his writing, so at no point did I feel compelled to try to reconcile his thoughts on embodiment with the religious—or Catholic—argument or sensibility that comes to dominate his later work.

necessary to present a more detailed account of Marcel's work in order to give the reader a sense of the evolution of his thought so that I could then focus their attention on the moment when Marcel jettisons the body from his philosophical system—that exact moment when he decides to forgo incarnation as the fulcrum of his later philosophical enterprise by replacing the experience of *incarnation* with the simple experience of *corporeity*. According to the narrative that I construct in the thesis, the turning point in Marcel's thought occurs when he realizes that the reality of the experience of *incarnation*—an experience that occurs on the boundary between being and having, that is irreducibly a function of both being and having since one both *is* one's own body and *has* a body—enables it to only function as the fulcrum of his metaphysics but not of his ontology. In other words, the first three chapters of this thesis will bring to light those qualities or characteristics of the reality of *incarnation* that Marcel uncovers and groups together under the term *corporeity* and that ultimately result in the body being dropped from Marcel's later ontological investigations into the nature of the relationship between the I and Thou.

As a result, the first section of the thesis is an attempt to describe what Marcel meant by *corporeity*, that term that Marcel deployed to refer to the duality of one's body as both something that one *is* and something that one *has*, with a view to trying to understand why Marcel, who initially used the experience of incarnation to challenge and move beyond Cartesian idealism, tried to move beyond or transcend the body in his later thinking. In other words, my aim is to try to understand why Marcel eventually decides to turn away from using the term *incarnation* to describe the experience of bodily reality and instead use the word *corporeity*. My argument is that, while *incarnation* initially

referred to the sense of belonging that exists between the self and its own body, the sense that one has of being one's body, the sense of the presence of one's own body to oneself, Marcel adopts the term *corporeity* at the moment when he discovers that the experience of bodily reality is one of radical, irreducible difference. *Corporeity* comes to refer to the inescapable experience that one has of the reality of one's own body as being both something that I *am* and something that I *have*.

This difference that Marcel is forced to acknowledge at the heart of one's experience of one's own embodiment is what is at the heart of this thesis. But I want to make it clear that I am using the concept of difference in a very specific manner. Difference itself is marked by differences. Derridean difference is founded on the experience (although that is not the right word since one never experiences difference...it is always already deferred and differing...it is never present to the self as a delineated and delimited experience) of difference that resides at the heart of language. Luce Irigaray's notion of sexual difference is rooted in the experience of gender difference, of the fact that there are two different sexes and that the difference between them is irreducible. The notion of difference that I am adopting in this thesis is that experience of difference that is rooted in the experience that one has of their own body as being both something that one is and something that one has; the experience of difference that I am referring to in this thesis is the one rooted in one's experiencing of one's own *corporeity*.

And this leads directly into the second section of the thesis in which I look at how three quite disparate thinkers—a philosopher, a writer, and an architect—work to articulate the reality of corporeity, its fundamental nature as an experience of difference, in their own works. In this respect, while Marcel abandoned the difference that he

discovered at the heart of one's experience of one's own embodiment and imported such concepts of sameness as presence and Being into his later work in order to develop his ideas on intersubjectivity, what I will argue is that the three thinkers whose work I explore in the second section of this thesis nourish their thoughts with the difference that is at the heart of our experience of *corporeity*. While I argue that Marcel remains a thinker of sameness, I present the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Antonin Artaud, French writer and author of *The Theatre and Its Double*, and American-born architect John Hejduk as thinkers of corporeal difference, thinkers for whom the radical disjunction at the heart of one's experience of one's own body, the fact that one's own body is both something I am and something I have, is the engine of their speculations. What I will work to demonstrate is how the difference between *being* and *having*, as a difference experienced by way of one's experience of one's own embodiment, is pivotal for each of these thinkers and for understanding their work.

CHAPTER 2: Marcel's Theory of Incarnation as Interposition

2.1 Opening Moves

2.1.1 *The Concept of Incarnation*

By way of introduction, I want to say that Marcel's philosophy can, in my estimation, best be categorized as a philosophy of incarnation. I suggest the term incarnation because the body proper—my body, the body that I am—is, for Marcel, the existent's foothold in existence. Marcel's early work can be said to be an inquiry into the state of being incarnate, where the verb *incarnate* is deployed in its polysemy. Throughout the early stages of his thinking, Marcel simultaneously aims (1) to incarnate, to give a body to the human being as a reaction against the way in which the human has been characterized by the philosophical tradition and depersonalized by our contemporary instrumentalist culture, (2) to make his philosophical inquiry concrete by focusing his attention on human experience, and (3) to cause the spirit to become a body because the only way for the spirit to realize itself in Being is by recuperating such intensely lived experiences of existence as incarnation at the level of Being and by bringing their ontological truths to light.

These aspects of being incarnate are embodied in Marcel's philosophy in a number of different ways. At the level of content, the question of incarnation, of unearthing the body of the philosophical subject, is at the heart of Marcel's existential project; Marcel's audit of Descartes' account of the separation of the mind and the body and the philosophical tradition built on the foundations of the mind/body duality is pursued with a mind to re-formulating and re-presenting human reality apart from the

spirit of abstraction that governs Cartesian philosophy. Consequently, the fact of consciousness's incarnation in its corporeal body, in its own body, becomes the central fact of Marcel's existential philosophy: as Marcel states in *Creative Fidelity*, "[t]he Incarnation, the central datum of metaphysics. The incarnation, situation of a being which appeared to itself as tied to a body...A fundamental situation which cannot strictly speaking be disposed of, surmounted or analyzed. Properly speaking, it is not a fact but rather the datum with respect to which a fact becomes possible" (*Creative Fidelity* 65). While Marcel undertakes to re-incarnate the philosophical subject, to present the subject in light of its body, the aspect of incarnation that refers to the act of making concrete appears at the level of methodology. Marcel refers to his methodology as a concrete philosophy that mines personal experience for the depths of Being: Marcel explains that "no concrete philosophy is possible without a constantly renewed yet creative tension between the I and those depths of being in and by which we are; nor without the most stringent and rigorous reflection, directed at our most intensely lived experience" (*Creative Fidelity* 65). Therefore, Marcel's attempt to develop a philosophy of the incarnate subject is reinforced, or underwritten, by a methodology that is itself informed by a will to incarnate or make concrete. Lastly, one could also argue that the very word incarnate also seems, at least implicitly, to direct Marcel's research. For instance, the question of belonging and the experience of being *at home* and the concepts of exposure and receptivity are themselves actually encoded in the word in-carnate: (1) at the level of grammar, the prefix in- has the sense of in, within, and towards while, as a suffix, it is derived from the Greek ending -in or -inos, which means made of or belonging to, as in

earthen. As a result, it would seem that the question of belonging and openness are intimately related to the problem of incarnation.

In light of the above exposition based on the various meanings of the verb to incarnate, I want to be clear as to why I have exclusively applied the concept of incarnation to Marcel. Firstly, I feel that the idea of incarnation best conserves the personalism that is at the heart of Marcel's philosophical project, which Marcel represents with the possessive index *my* as in the expression *my body*. I will use incarnation to evoke the personal situation of corporeality—the here and now of being incarnate—and the relation between me and my body, the personal relation that “cannot be objectified without its nature being radically changed” (*Creative Fidelity* 40), that Marcel outlines in his writing. In fact, it is exactly this personal aspect of corporeality, which is lost or ruined when the body is objectified or when the relation between the self and its body is objectified, that Marcel attempts to evoke in his work and that I want to bring to the fore through the use of the word incarnation. One argument that I put forward in this thesis is that Marcel's personalism is in marked contrast to the impersonality, or anonymity, that, in my mind, is a central part of Merleau-Ponty's approach to corporeality and that manifests itself as early as his first major text, *The Structure of Behavior*; this is the argument that is at the heart of my investigation into the different ways in which the two thinkers deploy the distinction between being and having. In fact, although I will not pursue this line of inquiry in the context of this thesis, I believe that one could generalize Merleau-Ponty's response to Marcel and argue that post-existential (specifically post-68) thought in France is, at least to some extent, a reaction to the personalism (whether it has to do with my body, my responsibility, my

past or my ownmost being towards death) that runs as a common thread linking together the various strands of existentialism.

The second reason why I have chosen to restrict the use of the word incarnation to the works of Marcel is the fact that, in the final analysis, Marcel tries to develop his thoughts on incarnation, on the body proper, into an ethics for an incarnate consciousness in an attempt to ground the I-Thou relation in our bodily reality. More specifically, I will argue that Marcel's excavation of the personal body and his use of the personal index that marks the intimate relation between the existent and its own body lays the groundwork for his eventual introduction of the personal as such—which could be construed as presence or being—into one's relationship with the other as Thou. This personalist impulse in his work is directed in at least two directions: (1) towards the Western philosophical tradition, especially its impersonal approach to the question of being human, and (2) towards the contemporary instrumentalist culture that, through a process of objectification, reduces the personal subject to living as though submerged by their functions (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 12). However, what one finds as one pursues the concept of incarnation in Marcel's work is that, in the end, *my body* cannot maintain or sustain the level of personalism required for ontological receptivity or disposability. In the end, the true nature of bodily reality turns out to be one of impersonality, and Marcel, after reducing incarnation to simple corporeity, must root the intersubjective relation between I and Thou in the experience of *my life*. In the end, it is by way of the concrete category of *my life* that the personal comes to radiate through his thinking: *my life* becomes the Trojan horse that Marcel employs in his later work to import the personal into his philosophical reflections on the I-Thou relation, an importation that leads to the

characterization of the human condition and its relation with the other in terms of personal ontological participation and availability.

2.1.2 The Levels of Existence, Objectivity, and Being

As I endeavour to highlight how *my* body comes into play in Marcel's philosophy of incarnation and how the category of *my life* comes to replace it in the realm of the interpersonal, I will also restrict myself to the vocabulary that Marcel himself uses to articulate and differentiate between the three stages of reality—existence, objectivity, and Being. In his translator's introduction to *Creative Fidelity*, Robert Rosthal argues that “the related themes of existence, objectivity, and being may be construed as three stages in a ‘dialectic’ embodying three stages of increased self-awareness” (*Creative Fidelity* xii). Each of these themes refers to a very specific way in which one experiences one's body, the world, and others, and I will also use equally specific terms to refer to the type of subject or individual that is the subject of these experiences.

Existence refers to a pre-reflective reality, to, as Rosthal explains, a “reality which does not possess the unity of a system but rather that of immediate experience” (*Creative Fidelity* xi); this unitary reality is experienced by the existent by way of the unity of immediate experience. In other words, existence refers to the existent's pre-reflective engagement with its own body and with the world: “existence is a state of being characterized by aspirations which are vague and indeterminate because they exist on a purely sensuous or prereflective level” (*Creative Fidelity* xiii). And, as will become clear later, existence also refers to the existent's inherence in the world, to its existence in the

world through its own body. The personal relation between the existent and its own body is experienced at this level as a felt relation, an immediacy that translates into a felt immediacy between the existent and its surroundings.

Objectivity refers to that level of reality attained through the spirit of abstraction and objectification that Marcel associates with the Western philosophical tradition and with instrumentalist culture. Rosthal explains that objectivity “is characterized by an attempt to discover a rational solution to one’s situation” (*Creative Fidelity* xiii).

Through the spirit of abstraction that Marcel refers to as a method of first reflection, the existent comes to look upon its own existence objectively and abstractly and, as a result, comes to understand itself as a self that is over and against a world of objects and depersonalized others. The problem with this first reflection of the self upon its own existence that is based in an attitude of objectivity is that it denatures or depersonalizes those existential relations that adhere at the level of existence; by way of being objectified, the nature of the existent’s personal existential relations that manifest themselves at the level of existence are radically changed and are reconfigured through the spirit of abstraction. It is for this reason that Marcel states that his methodology involves digging for the personal within the supposedly impersonal objective relations traced by Western thought and lived by the self in contemporary culture.

The last level, Being, involves “the ‘recuperation’ of immediate experience on a higher level...[W]e may envisage being or ‘ontological participation’ as a ‘clarification’ of existence or of what is indeterminately implied in existence” (*Creative Fidelity* xi-xiii). In other words, Being is that stage at which consciousness, by way of second reflection, takes up and clarifies, at the level of Being, its indeterminate existence as

incarnate. Being implies the recuperation of the ontological dimension of our existence by way of the technique of second reflection. For Marcel, second reflection comes to refer to the process by which the philosopher is able to unearth the ontological character of the intensely lived personal experiences that the subject lives through at the level of existence; it is by way of second reflection that Marcel explores the ontological dimension of such existential experiences as incarnation and tries to understand the implications of our incarnation at the level of Being. Unlike first reflection, or objectivity, which works to dissimulate the ontological dimensions of our intensely lived personal experiences, second reflection works to unearth the ontological character of our existential states and to realize them at the level of Being, at the level of our being-with others. And one of the central features of existence that Marcel recuperates is the category of the personal, and it is the personal realized at the level of Being that comes to transform the impersonality of observation that characterizes seeing at the level of objectivity into a personal relation of *bearing witness to...* or *testifying to...*. Following the logic of second reflection, Marcel works to articulate the reality of ontological participation and availability that is obscurely implied in the forms of existential participation and availability that his investigations into incarnation bring to light; in other words, what he hopes to find obscurely implied in the existential reality of incarnation is an ethics, a way of approaching the other in terms of presence at the level of Being. But, as I will demonstrate, it is exactly this drawing out of ontological receptivity from the pure receptivity of one's own body that becomes untenable for Marcel.

So one of the central questions that emerges out of my investigations into Marcel concerns how such a recuperation of incarnation at the level of Being occurs. As I just stated, what Marcel attempts to do later in his work is to distill the ontological dimension out of the existential experience of incarnation; what he wants to demonstrate is that our very incarnation, through its participatory reality and its rootedness in availability, provides the basis for being able to realize or actualize a relation with the other at the level of Being that is based in presence. But, what becomes increasingly clear as Marcel digs further into incarnate existence is that incarnation does not provide him with the existential model for the type of ontological interpersonal relation he is looking to develop; instead, for reasons that will become clear later, Marcel is forced to draw a sharp distinction between existence and Being that causes him to shift his focus from a philosophy centred on *my body* to one rooted in *my life*. At the level of existence, Marcel's existent is an incarnate situated existent that co-exists with the world through the interposed body proper: the existent exists towards the world and the world comes into existence as being for-me. Marcel then tries to apply this model to the interpersonal relationship between the I and Thou at the level of Being, and it is at this point that many commentators on Marcel's thought fail to notice a rather radical shift away from my body, the *corps sujet*. What begins to happen as Marcel starts to discuss the I-Thou relation is that experience of *my body* begins to recede from view and is slowly replaced by the category of *my life*, and it is by way of *my life* that the categories of presence, Being and the personal come to enter into his articulations of the interpersonal relation.

In other words, when Marcel begins to outline such ontological truths about the human condition as participation and availability that are at the heart of the I-Thou

relation, the reader must understand that, although the subject that lives its relation to the world in terms of involvement and its relation to others in terms of openness seems to be an incarnate subject, the personal index that is at the heart of these ontological states of disposability and openness is actually being introduced into Being by way of the category of *my life*. And this fact seems to have been overlooked by most of Marcel's readers who argue that only as an incarnate subject can one participate in Being and bear witness and testify to (or for) the other; according to these readings, both *participation with* and *availability to* the other are made possible through the personal involvement of the subject, through the introduction of the personal into one's relationship with the world by way of incarnate experience. But what I want to highlight instead is the fundamental incompatibility in Marcel's thought between the personal involvement of the subject in the world as incarnate and the personal involvement of the subject with the other terms of presence and Being; what begins to happen in *Being and Having* is a radical movement away from incarnation, from the lived experience of my body, and it is this turning away that I want to investigate in the opening chapters of this thesis.

2.1.3 The Levels of Incarnation

Lastly, to further reinforce the scaffolding that I am constructing in order to provide as clear and precise an exposition of Marcel's work as possible, I want to briefly discuss the words that Marcel employs in relation to the reality of the body as experienced by the individual within these various stages. What is interesting about these terms is that they are grammatically related to one another: at the level of existence, the

reality of the body is one of existential *interposition* and *exposure*; at the level of objectivity, the body is experienced and lived by the self as a *possession*; and, at the level of Being, the subject, by way of analogy, lives according to the ontological attitude of *disposability*, in the sense that the subject actively places itself at the disposal of the other. Unfortunately, the term *disponibilité* is translated for the most part as availability; the only translator who uses disposability is Rosthal in his translation of *Creative Fidelity*. Although I must admit that availability, to my mind, is much more accurate in terms of meaning, it erases the genetic link between the various terms that Marcel deploys throughout his work to denote the reality of the body experienced at the level of existence and the reality of the subject at the level of Being. Marcel does use the word *indisposed* to refer to the self's unavailability, or even indifference, towards the world and others exhibited at the level of objectivity; in fact, one could argue that Marcel condemns the stage of objectivity because it fails to properly take up, or clarify, the ontological truths that are implied within the existent's experiencing of its own incarnate existence. What is also interesting is that the grammar itself reflects the fact that the objective relation established between the self and its body when that body is taken up as a possession radically changes the nature of the personal relation between the existent and its own proper body expressed by the term *interposition*. Objectifying the reality of the body as interposed causes the relation of interposition between existent and its body and its surroundings to be radically altered into a relation of possession, a term which is not a member of the *ponere* family, like *interpose*, *expose*, and *dispose*, that are meant to denote existential and ontological relations adhering between the existent, its body, and its surroundings and between the subject and the other approached as Thou.

2.1.4 Conclusion

To summarize, the following exposition of Marcel's philosophy of incarnation will strictly adhere to the terminology outlined in the previous pages. The pre-reflective stage of existence will initially be discussed in terms of the *existent*, and the relations between the existent, its own body, and the world will be articulated by way of the concepts of *interposition*, *exposure*, and *existential receptivity*; then, once Marcel decides in *Being and Having* to refer to the nature of bodily reality as *corporeity* instead of as *incarnation* in *Being and Having*, we shall see the terms *non-disposability* and *non-availability* used to refer to the reality of the body proper as an absolute possession. The terms *self*, *possession*, and *indisposability* or *unavailability* will help to organize any discussion of the second stage of objectivity and the posture of detachment that characterizes the self's impersonal attitude towards the world and others. The last stage, Being, will be presented in terms of a *subject* that, through its conscious taking up of its own existence in terms of its life, adopts a posture of *ontological disposability* or *availability* in relation to the other in order to receive the presence of the other and to encounter them as Thou.

2.2 The Journals: Marcel's Initial Approach to the Problem of Incarnation

2.2.1 Descartes' Representation of the Reality of the Body

Marcel's most radical contribution to the philosophical re-evaluation of the Cartesian split between the body and consciousness is his attempt to re-think the relation between the self, its body, the world, and others, not according to the dualism between mind and body, but in terms of being and having. Early in his thinking, Marcel realized the centrality of the question of the body in philosophy and decided to approach the subject from a rather novel position. Instead of arguing directly against Descartes' method, Marcel highlights the role that the mechanistic conception of the body played in the Cartesian divorce of consciousness from the body and then goes on to argue that, in general, the entire tenor of one's philosophy rests on how the reality of the body is represented. In the *Metaphysical Journal*, Marcel explains that, in Descartes, "the definition of the body as a mechanical complexus is one of the mind's modes of realization" as that which is essentially human (*Metaphysical Journal* 125); in addition, the way in which Descartes represents the reality of the body also has a direct influence on how he formulates the relation between body and soul: "the notion that the mind can form of the relations of the soul and body must be a function of the movement by which the notion of body is constructed" (*Metaphysical Journal* 125). For Marcel, the central problem with Descartes' philosophy lies with how he tries to solve the problem of the body: "Thus the problem of the reality of the body is shown to be the central problem and upon its solution everything else depends. It is important to state this problem in terms that are explicit as possible, and I will formulate it thus: under what conditions is it possible to define a reality of the body in relation to which any other representation of the body must be said to function as appearance?" (*Metaphysical Journal* 126). And it is with this question in mind that Marcel approaches the theories of Descartes in order to

evaluate his presentation of the reality of human incarnation. But, before tracing out Marcel's engagement with Descartes, I would first like to take some time and explore how Descartes conceives of the reality of the body, how he tries to solve the problem of the body in his philosophy.

Although in *The Meditations Concerning First Philosophy* Descartes does not feel that the mind merely resides in the body "as a pilot is present in a ship" (Descartes (1971) 117), he does draw some essential distinctions between the mind and the body. Even though he understood that he has some reason for holding that "the body I called 'my body' by a special title really did belong to me more than any other body did" (Descartes (1971) 112), Descartes is unequivocal about that part of his being that is essentially his:

Now I know that I exist, and at the same time I observe absolutely nothing else as belonging to my nature or essence except the mere fact that I am a conscious being; and just from this I can validly infer that my essence consists simply in the fact that I am a conscious being. It is indeed possible (or rather, as I shall say later on, it is certain) that I have a body closely bound up with myself; but at the same time I have, on the one hand, a clear and distinct idea of myself taken simply as a conscious, not an extended being; and, on the other hand, a distinct idea of body, taken simply as an extended, not a conscious, being; so it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and could exist without it. (Descartes (1971) 114-5)

In other words, the body, understood by Descartes as simple extension, is ontologically separate from the I. More specifically, the body is not essentially mine—it is not part of that by virtue of which I am what I am—for two very important reasons: (1) because I have a clear and distinct idea of myself as consciousness and (2) because I have a clear and distinct idea of my body as an extended being.

But it is important to keep in mind that the case that Descartes builds against the body rests upon his establishing a rather strict standard for truthful knowledge. In the *Meditations*, Descartes states that he is interested in discovering clear and distinct ideas

because these ideas represent for him a form of knowledge that can be called truthful; as Descartes explains, the general principle of his method is that “whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true” (Descartes (1971) 92). Only such clear and distinct ideas are truthful and, as a consequence, impervious to doubt. But where can he find such ideas? What could possibly be the source of such ideas? To Descartes’ mind, the answer is in the mind. At this point, the body is already on the wrong side of the argument because, unlike the clear and distinct ideas given in the mind and by the mind’s eye, the body is a source of such confused sensations of hunger and thirst, of such “confused modes of consciousness that arise from the mind’s being united to, and as it were mixed up with, the body” (Descartes (1971) 117).

As the Czech philosopher Jan Patocka explains in *Body, Community, Language, World* when he discusses the example of the wax, Descartes thinks the essence of the wax from an objective perspective, which is “in evident conflict with the way the wax presents itself in our experience, and so comes to exclude sensible attributes such as color, odor, taste, and so on as not objective enough” (Patocka 13); what becomes clear at this point is that “anything in bodily experience that is reminiscent of anything personal must be excluded as a subjective addition, a subjective reflection which in no way belongs to the essence of things” (Patocka 12). Therefore, that mode of thinking that leads to the truth can only be achieved by a mind that is absolutely free from the contaminating influence of the body. In the Third Meditation, Descartes asks about those things that are perceived through the medium of one’s senses: “Now what did I clearly perceive about them? Only that the ideas or thought of such things occurred in my mind” (Descartes (1971) 77). As is outlined in the Second Meditation, one of the

purposes of these meditations was to decide at what point Descartes perceived the wax more clearly and distinctly: “was it when I first looked at it, and thought I was aware of it by my external senses, or at least by the so-called ‘common’ sense, i.e. the imaginative faculty? or is it now, after careful investigation of its nature and of the way that I am aware of it?” (Descartes (1971) 74). What distinguishes the latter method of knowing as being superior is the fact that it contains knowledge about the wax that is distinct and evident: “But when I distinguish the wax from its outward form, and as it were unclothe it and consider it in its naked self, I get something which, mistaken as my judgement may still be, I need a human mind to perceive” (Descartes (1971) 90). As a result, Descartes comes to ally the human being with that which gives access to the truth about things—namely, with the mind.

In fact, Descartes uses the claim that only those ideas that are clear and distinct are truthful and free from doubt to establish the separation between the mind and the body. Because the union or fusion of the mind and the body leads to confused modes of thinking and indistinct ideas, Descartes needs to focus on trying to demonstrate their separateness and uniqueness in order to understand the truth about what he really is. Since he has already established that the body is a source of unclear ideas that are, as a result, susceptible to doubt, he has already demonstrated a fundamental difference between the body and the mind—namely, that the mind is capable of conceiving of things truthfully. And, by way of the mind, Descartes establishes the true character of his body:

By *body* I mean whatever is capable of being bounded by some shape, and comprehended by some place, and of occupying space in such a way that all other bodies are excluded; moreover of being perceived by touch, sight, hearing, taste, or smell; and further, of being moved in various ways, not of itself but by some other body that touches it. For the power of self-movement, and the further

powers of sensation and consciousness, I judged not to belong in any way to the essence of body. (Descartes (1971) 68)

In other words, because bodily experience is understood by Descartes as a source of subjective addition to one's experience of the essence of things, the body itself can only be thought with respect to its essence apart from all bodily experience and "in the objective perspective of mathematical definitions" (Patocka 12); as a result, the personal subjective body that Descartes understood as his is subsumed—by being understood clearly and distinctly—by way of a list of purely objective properties that include "size, that is extension in three dimensions, the shape delimited by this extension, mutual relations of bodies, movement, duration, number" (Patocka 13).

Consequently, as Descartes states in his synopsis included in the 1960 Library of Liberal Arts addition of the *Meditations*, the mind itself, through the method of radical doubt, is able to "easily distinguish between those qualities which belong to [the mind]—that is to say, to its intellectual nature—and those which belong to the body" (Descartes (1960) 71). And, having established the true objective nature of the body, Descartes then proceeds to ask if any of the properties of the body can be considered as essential attributes of what he is: "Can I, in the first place, say that I have the least part of the characteristics that I said belonged to the essence of the body?" (Descartes (1960) 68). Descartes' answer to this ontological question concerning the make up of his own proper being is a resounding *no*; he ultimately finds that he cannot, with any certainty, claim any of those properties as being a part of what he is. The body is simply an extended being and can, as a result, be completely understood according to the characteristics of extended objects. In fact, what is clear to him is that he is a being that thinks and that the various qualities of material entities, "namely, extension, shape, location, and

movement,...are not formally in my nature” (Descartes (1960) 101). But, upon considering the properties of the mind, Descartes is able to state that, without a doubt, “‘I am’ precisely taken refers only to a conscious being...I am a real being, and really exist; but what sort of being? As I said, a conscious being” (Descartes (1960) 69). And, since the attribute of thinking is itself beyond doubt, the mind that thinks and which is inseparable from my nature can become that “fixed and immovable fulcrum” (Descartes (1960) 81) around which Descartes’ philosophy will turn or which will function as the support or prop for his writings. In fact, the mind will function as the support for the subject, since it is the only attribute of the self that is beyond doubt; we come to know “our own selves in the immediate certainty of reflection, since its certainty is independent of any certainty about the body’s existence. The existence of the body is in a sense dubitable, the existence of the thought we are presently thinking is guaranteed by self-reflection” (Patocka 15).

By way of this rather brief introduction to Descartes’ impersonal and objective understanding of the body, we are now in a position to engage Marcel’s critique of Descartes’ theory about the relation between the mind and the body and to ask along with Marcel whether or not “the representation of the body on which [Descartes’ theory] is based can be regarded as real” (*Metaphysical Journal* 126). Is Descartes correct in his conception of the essence of the body according to objective properties observed from a completely objective perspective? Is that how one, as Descartes states in the 1960 edition of the *Meditations*, really experiences “this body, which by a certain particular privilege I [call mine and which belongs] to me more properly and strictly than any other” (Descartes (1960) 130)? As will become clear in this chapter, Marcel answers these

questions in the negative. But what is interesting about Descartes is that, in contrast to the impersonality of the philosophical tradition that preceded him, his philosophical meditations do start out from the first person of the I. As a result, he does, as Patocka explains, “discover the problem of subjective corporeality,” but he quickly moves to cover it over by way of his mechanistic conception of the body (Patocka 10-1); although he comes to conceive of the phenomenon of corporeality in an impersonal way through a radical objectification that comprehends our body “in the third person, as an *it*—as a thing, an object of experience” (Patocka 9), he does glimpse “out of the corner of his eye...something other—the body as his own” (Patocka 11). That is to say that, upon glimpsing his own body, Descartes quickly reduces it to an extended being, to what Marcel would call a mere appearance of the true reality of the body. Although Descartes may have glimpsed the phenomenon of the personal body, his philosophical reflections actually work against understanding human life from the point of view of incarnation because, once glimpsed, Descartes works to conjure away the experience of my body as mine. Consequently, the problem still remains for Marcel as to how to take up the living body that Descartes turned away from so that it may “expand in the light of reflection” (*Being and Having* 158). How can one begin to elaborate the truth of human incarnation within philosophy? How can one begin to speak about one’s own body, especially since the Cartesian duality between mind (as subject) and body (as object) works to dissimulate the reality of the body as *mine*? How can one possibly go about trying to express conceptually the reality of the body as one’s own if one cannot use the distinctions between mind and body and subject and object that organize Descartes’ reflections? For his part, Marcel develops the distinction between being and having, between what one is

and what one has, in order to try to evoke the reality of the body as one's own.

According to Marcel, instead of simply relating to one's body as an instrument at one's disposal, it is crucial to understand the central place of one's own body in the constitution of what one is.

2.2.2 Marcel's Representation of the Reality of the Body

2.2.2.1 Introduction

Contrary to Descartes' exclusion of the body from his ontological determinations of the self as consciousness, Marcel goes to great lengths to stress the existential relationship that the existent has with its own body, as expressed in the phrase 'I am my body,' and he develops this relation of being by way of contrast with the instrumental relation of having expressed in the phrase 'I have a body.' By focusing on the objective and instrumental nature of the body, Descartes represented the reality of the body according to such terms as spatial extension; according to Descartes, the body is one object among many and the existent is related to the body in the same manner in which it is related to other external objects, as a simple possession at one's disposal and from which the existent, understood as mind, is ontologically separate. But what about the body that is felt to be mine, that has an absolute priority for the existent in relation to all other objects? What about the body that I am? What is at issue here are two distinct forms of possession, since possession is at the heart of each of the above relations between the body and the existent, and it is exactly the difference between these types of possession that interests Marcel. What Marcel works to evoke is the existential weight of

the body that is felt to be mine in relation to the objective body that I have at my disposal as an instrument, a weightiness that becomes ontological when, by way of second reflection, its implications are clarified at the level of Being. In other words, Marcel works to distinguish between an existential and instrumental or objective form of possession; existentially I feel my body as mine while objectively I possess my body as an instrument that is at my disposal. My body counts both among the objects and things that I own or possess and as an essential part of who I am.

The problem for Marcel is how to express, apart from the Cartesian dualism between mind and body, the subjective presence to the existent of their body as their own in relation to the body's objective presence to the existent as an external thing. The distinction that he draws between being and having in relation to incarnation works hand-in-hand with two distinct forms of the possessive. Although the relations of being and having between oneself and one's body are expressed using the possessive, they could not be more distinct in Marcel's mind. 'I am my body' expresses a relationship between the subject and the body in which the terms intermingle with one another, or are folded into one another, in such a way that they belong together in some essential way: "my body, in so far as it is *my* body, my body in so far as it has the character, in itself so mysterious, which we are expressing here by saying it is something I *possess*, something that belongs to me" (*The Mystery of Being* 206). In Marcel's work, the existential link between me and my body is contained within the possessive *my*—my body is that body which "is felt as *my* body" (*The Mystery of Being* 207). On the other hand, the fact that 'I have a body' that is mine to use as an instrument expresses a relationship of ownership and possession between a clearly defined subject and object in which the terms remain

separate and discrete. The reduction of my body to a mere object or instrument that I have at my disposal is the result of the dissociation of the notion of the body “from the notion of what is intimately mine” (*The Mystery of Being* 207). The body that I have at my disposal as an instrument is non-privileged, “is in fact only one body among many others. In relation to these other bodies, it has been endowed with no special privileges whatsoever...[and is experienced as separate] from the self that I am” (*The Mystery of Being* 206-7). But what is it that makes my body my own? How do I experience my body differently than the body that I have? What sort of relationship can I establish between myself and the world through my body? How is it different from the instrumental relationship between the self and the world organized around the body that I have? And how does my relationship with my body effect my relationship to other people? What are the implications at the level of interpersonal relations of my bodily experiences of my existing in the world?

What I will stress by way of the distinction between having a body and being one's own body in Marcel's work are the different ways in which an incarnate existent, depending on how it experiences its own incarnation, can sense or experience its existence in the world. In a world of instruments and objects in which the body is simply another tool, the incarnate subject experiences its existence in terms of instrumentality and objectivity; the category of having comes to dominate the existent's experiencing of itself and its situation in the world. Marcel characterizes this mode of existing in the world in terms of ‘having power over...’; things in the world are experienced as objects that one has, as objects that are at one's disposal. But, if the existent unearths the pre-reflective existential relation between itself and its body as its own that is present in its

most intimate personal experience of being incarnate, then the bodily existent can come to experience its existence in the world in terms of a participatory co-existence with the world, as an existing with the world that precedes the subject/object distinction that structures the world of having. And then the existent is in a position to work out its incarnate existence as existential participation on a higher level, namely at the level of Being, by way of bringing to light through second reflection the exact ontological nature of the experienced existential attitudes of participation and availability that characterize the body's receptivity and openness towards the world.

In particular, in contrast to the world of distinct and discrete subjects and objects in which I find myself submerged by way of my reduction of my body to a simple possession that is at my disposal, Marcel presents a view of human being-in-the-world that would result from my taking up of the ontological participation or availability implied in my experience of incarnation, in my living my body as *my own*, by way of a series of distinctions that work in conjunction with the distinction between being and having. The first distinction is between existence and objectivity, which works to frame the difference between the pre-reflective realm of experience in which the existent experiences their body as their own and the objective realm of abstraction and instrumentality in which the self reflectively takes up their body as an instrument. Marcel then deploys the distinction between mystery and problem in order to further clarify the differences between the levels of existence and objectivity. However, this second distinction also begins to inaugurate the recuperative movement that leads from existence to Being by way of second reflection; what begins to emerge is that the existent's pre-reflective experience of mystery at the level of existence, which Marcel

uses to refer to the type of existential participatory intimacy or inherence that the existent experiences between itself and its own body, contains within itself, although in an implied or indeterminate state, the basis for realizing, at the level of Being, one's relationship with others by way of ontological participation. In other words, the mystery of existential participation in the world as an incarnate existent contains the obscure beginnings for realizing the mystery of ontological participation in one's relations with others.

Another distinction, namely that between testimony and observation, should further help to clarify the relation between the three stages of self-awareness. At the level of existence, the body that I am is existentially rooted in exposure and disposability; the body that I am exposes me to, or makes me available to, the external world, which means that the world and I, by way of *my* body and at a pre-reflective level, co-exist with one another. According to Marcel, this co-existence involves an immediate felt relation between the existent and its surroundings: within the realm of existence, I am present to the world by way of my body and the world is present to me by way of the immediate relation implied in feeling or sensation that is rooted in my body. Thus, *my* body is interposed, at the pre-reflective level of existence, between myself and my surroundings. And it is exactly this participatory involvement of the existent in the world, this felt relation of inherence and intimacy between the existent and the world, that the form of self-awareness or self-consciousness implied in the attitude of objectivity overlooks or submerges beneath functional and instrumentalist relations. Consequently, Marcel uses the term observation to describe the relation between the self and the external world at the level of objectivity. But, by way of second reflection upon the existent's experience

of incarnation, the self is able to discern within the felt relation of existential participation the obscure contours of a form of ontological participation in the world that Marcel describes as testimony. Testimony refers to the disposability, availability, or openness of the subject to the appeals of others at the level of Being; in contrast to the indifference that characterizes the stance or posture of *impersonal* observation, Marcel deploys the term testimony to refer to a type of ontologically weighted and *personally* charged form of observation, one that has its basis in the existential disposability, availability, and openness that characterize the existent's experience of incarnation at the level of existence.

As I have ventured to explain, the initial thrust of Marcel's writing involves trying to get the existent to sense its existence as being a function of its incarnation, and, in order to accomplish this, Marcel uses the distinctions between existence and objectivity, mystery and problem, and feeling and observation to try to evoke the experience of incarnation in the reader and to try to get the reader to experience their body as more than a simple instrument. And it is through these terms that I intend to articulate more clearly the two bodies, or forms of incarnation, found in Marcel's philosophy of existence—the body that I have and the body that I am—and the types of relationships between the existent, its body, and the external world implied in these modes of incarnation. The last step of my exposition will involve demonstrating how Marcel extrapolates certain ontological relations, such as mystery and testimony, that are possible between the self and others and that are based in inherence, intimacy, and presence from the pre-reflective existential relations expressed by the terms existence, mystery, and feeling/sensation.

2.2.2.2 Incarnation as Interposition

The *Metaphysical Journal* is a chronicle of Marcel's attempt to develop a philosophy of existence by thinking beyond or outside of the limitations of idealist thought; in contrast to idealism, Marcel has "recourse to a method of 'concrete approaches'" (*Metaphysical Journal* viii) that focuses its attention on certain fundamental existential situations or intensely lived personal experiences with the aim of uncovering "the metaphysical conditions of personal existence" (*Metaphysical Journal* 255). And, in large part, Marcel's concrete philosophy and his explication of being-in-the-world is rooted in, or is organized around, the distinction that he draws between being and having, "between what one *has* and what one *is*" (*The Existential Background* 97), which is the foundation for the other major distinctions that populate his philosophical non-system and that are the focus of my investigations. But from where does the distinction between being and having originate? How does Marcel come upon the categories of being and having that are at the heart of his writings on human being-in-the-world? As Marcel himself explains in *The Existential Background of Human Dignity*, his thoughts on the distinction between being and having "originated from those that I had previously pursued on Incarnation" (*The Existential Background* 97). Consequently, the theme of incarnation, especially Marcel's investigations into the nature of the relationship between me and my body, "what could be called 'attachment' to the body proper" (*The Existential Background* 97), is the site where Marcel begins his drilling operations into his experiences; his attempt to mine his own experiences has as its starting point, as its point of entry, his investigations into "what the simple words 'my body' mean. It is very clear

that the possessive ‘my’ cannot be taken here simply in a possessive sense. The nature of possession, of the act of possessing, is indeed difficult to clarify; so much so that I was obliged, some ten years later, to sketch out the main lines of a phenomenology of *having*” (*The Existential Background* 45). In contrast to Descartes and the Idealist philosophical tradition that begins by drawing a distinction between mind and body, the starting point for Marcel is with my body and with an exploration of the nature of relationship expressed by the possessive in relation to one’s own body; in fact, the question of the relationship between me and my body comes, in Marcel’s work, to take the place of the traditional preoccupation with the nature of relationship between mind and body.

So the place to begin our excavation would be at that point in the *Metaphysical Journals* where Marcel eventually turns towards the problem of the lived body, the body that is felt to be properly one’s own, and the difference between how the body is actually experienced by the existent and how the existent represents the body to itself. On May 7, 1914, Marcel states “that the notion of the body is *not at all univocal*” (*Metaphysical Journal* 124), that the body does not speak with only one voice, and begins his investigations into the reality of the body and its various representations. As Joe McCown explains in *Availability: Gabriel Marcel and the Phenomenology of Human Openness*, it is at this point that Marcel realizes that “we represent our bodies to ourselves in certain ways. How we think the relation of the body and the [mind] varies along with the conception that we form of the nature of the body. Dualism..., for example, depends upon a notion of the body as a ‘mechanical complexus’” (McCown 25). And it is at this point that Marcel begins to take Descartes to task for his dualistic conception of the relationship between the mind and the body, not because he misrepresents the nature of

that relationship but because he misrepresents the nature of the body when he conceptualizes it as simple extension and instrument. And, as a consequence of this misrepresentation, Descartes necessarily misrepresents the relationship between the existent and its body because, reduced to an ontologically different substance than the mind and conceptualized as a simple instrument, the body as extension is an object, or attachment, that is extraneous to the essence of the 'I'. In this way, Descartes works towards developing a sense of self that is separate from its body, from its corporeality, since the incarnation of the self as mind in the body is rationalized as a contingent factor of what it means to be human.

Marcel begins the second part of his journal by questioning the a priori givenness of time and space and instead suggests that their givenness is only an illusion that conceals the situated existent's intimate involvement in their constitution. His entry for September 15, 1915 reads as follows:

Time has not and cannot have any origin save the present which is the only boundary that can be assigned to it...The illusion that time is *given* before it is *consumed* (as space which *is there* before it is traversed). Would it not be true to say that time is only in act, and space only in potency? Time [and space] cannot be compared to a medium into which consciousnesses are inserted, a medium in relation to which such 'insertions' are contingent. [They are] the *very negation of that*. (*Metaphysical Journal* 129)

Marcel argues that the very idea of time and space as given objective dimensions into which consciousnesses are merely inserted in such a way as to leave time and space unaffected and unchanged goes against the reality of our human existential experiences of time and space. Instead, time and space for Marcel are inseparable from the embodied existent that can act in the world and that can exert a certain power or influence over the world. As Marcel states, both time and space are the very negation of such indifferent

mediums of insertion, of such conceptualizations of mediums as mere containers and receptacles. In fact, Marcel seems to be implying that time and space are both somehow deployed or secreted by the existent, or by one's very existence, and are the coordinates of a personal field in which the existent lives. Such a personal field would be the very antithesis of indifferent, objective and abstract Cartesian space-time; time and space would, in this interpretation, be the very mediums of the personal, the very mediums through which and by which the existent realizes itself, or actualizes its very existence, in the world. At this early stage, Marcel is suggesting that 'existential' time is inseparable from the acting existent that consumes time while 'existential' space does not precede its being traversed by the existent. By arguing against the a priori objective determination of time and space as mere containers for consciousness, Marcel begins to outline his theory of the situated existent. Against the idealist conception of time and space as given, as a series of objectively determined co-ordinates within which consciousness and its objects are inserted, Marcel argues that time and space cannot be thought apart from the existent that acts and moves as an incarnate consciousness in the world.

Marcel explicitly formulates the reality of the body on May 14, 1916. In the wake of his thoughts on the existential nature of time and space, Marcel is led to contend that the body (as the centre of action and movement) comes to be *interposed* between the world and consciousness as the very possibility of time and space:

May 14th

I realized today in an impressive though confused way that the reality of bodies is and can only be a reality of interposition; bodies are mutually interposed or interpose themselves. The function of the body is at one and the same time to bind together and to separate. (*Metaphysical Journal* 132)

Using the vocabulary of interposition, Marcel's first explicit statement concerning the theme of incarnation states that incarnate existence is a form of existing in a state of tension, with the body assuming the intervening position; consequently, the reality of the body must be approached as an *existing between*. As a transitive verb, interpose refers to the action of placing between or of intervention, as in the act of putting in a remark or the like in the midst of a conversation or discourse; as an intransitive verb, interpose suggests coming between other things, assuming an intervening position, or stepping in between parties to mediate. Bodies are either mutually placed in intervening positions or bodies themselves assume these intervening, mediating positions; in both cases, the body functions as a joint or hinge—simultaneously separating and joining—either between individuals or between an individual and the world. By placing the emphasis on the prefix 'inter-', the reality of bodies is literally presented by Marcel as being between positions, in the midst of or among positions, or as intervening between positions. In fact, one could argue that the body, as the term in the midst of all the other terms, is the very possibility of all binding and separating.

One of the consequences of Marcel's use of the vocabulary of interposition to evoke the reality of the body is that, as the joint that binds and separates terms, the body "ought to be in some way homogeneous in relation to what is bound" (*Metaphysical Journal* 132); in other words, in order to simultaneously bind and separate terms, the body must share attributes, or be of the same matter, as those terms. In the case of incarnation, this means that the body must be homogenous with both the world and the existent in order to mediate between the two. Consequently, describing the reality of the body as one of interposition means that Marcel avoids the problem of mediation between

the existent and the world that is one of the central questions of the idealist tradition that isolates the mind from the world. Presenting the reality of bodies as a reality of interposition enables Marcel to, from the very beginning, put the problem of mediation out of play since the body is that in-between existence that partakes of both the existent and the world: “If the body binds the spatial in the sense that it itself is spatial, it can only bind the psychic...inasmuch as it is psychical, inasmuch as it is *charged with meaning*, and itself *is meaning*...” (*Metaphysical Journal* 132). As the hinge interposed between the existent and the world, the reality of bodies is that they are both spatial—they participate in the spatiality of the external world—and meaningful—they imbue the world with meaning. And, although left unsaid, one could argue that these two aspects of bodies are intertwined with one another, that bodies exist as meaningful because they are spatial—the spatial position of my body that becomes the nexus of my surroundings as mine—and that they are spatial because they are charged with meaning—one can take up a position in the world because of the meaning bestowing power of the body that makes human positioning (in terms of being in relation to something else) possible.

2.2.2.3 From Incarnation to the Interpersonal

It would be interesting at this point, especially since interposition is the first term of the *ponere* family to appear in Marcel’s work to describe the reality of the body, to briefly look at the various aspects of bodily existence that are interwoven within this one word since interposition could be said to guide or govern all of Marcel’s excavations into the experience of incarnation. In fact, I would argue that all of his future thoughts on

incarnation lead back to this initial confused realization concerning the reality of the body as interposition and to the various existential aspects of incarnate existence that are implied within the concept of interposition. By digging underneath the term, whose Latin root means 'placed between', one comes to discover that it has its roots in three central aspects of bodily existence: position, pose and 'betweenness.' And, faced with these roots and with a certain foreknowledge concerning the direction that Marcel's thought will take, I want to briefly explain how Marcel, in order to clarify the reality of the body and incarnate existence implied within the term interposition, works, by way of second reflection, to investigate separately each of the existential attitudes or realities that are interwoven within that one word in an attempt, by way of the process of second reflection, to clarify at the level of Being what is implied, in an indeterminate and obscure way, about the reality or truth of interpersonal relations within experiences at the level of existence.

The first existential attitude, *position*, is related to the uniqueness of my body in relation to other bodies that is a result of the felt relation between myself and my body. *Position* is defined as the act of placing or arranging, as the act of adopting either a physical location or an intellectual point of view from which one is able to make decisions on one's own, both of which refer to the unique position in the world that the body offers the existent. As I mentioned above, positionality is that quality of incarnate existence that is the very possibility of existing in the world. What Marcel unearths is that, grasped in terms of its reality of interposition, the body—or, more specifically, what Marcel will come to refer to as *my* body later on in the *Metaphysical Journal*—instead of being a simple object among other objects, is the centre of a world that the existent

experiences as their own. Instead of situating one in the instrumental and functionalized world of objects, the existent's body situates the existent in the midst of existence, which is common to, and shared by, both the existent and the world. And, as we shall see later, this points to the existential meaning of interposition: as a presence interposed between the existent and the world, my body, as the privileged position from which I am present to the world, ensures that any object is granted to me as an existence that exists for-me.

As Joe McCown explains in *Availability: Gabriel Marcel and the Phenomenology of Human Openness*,

This body which is mine appears as privileged object, my landmark upon the world, a living centre. That I have a world at all means that I have a 'place,' a position from which my life can venture out among the things that surround me. My body gives me such a position, a position of privilege from which I take measure of the things of the world and familiarize myself with what is strange and other. Everything which is *for me* passes through my body. This is Marcel's idea of 'an absolute interposition of my body.' He does not intend to question the reality of things, he only intends to specify that their existence is apprehended in our bodies, because we are embodied. (McCown 31, emphasis added)

As the foothold that guarantees, or underwrites, the existent's presence in the world, the interposed body roots the existent in existence and comes to function as the stable support for the existent and its existential spatiality and temporality. *My body*, instead of being a simple object among other objects, is the centre of *my* experiential world, a world that I experience as existing for-me. As the living centre of my world, all existence passes through my body and in this way the world becomes for-me; this privileged body is the introduction of the personal into the world, and it is by way of this (or from this) personal position that I am able to "take the measure of the things of the world and familiarize myself with what is strange and other". Things in the world, through my body, become meaningful for me because they are apprehended by my body as being-for-me; things

exist for me, or I apprehend the existence of things, as a function of my incarnation. Instead of situating me in the instrumental and functionalized world of objects, my body, as the privileged location from which I co-exist with the world, situates me in the midst of existence with a world of things that exist for-me. It is against the personal horizon of my body that the world of things comes into existence as existing for-me—an existence based on their relative position to my body. And it is the particularity of the interposed body, its uniqueness as *my* body that supports the existent's co-existence with the world. As Piotr Hoffman notes in his book *Violence and Philosophy*, the unique particularity of my own body, its positionality, is the factor that is “capable of furnishing one constant point of reference determining my grasp of places and distances...[B]ecause I identify my body as ‘mine’ immediately and without any use of general criteria of identity...my body’s Here is unique, for it is *my here*” (Hoffman 152). Later in his writing, Marcel comes to develop alternate terms to articulate this felt immediacy and intimacy, suggested by the word interposition, that exists between the existent and its body, including the phrase ‘I am my body’ and the word *ecceity*, both of which will be dealt with in greater detail as we progress through Marcel’s writings.

But, as I have stressed throughout this introduction, Marcel’s investigations do not stop at the level of existence; what becomes clear in his later work is that his excavations into intensely lived experiences of existence become the groundwork for his ontology. As I have stated, Marcel approaches these experiences on the basis of second reflection with the hope of bringing to light the obscure truths about our participation in Being with others. So, in the case of positionality, I have already endeavoured above to explain the existential nature of positionality that is a function of being incarnate.

However, when this existential reality of incarnate existence is subjected to objective and abstract reflection, one is lead to posit the reality of the body as being that of an object with objectively describable properties, which is what happened in the case of Descartes; abstract reflection leads to situating the body as an extended substance within objective Cartesian space. But, through second reflection, Marcel intends to take up the existential nature of bodily reality as interposition otherwise than according to the categories—such as objectivity, impersonality, and functionalism—of abstract thought; instead, he intends to take up the implications of incarnation in terms of Being in order to foreground the ontological implications that pervade the felt relation between the existent and their own body. In terms of positionality and the unique *here* that is a function of my incarnation and through which I come to apprehend things in the world, Marcel develops an ontology of *being-at-home* that he presents as the ontological equivalent to incarnate existential positionality. In light of his discoveries concerning the rootedness of co-existence in the positionality of the existent as incarnate, Marcel develops, through second reflection upon this experience, an equivalent concept of ontological positionality, which he refers to as *being-at-home*, that expresses that mode of being through which the subject is able to make itself available and receptive to the appeals of the other and to be with the other as Thou in terms of co-presence within Being.

In contrast to the centripetal movement implied in the establishment of the existent's position as a unique here by way of its own body, the rootedness of the word interposition in the word pose (as in inter-pose) picks up on the centrifugal movement of existence that Marcel refers to in *Creative Fidelity* as follows: “the prefix *ex* in exist, has primary significance because it conveys the meaning of a movement towards the external

world, a centrifugal tendency” (*Creative Fidelity* 17). The word *pose* points towards this existential reality of incarnation as movement outwards because of its function as a transitive verb: the body, or *my body*, presents the existent to the world for consideration or attention and puts or sets the existent forth and offers its existence to the world. *Pose* then denotes the manifestory aspect of incarnation that presents, offers, or exposes, the existent—as an existence—to the solicitations of the world, and it is based on this existential exposure that Marcel comes to refer to incarnate existence in the world as being based in a stance of receptivity. And it is by way of second reflection upon this existential receptivity of the body, of my body, towards the world that Marcel comes to articulate the ontological state of availability or disposability towards the other that is the possibility for encountering the other in terms of presence as Thou. It is through a posture or comportment of availability that the self becomes receptive to the presence of the other and meets the other as Thou in Being. But, one must keep in mind that all of these aspects of incarnation as interposition are interrelated at the level of existence, so it is important to remember that the various aspects of their ontological clarification are also intertwined. As a result, as we shall see later, availability is intimately related to establishing oneself in a mode of *being-at-home* because, according to Marcel, making oneself available to the other involves actively preparing a place in which one can welcome the other and participate with the other in co-presence.

The last existential embodied in the word interposition is ‘betweenness’. The prefix inter-, which is rooted in the Latin term for *among*, the Greek term for *intestine*, and the Old English term for *in*, brings the notion of being in the midst of and of being between to the hereness and exposure implied in the word pose. As a result, *interpose*, as

a transitive verb, means to place in an intervening position, to put or place oneself between, as in to intrude, and to introduce or place between; as an intransitive verb, interpose means to come between or to step between. I am making a point of stressing both the transitive and intransitive aspects of the verb because this doubleness of interpose picks up on the double aspect of incarnate existence as a manifesting of oneself and as a being manifested that Marcel understands to be implied in the affirmation 'I exist,' which, as he explains, refers to the fact "that I am not only for myself but that I manifest myself, or rather am manifested" (*Creative Fidelity* 17). In other words, at the level of existence, incarnation, understood as interposition, is both active and passive; while the existent, by way of its own body, is able to place itself in the midst of the world, the reality of the body as a being between or an intervening by way of interference means that the existent is always already in the midst of the world, is always already involved in existence. In fact, the prefix *inter-* also eludes to Marcel's characterization of existence as a sphere of co-existence in which both the existent and the world participate. The sense of existence as being something shared by or derived from two or more sheds light on Marcel's positing of existence as a co-existing, as a realm that is shared by—and perhaps even derived from—the existent and the world by way of their presence to one another. But the important thing to remember is that this co-existence is made possible by way of the body because the body necessarily assumes the intervening position between the existent and the world; as such, it functions both as the way in which the existent exists in or towards the world and, by way of sensation, as the way in which the world appears or manifests itself to the existent.

This existential category of between-ness opens onto the dominant theme of the I-Thou interpersonal relation that comes to dominate Marcel's later work. What begins to occur as early as *Being and Having* is that the existential structure of the body as interposed between the existent and the world gets taken up by Marcel at the level of Being, and he begins to develop the interpersonal relation of being-with the other as a being-between, as co-presence with the other as Thou. In other words, the existential reality of the body as interposed between the existent and the world leads, through second reflection, to the eventual realization of the I-Thou relation as a meeting that takes place between them. Throughout his writing, Marcel deploys a whole series of terms to evoke the two modes of the intersubjective relation, the relation with the him or it and the relation with the Thou, and it is specifically in his attempt to articulate the relation between the I and Thou that he imports terminology—such as participation, availability, and the between—that is intimately related to his investigations into incarnation. Marcel tirelessly works at trying to unearth within intersubjective relations the path leading from relations of objectivity—those in which I treat the other as him, as an object “that does not take me into account, something for which I do not count” (*Creative Fidelity* 32)—towards the ontological experience of love in which the other, taken up as Thou instead of as a third person, “allows me to discover myself; my outer defences fall at the same time as the walls separating me from the other person fall” (*Creative Fidelity* 33). In other words, Marcel concentrates his attention on those relations of intersubjectivity that involve the presence of the other person in relation to me, that expose me to their presence as Thou, and that are founded on my taking up a posture of receptivity towards the other person who, as Thou, takes me into account and responds or answers to the

appeal of my presence. Relations between myself and the other as Thou involve the other taking me into account; they are relations in which I count for the other who addresses his/her answers to me specifically. What Marcel is trying to highlight by elaborating the reality of intersubjectivity as a reality of interposition is one's necessary exposure to the other, to the presence of the other that is the possibility of community and self-knowledge, where both terms—exposure and presence—are extracted from his earlier investigations into the reality of the body approached as interposition and elaborated in terms of their ontological implications. For Marcel, it is only by way of the thou, by way of the other as Thou who takes me into account in our conversation, that I can come to know myself better, but only if I am receptive, or disposable, to the other as Thou: "This can be expressed more clearly in terms of the observation that I communicate effectively with myself only insofar as I communicate with the other person, i.e. when he becomes thou for me. Such a transformation can be accomplished only by an inward relaxation in which I abolish the sort of constriction which makes me shrink into myself and which deforms me" (*Creative Fidelity* 34). The determining factor in any relation between oneself and the other is the attitude or posture that one is able to assume in relation to the implied interposition of the Thou between oneself and the other. Since the reality of interposition implies that one is always already in the midst of, or exposed to, the Thou, the only question is the attitude that one takes up towards the Thou.

Ultimately, however, Marcel moves away from the vocabulary of interposition and towards the notion of the between to characterize the interpersonal relation lived at the level of Being. As I outlined above, in the case of the relation with the other as him, Marcel refers to the relationship as objectifying, as being based on my treating the other

as absent since “it is his absence which allows me to objectify him, to reason about him as though he were a nature or given essence” (*Creative Fidelity* 32), and as being based in the exchange of information and knowledge. As an example of objectification, Marcel asks the reader to consider the experience of being spoken about in the third person by a group of people even though you are present for the conversation: “A person spoken of in this way feels that he is being treated as an object and so is being relegated to the level of things...He is deprived of his status as a subject. One might also say that he is not *with* the others, that he is being excluded from a certain community to which he feels he rightly belongs” (*The Existential Background* 40). At the level of Being, the relationship with the other as Thou is based on presence and is such that “the *thou* becomes *thou* more and more profoundly” (*Metaphysical Journal* 146), with the result that the other, instead of simply being reduced to an independent him, “participates more and more in the absolute which is *unrelatedness* and we cease more and more to be ‘somebody’ and ‘somebody else.’ We become simply ‘us’” (*Metaphysical Journal* 146). Marcel suggests the English noun *togetherness* that, while it “has been unfortunately travestied in popular usage, has no possible equivalent in French” (*The Existential Background* 41). But, unsatisfied with the concept of togetherness, he ultimately finds the fact that there is no French equivalent more interesting, arguing that “it is as if the French language refused to make a substantive of—that is, conceptualize—a certain quality of being which is concerned with the ‘*entre-nous*,’ the between you and me” (*The Existential Background* 41). And it is this concept of the between that Marcel comes to light upon as being the most promising term for expressing the reality of the interpersonal relation at the level of Being, a term that Emmanuel Levinas draws attention to in an essay entitled “Martin

Buber, Gabriel Marcel and Philosophy” that we shall investigate more closely later. In the context of the essay, Levinas explains that Marcel’s work attempts to bring to light “the originality of sociality with respect to the subject-object structure, the latter not even being necessary to the grounding of the former” (Levinas 21) by way of the approach to the other person addressed as Thou, “an approach that greets the other, an I-Thou relation, i.e. a relation fundamentally *other* than the perception of the other in his or her nature or essence, which would lead to truths or opinions expressed in the guise of judgements, as in the experience of any object whatsoever” (Levinas 22). And what Levinas highlights in his essay is how Marcel has recourse to the vocabulary of between-ness when trying to express the I-Thou relation, as is evidenced by the following quotation from Marcel taken from a later essay: “In all these situations, the meeting does not take place in any sense in one or the other participant, nor in a neutral unity embracing both, but in the truest sense between them in a dimension accessible to them alone” (Levinas 22).

CHAPTER 3: The Interposed Body and the Distinction between Being and Having

Although the previous chapter focused on Marcel's attempt to bring to light the nature of bodily reality as interposition, what should have been clear in the exposition is the fact that Marcel introduces the concept of interposition as a way of developing his realization that the body is much more than something that I simply have at my disposal. For Marcel, the concept of interposition is deployed in the service of the distinction between *the body that I have* and *the body that I am* in order to help evoke the experience of incarnation in the reader. In fact, I would argue that the concept of interposition and the distinctions between existence and objectivity and problem and mystery that Marcel develops during the time covered by the first two instalments of his metaphysical journals all serve to help articulate the distinction between being and having that inaugurates his philosophical project and that has its beginnings in the existential experience of incarnation. What I would like to do in this chapter is to expand upon the relationship between interposition and the distinction between being and having in light of Marcel's theory of sensation. Then, in order to open the way for approaching Marcel's more sustained and systematic formulation of the distinction between being and having, I will present an overview of the distinctions between existence and objectivity and problem and mystery. The final section of this chapter will then provide an outline of the essential features of relations of having and will explain how Marcel theorizes the relationship between the sphere of having and the sphere of being by way of such concepts as ontological disposability and participation.

3.1 Early Thoughts on the Relations of Being and Having

Marcel returns to the issue of the body on October 23, 1920, as he is writing down his metaphysical ideas on death. Perhaps thinking back to his wartime experience with the Red Cross, what is at issue for Marcel in relation to death is the possibility of making present, or maintaining the presence, of a dead friend in spite of his/her material absence and ultimately of communicating with him/her. For such a communication to be possible, one must tackle “the question of the possibility of communications which are distinct from those effected by way of messages,” which Marcel understands as involving the transmission of a material element between existents (*Metaphysical Journal* 241). If, however, no such form of communication exists, then Marcel would have to either admit that all communication ceases with the death of the existent, an alternative that the very possibility of remembrance discounts, or that death does not involve the actual expiring of the physical body since a certain body—or a certain understanding of incarnation—is at the centre of any communication effected by way of messages, an alternative that does not fit with our experiences of death. So, since neither alternative is plausible, Marcel is left to conclude that a non-material—or, more precisely, a non-message based—form of communication is possible and endeavours to trace out the conditions for the possibility of such communication. This leads Marcel to look beyond one’s relationship with another that is based solely on the interchange of messages and to attempt to unearth some form of non-material or non-message based communication. What he asks is “can it not be maintained that death, i.e. the destruction of the instrument which allows us to send and to receive messages, involves the pure and simple negation of a life that is only maintained thanks to the interchange of messages” (*Metaphysical Journal* 242)? If this

possibility can be maintained, then it opens a path for inquiring into the existence of a life that is rooted in a method of communication that is beyond the simple sending and receiving of messages.

Once again, Marcel comes to realize that the problem rests with how the reality of the body, and the relationship between the existent and their body, is conceptualised, so it is at this point that Marcel turns his attention to understanding the body as that instrument that is the possibility of exchanging messages. On one level, one makes use of one's body as an instrument and communicates with the other by way of the exchange of material elements. But, "obviously I do not restrict myself to *making use of* my body. There is a sense in which I *am* my body, whatever that may mean" (*Metaphysical Journal* 242). What Marcel is pointing to is the fact that, although I can certainly approach my body as an object among other objects and thereby use the body that I have at my disposal to communicate with the other through the exchange of messages, this attitude does not exhaust the whole phenomenon of my body. My body, as mine, has priority for me over other objects; although I can separate myself from other things, I cannot escape my body because it is always already *with* me. My body and I participate in an indissoluble unity. The problem for Marcel is how to evoke the experience of my body, the body that "I feel internally as I cannot feel other things...and which is reducible neither to an object or an instrument" (Wild 171). And this is where the previous arguments concerning the possibility of communication without messages come into play. One way that Marcel goes about trying to distinguish the body that I am, that is part of my being, from the body that I observe as an object or use as an instrument is to argue that *my body*, as a body that feels or senses things in the world through sensation, enables

me to communicate with the world beyond the simple exchange of messages: “Note that communication by signs or symbols can only be *effected* on the basis of sensation and that sensation can in no way be compared with a message. Beings who did not feel one another, that is to say, did not grasp one another as *affected*, could not communicate in that way” (*Metaphysical Journal* 243, emphasis added). Consequently, the body that senses, that is affected by and feels the presence of things in the world, is the very possibility of any communication by way of messages. Communication by way of signs or symbols can only be *effected* (in a technical sense by making use of one's body) on the basis of one's ability to be *affected* (in an existential sense through the body that one is, that is open to the world) through the body that one is.

This is the first definitive statement by Marcel on the difference between having a body and being my body that is so central to his philosophy. What Marcel is drawing attention to is the non-objectivity of one's body, that quality of a body that makes it one's own and confers upon it, beyond its objectification as a useful object or instrument, an absolute existential priority in relation to other objects. But what exactly is it that distinguishes my own body from other bodies? According to Marcel,

my body is only *mine* in as much as, however confusedly, it is felt. The radical abolition of coenesthesia, supposing it were possible, would mean the destruction of my body in so far as it is mine. If I am my body, it is in so far as I am a being that feels. It seems to me that...I am my body in the measure in which my attention is brought to bear on my body *first of all*, that is to say before my attention can be fixed on any other object whatsoever. Thus the body would benefit from what I may be allowed to call an absolute priority.

I only *am* my body more absolutely than I am anything because to be anything else whatsoever I need first of all to make use of my body (here we come back to the idea of the body being *interposed*). (*Metaphysical Journal* 243)

Although still in the early stages of development, all the elements of Marcel's thoughts on incarnation appear, in this journal entry, together for the first time—the expressions *I am*

my body and *my body*, the body that I make use of, sensation, and the body as interposed. What I want to do at this point is to trace their interrelationship and to use this as a point of entry for my discussion about the distinction between being and having in relation to incarnation that evolves out of these early writings.

Marcel's first order of business is to establish one's own body as the body that is felt or lived by the existent *as* one's own because of its 'absolute priority' for the existent, and he contends that one's own body has priority for the existent in at least two ways, both of which relate to his earlier statement equating the reality of bodies with that of interposition: firstly, my body as interposed between me and what I am—I must first be my body before I can be anything else—and, secondly, my body as the site of sensation and affection, as "immediately imposed" (*Metaphysical Journal* 248) on my attention before I am able to pay attention to anything else—as Marcel explains, "to pay attention to something is always to pay attention to oneself as a feeling being" (*Metaphysical Journal* 246).

In the case of the first type of existential priority, if one wants *to be* anything else (such as male or female, white or black), then one must first be one's own body since feeling one's body as one's own is the very condition for making use of one's body so as *to be* anything else. Understood in relation to his comment concerning coenesthesia, one's own body for Marcel is the very possibility of bringing together the impressions arising from organic sensations that function as the basis of an existent's awareness of their body or bodily state; in other words, only by destroying the felt quality of my body—destroying my body in so far as it is felt to be mine—would it be possible to abolish coenesthesia. By enabling the existent to feel their bodily state as their own,

coenesthesia is the process by which the existent is able to utter such affirmations as 'I am tired' or 'I am healthy'. But an existent's awareness of such bodily states is predicated on the existent feeling, at a pre-reflective level, their body as their own; before I can feel tired or healthy, I must first feel my body as mine. It is only by being one's own body that one can establish oneself existentially within a situation and expand one's being, expand on what one is—such an expansion of one's being requires taking up various aspects of one's own body into one's life so that one lives *as* tired, white, male, etc. In this way, it also becomes possible for the existent, through the process of abstraction, to take up their body as a simple instrument and expand their incarnation into the sphere of objectivity; however, if one takes up one's body according to this spirit of abstraction as a simple object and submerges the body's reality as interposition beneath its determination as merely one object among others in the world, then the self will only be able to expand its being by way of objective properties and not according to the various ontological avenues implied the reality of the body as interposition. In other words, how the existent comes to represent the reality of its incarnation to itself determines the atmosphere in which the more self-aware human being comes to live its life.

Secondly, my body enjoys absolute priority in an existential sense in regards to all other objects and is felt to be more than simply one object among others. In fact, my body is the very possibility of objectivity because my body has priority in terms of the attention I can fix on objects in the world. Marcel relates one's own body to the possibility of perception in general by stating that, before one can pay attention to any other object, one must first, out of necessity, fix one's attention on one's own body;

because the body is im-*pos*-ed upon the existent, put upon or applied to the existent, the existent first comes to feel its body as its own. As implied in the word *impose* that I have used in this context, Marcel presents the body as serving a mediating function and expands on his evocation of the reality of bodies as a reality of interposition. This second aspect of the priority of the body is responsible for the fact that one is unable to reduce one's body to an object because the fact that one's attention is initially and always already fixed on one's body *as* one's own—as a subject—is the very condition for the possibility of paying attention to any other object whatsoever, including one's body: as the possibility for knowing and for being able to... , “[my body] enters into play [but] cannot be conceived as an object” (*Metaphysical Journal* 244). It is only by way of one's own body being imposed upon or forced on one's attention that the existent *is able to* pay attention to objects *as* objects—in other words, feeling my body as mine, as interposed between oneself and the world, is the very possibility of the separation between subject and object that enables one to pay attention to objects as objects in the world. As a result, the existent's own body cannot be reduced to simply being an object of thought for the existent; as Marcel explains, “to posit the absolute priority of the body is to say that the mediation of the body is necessary for paying attention to anything whatsoever, hence for knowing [my body] itself” (*Metaphysical Journal* 244). Consequently, this would seem to imply that my body functions as an instrument of attention; without making use of my body as mine, one would be unable to pay attention to anything at all.

But then is the relation between the existent and its own body as expressed in the phrase ‘I am my body’ simply instrumental in nature? Although my body is felt to be more than a simple instrument, the reality of the body as a reality of interposition seems

to reduce my body as mine to the level of instrumentality—my body as interposed is an instrument to be used for paying attention to anything whatsoever. On the one hand, Marcel feels that, beyond being a simple instrument, my own body is also an essential part of who I am, and that these two aspects of the body (instrumental and existential) are distinct: “I am my body...only in the measure in which I do not treat my body as an instrument” (*Metaphysical Journal* 244). However, before being able to pay attention to anything else, one’s attention must first take one’s own body into account⁷; one must feel one’s body as one’s own before being able to pay attention to an object. In light of his discoveries, was Marcel wrong to suggest that my body is more than something that I can make use of? Was he wrong to contend that my body is more than a mere object that I have or possess, that it belongs to my subjective being and is something that I am (Wild 171)? Or perhaps Marcel misspoke when he referred to my body as “a primary instrument of attention” (*Metaphysical Journal* 245) when he suggested that that which is the very possibility of paying attention to something, whether as an object or as an instrument, is not itself instrumental in nature.

⁷It is essential at this juncture to point out the difference between the phrases *one’s own body* and *one’s body*. One’s own body refers to the felt impression that ‘I am my body’; one’s own body is the proper body that underwrites any use that the self makes of their body. One’s body, on the other hand, refers to the fact that one can make use of one’s body as an instrument, as something one has power over. In fact, as we’ll see in a moment, it is by way of this (primary) appropriation of one’s body as something that one has that all other acts of appropriation become possible; one’s body, as soon as one recognizes it as one’s possession, becomes the centre or fulcrum for all other processes of appropriation. But what comes through in the phrasing is the doubling of possession through being. While having a body (as one’s body or as the body that is mine) only suggests a rather temporary relationship between the self and its body that allows the self to bring out its body’s instrumental character and to make use of the body and dispose of it at will, being one’s body (as one’s own body or my own body) suggests a relationship in which the self and its body are folded over on each other in such a way that the self is intimately related to its body, so much so that it cannot exist without it.

Marcel adopts the second position and comes to take issue with his previous characterization of the functioning of my body as the “mediation for the attention to be concentrated on any object” (*Metaphysical Journal* 245) as being instrumental in character. What Marcel realizes is that my body “is not an object, but the absolute condition for any object whatever to be given to me as datum. I wonder if whether I would be betraying the thought that I am trying to ‘bring to birth’ at this moment if I said that there is no attention save where there is at the same time a certain fundamental way of feeling that cannot be converted into an object” (*Metaphysical Journal* 247). In other words, the felt quality of my body as mine, the sensation I have of my body as mine, is the necessary condition for my being able to pay attention to anything else whatsoever. And, in order to separate out the objective and instrumental aspect of bodies from their existential aspect, Marcel introduces a distinction between *feeling* (or *sensation*) and *paying attention to* that highlights the non-objectifiable background of the process of objectification. The body that I am is the body that I feel as mine, that has the felt quality of being my own body, and one can apprehend this body only by way of feeling or sensation, both of which are pre-reflective and non-objectifiable. In addition, feeling my body as mine is the very possibility of paying attention to anything else whatsoever, where *paying attention to*...implies a form of objectification.

3.1.1 Sensation vs. Communication

Throughout these early explorations into the reality of bodies, the driving concern for Marcel has been to overturn the prevailing philosophical understanding of bodies as

mere objects and to rethink the philosophical reduction of the relation between the existent and its body to one that is instrumental in nature. In order to achieve this, he questions the objectivist conceptualization of the process of communication as an exchange of messages, which figures prominently in the traditional interpretations of the process of sensation or feeling as a receiving of messages by the existent from the environment and which relies on, or is intertwined with, the interpretation of the body as a simple instrument: “My concern is to examine whether sensation itself can be regarded as a message. It seems to me that the question is of the same order as that regarding the instrumental value of the body. Sensation can no more be treated as a message than the body can be treated *simply* as an instrument” (*Metaphysical Journal* 257). Thus to rethink sensation itself is intimately linked to re-thinking the relation between the existent and its body. In order to have conceptualised sensation as a process of transmitting and receiving messages, in other words, required the reduction of the body to the status of an instrument that the existent uses to send or receive these messages; consequently, any attempt to rethink the nature of the body necessary requires rethinking the reality of sensation. Thus, Marcel’s investigation into alternative forms of communication, his work to rethink or reconfigure the process of sensation or feeling at the heart of incarnate being, aims at understanding the relationship between the existent and the world that conditions the possibility of communication based in the exchange of messages—a relation that he refers to as sensation or feeling—and at the relation between the existent and their body that determines or structures the relation that the existent has with the world. In other words, on the road to understanding the way in which the existent senses things in the world in a non-instrumental and pre-objective manner, Marcel also expects

to bring to light the reality of the existent's pre-objective relationship with that thing in the world that has priority over all others, namely its own body. So, his investigation into sensation has as its ultimate goal an understanding of how the existent senses their own body, that thing in the world that has priority for the existent over all others and that, because of its priority, is the condition of the possibility of sensation in general. Thus, the bringing to light of the reality of sensation, in the final analysis, is focused on uncovering the reality of the mediating nature of my body as mine, on the body interposed in sensation, that is the very (non-objectifiable) possibility of objectification: "[By way of sensation, a thing in the world] appears to me as object in virtue of the (unobjectifiable) power of mediation which allows me to apprehend anything whatever" (*Metaphysical Journal* 256).

In particular, he questions the possibility of "treating the mediating element as an object and of forming an idea of it" (*Metaphysical Journal* 250) by arguing against the conceptualization of sensation as the passive receiving of messages from one's surroundings; according to this model, the body of the existent only participates in sensation in a passive manner as a simple receptor, as a simple instrument that is subject to impinging messages. What Marcel is proposing is that sensation actually involves the body actively making itself present and receptive to the world, and he explains his understanding of the problem of sensation as follows:

Inasmuch as the body is an absolute instrument (or appears to be such) it must needs appear [sic] to be interposed between us and objects, and we are therefore convinced that it mediatises our apprehension of the objects...From the point of view of the mechanical world which is the world in which we act, the world in relation to which the body functions as instrument, sensation is bound inevitably to seem *emitted* and *transmitted*. Only, as I have long realised, this interposition is in some way illusory. Hence there is a sense in which sensation differs radically from any conceivable message. But from this new point of view

sensation ceases to be defined in function of an object. To feel is not to receive but to participate in an immediate way. But personal life involves the impossibility of dissociating this immediate participation from the inevitable appearance of mediation and of communication. (*Metaphysical Journal* 258)

As an absolute instrument, the body as interposed between the existent and the world necessary seems to be a mediating element between us and objects, an interpretation that reduces sensation to the sending and receiving of messages and the body to an instrument that the existent uses to emit and receive those messages. But this interpretation of sensation mis-represents the truth about interposition that is the reality of the body; instead of bodily interposition opening onto a mediated relation between the existent and the world in which the body functions as a passive intermediary, it opens onto an immediate form of active participation of the existent with the world. Feeling or sensing involves the existent actively participating with the world in an immediate way, and this immediate participation with the world is conditioned by the interposition of the body between the existent and the world.

Marcel already has it in mind to take up the active existential participation of the existent with the world that is at the heart of sensation through second reflection at the level of Being and to situate this form of active receiving—a form of reception based in activity and participation as a form of being-with—at the centre of his theorization of the interpersonal. The ontological lesson to be learned from sensation is the state of active participation, which will open onto the possibility of co-presence with the other, to the opening up of a space of Being between the I and the Thou in which both can participate by way of presence. This theme begins to emerge as Marcel returns, in the course of his ruminations on sensation, to the example of evoking the presence of a disappeared friend. Instead of simply passively living with that friend's absence and treating that friend as a

him, Marcel contends that, in order to have a true relationship with that friend and to treat them as *Thou*, one must actively call that friend to presence and communicate with them by way of invocation: “but we must understand that invocation is a means of making ourselves present to him whom we invoke...It looks as though the appeal ‘Abide with me’ were converted into a *fiat*, into ‘I will appear to you’” (*Metaphysical Journal* 252). Thus, invocation represents an active form of relation with the other that, instead of objectifying them, respects their presence and treats them as a *Thou* by way of one’s making oneself available and present to the other that one invokes. Instead of asking the other to dwell with me, an action that would only require me to passively wait for the other to approach me, I must actively make myself present to the other, actively make myself appear to the other by making myself available to the other; receiving the other as *Thou* involves for Marcel actively making oneself available to the other by making oneself appear—as available—before the other.

At this point, I want to emphasize the importance of active receptivity—understood as the activity of making oneself available to the other, as actively placing oneself at the disposal of the other, as actively appearing to the other as being at their disposal—for Marcel at both the existential level of sensation and the ontological level of the interpersonal. In light of Marcel’s technique of second reflection, I want to highlight the importance of his existential theory of sensation for his later ontological musings on the nature of the interpersonal relation; what one begins to see emerging at this point is the existential basis of Marcel’s theory of ontological participation and the obscure existential beginnings or outlines of the concept of ontological availability around which the relationship between the I and the *Thou* is centred. But, for the time being, I only

want to indicate briefly for the reader the direction in which Marcel's thought is heading because, as we shall see shortly, Marcel will unearth a facet of bodily reality that will threaten to undermine his ontological aspirations.

What we have seen up to this point is that Marcel, in his effort to try to get to the bottom of the felt quality of one's own body discovers a form of participatory sensation or feeling that, as pre-reflective and pre-objective, conditions all other sensations for the existent that are based on the model of mediation and communication. For Marcel, sensation, instead of being based in mediation and involving the passive reception of messages, actually involves the active immediate participation of the existent; instead of being a function of the object that is being communicated, sensation somehow involves the active participation of the existent with the object being sensed. In other words, while standard interpretations of communication based on the determination of the body as being instrumental in nature are structured according to the subject/object dichotomy, sensation and feeling are presented by Marcel as being forms of active participation in some common reality between the existent and the thing that makes it impossible to distinguish between the existent feeling and the thing being felt. But of what does this active immediate participation consist? How can one understand the active relation between the feeling and felt existence implied in the act of sensation? Marcel explains that "perhaps we must admit that to experience a sensation is really to become in some manner the thing sensed, and that a sort of temporary coalescence is established between beings situated on different planes of reality" (*Metaphysical Journal* 257). Consequently, that participatory relation with the world that one senses cannot properly be called a 'relation,' because 'relation' implies the behaviour of one object in reference to another:

“When I say...[sensation] I mean that no relation of thing to thing (or even of being to being) can be considered here” (*Metaphysical Journal* 259). Instead, sensation has more to do with existence, coalescence, intimacy, participation, involvement, adherence, and pre-objectivity.

But how exactly is one to understand sensation? How is sensation different from the objective experience of objects? At the level of existence, sensation, as the very possibility of objectification, involves a relation with the world on a “pre-objective plane” in which one deals with the presence of things in the world “under the form of fluids” (*Metaphysical Journal* 252). By way of sensation, as a non-objectifying and unobjectifiable process, the existent approaches the world according to its existence, which is the condition for the possibility of all other feelings or sensations. And, in the sensed world, unlike in the objectified world in which “the object as such is defined as being independent of the characteristics that make me this particular person and not another” and as not taking me into account, objects have a regard for me, they take me into account, because of my particular presence to them and their presence to me in particular (*Metaphysical Journal* 261); objects come to take me into account because existence is experienced as co-existence. What characterizes sensation at the level of existence is the relationship between the thing sensed and my own unique *personal* existence; unlike at the level of objectivity where all relations with the world have been depersonalised, sensation, as the central form of relation between the existent and the world at the level of existence, is thoroughly personal. Sensation, as co-existence, is saturated with the personal, and it is my co-existence with the world within existence that makes sensation personal. My active participation with the world in existence is

predicated on my active appearance to the world as myself, on my active manifestation to the world through the personal. The pre-objective sphere of existence is therefore a sphere that is thoroughly saturated with the personal. But how exactly does the personal appear at the level of existence? How am I able to manifest myself to the world in terms of the personal?

Quite simply, personal existence is rooted in *my body*, in the body that I am. Unlike the world of objectification in which the existent, as an object or instrument, engages with objects and instruments in a depersonalised manner by way of their body construed as being instrumental in nature, as something that I have, the world that *exists for* the existent exists only to the extent that one's body is not an instrument; in other words, the body that I am is at the heart of the pre-objective plane. As Marcel states in his December 3-4, 1920, journal entries, within one's existential orbit,

every existent must appear to me as prolonging my body in some direction or other—*my* body inasmuch as it is *mine*, that is to say, inasmuch as it is non-objective...The world *exists* in the measure in which I have relations with it which are of the same type as my relation with my own body—that is to say inasmuch as I am incarnate...Unless I am mistaken existence can only be sensed, as sensation is the mode in which the continuity of anything whatever with my body can be given to me as datum. (*Metaphysical Journal* 269)

In contrast to the stage of objectivity, in which objects in the world have no regard for me and only extend already established powers that are part of my instrumental body, the stage of existence sees the existent experience objects in the world non-objectively in the sense that the existent experiences the same bond between itself and objects that it experiences between itself and its own proper body. In *Being and Having*, Marcel states that the existent experiences objects “existing in so far as [the object] shares in the nature of *my body*, i.e. in so far as it is not thought of as object” (*Being and Having* 9). Or

again, “[w]hen I affirm that something exists, I always mean that I consider this something as connected with my body, as able to be put in contact with it, however indirect this contact may be” (*Being and Having* 10).

But how does the object exist for the existent? The object that exists does not extend the powers of my instrumental body; instead, it appears to me as prolonging my experience of my body as mine, as being for-me, in the world. The bond that unites me with my body, with the body that I am, is prolonged or extended to the object that I experience as existing; as a result, I come to experience a similar bond with the object as I have with my body: “To say that something exists is not only to say that it belongs to the same system as my body..., it is also to say that it is in some way united to me as my body is” (*Being and Having* 11). In this way, the existent and the existing object co-exist in relation to one another; as Marcel states, the only way to experience an object as existing is “on the basis of a certain felt community...[that] is indivisible” (*Being and Having* 14). Just as I cannot validly separate myself from my body by saying ‘I and my body,’ I cannot separate myself from those objects that I feel or sense as existing; at the level of existence, the existent and the world participate in a common reality by way of the interposed body—in the felt reality of co-existence⁸. As a result, Marcel is led to

⁸ In another instance, Marcel uses the term adhesion to compare one’s immediate participation in one’s body to one’s participation in one’s habitual surroundings: “I *am* my body; but I *am* also my habitual surroundings. This is demonstrated by the laceration, the division with myself that accompanies exile from my home...We must take in their strictest interpretation words such as *belong to* (a town, a house, etc.): and the word *laceration*. It is as though *adhesions* are broken” (*Metaphysical Journal* 259). This comparison raises Marcel’s discussions of sensation from the simple existential feeling of one’s body as one’s own that one experiences at the level of existence and towards the intimate ontological adherence at the level of Being that exemplifies the state of *being-at-home*. At this stage, Marcel is already laying the groundwork for his later development of the I-Thou relation that he feels is implied within the obscure and indeterminate

state that incarnation is at the heart of existence in such a way that the body, as my body, must be understood as being interposed between the existent and the world as the very medium of co-existence: “the existential point of view about reality cannot...be other than that of an incarnate personality” (*Being and Having* 10).

But how is one to understand the felt community between the existent and the world? How is it that one can come to understand this non-objectifying existential relation between the existent and the world in which the thing as felt prolongs my body? It is important to remember that sensation is non-objectifying, that, at the level of existence, the existent experiences or senses the thing in an immediate non-objectifying manner that is identical to the immediate sensation that one has of one’s body as being one’s own. In other words, objects that are experienced as existing or are encountered at the level of existence are given to the incarnate existent in a way that is not exclusively abstract and objective, as they are at the level of objectivity. And, since what distinguishes the body that I am from the body that I have is the fact that it is felt as mine and as being for-me, I think it would be appropriate to suggest that, at the level of existence, I experience or sense things as being *for-me*. In the language of intentionality, one could say that, just as my body prolongs my intentions, one could argue that objects that exist for me are *for-me* to the extent that they become meaningful through the

intensely lived experiences of the existent. In contrast to relations that the self has with the world of objects by way of the instrumental body, sensation points to the possibility for a non-objectifying and unobjectifiable association between the existent and the world that is rooted in the felt body. Consequently, by way of second reflection, the existential participation of the existent in the world through sensation and feeling is lifted up into a form of ontological participation in which the subject comes to inhabit its surroundings and is able to approach the other as Thou. In other words, my habitual surroundings, at the level of Being, have the same felt quality for me as does my body at the level of existence; similarly, my habitual surroundings in which I feel at home are the foundation for my participation in Being with the other as Thou.

prolonging of my intentions; just as I am involved in my body by way of the intentionality that underwrites or guides the actions of my body—an intentionality that is centred on the ‘I’—so to am I involved in the existence of things because they become meaningful for me within the horizons of my incarnate intentions.

3.1.2 The Spheres of Existence and Objectivity

What can be gleaned at this point in the development of Marcel's thought are two of the three distinct spheres, or stages, of self-awareness—the sphere of existence and the sphere of objectivity, both of which are organized around a dominant relation between oneself and one's body. However, these spheres are not independent of one another. Marcel stipulates that the sphere of objectivity is founded upon, or rooted in, the sphere of existence, a rootedness that is (necessarily) elided or dissimulated within the former; in fact, it is by way of his digging into the experiences that underlie the self's life in the objective sphere, of which the personal experience of the instrumental body is the most important, that Marcel uncovers the existential sphere and the felt body, the body that I am. As a result, one could argue that the two spheres overlap in the body. The body is the nexus of both spheres; while the body that I make use of is at the centre of the sphere of objectivity, the body that I am is the fulcrum of the sphere of existence. In the sphere of objectivity, one's body is something that one has use of and, through various techniques and technology, can use to pay attention to the world and acquire knowledge; the nexus of this sphere is the body as instrument. In the sphere of existence, on the other hand, one's body as one's own is the very possibility of using or seeing one's body as a

power or a centre of power in the world⁹. Instead of simply being an instrument—Marcel characterizes instruments as “a means of extending or of strengthening a ‘power’ that we possess” (*Metaphysical Journal* 245)—one’s own body is the very possibility of power, of having a particular power of the body at one’s disposal and making use of one’s body as an instrument.

But this possibility of power is based on the active receptivity that best defines or describes my body’s existential stance or attitude towards the world as revealed in the experience of sensation. Instead of simply receiving messages from the world, the body, at the level of existence, manifests the world to the existent as being for-me; the disposability of my body to the world, its active stance of receptivity towards the solicitations of its surroundings through which the world becomes meaningful for-me and through which I am forced to realize my existence in the world, is the power at the heart of incarnate existence that makes all other forms of power possible, including realizing the body as an instrumental power in the world. The receptive existential stance that the body assumes towards the world—as experienced in the relation of sensation between the body and the world through which the world becomes meaningful for-me and I am exposed to the world in the world—is the basis for all other activity within the world; all of one’s actions are based in the initial adoption by one’s own body of an existential attitude of disposability towards the solicitations of the world. In the case of the

⁹At this point, I would like to briefly highlight the connection between having (*avoir*) and power (*pouvoir*) that will be foregrounded later on in the thesis. Perhaps drawing on their grammatical similarity (in French), Marcel makes a point of demonstrating the affinity between the terms. On October 11, 1933, he writes the following note to himself:

Examine the relations between having and being able. To say ‘I have the power to...’ means ‘*the power to* is numbered among my attributes and endowments’. But that is not all. ‘To have’ is ‘to have power to’, since it is clearly in a sense ‘to have the disposal of’. (*Being and Having* 150)

instrumental and objective relation between the self and its body, the surrounding world relates to the self as a set of instruments that are means of extending or strengthening a specific power of the instrumental body. The body as instrument, as a set of powers that one possesses, is at the heart of the sphere of objectivity; the body that I have is interposed, as instrument, between myself and the world in such a way that I experience my relation to the world in instrumental terms, as a set of objects that may or may not be useful in augmenting the specifically useful powers of the body. In the case of the existential relation between the existent and its own body, the world *exists* for the existent by prolonging the existent's own body inasmuch as it is its own. The felt body, the body that I am, is at the heart of the sphere of existence. In the vocabulary of interposition, my body is interposed between myself and the surrounding world, which comes to exist for me in the measure in which the world is experienced in the same way in which I experience my body as mine, in the measure in which the world comes to exist for me as *my* surroundings. While the world of instruments extends the powers of the body that I have, the world that exists for me prolongs *my* body, the body that I am.

3.2 The Distinction Between Existence and Objectivity

This distinction between existence and objectivity that Marcel unearths as a result of his investigations into the experience of embodiment is further developed in his 1925 article entitled "Existence and Objectivity." In part, Marcel moves to further develop the distinction between existence and objectivity in part to demonstrate how his concrete philosophy differs from the abstract philosophy of idealism, especially in relation to their

respective determinations of the relation between existents and objects in the world.

While he uses the term objectivity to characterize the relation between the self understood as mind or consciousness and the object as object, a relation that “confers on objects a sort of *insularity*” because the existent, by way of the *cogito*, comes to bathe the object in objective space (*Metaphysical Journal* 319), Marcel reserves the term existence for that type of relation between the existent and the thing of “immediate apprehension and participation” (*Metaphysical Journal* 324) in which the thing is present in an immediate way to the existent that senses it and in which the existent is receptive or open, through sensation, to the existence of the thing.

But Marcel is not only interested in articulating the distinction between these two relations; he is also concerned with demonstrating “the primacy of existence” (*Metaphysical Journal* 324) by showing the rootedness of the attitude of objectivity, as a type of evasion or forgetting, in our existential relation with the world: “From this standpoint [of objectivity] the actuality of any experience is treated as though it needs to be surmounted, thanks to the mind deliberately cutting the cables: and as soon as it has got into its swing the mind owes it to itself to forget the irreducible and apparently primary element in this actuality, and hence it no longer sees it as anything more than an opportunity...for deploying its own immanent powers of universality” (*Metaphysical Journal* 321). Instead of simply dismissing objectivity as an erroneous relation between the existent and the world, Marcel argues that objectivity is made possible by our participation in existence through the sense of actuality inherent in our experience, that our existential relation is “a kind of priming (unthinkable in isolation) for the complex operation by which the mind brings an object before itself” (*Metaphysical Journal* 327).

And it is this priming that objectivity overlooks or forgets when the existent approaches the world by way of its power of universality, a formulation which suggests that the irreducible actuality of experience is somehow related to the personal or particular aspect of existence; therefore, objectivity is to universality and the impersonal as existence is to particularity and the personal. But, in order to “penetrate *beyond* objectivity...so as to reach a domain in which the classical relation between the subject and the object ceases to be strictly applicable” (*Metaphysical Journal* 325), one must re-interpret sensation and come to an ontological understanding of our fundamental personal inherence in existence as incarnate existents.

The theory of sensation developed by Marcel in the *Metaphysical Journal* plays a central role in this article as he argues that sensing or feeling provides the existent with access to “the sense-presence of the ‘thing’ which, if not identified with its existence, at least appears to unbiased reflection as its immediate manifestation and revelation—it is this that a philosophy which is orientated at one and the same time towards ideas and towards objects necessarily tends to conjure away” (*Metaphysical Journal* 320). As I pointed out above, Marcel, contrary to the interpretation of sensation as the communication of a message, as the transmission of a message between two stations, comes to describe sensation as an act through which the existent is open or receptive to the world in such a way as to be in a position to receive things in the world according to their existence; because sensation is an openness to, or a receptivity to, the existence of things, it gives access to the existential index or aspect of that thing. And it is precisely the existential aspect of the thing that idealist philosophy, for which existence simply appears as “something on which thought is perhaps so to speak *propped up*”

(*Metaphysical Journal* 319), overlooks or elides. As a philosophical methodology, idealist philosophy is part of the philosophical tradition that emphasizes “the *object* as object, together with the characteristics that constitute it as object, and the intelligibility with which [the object] needs to be weighted down so as to provide a grip for the subject who confronts it” (*Metaphysical Journal* 319). As has already been discussed, Marcel contends that the object in the idealist tradition is characterized by a sort of insularity, a quality that places the object in an isolated situation or condition in relation to the existent: “The idealist doctrines which put an increasingly emphatic accent on the *insular* character of the object are called upon to *minimize* the original contribution made by the object to us” (*Metaphysical Journal* 326).

If one considers Marcel’s explanations of the process of evocation and of how the evoked presence of the disappeared friend magnetizes one’s field of memories and affectivity, the relationship between idealism and insularity becomes quite clear. Since the act of insulating is meant to prevent the transfer of electricity as well as the induction of a magnetic field around the thing¹⁰, insularity in idealism can also be read as the covering of the thing with non-conducting material in order to lessen its effect on the existent, in order to prevent the thing—by way of its existence—from affecting the existent. In other words, the insular character of the thing *as* object is meant to reduce the “*effective presence*” of the thing *as* thing in relation to the existent, a presence that, “as neither the presence of something nor of someone...[but] which ‘subtends’ the ‘integrality’ of our experience and of any experience whatsoever,” is unintelligible as a

¹⁰ By way of the theory of electromagnetism developed by Maxwell, an electrical current is one way of inducing a magnetic field. In fact, one way to produce a magnetic field is to run a current through a wire that has been wound into a coil.

relation between a subject and an object (*Metaphysical Journal* 331). It is through sensation, therefore, that the existent is open to the effective presence of the thing as thing, to the existential quality or feeling of the thing.

But, as openness, is existential sensation passive or active? Does the existent simply receive sensations passively or must the existent enact the stance of openness that is at the root of sensation? I have already provided Marcel's response to this question and noted that sensation is an active existential stance or attitude taken by the existent towards the world in which the existent comes to participate—by way of co-existence—with the world in the sphere of existence. In the context of this article, Marcel explains that his philosophy of existence approaches the thing according to its magnetic field, which is equivalent to its existential index or aspect, according to

the mode in which the object is *present* to the person who considers it or, which amounts to the same thing, the mysterious power of self-affirmation by which it confronts the spectator. On a deeper level there is the question of how it comes about that this object is not only a rationally articulated spectacle but also possesses the power of affecting in a thousand ways the being of the person who contemplates it and is submitted to it. (*Metaphysical Journal* 320)

The process of sensation requires two active participants: the existent and the thing. The existent must first submit itself to the thing, make itself receptive to the existence of the thing. But, in order for the existent to sense the thing, the thing must also make itself present to the existent through its own power of self-affirmation. And it is by way of the thing's power of self-affirmation and the existent's ability to submit itself to the thing that sensation for Marcel comes to "involve the immediate participation of what we normally call the subject in the surrounding world from which no veritable frontier separates it" (*Metaphysical Journal* 332). Therefore, sensation, as a 'relation,' is markedly different from the relation between subject and object postulated by objectivity. But what exactly

is sensed by the existent through sensation or feeling? What is the content of this affect of the thing as presence on the existent? What is the content of this self-affirmation by the thing that Marcel equates with existence? What is the content of one's sensing of the existence of a thing?

To begin with, the term 'content' is itself inappropriate in this context because of the uncharacterizability of the contents of sensation and the nature of the affectivity of the thing. However, Marcel does try to elaborate on that which is given by way of the act of sensation. One must keep it in mind that the relation of objectivity is rooted in this very existential relation with the existence of the thing, in this being affected by the thing as present to the existent in sensation. In other words, we have not somehow lost this existential relation with the world; we have only lost sight of it because we have come to reside solely in the world of objectivity. Objectivity is, in fact, rooted in sensation, a relation with the world that (while not strictly a relation) gives one

the confused and global experience of the world inasmuch as it is existent; and here the term 'given' fits only imperfectly. *Given* normally signifies *presented* to a subject. Now here I would not like to insinuate anything of the kind...At this point I must restrict myself to pointing out that this assurance appears to us as though *constitutive* of what we habitually call the subject. It is not *added to* it or *provided* for it; without this assurance the subject ceases to be anything, it disappears. (*Metaphysical Journal* 323)

As is clear from the above quotation, Marcel is interested in reclaiming or unearthing that givenness of the world, that assurance of the existence of the world, that is constitutive of the subject and that has been buried beneath objectivity; the development of the distinction between existence and objectivity is an attempt to demonstrate the rootedness of the subject, and its relation with the world and others, in existence by establishing the absolute priority of existence in relation to objectivity. A little later in the article, Marcel

makes a point of stressing the fact that “the fundamental assurance we are dealing with here is of the order of sentiment or feeling—provided it were explicitly understood that this *feeling* must not be intellectualized” (*Metaphysical Journal* 324). It is by way of the act of sensation or feeling that the existent “knows itself to be fortified by an unquestionable assurance regarding the existence not of any particular thing nor even regarding existence in general, but regarding the existing universe” (*Metaphysical Journal* 323). Thus, sensation opens the existent to the pure immediate feeling of existence, and this feeling of existence according to Marcel has the following essential qualities: (1) the sensation, because it is uniquely *mine* and constitutes me as a unique subject, “is incapable of mediation” (*Metaphysical Journal* 329) and (2) the assurance itself given by sensation is in no way external to the existent and is such that the existent cannot separate itself from it without “causing a profound alteration in its nature” (*Metaphysical Journal* 323-4). I want to stress that the question of the unmediated quality of sensation, and the assurance it provides, has everything to do with the personal nature of sensation and with its irreducibility in the face of objectivity; the irreducible and unmediated aspect of sensation comes from the fact that “it is essential to the character of the *existant* [and this applies to both the human existent and the world] that it should occupy with regard to thought a *position* which cannot be reduced to the position implied in the fact of objectivity itself” (*Metaphysical Journal* 326), a position that involves immediate participation. And, as a case in point, Marcel turns his attention to the immediate sensation that one has of their own body, a sensation that “by [its] very essence is not given to me as datum at all” (*Metaphysical Journal* 328).

As I have already suggested, the possessive index is a crucial factor in Marcel's attempt "to account for the existence of a body that appears to the subject to be *his* body" (*Metaphysical Journal* 332) because it calls attention to the pure immediacy of the sensation that one has of one's body as one's own. Understood as my unique body, as that body that belongs to me uniquely and has absolute priority for me in relation to all other bodies, the relation between myself and *my* body implies my immediate participation in my body from which no frontier or boundary separates me. The relation between myself and my body is not rooted in externality; the actions and movements of my body intimately involve and imply me in such a way that I *am* those actions and movements. But my body as sensed is very different from the body that I use as an instrument for carrying on communication between myself and objects, as "an instrument of which I make use both for receiving and sending messages (which may, moreover, easily be reduced to simple signs. In a world constituted by or at least marked out by stations in communication with one another, *my* body like other bodies functions as an apparatus for signaling)" (*Metaphysical Journal* 332). Consequently, such instrumental mediation between the existent and the surrounding world, which is made possible by representing the body interposed between myself and objects as a station that sends and receives signals, "can only conceivably take place within a world of objects and between bodies of which none are regarded as *my body*, that is to say, as affected by this special index which in part removes it from the order of that about which we can hold discourse" (*Metaphysical Journal* 334). By adopting this instrumentalist way of representing what I call my body, "I cease to look on it as *my body*, I deprive it of that absolute priority in virtue of which *my body* is posited as the centre in relation to which my experience and

my universe are ordered” (*Metaphysical Journal* 334-5). Instead, in a world of objects, I am led to treat my body as one object among many; as a result, when I make use of my body in the world of objects, “I do no more than prolong and specialize a way of behaving that already belongs to my body (whether to my limbs or to my senses)” (*Metaphysical Journal* 333). However, as soon as I begin to regard my body as *my body*, I affect a change in the status of my body by way of this existential index and displace it from a world of objects into the world of existence that prolongs *my body* and which I encounter through the act of sensation, where sensation is understood as “the fact of feeling, of participating in a universe which creates me by affecting me” (*Metaphysical Journal* 338).

By taking up the objective experience of living in a world that enables the self to simply extend the already established powers of its body, that further enables the self to implement the body that it is already able to make use of as an instrument, Marcel works towards uncovering the more originary existential experience of existing in a world that, through the assurance of existence given by way of sensing, *enables* the existent *to...*, that affects or creates the existent as an existent that *is able to...*, a state that is beneath objectivity because objectivity, through the reduction of *my body* to a body of signs and signals, telescopes or interpolates the existent that (by way of their own body) *is able to...* into a self who is simply able to make use of their body as an instrument¹¹. What seems

¹¹ But how is one’s own body the very possibility of power, of having the body at one’s disposal as an instrument? Clearly, the statement that ‘I am my body’ refers to my ability to take up my body as the general power of *being able to*. The problem with the body conceived as instrument is that it reduces, by extension, the general power of the body as *being able to* to the specific power of *being able to make use of* one’s body as an instrument. Instead of existing one’s body in situation as one’s own, within the space of

to be at the heart of the distinction between existence and objectivity is a difference in degrees of enabling. While objectification enables the self to simply make use of its body, in response to the messages it receives from the external world, as an instrument, as a series of already determined and structured potential specialized ways of behaving or acting, the existent in the sphere of existence discovers, through sensation, a world that *enables*, that calls upon the existent and makes the existent *able to* respond but in an unspecified and undetermined manner. Or perhaps, keeping objectivity in mind as a prime example, the existential enabling of the existent through sensation involves making one able to take up one's incarnation, to represent the relationship between oneself and one's body. Existential enabling, in other words, could be understood as a fundamental *making creative*; what the general process of making an existent *able to*... provides an existent is the creative power necessary to respond to its being called forth by the world, to manifest itself to the world. The general enabling of the existent that originates in the sphere of existence becomes a specific enabling, a making able to use the body as an instrument, in the sphere of objectivity through the Cartesian representation of the body as a mechanical complexus that is ontologically distinct from the being of the subject. Considered from this point of view and in light of Marcel's earlier claim that the nature of the body is not at all univocal, Cartesian philosophy can be understood as a specific response to the existential call to make oneself present to the world, to present oneself or make oneself manifest to the world; what distinguishes this response from others is the way in which the incarnate reality of the Cartesian subject is represented. Thus, the

existence in which one is able to find oneself and to recognize oneself, the subject simply finds itself within the functional space of objects that, like its body, are at its disposal as instruments and that one is only able to make use of in an instrumental and objective manner.

decision that the existent would make concerning how to take up, actualize or realize the general possibility or potential of *being able to...* would determine their specific ways of being in the world; by taking up the body as something that I have, I come to situate myself in a depersonalized and functionalized objective world in which my body is just one object among many. If one represents one's body simply as an instrument, then one reduces the world to a world of objects in which one is only able to participate in so much as one is able to make use of one's body as an instrument. And this process is self(re)producing since the world of objects inaugurated by the instrumentalization of the body reduces the possible ways in which an existent *is able to...* The only way that Marcel sees out of this predicament is by re-thinking the representation of the body that is at the heart of the world of objects in order to transcend our current situation and attain the level of Being; in other words, any transition from the sphere of objectivity to that of Being requires re-investigating our experience of our bodies as our own and thereby uncovering, through second reflection, the ontological dimensions of incarnation implied in our existence as incarnate existents participating with the world. By re-discovering, or uncovering, *my body* that is at the heart of the affective world, I re-instate my openness—that is a function of sensation—to the creative presence of the world.

3.2.1 Ontological Implications of the Theory of Sensation: Testimony vs. Observation

Through second reflection on existence, Marcel develops, along two fronts at least, the ontological implications of sensation into a theory of testimony: (1) according to the active participation of the existent with the world in a relation of co-existence and

(2) according to the personal nature of sensation as co-existence. Marcel recuperates, at the level of Being, the participatory and personal nature of sensation and develops the implications of these existential realities into a theory of testimony that is a way of being-with the other in co-presence.

The first aspect of sensation that Marcel takes up, or ontologizes, is its involvement with the personal. Initially, in *Being and Having*, Marcel suggests, on October 7, 1932, that it is “the essence of man to be a being who can bear witness” (*Being and Having* 97); in contrast to sensation as a form of existential looking or paying attention to..., he feels that bearing witness is a type of looking that is related to the ontological. As he asks on October 9, 1932, “surely it is of the essence of anything ontological that it can be no more than *attested*?” (*Being and Having* 99). Bearing witness, as the ontological recapitulation of sensation, points towards another way of seeing, one that, by way of attestation, looks towards the ontological. However, witnessing, in addition to providing access to the ontological, also involves the personality of the individual who is bearing witness; as Marcel explains, “attestation is a personal thing; it brings the personality into play, but it is at the same time turned towards Being, and is characterized by this tension between the personal and the ontological factors” (*Being and Having* 100). This tension between the personal and Being is integral to Marcel’s ontology, just as the tension between the personal and existence is fundamental to his existential investigations into the nature of incarnation. Since ontological inquiry involves somehow clarifying the ontological dimensions of intensely lived personal experiences, it must, by necessity, have a foothold in both the personal and in Being. In this way, ontological attitudes or ways of being, such as testimony, are by

necessity bi-polar: they are determined according to the tension between the unique and the generalizable.

As was the case with sensation and objectivity, Marcel opposes testimony to the kind of indifferent looking implied by the stance of objectivity. What witnessing represents for Marcel is a form of ontological insight, and he develops its implications in relation to objective observation in his 1946 essay entitled “Testimony and Existentialism” in which he, in an attempt to define existentialism, draws a distinction that he feels is fundamental between objective and ontological looking. According to Marcel, observation involves observing a phenomenon “which is outside myself and which I note. I cannot help noting it—I am *obliged* to note. At the same time I see...that my observation does not in any way modify the phenomenon that I have observed, and, moreover, that the *I* who observes is highly impersonal” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 92). Marcel goes on in the essay to contrast observation with testimony. He argues that, unlike with observation, “it cannot be ever *one* who bears witness; it is always and inevitably *I*, and if not myself, then another, who is yet another *I*...I have said that I *can* testify; this means that ‘I am in a position to...’” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 92). What distinguishes testimony from observation, and confers upon the former its ontological character, is its essential personal aspect—only I as an *I* can testify. My testimony depends on my being in a unique position to testify, and what characterizes this position involved in testifying is the fact that no one can take the place of the one who is testifying. The ability to testify requires that I exist in the world in a unique position, that I have a privileged position in the world, from which I am able to testify to..., and it is from this unique position that testimony, as is fundamental to its nature, is

able to come to bear “on that part of an event which is unique and irrevocable” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 95). Also, this position is unique in that no one else can testify for me, can substitute themselves for me or testify to what it is that I have witnessed.

But how is this privileged position of the witness to be understood? For Marcel, this unique *here* within Being is an ontological version of the existential *here* or position that Marcel unearthed in his explorations into incarnation. As we saw in the earlier exposition of Marcel’s determination of the existential reality of the body as one of interposition, position is a central element in the existential make up of the incarnate existent; one’s own body is a unique *here* that presents or manifests the existent to the world and that places the existent in a relation of co-existence with the world. And it is exactly this existential aspect of incarnate existence that Marcel recuperates through second reflection and raises to the level of Being in order to set testimony apart from observation. In contrast to observation, in which the existent stands in relation to the world as “a recording instrument, a recorder among many thousands” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 93), testimony requires that the relation in which the witness stands to the other be based on commitment, a commitment that, implied by the reality of incarnation at the level of existence, is realized or actualized at the level of Being:

Every testimony is based on a commitment...[and] this is indeed the reason for the preliminary oath which is administered in a law court. By taking an oath I bind myself, I give up the possibility of withdrawing myself, as it were, from what I have said; to underlie this the body itself is called into play, and every effort is made to ensure that the oath is a genuine and effective act, performed by me as an individual who can be discerned and identified by other people. (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 93)

Consequently, the commitment of the subject who testifies is to some extent underwritten, supported, or guaranteed by the subject's incarnate nature; the uniqueness of the 'I' that is a mark of its incarnation gets taken up and clarified in the ontological act of testifying.

But to what or whom does testimony require a commitment? How is one to understand the nature of this commitment, especially since there is no equivalent experience at the level of existence? As Marcel understands it, testimony "is based on a fidelity to a light or, to use another language, to a grace received. In using this term I wish to exclude its religious connotation and to treat it as signifying *gift*; the point is that testimony refers to something which has been *received* [through the act of bearing witness]" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 98). Therefore, the commitment involves being faithful to the truth that one received in the act of bearing witness; if ever one is called to testify on the behalf of some other, one must remain faithful during the course of one's testimony to the Being of that which one witnessed.

From the above, it would seem that testimony, as a form of ontological receptivity or openness towards the other, cuts two ways in Marcel. There are two separate yet related aspects to testifying: *bearing witness to...* and testifying, both of which require the active participation of the subject. First, one must prepare oneself to bear witness to...; one must act creatively and actively prepare oneself to receive the Being of the event and become its custodian or guardian. Second, one must always be prepared to give testimony concerning the Being of the event in case one is called upon to testify; in other words, one must act creatively and with fidelity towards the gift of Being that has been bestowed upon the subject through the act of bearing witness. Both aspects are

central to Marcel's elaboration of ontological availability at the heart of the relation between the I and the Thou, and, taking one's cue from Marcel himself, the suggestion is that both aspects are rooted in the experience of incarnation.

In the case of sensation, what is central to Marcel's ontology of testimony is the openness of the interposed body to the world; what interests Marcel at this point is the existential availability of the body to the world, an interposition that is the very possibility of the immediate participation of the existent with the world. The immediacy of sensation and the fact that the body determines the relation between the existent and the world as an immediate participation in co-existence is the central existential feature of incarnation that Marcel draws upon at this juncture in his ontology. And it is in this experience of existential participation based in the body that Marcel discovers the obscure outlines of ontological receiving as an instance of making oneself ready to receive the other,

a receptivity which I would describe as creative...As I have written elsewhere, receptivity covers a wide scale of gradations; at one end of it is 'suffering,' in the sense in which wax 'suffers' the imprint of a seal; at the other end is giving—and even self-giving—as when we speak of a hospitable host 'receiving' his friends. This kind of 'reception' is entirely different from that of a vessel which is filled with an alien substance; it is participation in a reality, in a plenitude, and a communication of oneself. To 'receive' in this sense is an act, and even an art, like that of a host who brings out the best in his guest and creates a genuine communication and exchange. (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 98-9)

Just as the existent receives the existence of the world by way of the openness of their own body that is found interposed between itself and the world and thereby creates a chance for genuine communication understood as sensation, Marcel argues that the subject, in order to genuinely communicate with an other, must work to actively prepare oneself and make a gift of oneself to the other. Or, using the terminology that will

eventually come to dominate his writings on the interpersonal, the subject must actively and creatively make himself/herself available to the other or place themselves at the disposal of the other, just as the existent actively interposes their body between themselves and the world, thereby placing the body—and, by extension, the existent—at the disposal of the world and making it available to its solicitation. So, the subject must, in order to participate in co-presence with the other as Thou, actively and creatively maintain itself in a stance of openness and availability towards the presence of the other.

With the intention of forewarning the reader, I want to explain that we have now come upon what is perhaps the most interesting, but also the most destabilizing, foundational work in Marcel's corpus: the relation between existential and ontological availability or disposability. The previous sentence that related the activity of the existent to make itself available to the world and the activity of the subject to make itself available to the other is fundamentally false. The existential instance of availability is inherently passive or inactive. The existent is in no way responsible for interposing its own body between itself and the world; the reality of the proper body as interposition means that *my body* is inherently open or available to the solicitations of the world without any active involvement of the existent. Thus, ontological availability as a making oneself available or placing oneself at the disposal of the other does not have its obscure beginnings in its existential counterpart, which is characterized by the passivity of the existent with respect to the body that interposes itself—or is always already interposed—between the existent and the world. This will become an important consideration in *Being and Having* as Marcel tries to dig further into the reality of incarnation because he will be forced to concede that, instead of the proper body being actively placed by the existent within the

always already existing gap between the existent and the world, the gap between the existent and the world, the difference between the sensed and the sensing, is inaugurated by the proper body itself. But more on that in a moment.

The other active aspect of testimony involves the fidelity of the subject to the Being of that to which they bore witness and on whose behalf they may be called on to testify. In the case of ontological fidelity towards the gift of presence that the other as Thou bestows on the subject who bears witness and that the subject must actively work to maintain, I would ask that the reader recall the gift of absolute assurance that the world provides the existent by way of sensation, that gift of *to be able to...* that is given to the existent by way of the existent's participation or co-existence with the world and towards which the existent must respond creatively in order to manifest itself to the world. Sensation involves the receiving of a gift from the world, the gift of absolute assurance that comes from the experience of being *my body*, and it is my responsibility to take up or realize that gift according to the creativity that the gift inaugurated or of which the gift is the very possibility. And it is this gift that enables the existent to give itself to the world, or to others, in a creative way.

Testimony is thus a form of ontological fidelity that is based in the act of bearing witness. As I argued above, Marcel takes (up) the stance of receptivity or disposability from his earlier investigations into incarnate existence and places it at the heart of the ontological notion of testimony. At the level of Being, testimony involves an act of fidelity that is rooted in an ontological stance of disposability that makes the subject available to or that keeps the subject open to the presence of the other. But, once the subject bears witness to the presence of the other and participates with the other as Thou

within Being, the subject must remain faithful to that presence and creatively maintain the presence of the other within Being—all of which Marcel refers to as a willingness to testify on behalf of the other. And it is because of this untimeliness of the presence of the other, of our being out of step with the encounter with the other that has always already occurred and which it is, as a result, necessary to work to recapture and maintain, that Marcel turns his attention to the phenomenon of memory and recollection. But he pursues these investigations into memory and the pastness of Being by way of a new distinction, namely that between problem and mystery, and it will be in light of this final pair of terms that we will finally be in a position to approach or broach the eventual disappearance of the body from his ontological investigations into the nature of interpersonal relations at the level of Being.

3.3 The Distinction Between Problem and Mystery

Commentators often point to the distinction between problem and mystery as central to understanding Marcel's thought. What I would like to stress in my own reading of Marcel's work on the concepts of problem and mystery are the links that connect this distinction, by way of the vocabulary and problematic presented in "Existence and Objectivity," to the theme of incarnation that, up to this point, has been so central to the development of his thought. What I will attempt to bring to light is the ontological implications of Marcel's shift in terminology. Unfortunately, the distinction between existence and objectivity does not seem to lend itself to ontological clarification; there seems to be no way for Marcel to expand upon the ontological implications

contained in his investigation into existence within the framework offered by such a distinction. So, in part, the shift to the terminology of problem and mystery is a response by Marcel to the ontological exigency that is at the heart of existence and is a direct result of the ontological impulse that increasingly comes to dominate Marcel's thought. In particular, I want to focus on how Marcel develops the ontological dimensions of the existential reality of incarnation by way of the distinction between problem and mystery and on how the consequences of these developments open onto the ontological attitude of disposability or availability. But, as is the case throughout Marcel's work, any ontological statements or claims can only be drawn from personal experience, and we have seen that the primary personal experience for Marcel is that of incarnation, is the feeling that one has of one's body as one's own. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the experience of incarnation, the experience articulated in the phrase 'I am my body,' is the fundamental existential mystery for Marcel and also comes to function as the prototype for the ontological mystery that Marcel places at the heart of the relation between the subject and the Thou: "It is evident that there exists a mystery of the union of the body and the soul. The indivisible unity...is not only data, I would say that it is the basis of data, in the sense of being my own presence to myself" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 19).

His 1933 essay entitled "On the Ontological Mystery" begins by repeating the earlier distinction between the objective world of objects and instruments and the world of existence and presence that Marcel put forward in "Existence and Objectivity": the objective world in which 'I have a body' and in which objects in the world appear to me as objects and the existential orbit in which 'I am my body' and in which, because of my

incarnate nature, the existent co-exists with the world. In fact, the distinction between problem and mystery is firmly rooted in this earlier distinction and on the bodily attitudes that are their very possibility. However, as I have suggested, the distinction between problem and mystery cannot simply be reduced to the earlier one between objectivity and existence.

Marcel develops his thought through the distinction between problem and mystery in two important ways. First, he uses the essay to expand on his critique of the objective world and its functionalization of human beings. Second, the distinction also serves to revitalize the ontological dimension of one's own existence by demonstrating the difference between consciously approaching reality as a complex of problems to be solved or, by way of the posture of availability, as a mystery; as Marcel explains, while trying to justify his use of the terms ontological and mystery, his intention is to counteract those forces of the world that work to obscure the ontological need at the heart of human existence, that produce human beings "in whom the sense of the ontological—the sense of being—is lacking, or, to speak more correctly,...who have lost the awareness of this sense" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 9) by rekindling the ontological demands central to our being and by revitalizing our "faculty of wonder" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 13). And the reality of incarnation is a determining factor for these two distinct ways of approaching reality. While the world of the problematical, or "the world of the functional—or of what can be functionalised" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 30), in which one approaches "reality as a complex of problems" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 30) is determined by the self taking up its body according to its functional, instrumental nature, the world of mystery in which I encounter the other as Thou and in

terms of presence has its obscure beginnings in the experience of incarnation, in the experience that one has of one's body as one's own born of and by others (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 19).

There are primarily two places where Marcel develops the distinction between problem and mystery. The essay that I mentioned above is one of those places; the other place is in the journal entries for the year 1932 in *Being and Having*, and it is here that his endeavour to articulate the distinction begins. Initially, in the entries that lead up to the first appearance of the distinction between problem and mystery, Marcel is meditating on the act of witnessing, which, as I argued above, he feels is a type of looking that is related to the ontological and which, beyond providing access to the ontological, also requires the personal involvement of the subject who is bearing witness. What witnessing represents for Marcel is a form of ontological insight, a form of insight into Being. Marcel opposes attestation to the kind of objective looking or insight that, because it keeps the onlooker from becoming involved, one uses when solving problems. In fact, the opposition between witnessing and a technical or instrumental form of insight is bound up with the opposition between the problematic and the mysterious, which Marcel, on October 22, 1932, explains as follows:

A problem is something met with which bars my passage. It is before me in its entirety. A mystery, on the other hand, is something in which I find myself caught up, and whose essence is therefore not to be before me in its entirety. It is as though in this province the distinction between *in me* and *before me* loses its meaning. (*Being and Having* 100)

The disintegration of the boundary between what is in me and before me is one of the aspects of the ontological that Marcel takes up from "Existence and Objectivity" and develops further by way of the distinction between problem and mystery. In the earlier

article, Marcel contends that, though the act of sensation, the object is present to the existent in such a way as to overcome or go beyond the frontier between subject and object; in his later work, the overcoming of the distance between subject and object instated by objectivity becomes a central feature of all ontological states or postures. And, in order to separate purely objective and instrumental problems from properly ontological dilemmas, Marcel decides to use the term mystery to refer to metaproblems in which the subject of inquiry is itself implicated in the problem. As Richard Zaner explains in *The Problem of Embodiment: Some Contributions to a Phenomenology of the Body*, problems “begin with a separation between a ‘here’ which is ‘subject,’ and a ‘there’ which is object...[and seeks] an ideal noninvolvement by the spectator in the spectacle” (Zaner 6). But, as stated above by Marcel, this separation and ideal indifference and noninvolvement are not characteristic of a mystery, which is defined as a problem from which the one for whom it is a problem cannot be excluded from consideration. In other words, a mystery is a problem in which I, “the one who [poses the problem], am drawn into the sphere of my own question: I become, that is to say, the *stage*, and not the subject (over against an object) of the quest” (Zaner 6). Consequently, the concept of mystery has inherited two important (interrelated) factors from Marcel’s earlier articulation of the reality of the body as one of interposition: the sense of mine-ness that pervades my experience of my body and of the world with which I co-exist and the positional nature of the incarnate existent.

As with bearing witness, mystery can also be characterized by a tension between the personal and the ontological. A mystery is structured as something in which I am personally involved or caught up, in which I find myself ‘engaged’ in a personal way, a

term which Marcel takes to “represent both ‘involvement’ and ‘committal’” (*Being and Having* 18)—in other words, someone else cannot take my place within a mystery because the mystery relies upon both my own personal involvement and my commitment or fidelity to the mystery—and as something that is turned towards impersonal and universal Being. The adherence of the subject to a mystery, its inherence in a mystery (as the ‘my’ in my-stery), should sound extremely familiar by now because it is modeled on the bond of intimacy that unites the existent with their own body; in fact, the felt intimacy between myself and my body is for Marcel the first mystery, albeit existential. The mysterious bond between the existent and its own body is the prototypical mystery at the level of existence. But, what distinguishes the two forms of involvement is the accent that Marcel places on committal when he speaks of the engagement of the subject in a mystery; in contrast to the existent’s involvement, at the level of existence, in their own body and their involvement or co-existence with the world by way of incarnation, a subject’s involvement in a mystery is doubled by a conscious commitment to the mystery on the part of the subject, a committal that transforms existential involvement—an existing with the world that is founded upon an original non-active *enabling* or *making able to...*—into ontological engagement. The second existential factor of incarnation that appears in the context of Marcel’s development of the distinction between problem and mystery is the unique ‘here’ that supports the existence of the incarnate existent. This unique here, as the existent’s privileged position from which it takes measure of the world, is that through which everything that is *for me* must pass; as my landmark upon the world, it is *my* privileged place from which I can venture forth into the world because the world comes to exist, by way of this unique ‘here,’ *for me*. In the case of ontological

mystery, I become the stage, the place, of the mystery in much the same way as my body is the stage for my existence in the world since everything must pass through my body; just as the unique existential 'here' implied in incarnation is not the here of a self over and against an object but the here of existence in which the existent and the world co-exist, the unique ontological 'here' of the subject is also not an objective here but a 'here' through which the subject and the other as Thou are co-present in the plenitude of Being.

The distinction between problem and mystery can therefore be understood as an elaboration and further extension of the two realms of human existence that Marcel unearthed in "Existence and Objectivity": the realm of existence, which contains within itself the seeds for an ontological understanding of mystery, and the realm of objectivity or the problematic. But, as outlined above, the distinction between problem and mystery also directs Marcel towards the realm of Being, or of the mysterious understood ontologically, and it is primarily at this level, at the level of the distinction between objectivity and Being, that the separation between problem and mystery is most evident. The realm of nature, at least as nature is approached by the natural sciences, is the realm of the problematic; in the sciences, entities are understood to be present *before* the observer in their entirety. However, the presence of the mysterious is somewhat more complicated because the observer is involved in, or implicated in, its presence; the mysterious is not something that is *before* or *in front of* the observer because the boundary or frontier between the observer and the mysterious is indistinct. As a result, the observer becomes a participant in the problem, an experience that Marcel refers to as an ontological mystery. In this way, the distinction between mystery and problem follows quite closely the earlier distinction between existence and objectivity. But it is

important to keep in mind that ontological participation with the presence of the other within Being is based on or determined by a commitment on the part of the subject and that this act of committal is absent from Marcel's discussions of existential participation; the subject must actively commit to their involvement in the mysterious while the involvement of the existent with the world is a result of the reality of the body as interposition. As we shall see momentarily, one could argue that, while ontological participation is based in a desire for unification, is presented as a process of bringing together the I and the Thou at the level of Being, existential participation is based in difference, in the difference that the body, as interposed, inaugurates between the existent and the world and that this difference is the condition for the possibility of co-existence with the world.

In "On the Ontological Mystery," Marcel gives the following definition of the distinction between the problem and the mystery: "A mystery is a problem which encroaches upon its own data, invading them, as it were, and thereby transcending itself as a simple problem" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 19). In the context of the article, Marcel circles around, and engages with, numerous ontological phenomena that he refers to as mysterious. One example is the 'problem of evil'. Looked at objectivity and treated as a problem to be solved, evil is "no longer evil which is suffered; in fact, it ceases to be evil" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 19). In order to truly understand the reality of evil, however, one must approach it as a mystery and understand that

I can only grasp it as evil in the measure in which it *touches* me—that is to say, in the measure in which I am *involved*, as one is involved in a law-suit. Being 'involved' is the fundamental fact; I cannot leave it out of account except by an unjustifiable fiction, for in doing so, I proceed as though I were God, and a God who is an on looker at that. This brings out how the distinction between what is *in me* and what is only *before me* can break down. This distinction falls under the

blow of a certain kind of thought: thought at one remove. (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 19-20)

As was mentioned earlier, those ontological phenomena that are properly called mysterious involve the breakdown of the distinction between the observer and what is in front of the observer. In the case of evil, the true (or real) presence of the phenomenon of evil necessary involves me; I am implicated¹² in the total phenomenon called evil, and my involvement in it is a necessary part of its reality—I come to find myself in the midst of the problem with which I was previously occupied. In other words, reducing evil to a problem overlooks the true reality of evil as a mystery, as something suffered by the subject. Another mystery that Marcel focuses on in “On the Ontological Mystery” is hope, which he defines as “the prolongation into the unknown of an activity which is central—that is to say, rooted in being. Hence it has affinities, not with desire, but with the will. The will implies the...refusal to calculate possibilities” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 33). In general terms, what Marcel is stating is that problems imply solutions that can be attained and calculated by using available techniques and technology; in other words, problems are questions for which the answer (as a course of action) is already known or knowable. The solution to the problem does not involve true creativity, only technique and objectivation. On the other hand, since a mystery requires

¹² Marcel’s comment that one is involved in a mystery as one would be involved in a lawsuit helps to connect his prior thoughts on witnessing to the concept of the mystery. When working towards grasping such a mysterious phenomenon as evil, the subject that is attempting to grasp the mystery is called to testify as a witness in the on-going trial aimed at arriving at the truth about the phenomenon. As a witness, one’s character is called into question and one’s actions are scrutinized. But in the end, one’s presence as a witness—one’s testimony—is a significant factor in the final verdict. Also, the act of bearing witness is related to Marcel’s notion of availability that I will look at a little later in the chapter; since human presence is essentially a form of availability, one must always be willing to testify (or bear witness) on behalf of the other person.

the participation of the subject, a losing of the subject in the mystery, any attempt to solve a mystery involves a continuation of the active participation of the subject and the risk of moving creatively and non-probabilistically into the future without any calculation of possible outcomes or solutions.

Consequently, problem and mystery refer to two distinguishable ways of being in the world, to two types of being in situation. In the section on Marcel in *Six Existentialist Thinkers*, author H.J. Blackham refers to Marcel's contention that "the essence of man is to be in a situation" (Blackham 68). But, for Marcel, one can either be in a situation as if it were a problem, in which case "a certain place has already been plotted out, the question is then, how can I [through some form of technique or technology] gain access to it" (*Being and Having* 101), or one can be in a situation as if it were a mystery, in which case the subject participates in, or is made available to, the ontological order and is brought into "contact with the ontological basis of [their] being" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 34). While being in a situation as a problem involves the objective remove of the self, the subject is completely caught up in the mystery. Thus, an individual is able to occupy situations differently. On the one hand, one can exist in a situation in terms of a problematic inquiry in which case one gains objective knowledge; the space of this reality is conditioned by the division between what is in me and what is in front of me, and its relationality is expressed in terms of having. On the other hand, one can be in a situation in terms of a mystery in which case one can gain "a mystery of knowledge that belongs to the ontological order" (*Being and Having* 101); the space of this reality is characterized by the disintegration of the boundary between myself and that which was before me, and its relationality is expressed in terms of Being.

In fact, while discussing the mysterious nature of an encounter “which has left a deep and lasting trace on [his] life” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 21), Marcel makes some interesting claims about the spatial relations that exist when the self finds itself in the midst of a mystery. He explains that, when I am in the presence of a mystery,

I cannot place myself outside it or before it; I am engaged in this encounter, I depend on it, I am inside it in a certain sense, it envelops me and it comprehends me—even if it is not comprehended by me. Thus it is only by a kind of betrayal or denial that I can say...[that] I have been changed by [my encounter with the mysterious] as by an outward cause. No, it has developed me from within, it has acted in me as an inward principle. (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 22)

Thus, as we shall see, expressing the reality of a mystery requires moving beyond the terminology of having that defines the realm of problems and towards a vocabulary of Being, moving beyond the use of available techniques and technologies to provide the measure of the mystery, and beyond the use of those spatial coordinates that are structured by the boundary between what is *in me* and *in front of* (or *before*) *me*¹³ towards an enveloping and comprehending spatiality outside of which one cannot place oneself and through which one cannot place oneself apart from the other. And one of the terms

¹³ In *Problems of Embodiment*, Richard Zaner also has problems with the word *in* when discussing the relationship between the corporeal body and the manner in which one is in-the-world. As Zaner explains, “consciousness...takes on the characteristic of being ‘here and now’ (*ecceity*) by means of experiential...relation to that corporeal being which embodies it. Accordingly, that there is a world for consciousness is a consequence in the first instance of its embodiment *by* that corporeal body which is for it its own animate organism” (Zaner vii, emphasis added). Zaner is quick to point out in a footnote the significance of the preposition *by* that he uses to characterize how consciousness is embodied by the corporeal being; he uses *by* to avoid the spatial connotations of the preposition *in* because “spatial determinations arise after, not before, embodiment” (Zaner vii). Chronologically, consciousness, although possible without being embodied, only takes on the characteristics of being ‘here and now’—only appropriates a time and place for itself through which it can be in-the-world—only through its experiential relationship to that corporeal being which embodies it.

that Marcel deploys to outline the contour of the mysterious understood as engagement is *presence*: “We then discover that it is just this participation which passes beyond the order of the problematic, and beyond what can be stated as a problem...[I]n fact, as soon as there is *presence*, we have gone beyond the realm of the problem...[But] every presence may always give rise to problems. But it can only do so in so far as it loses its worth as presence” (*Being and Having* 115). If one recalls the importance of incarnation for Marcel, the relation between the levels of existence, objectivity, and Being starts to become clearer and more distinct. Existence is always exposed to the dangers of objectification, of being devalued through the methods of objectivity and the phenomenon of having. At the level of existence, simple existential being with the world that characterizes the bond of co-existence that the body interposes between the existent and the world is susceptible to being denigrated by the spirit of objectivity that reduces my body to a simple instrument. As a result of this denigration of the body to the status of simple instrument, the self never comes to realize nor actualize the ontological bond of co-presence established with the other as Thou because the self, through objectivity, simply comes to approach the other in terms of the third person. What objectivity fails to take up from, or recognize in, the experience of incarnation at the level of existence are the ontological implications of the truth of incarnation as a mystery. Approaching the experience of incarnation objectively as a problem to be solved or to be exhausted in terms of knowledge reduces the existential relation that is at the heart of my experience of my body and thereby puts its ontological implications for being-with-the-other as Thou out of play. However, approaching incarnation as a mystery and according to the ontological imperative at the basis of the human helps bring its ontological implications

into the light of day and shows intersubjectivity, understood from the point of view of presence, to be based in involvement and engagement.

But then the question remains as to how one can attest to this revelation of presence? How can one attest to the presence encountered in mystery without denigrating it by way of objectification? As we have seen, testimony is one such term that Marcel deploys for describing a type of vision or approach that remains faithful to presence; in the context of his development of the distinction between problem and mystery, Marcel uses *recollection*, *creativity*, and *fidelity*. It seems that, according to Marcel, to be in the presence of a mystery implies a strange temporality in which one must exercise the power to grasp, or take hold, of oneself through the act of recollection. Although Marcel does not state this explicitly, I believe that the relationship between mystery and recollection has everything to do with the earlier determination of the immediate nature of the act of sensation through which an object is present to the existent¹⁴. What becomes clear the further one reads into “On the Ontological Mystery” is that the quality of presence is central to the possibility of being in the midst of a mystery, and, as Marcel explained in “Existence and Objectivity,” a thing exists for me only through the act of sensation through which I immediately feel that the thing is somehow with me. As we saw, what is essential about sensation for Marcel is its immediacy; in fact, Marcel stated that any attempt at mediation would only distort the reality of co-existence revealed by way of sensation. The same holds true for the ontological experience of presence at the heart of mystery. And it is because of the

¹⁴ The only connection between recollection and sensation that I could find has to do with the bodily nature of recollection that Marcel briefly mentions in his December 8, 1921, entry: “May we not maintain that a certain attitude of the body is necessary for the evocation of a given recollection...?” (*Metaphysical Journal* 279).

immediacy and non-mediated nature of one's encounter with presence that the moment when one was in the presence of a mystery and "in a reality rooted in what is beyond the domain of the problematical properly so called" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 21) is always already past; one can only approach the experience of presence through an act of recollection that Marcel defines as "the act whereby I re-collect myself as a unity; but this hold, this grasp upon myself, is also relaxation and abandon. *Abandon to...relaxation in the presence of...*—yet there is no noun for these prepositions to govern. The way stops at the threshold" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 23).

What is important to note about recollection, as is the case with sensation, is its active nature; recollection involves the act of grasping or taking hold of oneself in such a way as to abandon oneself to... or to relax in the presence of.... In much the same way that sensation involves a certain fidelity to the gift of assurance that the world provides and that functions to enable the existent, recollection also involves an act of creative fidelity towards the memory that one has of the immediate presence of the other as Thou. The act of recollection involves a grasping or re-collecting of oneself that involves an active opening, or abandoning, of oneself to the immediate presence of the other. In other words, Marcel does not understand the withdrawal implied in the act of recollection "and whereby I renew my contact with the ontological basis of my being" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 34) as a purely egocentric turning to oneself; instead, he contends that withdrawing into oneself brings one up against "the paradox of that actual mystery whereby the I into which I withdraw ceases, for as much, to belong to itself" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 24). What recollection uncovers are those mysterious moments or experiences characterized by abandonment to...or relaxation in the presence

of ..., situations in which one finds that one does not belong to oneself but instead finds oneself at the disposal of the other, an encounter that one experiences as co-presence.

But then how does recollection remain faithful to the presence encountered in mystery and not work, as is the case with simple representation or objectivity, to degrade or dissipate that presence? What distinguishes recollection from simple representational remembering? According to Marcel, recollection is profoundly creative and thereby “excludes the act of self-centring and self-hypnotism” which is detrimental to any attempt at maintaining presence (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 34). As Marcel explains, “where there is creation there can be no degradation, and to the extent that technics are creative, or imply creativity, they are not degrading in any way. Degradation begins at the point where creativeness falls into self-imitation and self-hypnotism, stiffening and falling back on itself” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 33-4). And what recollection actively and creatively works to maintain or to prolong is a presence, “something which can be maintained within us or before us as a presence, but which...[could] be just as well ignored, forgotten and obliterated; and this reminds us of that menace of betrayal which, to my mind, overshadows our whole world” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 35). In other words, in order to be effective and to maintain the presence at the heart of mystery, recollection must work creatively so as not to betray that presence by debasing it into an effigy. This is especially true of other beings (especially the deceased) who have been granted to me as presence: “In this case, everything depends on me, on my inward attitude of maintaining this presence which could be debased into an effigy” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 37). However, throughout his writings, Marcel continually warns his reader about the difficulty involved in such acts of fidelity towards the other as

recollection and about both the internal and external forces conspiring against presence; in fact, as part of his attack upon contemporary society, Marcel continually emphasizes the possibility of our betrayal of Being and presence and states that such a betrayal is also “pressed upon us by the very shape of our world” (*Being and Having* 97).

Marcel combines the aspects of creativity, fidelity, and presence at the heart of mystery in the notion of *creative fidelity* in order to stress the connection between the innovation in recollection and its faithfulness, as a creative act, to presence; as Marcel explains, creative fidelity is “a fidelity [to the presence of a person] only safeguarded by being creative” (*Being and Having* 96). But what exactly is this presence to which recollection remains faithful by maintaining or prolonging it? According to Marcel

if presence were merely an *idea* in us whose characteristic was that it was nothing more than itself, then indeed the most we could hope would be to maintain this idea in us or before us, as one keeps a photograph on a mantelpiece...But it is of the nature of presence as presence to be uncircumscribed; and this takes us once again beyond the frontier of the problematical. Presence is mystery in the exact measure in which it is presence. (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 36)

And it is this uncircumscribed quality of presence as presence that one must remain faithful to if one hopes to maintain a person with oneself as a presence: “Now fidelity is the active perpetuation of presence, the renewal of its benefits—of its virtue which consists in a mysterious incitement to create” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 36). As opposed to those technics—such as photography, according to Marcel—that do not involve creativity and which work to characterize an individual as nothing more than a him, the process of creative fidelity takes up a being according to their presence, which works to incite the subject towards creativity and the perpetuation of that presence as uncircumscribed. Thus creative fidelity is rooted in Being, in Being understood as presence: “Thus if creative fidelity is conceivable, it is because fidelity is ontological in

its principle, because it prolongs presence which itself corresponds to a certain kind of hold which being has upon us; because it multiplies and deepens the effect of this presence almost unfathomably in our lives” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 36). Thus, recollection, as an attempt to apprehend mystery, is analogous to the act of sensation through which the existent originally comes to feel the existence of the world and comes to co-exist with the world; while the act of sensation opens the existent up to the existence of the world, which the existent experiences or feels, recollection, as a form of creative fidelity, is involved in prolonging or maintaining that presence within one’s life by keeping oneself open to its effectiveness.

But again I want to draw the reader’s attention to the (self-conscious) commitment that is an integral part of recollection understood ontologically as creative fidelity and that seems to distinguish the existential act of sensation from the ontological act of recollection. In the case of sensation, co-existence refers to the existence of the existent for and in the world by way of its body and to the existence of the world for and in the existent, which is also by way of the existent’s own body (as the facilitator of the act of sensation). Consequently, what Marcel’s investigations into sensation in part bring to light is the hold that the world has on and in the existent: “the hold that a reality exercises over us...is at the base of judgment itself...There must be a *hold* on the real at the root of intelligence” (*Being and Having* 46-7). In fact, while sensation partakes of this existential hold that the world has on the existent and, in terms of this hold, enables the existent and the world to co-exist, objectivity erases and dissimulates this hold that the existence of the world exerts on the existent and establishes the self over and against the world as a disinterested spectator. However, sensation is itself pre-reflective and pre-

objective; as existential, it occurs below the level of self-consciousness and self-awareness, so it is difficult to conceive of this hold that the real has on the existent in other than passive terms. As I mentioned before, the existent, at the level of existence, is unable to open itself or make itself available to the world; there is no placing of oneself at the disposal of the world. Instead, through the reality of the body as interposition and through the immediate participation of the existent with the world that the felt body makes possible, the existent is opened up to or made available to the world in such a way that the existent senses the absolute assurance of the world, an assurance that then conditions the existent in such a way as *to be able to...* actively participate in the world.

Recollection, on the other hand, occurs at the level of Being and involves the self-awareness of the subject; consequently, the hold that presence exerts on the reflective or reflexive subject at the level of Being and the subject's engagement with the other as Thou in terms of co-presence must be doubled by a commitment on the part of that subject. Thus, fidelity is not an issue at the level of existence and in relation to the world; fidelity only refers "to what I called the hold that the other being has over us" (*Being and Having* 46) because it involves the double commitment of actively and creatively maintaining oneself as available to or at the disposal of the other and of active and creatively maintaining the presence of the other as Thou through recollection.

Recollection, as an act of creative fidelity, is thus a faithfulness to the presence of the other as Thou, the presence of the other that I experience as the hold that the other has over me. The disposability at the heart of recollection—the abandonment to...—involves a giving of oneself to the other by way of commitment because recollection, as ontological, occurs by way of the self-aware subject; in other words, availability at the

level of Being involves a conscious commitment of the subject to the presence of the other, which Marcel understands as a response to the hold that the other has over me:

“There is no commitment purely from my own side; it always implies that the other being has a hold over me. All commitment is a response” (*Being and Having* 46).

Recollection, as creative fidelity, is thus a response to the presence of the other, a presence that I feel by way of the hold that the other has over me, a response that manifests itself in the form of “a commitment that I *accepted* after an offer had been made to the most hidden depths of my being” (*Being and Having* 15).

In order to provide an example of how recollection remains faithful to the presence of the other, to the hold that the other has over me, Marcel again returns to the relation between the living and the dead and the example of the departed friend and one’s ability to keep their memory alive. In order to maintain the other as presence, one must be careful not to reduce their presence to mere effigy or representation: “A presence to which we are faithful is not at all the same thing as the carefully preserved effigy of an object which has vanished; an effigy is...nothing but a likeness; metaphysically it is *less* than an object, it is a diminution of the object. Whereas presence, on the contrary, is *more* than the object, it exceeds the object on every side” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 36-7). What is essential in creative fidelity is to maintain “a being who has been granted to me as a presence” according to their presence and not to debase them into an effigy (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 37).

But how is the other granted to the subject as a presence in the first place? How does the presence of the other come to affect the subject? And how in particular is one supposed to maintain or prolong the presence of a person or object? How exactly does

one go about insuring the continual effect of that presence in one's life, of that hold that that person or object through their existence has on one's life?

In "On the Ontological Mystery," Marcel describes mystery as a form of permeability and characterizes the presence at the heart of mystery as both something that is granted or given to us and that we must actively work to receive. For instance, Marcel explains that "when I say that a being is granted to me as a presence or as a being..., this means that I am unable to treat him as if he were placed in front of me" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 38); he also states that "a presence is a reality; it is a kind of influx: it depends upon us to be permeable to this influx, but not, to tell the truth, to call it forth" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 38). What is key is an understanding of presence as an affective force. And, in relation to this potential influx and the continual affectivity of presence, "creative fidelity consists in maintaining ourselves actively in a permeable state; and there is a mysterious interchange between this free act and the gift granted in response to it" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 38). Therefore, in part, creative fidelity consists in maintaining oneself in a state of permeability, of openness to the affectiveness of presence as presence that is at the heart of mystery, an openness that enables the continual growth of, or accretion, of that presence within oneself. And it is at this point that Marcel introduces the notion of availability that allows him to characterize creative fidelity as putting oneself at the disposal of others, as making oneself available to others. By way of recollection, what Marcel unearths about that experience when one is in the presence of a mystery is the attitude of availability whereby one is not one's own, does not belong to oneself, but is open to the presence of the other. And, in order to maintain or prolong this presence and its effectiveness—which Marcel understands as being

positive, a force of goodness, and as intrinsically valuable—within oneself, one must continually work actively and creatively to recollect the presence of the other as Thou, work that requires the subject to keep itself open to, and at the disposal of, the influx of presence.

3.4 The Distinction Between Being and Having

I have spent a great deal of time explaining Marcel's theory of sensation because of its importance in relation to his early formative thoughts on the problem of incarnation; his re-thinking of the experience of sensation seems to have been a necessary detour in order for Marcel to formulate some coherent understanding of the existential experience of incarnation expressed in the phrase 'I am my body' and of the reality of the body as interposition. What his reflections on the experience of sensation brought to light was the stance of disposability or availability in which the existential experience of incarnation is rooted, a reality of bodily openness that then comes to exert a tremendous amount of influence on Marcel's ontological research into interpersonal relations. But what I want to do now is to begin to outline in detail how Marcel develops the vocabulary of being and having in relation to the experiences of existential incarnation and ontological availability, a development that necessarily goes through or is informed by his thoughts on sensation and ultimately leads to his recapitulation of bodily openness or availability in terms of corporeity.

As I have already mentioned, Marcel, instead of conceiving of sensation as communication and as the passive reception of messages, characterizes the act of

sensation as immediate participation, as “involv[ing] the immediate participation of what we normally call the subject in a surrounding world from which no veritable frontier separates it” (*Metaphysical Journal* 332); the existent participates in existence through sensation because existential incarnation opens it to the influx of the existence of the world. In contrast to the instrumental relation between the self and its body expressed by the phrase ‘I have a body’ that places the self within the world of objects, and, by way of objective co-ordinates, places the self’s body as one object among other objects, the existential relation expressed by ‘I am my body’ that is at the heart of sensation denotes the contact that the existent has, by way of its own body, with existence. Instead of simply being at my disposal as an object or as an extension of previously determined powers of my instrumental body, the world exists for me by way of my body, by way of the world’s participation in or extension of the existential bond that unites me with my body:

In a word, to state the existence of a being or a thing would be to say: This being is of the same nature as my body and belongs to the same world; only this homogeneity doubtless bears less on the (objective) essence than on the intimacy that the word *my, my body*, involves...And the world only exists for me inasmuch as I think it (I express it badly), as much as I apprehend it as bound up with me by the thread which also binds me to my body. To this must be linked the idea that the world only exists inasmuch as I can act on it: for there is only action inasmuch as I am my body, inasmuch as I cease to think my body. The nonobjectivity of *my body* becomes clear to our mind as soon as we remember that it is of the essence of the object as such that it does not take me into account. (*Metaphysical Journal* 315-6)

What Marcel is pointing towards is an existential intimacy with the world that is possible through our incarnation in the world by way of our own bodies. Instead of simply enacting functional behaviour in a world of objects and instruments, instead of simply approaching the world as a series of problems, Marcel argues that, because of its

incarnate nature, the existent always already, at the pre-reflective level, participates with the world—and can thereby truly act in the world—to the same extent that the existent participates in or with its own body. The world comes to exist for-me to the extent that it is bathed, by way of my body interposed between myself and the world, in the reality of my body as mine; through my interposed body, the world comes to exist for-me, comes into existence with me because of the meaning it acquires for me by way of its being brought into relation with my body through sensation, which is the term that Marcel uses to refer to the structural feature of the body as a being that is towards the other-than-itself. My body enables me to participate with the world in the common space of co-existence because the body comes to endow the world with existence, because the body brings the world into existence as being for-me, endows or charges the world with my personal index. And it is by way of the personal appearance of the world as being for-me that I am able to act in the world, and it is only by way of my body, by way of the non-objectifying and immediate relation between myself and my body, that I am able to act in the world. Thus, this homogeneity that the interposed body establishes between the existent and the world is a function of the non-mediate relation that the existent has with its own proper body. At the level of existence, the world is with me in the same way as my body is with me, by way of an intense and intimate personal bond.

But what is at the heart of the bond of intimacy that ties the existent to the world within co-existence? How is existential sensation fundamentally different from objective observing, and how is the difference related to the distinction between being my body and having a body? As I hinted at above, perhaps the most important element of existential sensation is its rootedness in the personal, in the intimacy that is at the heart of

the term my body. On March 9, 1923, Marcel wonders in the *Metaphysical Journal* about the possibility of identifying and defining—or, more precisely, objectifying—a feeling and concludes that identification is only possible to the degree that the feeling is approached as something one has, like a cold or the measles. By thinking about a feeling as something I have, I am able to delimit and intellectualize it. But Marcel senses that approaching a feeling in this way distorts or misrepresents that feeling. Instead, he is “led to the opinion that there must be a depth of affectivity within us which it is not possible for us to identify and hence define conceptually, still less to set face to face with ourselves and deal with objectively. It is not easy to see how feeling can fail to be in some way woven into an affective material from whose woof it then stands out. But this woof in a sense must be identified with myself” (*Metaphysical Journal* 309). Marcel argues that one overlooks—or worse, destroys—the essential personal element of feeling by trying to objectify feeling and by treating it as a problem that can be placed before the existent in its entirety.

The image of weaving works to illustrate how, while the feeling can stand out from the fabric that I am as something that I have, it is impossible to separate the feeling from the existent that runs across that feeling and makes the feeling part of the larger woven textile that is the existent; just as the threads of a piece of textile cannot be separated—although the separate threads do stand out from one another if one closely inspects the textile—from the larger textile without damaging the entire weaving, feeling is inseparable interwoven with the existent who feels. One of the essential aspects of feeling is that it is mine, and to neglect the personal nature of feeling would be to distort it in some essential manner and leave it unrecognizable. In his 1933 article “Outlines of a

Phenomenology of Having” to which we will return in a moment, Marcel states that, “in proportion as my feeling cannot be isolated, and so distinguished, I am less sure of being able to recognise it. But is there not really a sort of emotional woof running across the warp of the feeling I have? And is it not consubstantial with what I am, and that to such a degree that I cannot really set it before myself and so form a conception of it? This is how I got my first glimpse of...an imperceptible shading-off from a feeling I have to a feeling I am” (*Being and Having* 155).

And this first glimpse at the difference between being and having a feeling lead Marcel, on March 16, 1923, to make a first attempt at explicitly conceptualizing the distinction between what one has and what one is:

What we have evidently has a kind of exteriority as regards the self. Yet this exteriority is not absolute. In principle, what one has are things...Strictly speaking, I can only have something whose existence is up to a certain point independent of me. In other words, what I have is added to me; furthermore the fact of being possessed by me is added to other properties, qualities, etc. that belong to the thing I have. I only have that which I in some way and within certain limits have at my disposal, or to put it in other words, inasmuch as I can be considered as a potentiality, as a being endowed with potentiality. We can only transmit what we have. If it happens that a potentiality is capable of being transmitted, we are driven to conclude that potentiality is in practically the same relation to a more substantial ego as my pen (the pen I have) is in to that potentiality. If the category of being is really valid it is because that which is capable of being transmitted is to be found in reality. (*Metaphysical Journal* 311)

Many of the major characteristics of having that Marcel presents in his later article are present in the above journal entry. Firstly, having is a relation of exteriority in which what the existent has has a certain exteriority in relation to the existent; the existence of the thing that one possesses is independent of the self up to a certain point. Secondly, having something involves the addition of the quality of ownership to the various objective characteristics of the thing; in fact, the intrinsic quality of having something as

property is a characteristic recognized by law. Thirdly, drawing on the relationship in French between *avoir* and *pouvoir*, Marcel states that possession involves having something at one's disposal; one has the power to dispose of one's possessions as one wishes. And lastly, although Marcel does not to my knowledge develop this aspect of having in his later writing, he identifies the existent that has as a being endowed with potentiality, a definition that ties the issue of having to the existent's relationship with its body. Since having an object places that object at one's disposal, the existent that approaches the world in terms of having is a being that lives in potentiality because objects are placed at its disposal. The world of having is therefore a world that is oriented toward the future; the temporality of the world of having involves living in a future of possibilities, of possible ways to dispose of, or make use of, one's possessions.

But where is this potentiality stored? What is the source of the existent's potentiality? This is the question that will come back to haunt Marcel in *Being and Having* as he tries to come to grips with that non-relational relation between the existent and its own body that is the condition for all relations, including those steeped in potentiality. But, for the time being, Marcel relegates the source of such potentialities, the source of the world of things that are at my disposal, to the body that I have; at this point in the development of his thought, the self lives in the world as a being endowed with potentiality on condition that the self takes up its body as an instrument, as just one object in a world of objects. Because the reality of bodies is the reality of interposition, the only way one can have access to objects in the world as objects, and therefore possess them and have them at one's disposal, is to take up one's body as a simple set of potentialities that one possesses and can make use of whenever one wants; to be a being

endowed with potentiality is to have one's body at one's disposal¹⁵. So the existent that has a body lives in a world of potential, oriented toward the future according to a series of possible actions.

3.4.1 Towards a Phenomenology of Having

What we have continually witnessed in Marcel's philosophy is the turning and returning of his thought to the primary experience of incarnation, to the "nature of my bond with my body" (*Being and Having* 14). It is this bond that is the very possibility of having, of possession, and the ontological category of disposability also springs from this bond that unifies the existent with their own body. Initially, the majority of Marcel's early statements concerning (1) the existential bond that unites the existent with its own body and with the world, (2) the bond of simple having of a possession that is at my disposal, and (3) ontological disposability appear in the context of his journal entries. However, in 1933, Marcel gathered together his thoughts on having and organized them into a paper entitled "Outlines of a Phenomenology of Having" that he delivered to the Lyons Philosophical Society. Marcel used the occasion of this address to elaborate on some of the central features of the relation of having that he had unearthed earlier in his journals; in fact, it contains his most thorough analysis of the structure of the relation of having and also develops the relation between having and Being in such a way that

¹⁵ As an aside, it is interesting to note that this is where Marcel's thought overlaps with Marx's thinking on labour power. As a being endowed with potentiality, the worker is able to sell his/her potential, his/her labour power, to those who own the means of production. What this points to is the rootedness of capitalism in a certain understanding of the body as instrument, as something that one has.

highlights how the self can pass through having so as to transcend it towards the reality of Being.

Marcel begins “Outlines of a Phenomenology of Having” by quoting his March 16, 1923, journal entry—that develops out of the difference between sensation and communication—at length and decides to continue on from where he left off, with the idea that one can only transmit what one has. In the journal entry, his point was that, since the existent that has a body is a being that is endowed with potentiality—as a being able to (dispose of)—that can itself be transmitted, the body understood as potentiality is something that one has and to which one can have access. But the body as potentiality does not exhaust the meaning of my body, and he goes on to suggest that my body may even be that which I cannot transmit, which is not at my disposal. As Marcel explains, when I concentrate my attention on my body, I find myself “in the presence of a datum which is opaque and of which we may even be unable to take *full possession*” (*Being and Having* 157, emphasis added). What one discovers as the article opens is Marcel trying to come to terms with—trying to find a vocabulary for—describing the bond that unites the existent with the body proper, with the body that one is. Initially, he has recourse to a vocabulary of presence. By deploying the term presence to characterize the existent’s experience of incarnation, Marcel removes “the body-self relationship” (*Being and Having* 108) from the reality of simple having; as is the case with the presence of the other that I receive and must maintain through a posture of creative fidelity that works to keep the presence of the other from being objectified, his vocabulary of presence deployed in relation to one’s own body suggests that the body proper is something of which I cannot dispose in any way, that I cannot possess exactly because I cannot

objectify it into a possession without radically altering its very being (*Being and Having* 146). Therefore, if the experience of incarnation is an experience of presence, then my body is not something of which I am in possession and that I have at my disposal.

So the primary datum of incarnation is the very possibility of all having in general, including my having of my body as a potentiality. As Marcel stated earlier, beyond simply being able to make use of my body, I am my body; the instrumental nature of the body that I have at my disposal does not account for the whole story concerning my relationship with my body. Marcel proceeds to illustrate his point by way of the example of suicide, an action that is based on the perception of one's body as something that one has, as a thing at one's disposal, and "surely this is an implicit admission that we belong to ourselves" (*Being and Having* 156). He contrasts this understanding of the relation between oneself and one's body to "the man who refuses to kill himself, because he does not recognize a right to do so, since he does not belong to himself" (*Being and Having* 156), and, in fact, this sense of dispossession and being de-centred is the essential element that comes to distinguish existential possession (I am my body) from simple having (I have a body) as such. What the phenomenon of suicide manifests is the reality of dispossession and de-centredness that is at the root of the existential stance of disposability and that roots the existent in existence and enables the existent to participate, by way of sensation, with the world in a relation of co-existence. What the act of suicide highlights is the inadequacy of conceiving the relationship between oneself and one's body in instrumental terms because the disposal of one's body also results in the disposal or annihilation of oneself. Therefore, for Marcel, the truth of the body lies in a certain feeling of dispossession in the face of one's body or an inability

in being able to dispose of one's body as desired; the existential relation between the existent and their own body disqualifies suicide as an affirmative action because of the reality of the possessive relation between the existent and the body. Instead of being an external object that I own and that is at my disposal, my body is intimately related to my existence, so much so that I am nothing without it.

3.4.1.1 Relations of Having

The example of suicide highlights a central difference between the two modes of possession under discussion—the externality of an object that one has and the interweaving of the body, the existent, and the world within existence—whether it is the existent and its body in the affirmation ‘I am my body’ or the existent and the world co-existing by way of sensation. As was noted above, the relation of simple having is characterized by the exteriority of an object in relation to the subject, although Marcel prefers to use the terms *quid* and *qui*: “in all having-as-possession there does seem to be a certain content...Call it a certain *quid* relating to a certain *qui* who is treated as the centre of inherence or apprehension” (*Being and Having* 158). The centred and transcendent *qui* is at the heart of the relation of having since the force of having originates and progresses from the *qui* to the *quid*; the *qui* is understood to actively contain and enclose—where to enclose implies the idea of potentiality since “to enclose is to prevent, to resist, and to oppose the tendency of the content towards spreading, spilling out, and escaping” (*Being and Having* 159)—the *quid* that it possesses. The potentiality of the body that I have is a result of the fact that I contain the body within myself and have my body at my disposal; the body that is at my disposal, that is centred around me, is a

potential set of actions in the world that I have the power to enact. As Marcel explains regarding the active sense of having, “it is significant that...the verb ‘to have’ is only used in the passive in exceptional and specialized ways. It is as though we saw passing before us a kind of irreversible progress from the *qui* towards the *quid*...The progress seems to be carried out by the *qui* itself: it seems to be within the *qui*” (*Being and Having* 160). And this observation concerning the centring of the relation of having around the self leads to Marcel’s first formula for expressing the reality of relations of having: “We can only express ourselves in terms of having when we are moving on a level where, in whatever manner and whatever degree of transposition, the contrast between within and without retains a meaning” (*Being and Having* 160). The reader should keep it in mind that this distinction between inside and outside is in marked contrast to the feeling of unity that underwrites such ontological and mysterious experiences as hope and love and the existential sensation of my body¹⁶.

Marcel illustrates the necessary relation between interior and exterior that constitutes having through the example of a secret that one possesses. As with possessions, secrets must be showable or able to be made manifest to another, a characteristic that Marcel claims is at the very heart of the possibility of expression in general:

This act of showing may take place or unfold before another or before one’s-self. The curious thing is that analysis will reveal to us that this difference is devoid of meaning. In so far as I show my own views to myself, I myself become someone else. That...is the metaphysical basis for the possibility of expression. I can only express myself in so far as I can become someone else to myself...We can only express ourselves in terms of having [as in I have a secret], when we are moving

¹⁶ As well, the fact that having implies an irreversible progress from the *qui* to the *quid* introduces time into the relation of having, a factor that separates it from the immediacy inherent in relations of being.

on a level implying reference to another taken as another...The statement 'I have' can only be made against another which is felt to be other. (*Being and Having* 161)

This is the second facet of relations of having that Marcel brings to light: that having is rooted in a relation with another as other, not in a relation based in unity in Being in which I am in relation with the presence of the other, with the other as Thou. Having a secret implies one's being able to transmit that secret to another person; my secret is external to me and can be made manifest before another. Even the very possibility of having certain properties or characteristics is dependent upon relating to another as other: "In so far as I conceive myself as having in myself...as mine...certain characteristics, certain trappings, I consider myself from the point of view of another—but I do not separate myself from this other except after having first implicitly identified myself with him" (*Being and Having* 161). Marcel demonstrates his point by asking the reader to consider what it means to have an opinion about something; what having an opinion implies is that my opinion is not that of everyone else, and "I can only exclude or reject everybody's opinion if I have first, by a momentary fiction, assimilated it and made it mine" (*Being and Having* 161)¹⁷. The momentary fiction at the heart of having an opinion is that of assimilation, just as conceiving myself as having certain characteristics

¹⁷ I ask that the reader keep the fictitious nature of having, or the fiction at the root of having, in mind. An earlier quotation from Marcel drew attention to the fiction of having as a force that progresses from the existent to the object; Marcel stated that the progress *seemed* to be carried out from the *qui* to the *quid*. As will become clear in the next few pages, the relation of having also places the *qui* under the influence of the *quid*, although one tends to overlook our powerlessness in the face of objects that we own. In the above quotation, Marcel contends that the assimilation of another as other that is constitutive of the possibility of expression and predication is itself a fiction that covers over the unity at the heart of being.

involves the momentary fiction by way of which I come to identify myself with the other. But the larger issue for Marcel is the fact that all relations of having are constituted in reference to another as other. As Marcel states on September 27, 1933, “[h]aving is the function of an order which carries with it references to another qua another. It must in fact be seen that the hidden thing, the secret, is ipso facto something that can be shewn...Perhaps..., in the order of Being, the Other tends to melt away and be denied” (*Being and Having* 148-9). As we saw in the case of mysteries, it is just this distinction between the same and the other that is at the root of having (*Being and Having* 149) that melts away at the level of Being, that tends to be denied when relations of having flow into those of Being. In other words, the distinction or separation between the self and the other as other is the foundation for all relations of having but is also in marked contrast to the ontological relations that one has with the other by way of love and creative fidelity.

But how exactly is having rooted in the distinction between the self and the other? How is this distinction related to Marcel’s earlier remarks concerning the reality of having? For Marcel, this reference to another as other implies a certain having at one’s disposal. In the case of certain properties that I have or in the case of my opinions, I have the other at my disposal because I either identify myself with them or assimilate their opinions in order to generate my own position. In the case of possessions, the separation between the self and the other makes it possible for the self that has things at its disposal either to keep things for one’s self or to give them out to another. And this rhythm and alternation are part of the structural possibilities of all relations of having (*Being and Having* 149), a double possibility which Marcel also notices within consciousness: “There is probably no fundamental difference between being conscious of something and

manifesting it to others (i.e. making them conscious of it). The other is already there when I am conscious of myself, and expression is, I suppose, only possible because this is so” (*Being and Having* 149-50). Because of this structural similarity, Marcel works very hard to describe the levels of existence and Being without making any reference to consciousness understood as knowledge; hence, existence involves the pre-reflective and pre-conscious participation of the existent while engagement in Being, as evidenced in the category of mystery, involves a thorough foregoing of all the distinctions that structure the reality of having. Hence, Being is beyond knowledge and expression since both partake of having: “Knowing as a mode of having. The possession of a secret. Keeping it, disposing of it...Knowledge as a mode of having is essentially communicable” (*Being and Having* 145).

Thus, the two features that most interest Marcel about the relation of having are (1) the tension between externality and internality and (2) the necessary fictions—of power and assimilation—and he is especially interested in how these features work to constitute the self in relation to the world or to others. At first, the relation of having seems to clearly demarcate the boundaries between the self as *qui* and the object as *quid*, where the internally consistent self actively works to possess the inert and passive external object. But this is the lie at the heart of possession. The fact is that externality and internality cannot be separated in the case of having because having is fundamentally constituted by the tension between inside and outside; this means that the boundary between *qui* and *quid* is anything but permanent, and, as a result, the self who draws its identity from the permanency offered by the relation of having—the permanency of being a self over and against its external possession—soon discovers that its sense of self is

founded on unstable ground. As James Collins explains in *The Existentialists: A Critical Study*, the order of having, as Marcel understands it, “is the open flank which leaves one’s being exposed...One’s being is vulnerable at that point where it is prolonged in its possessions” (Collins 156). More specifically, what concerns Marcel about the order of having is how one’s selfhood can come to be “compromised by concern over the order of having” (Collins 156). The problem is that tying one’s sense of self to possessions opens the self to uncertainty and insecurity.

In part, the tension at the heart of having is a result of the exteriority of the object in relation to the possessor, the fact that it is spatially distinct from possessor; because of its externality as object, it is “subject to the changes and chances proper to things, [and] it may be lost or destroyed. So it becomes, or is in danger of becoming, the centre of a kind of whirlpool of fears and anxieties, thus expressing exactly the tension which is an essential part of the order of having” (*Being and Having* 162). And it is these fears and anxieties in the order of having that work to erode the self’s sense of permanency: “[The two-fold permanency of the *qui* and the *quid* in having] is, of its very nature, threatened... The threat is the hold exerted by the other *qua* other, the other which may be the world itself, and before which I so painfully feel that I am I. I hug to myself this thing which may be torn away from me, and I try desperately to incorporate it in myself, to form myself and it into a single and indissoluble complex” (*Being and Having* 162-3), in much the same way in which I tried to incorporate the other as other to enable the act of expression. Thus, constituting one’s sense of self in the order of having, and in the tension between inside and outside constitutive of that order, involves exposing one’s

being to the vicissitudes of the world because the external objects to which one ties oneself through the act of possession are uncertain and susceptible to change.

By way of the relation of having, the existent exposes itself to the uncertainties of the outside world. Having exposes one's being to danger in at least three ways: (1) through the possible mutation of the feeling of loss at the level of having into a feeling of loss at the level of Being, which Marcel characterizes as ontological despair, (2) through the devitalization of one's life, and (3) through the eclipsing of our ontological needs by way of the non-disposability that is at the heart of the phenomenon of having.

In the first case, Marcel explains that "every loss in the order of having constitutes a threat to what I have called the soul and runs the risk of turning into a loss at the level of being: we return here to the problem of despair" (*Being and Having* 91-2). Because the sphere of having is structured according to the opposition between presence and absence, it has the potential of infecting one's being, by way of loss, with that very absence. Loss, if it invades one's very being and becomes ontological despair, has the potential to eat away at the presence that sustains one's being, at that presence that is the very foundation of one's being. So, not only is it possible for the self to lose its possessions, but that loss, depending on how strongly that possession was associated with one's sense of self, could contaminate the presence at the heart of one's being with absence and transform that simple loss into ontological despair.

On a similar note, having is also understood by Marcel as a process of devitalization, as a process that sucks the life (and presence) out of that which one comes to possess. Marcel draws upon the expression 'I have a body' as an example of this process: "But when I assert that I have a body, it is clear that I am really tending in fact to

immobilise this body in some fashion and to devitalize it. I wonder now if having qua having does not always imply in some degree a devitalisation of this kind” (*Being and Having* 87). This process of devitalization is in marked contrast to the ontological attitude of creative fidelity that acts to preserve the vitality, the presence, of that other that one encounters or engages with at the level of co-presence. So, not only is it possible for the possessed object to which the existent has tied itself to be lost or destroyed, thereby exposing our being to the possibility of despair and hopelessness, but, as the phrase goes, our possessions are also capable of devouring us and our lives. What Marcel finds is that certain objects that I own “are not only external: it is as though there were a connecting corridor between them and me; they reach me, one might say, underground. In exact proportion as I am attached to things, they seem to exercise a power over me which my attachment confers upon them, and which grows as the attachment grows...Having as such seems to have a tendency to destroy or lose itself in the very thing it began by possessing, but which now absorbs the master who thought he controlled it” (*Being and Having* 164). In this case, our being is subjugated to our possessions. Our possessions become more important to us than other people, and, as a result, the presence of Being in our lives dissipates as we come to associate who we are with what we possess. So Marcel understands having as posing a double threat to one’s very being: by way of our attachment to our possessions, we will either lose ourselves in despair because of the vicissitudes of the world or be devoured by our possessions.

Lastly, what concerns Marcel is the possible elevation of having to the level of Being, which results in the mistaken idea that “no longer having anything is the same as no longer being anything: and in fact the general trend of life on the [objective] level is to

identify one's-self with what one has: and here the ontological category tends to be blotted out" (*Being and Having* 84). What the identification of one's being with one's possessions, with what one has, buries from view is the ontological truth of our being. More specifically, because the self becomes the centre of adherence at the level of having, which consists of making objects mine, of bringing objects into my sphere of influence at the centre of which is the self that is able to exert power over and disposal of its possessions as it sees fit, the self does not realize the true nature of disposability and availability that is the truth of its being. What the phenomenon of having blots out is ontological disposability because the sphere of having is rooted in the non-disposability of the existent's proper body; the problem with having, as Marcel understands it, is that all having is ultimately rooted in the non-disposability of one's own body, in that body that is the very possibility of having something at one's disposal and which, as a result, is necessarily not completely at one's disposal. Thus, Marcel comes to the conclusion that having is rooted in non-disposability.

3.4.1.2 Relations of Being

But how else, if not through objects to be possessed, is one to relate to the world? How is one to understand a relation with the world apart from having? What possible salvation is there for someone lost in the world of objects? What Marcel acknowledges at this point is that there are instances in which the relation of having, or simple possession, changes signs and is transformed into a relation of Being. He admits that our possessions tend to eat us up "when we are in a state of inertia in which of objects which are themselves inert...[but not] when we are more vitally and actively bound up with

something serving as the immediate subject-matter of a personal creative act, a subject-matter perpetually renewed. (It may be the garden of the keen gardener, the farm of a farmer, the violin of a musician, or the laboratory of a scientist) In all these cases, we may say, having tends, not to be destroyed, but to be sublimated and changed into being” (*Being and Having* 165). Consequently, while having is characterized by a state of inertia on the part of the self and the object, the relation of Being is an active and creative personal relation that is continuously being renewed. In the case of having, the state of inertia is part and parcel of the tension between externality and internality that constitutes one’s relation with one’s possessions; in other words, having is unthinkable without the inertia that establishes the duality between possessor and possessed.

So, in addition to the other dangers of having, this state of inertia that is a necessary aspect of the duality of possessor and possessed that structures having also poses a threat to the being of the self because it acts to thicken the being of the existent into a self that can only interact with a world of objects and others understood as others. Marcel explains that “the man who remains on the plane of having (or of desire) is centred, either on himself or on another treated as another; the result is the same in either case, so far as the tension or polarity goes which I was emphasizing just now...[In the case of having,] the self is always a thickening, a sclerosis...of the body, not taken in the objective sense but in the sense of my body” (*Being and Having* 166-7). Consequently, relations of having are only possible through the constitution of a polarity between self and object or other, through the realization of the tension between the existent as self and the object or the other as external thing. And the only way to realize this tension is through the thickening of the body into something that the self has at their disposal,

through the centring of the self by way of the expression 'I have a body.' By realizing my body as a possession that belongs to me, I have already made the first step towards establishing myself as a self and the world as external in relation to me: "The more I treat my own ideas, or even my convictions, as something belonging to me—and so as something I am proud of...as I might be proud of my greenhouse or my stables—the more surely will these ideas and opinions tend, by their very inertia (or my inertia towards them, which comes to the same thing) to exercise a tyrannical power over me" (*Being and Having* 166).

But then how is it possible to pass beyond our relations of having into being? How is it possible to transform ideas or convictions I have into ideas or convictions that I am? According to Marcel, only a relation of pure creation is able to transcend the order of having and to dissolve or dissipate the duality between possessor and possessed that organizes relations of having. Therefore, having depends on the insinuation of the tension between externality and internality for its realization; returning to the example of having an idea, once an idea or conviction is able to exist apart from me, once it loses its personal vitality and becomes exterior to me, it then no longer has a firm or intimate hold on me and "can fall from me as a leaf falls from a tree" (*The Existential Background* 99). I exist in a relation of Being only with those ideas and convictions that I can attest to, that I can testify to, that have such a vital hold on me that I remain faithful to their presence to me, continually working creatively to maintain or perpetually renew their presence to me and my presence to them. So, while convictions that I have are like leaves on a tree, those convictions that I am are like major organs that can not be made external to me, that can not be separated from me; but in order to maintain their vitality and the relation of

intimacy with my convictions, I must continually work creatively to renew that relation and realize it as a living reality. Marcel explains the difference as follows: “The ideologist is one of the most dangerous of all human types, because he is unconsciously enslaved to a part of himself that has mortified...The thinker, on the other hand, is continuously on guard against...this possible fossilising of his thought. He lives in a state of creativity, and the whole of his thought is always being called into question” (*Being and Having* 166). The state of creativity, or creative fidelity towards one’s thoughts, consists in maintaining oneself in a state of openness or a posture of availability; against the possibility of coagulation or thickening, the thinker maintains himself/herself in a state of receptivity, always open and available to the possibility of having their thoughts called into question.

In terms of one’s relation with others, it is possible to transcend the order of having, and the division between self and other in which that order is rooted, through both love and charity: “love moves on a ground which is neither that of the self, nor that of the other qua other; I call it the Thou...Love...treated as the subordination of the self to...a reality at my deepest level more truly me than myself—love as the breaking of the tension between the self and the other, appears to me to be what one might call the essential ontological datum” (*Being and Having* 167). Beyond the tension between interiority and exteriority that constitutes the phenomenon of having, both love and charity involve the decentring of the self, the giving of myself to a reality that is not centred on myself but on the other—not as other but as Thou. What characterizes these states for Marcel is the fact that they work to dissolve the frontier separating the self from

the other as other, thereby breaking the tension that maintains relations with others within the order of having.

3.5 Conclusion

One of the difficulties that Marcel faces at this relatively early stage in his thought is the incompatibility between his triangulation of reality as existence-objectivity-Being and the distinction between the spheres of having and Being that originates with his realization that the body is more than a simple possession. In one model, there are three distinct levels to reality, and the levels of objectivity and Being are understood as being the result of different degrees of reflection upon various intensely lived existential experiences. According to the other model of reality, all relations are either relations of having or of Being, and the body proper is presented as the frontier between the two spheres since the bond between the existent and its own body is simultaneously one of participation and possession. In the latter model, there is no room for the concrete lived experiences that were the source of Marcel's initial insights since they are not experiences that I have nor experiences that I am. As with the experience of incarnation, they seem to function to locate the line of demarcation between the two spheres; I can either experience my body as a possession, as one object among others, and use it to realize projects in the world, or I can experience my body as that which I am, as my own body, and establish myself in relation with the presence of the other through an attitude of ontological disposability. But Marcel begins to run into problems with this model of reality because, as he digs further into the experience of incarnation, he discovers that my

body cannot be completely appropriated by the subject and simply given to the other or placed at their disposal. What he uncovers is that incarnation is irreducibly double, that it necessarily and irreversibly has its feet in both the spheres of Being and having, and it is this realization that leads him to import a vocabulary of *absolute having* and *corporeity* in order to talk about the body proper. Thus, instead of marking a point of passage between having and Being—as is the case with that which Marcel comes to refer to as *my life*, which, while it can be something that I have at my disposal, I can also make it receptive to the presence of the other by identifying myself with it, becoming my life, and thereby transcend the sphere of having—incarnation understood as corporeity seems to inaugurate the distinction between the two spheres, seems to bring the difference between Being and having into play within existence and force the subject to discover ways to overcome that difference and realize itself in Being.

CHAPTER 4: Marcel, Corporeity and the Non-availability at the Heart of Incarnation

4.1 The Seeds of Doubt

As I have alluded to throughout the previous chapters, Marcel's probing into the reality of bodily existence eventually unearths an aspect of incarnation that forces him to suppress the body, or at least to minimize its presence, in the context of his later ontological writings on the interpersonal. And, as I have indicated, the problem is twofold. On the one hand, Marcel, after working to evoke the experience of incarnation in the reader and making contentious statements concerning the centrality of incarnation within metaphysics, is faced with the embarrassing situation of trying to explain the existential beginnings of ontological availability or disposability; the problem that he faces involves his attempts to establish some connection, at the level of existence, between the always already interposed body that makes the existent available to the world without the least amount of effort or commitment on the part of the existent and, at the level of Being, the active commitment required on the part of the subject to both place itself in a state of availability towards and remain faithful to the presence of the other. As Marcel digs deeper into the reality of bodily existence, he begins to realize that, by linking his theory of the interpersonal and the I-Thou encounter to the personal experience of incarnation, he has actually grounded his concept of active ontological availability in an intimate concrete experience of radical non-availability and passivity. And, as the following quotation from *Creative Fidelity*, a set of lectures published in 1940, makes clear, the relationship between existential sensation and ontological

availability becomes more and more tenuous as he tries to articulate the exact nature of that correspondence:

I must somehow make room for the other in myself; if I am completely absorbed in myself, concentrated on my sensations, feelings, and anxieties, it will obviously be impossible for me to receive, to incorporate in myself, the message of the other. What I called incohesion a moment ago here assumes the form of disposability; thus we are indirectly brought to the question whether there is not a basis for granting the existence of a fundamental analogy between the sensory receptivity of a living being exposed to the solicitations of his surroundings and the disposability of a consciousness capable of caring for another person. (*Creative Fidelity* 88)

What Marcel makes clear in the above quotation is the fact that there is no room for the other at the level of pre-reflective existence, that, when it comes to experiences of co-existence, because I am completely absorbed with myself, I am unable to receive—and am unreceptive to—the presence of the other. Therefore, any relation with another being that is respectful of their presence must occur at the level of Being because it requires the (self-conscious) subject to actively make itself available to the other and to make itself able to care for the other. So, while existential sensation appears as a form of availability that is completely wrapped up with the existent, Marcel conceives of ontological availability as a form of openness to the presence of the other that is at the heart of consciously being able to care for another being. But, since Marcel has developed his ontology of the interpersonal encounter on the basis of the model of sensory receptivity of the interposed body to the solicitations of the surrounding world, he senses the need to discover some fundamental analogy between the existential exposure of the existent by way of their body proper and ontological availability, an analogy that Marcel realizes that he must abandon for reasons that will become clear in the following chapter.

The passivity of the existent at the level of existence in relation to their incarnation is also at the heart of the second problem, and it again involves the active

participation of the I with the other as Thou at the level of Being. As I indicated earlier, Marcel's ontological writings aim at establishing the conditions necessary for the realization or actualization of the space that comes into being—through our participation with the presence of the other in Being—between the I and the other approached as Thou. And what is essential for Marcel is that this space *between* is unifying; the interpersonal relation in which the subject participates with the other in a mystery in which the boundary between what is in the subject and before the subject breaks down is thus a way of overcoming the space of difference and separation that characterizes the sphere of having. Or, understood more generally, the I-Thou relation involves the unification of the subject with the other over and beyond the false separation that structures relations in the sphere of having. Seen in this light, the responsibility of the subject in relation to the presence of the other and to Being is to creatively work towards overcoming, through a commitment to openness, availability, and fidelity, the differences that separate the self from the other *as* other at the level of objectivity. Thus ontological availability is an attempt to reduce difference and to achieve a state of co-presence with the other within Being; therefore, ontology for Marcel would seem to involve the art of negating a pre-existing difference. And Marcel's conception of the nature of the *between* that characterizes the I-Thou encounter is firmly grounded in his initial investigations into the nature of bodily reality as interposition because, at least in the beginning, he understood the interposition of the body between the existent and the world as the overcoming of the separation between the two terms, an overcoming that inaugurated the participation of the existent with the world in co-existence. In other words, the proper body, my body as mine, was the model for ontological unification in Being because of its existential availability or openness to the other-than-itself; the openness of the body to the world, its

availability to the solicitations of the world, that is the condition for the possibility of the existent participating with the world in the unified space of co-existence came to function as the existential model on which he based his attempt to overcome the separation between the self and the other through the posture of ontological availability.

But what slowly begins to dawn on Marcel as he mediates further on the reality of the body as being one of interposition is the rather unsavory possibility that the difference between the existent and the world that the body proper reduces through sensation is not a priori but is actually inaugurated by the body proper itself. Instead of the body being interposed *between* the existent and the world in an attempt to unify, perhaps the reality of incarnation requires one to place the emphasis on its intransitive nature and admit that interposition refers to the fact that the body proper actually produces the difference between the existent and the world, that the personal body is always already between the existent and the world and functions as a result of, and not in spite of, the difference it inaugurates. In fact, Marcel, after a brief recapitulation, begins his next metaphysical journal *Being and Having* with exactly this realization, and I will use this chapter as an occasion to follow the path that leads from his re-evaluation of the nature of obscurity, especially the obscurity of the body, to his eventual re-formulation of the reality of the body in terms of *corporeity*.

4.2 Levinas' Critique of Marcel's Theory of Sociality

I would like to begin to approach the unearthing of the notion of corporeity by Marcel in *Being and Having* by way of an essay entitled "Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel and Philosophy" by Emmanuel Levinas. In part, this essay highlights the similarities and

differences between the philosophical projects of Marcel and Martin Buber; in addition, Levinas also uses the essay as an opportunity to situate his own work on the nature of sociality in relation to how these two mentors understood the encounter between the I and Thou. What is compelling about Levinas' essay are his insights into Marcel's project, especially as it relates to the central datum of incarnation; Levinas is a keen reader and provides a quite precise interpretation of Marcel's theory of the interpersonal meeting that takes its cue from the insights that Marcel gained into human existence through his investigations into that obscure shadow—namely the personal body, the body proper—at the heart of our most intimate personal experiences. However, his keen insights are themselves clouded by what I consider to be his deep mistrust of the body, a mistrust and sense of apprehension that I would argue is a determining factor in his own work. What I propose to do in this section is to take up Levinas' critique of Marcel, beginning with his presentation of Marcel's argument and ending with his charge against Marcel of collusion with a philosophical tradition mired in Being, and then to show the central role that the body plays as contagion, as the purveyor of Being, in his critique. Afterwards, I will turn to the development of the concept of corporeity in *Being and Having* and show that, contrary to Levinas' charge, Marcel was forced to dump the body, to jettison incarnation from his work, in order to develop his ontology of the I-Thou relation in terms of Being and presence, a reading of Marcel's work that challenges Levinas' equation of incarnation with Being and presents *corporeity* as a way of thinking about the nature of bodily reality, and, by extension, about the relation between the existent, their own body, the world, and others otherwise than according to the vocabulary of Being and presence.

4.2.1. Incarnation as Interposition and Opacity in Marcel

Levinas begin his article by arguing that Marcel's formulation of incarnation as the central given of metaphysics by way of the affirmation 'I am my body' is a direct challenge to Descartes' grounding of the I in the *cogito*. While the *cogito* is a transparent given that the subject knows absolutely and beyond a shadow of a doubt, Levinas argues that Marcel presents the fact of my incarnation as an impenetrable shadow at the heart of my existence and works to develop, against the grain of Descartes' philosophy, the existential consequences of this opaque given at the centre of one's existence. In fact, incarnation is at the heart of Marcel's early existentialism because of its very opacity; in his essay, Levinas stresses that, while the subject of the *cogito* is an epistemological subject, an intellect, a mind that is severed from life, the incarnate subject for Marcel is a living subject fully immersed or involved in life. For the early Marcel, the living subject has its beginnings in non-transparency and obscurity; in order to grasp the living being in its full unity and vitality, one must begin with an existence that is not transparent to itself.

What Levinas brings to the foreground is the relationship for Marcel between opacity and obscurity and the nature of bodily reality as interposition. Levinas realizes that one of the central consequences of Marcel's unearthing of bodily reality as interposition is that it brings to light the essential obscurity and opacity at the heart of incarnation; for Marcel, the interposed body must necessarily be an opaque existence to the existent, which means that incarnation, as the central datum of our lived existence, is necessarily centred around a shadow. But the question remains as to the source of this opacity. From where does the opacity of the body originate? What does the fact of the obscurity of the body reveal about incarnation? According to Levinas' reading of

Marcel's work, the opacity of the given body points to the rootedness of the existent, as incarnate, in a certain posture of *being-for-others*:

[Incarnation] is 'the situation of a being that appears to itself as attached to a body.' By contrast with the *cogito*, it is 'a given not transparent to itself.' A non-transparent given: the incarnate *I* is not, in its consciousness of self, for itself only; it exists in such a way as to have something impenetrable within itself. Not a foreign body! Its being-toward-itself is immediately a *being exposed to others* and, in this sense, it is itself obscurity. 'It is the shadow that is at the centre.' The impenetrable 'something' in it is not the addition of an extended substance to a thinking substance, but a way of being of the spirit itself by which it is, before all thematization of the universe, *for* the universe, and thus united with it. In a way of being toward oneself precisely as being toward the *other-than-oneself*—which identifies it. An ontological modality, a modality of the verb *to be* that is mediation itself... There is no Cartesian separation between me and my body, nor a synthesis, but immediately an unobjectifiable, lived participation. The body is essentially a mediator, but irreducible to any formal or dialectical mediation. It is the absolute or originary mediation of being: 'In that sense, it is myself, for I can distinguish myself from it only on the condition that I convert it into an object, that is, that I cease to treat it as the absolute mediator.' Hence: 'we are tied to being.' And, conversely, every existent refers back to our body: 'When I affirm that a thing exists, it is always the case that I consider that thing as linked to my body, as capable of being put in contact with it, however indirectly.' (Levinas 25-6)

What Levinas is tracing in the above quotation is how Marcel's existentialism, which is marked by a turning away from idealism, begins with the claim that, instead of simply having a body as an instrument, 'I am my body,' a statement that ties the I to a non-transparent given, namely its body proper. By answering 'I am my body' to the question 'What am I?', Marcel insists on passing the circuit of self-identity through an impenetrable and opaque given that is unknowable—a move that is a direct challenge to the Cartesian statement of identity ('I think therefore I am') in which the being of the I is switched/shunted through the self-transparent and self-reflective act of thinking. In contrast to the transparent *cogito*, the body is the impenetrable existence, what Levinas terms obscurity itself, that Marcel discovers at the heart of human existence. But Levinas makes a point of explaining that the body proper is not a foreign body. So, what is at the

root of the obscurity of the body? Of what does the obscurity of the body consist? As Levinas understands it, the obscurity of the body, its non-transparent nature, is rooted in the fact that the being-for-itself of the body is “immediately a *being exposed to others*” (Levinas 25). The central insight of Marcel’s philosophy is the presentation of the reality of bodily existence as an opening towards the world, as an exposed surface, as a surface by way of which the existent is exposed to the other-than-itself that is the world. The body to which the existent is attached through incarnation, the body that I am, is a type of being whose existence for-itself is immediately always already a being *exposed* to others, a type of being whose very way of being is as being toward the other-than-itself. And it is this way of being of the body as interposed that identifies¹⁸, or is the determining structure of, the body and, by extension, the existent, since the existent is tied to its body proper by way of an immediate relation that is a lived participation. The being of the existent as incarnate therefore means that the existent must be understood as being fundamentally tied in a relation of lived participation with that which is other-than-itself. Thus, incarnate existence is an existence that is at root a receptivity to the other-than-itself. The impenetrable something through which the circuit of identity passes is itself a way of being for the universe, of being united with the universe; before the subject is able

¹⁸ One could also understand Levinas’ qualification that the being toward oneself of the existent must be understood as “a being toward the *other-than-itself*—which identifies it”—as referring to the fact that the existent, by way of its being towards the other-than-itself, identifies and determines the other as an other *for-itself*. This would fit in with Levinas’ critique of the body and its relation with alterity and otherness because it presents the body as reducing the alterity of the other to Being through the process of identification; the very nature of the body as being exposed to others works to determine the other as other, works to identify the other by way of Being (this other *is* an other) and enables the incarnate existent to approach the other in terms of the meaning that the other comes to have for the existent.

to thematize the world or the universe as an object, the body draws the I into a relation with the world in which it is for or towards the universe.

What Levinas is expanding upon through the vocabulary of *exposure* and *being-for-others* is Marcel's determination of bodily reality as interposition. As I pointed out in the second chapter, Marcel introduces the concept of *interposition* to evoke the essential feature of incarnation as a non-mediate mediating element that is interposed between the existent and the world that enables their active participation—in terms of co-existence—with one another at the level of existence; because the reality of the body is one of being between, its being-for-itself is always already a being-exposed-to-the-world. So, as Levinas points out, such an affirmation as 'I am my body' unites the existent with an existence that—in its very being—is a being exposed to others. As a result, one's own being, since the relationship between oneself and one's body is one of lived participation instead of Cartesian separation, or one's own being for oneself is precisely a form of being for or towards that which is other-than-onese. Through one's body proper, one is united with the world in a non-objectifying relation. And this last statement is key because, as Levinas stresses, Marcel insists that the nature of bodily reality as interposition, as a being-between, must not be understood as establishing a relation that would enable a communicating of messages between oneself and the other-than-onese; instead, it realizes a relation that is non-objectifying.

As I argued earlier concerning Marcel and his theory of sensation, the fact that a thing exists for me (to the extent that I affirm its existence) is a direct consequence of the fact that the thing is linked to my body; it is my body that immediately mediates the being of the other-than-itself for me. In other words, this non-transparent given is an absolute mediator, and, because of the nature of the bond between the existent and its own body,

the being-for-itself of the I is essentially a being-for-the-other-than-itself. The role of the body as absolute mediator is what ensures that this relation between the existent and the world is not a relation between a subject and an object. Any such objective relation between a subject and an object necessitates mediation as communication, specifically the communication of a message, and, as I have demonstrated, Marcel spends a great deal of time in the *Metaphysical Journal* and his early essays developing a theory of communication that attacks the functionalization of language. However, as absolute mediator, what the body mediates are not messages but existence, to such an extent that, when I affirm that things exist, it is because they are linked to my body and come to exist *for-me*; consequently, my body mediates in an immediate and non-objectifying manner the being of the world for the existent. And it is on the basis of this non-objectifying relation between the existent and the world mediated by the body that Marcel holds out hope for a non-objectifying relation between the subject and the other as Thou that is rooted in Being and that is faithful to the presence of the other.

So, as Levinas explains, the body in Marcel is no longer a simple extended substance added to the thinking self but is instead the very modality of being of the thinking self that makes its objectifying and thematizing stance before the world possible; the existent, as incarnated, is for the world before it is for itself before the objective world. Fundamentally, the incarnate existent, as a way of being-for-itself, is precisely a being-toward-the-world through which, or by way of which, the existent is able to identify itself; the existent is only itself by way of its exposure to the other-than-itself. And it is as a modality of incarnation that Marcel wants to structure the interhuman encounter between the I and the Thou. As Levinas explains, since the existent, through incarnation, is fundamentally a non-objectifying way of being for or toward the other-

than-itself understood as the world, then incarnation should also make possible a non-objectifying relation with the other understood as another person:

The one *with* the other of being is thus reduced to the incarnation of the *I*, placed on an 'existential orbit,' as in a magnetic field. The interhuman encounter is but a modality of that ontological coherence mediated by the incarnation in which the *I* is *for* the other. Here we are...at the heart of co-presence: participation founding all relation. Participation is not a dialogue. It is an intersubjective nexus deeper than the language that is torn away, according to Marcel, from that originary communication [in Being]. As a principle of alienation, language petrifies living communication: it is precisely in speaking that we pass most easily from 'Thou' to 'He' and to 'It'—objectifying others. (Levinas 26-7)

It is important to keep in mind Marcel's characterization of the body as absolute mediator, as immediate mediator, because, as Levinas points out, the question of mediation becomes a major obstacle for Marcel. What Levinas rightly points to is a distinction in Marcel's thought between an intersubjective meeting based in co-presence and an objectifying relation with an other. As I have already stated, any relation involving some form of mediation, such as language, is, according to Marcel, objectifying and is a betrayal of Being and of the presence of the other as Thou. The problem is that mediation involves separation and thereby undoes or betrays the truth of Being as participation; participation must be immediate co-presence and living communication with the other as Thou within Being, and any such communication is covered over, or betrayed, by language. But how is it possible to achieve such a form of non-objectifying communication? How is it possible to participate with the other in a non-objectifying manner? Although communication apart from language seems impossible, Marcel discovers an example of immediate non-mediated participation in our lived experience of our own bodies and argues that bodily sensation is a form of non-mediated communication. Thus, Marcel comes to see this existential mode of participatory co-existence between the existent and the world as providing a model for true sociality. The

body's non-mediate mediation between the existent and the world comes to function in Marcel's thought as the model for the interpersonal encounter; for this reason, Levinas is able to state that the I-Thou relation in Marcel is a modality "of that ontological coherence mediated by the incarnation in which the I is *for* the other" (Levinas 27)¹⁹.

4.2.2 *The Interpersonal Meeting in Marcel*

While the essay opens with an overview of Marcel's theory of incarnation, Levinas uses the essay as an occasion to position his own thoughts on sociality in relation to the work of both Buber and Marcel, especially as it pertains to the relationship between sociality and Being. What Levinas highlights in the article is that, while the concept of *the meeting* and *the between* for both Marcel and Buber does function to "break away from an ontology of the object and of substance, both characterize the I-Thou relation in terms of *being*. 'Between' is a *mode of being*: co-presence, co-esse. If we are to go by the letter of the texts, being and presence remain the ultimate support of meaning" at the level of sociality (Levinas 23). As Levinas reads their work, both wrote against the objectifying tendency in intersubjective relations, a tendency rooted in the objectification of the other as an It and in a disregard for the otherness of the other, and attempted to reinstate the ontological weight of the inter-personal encounter by situating it on the plane of Being; however, Levinas argues that any attempt to reduce the other to their presence and to Being also flies in the face of the alterity of the other and, as with the techniques of

¹⁹ Levinas' reading is already beginning to unravel with his statement that the cohesion between the existent and their own body is ontological in nature. Part of the problem with Levinas' presentation of Marcel is his conflation of the existential with the

depersonalization and objectification, functions to reduce the otherness of the other. So, what one finds being articulated in this essay is the primary goal of Levinas' philosophical project to replace the Western ontology of being-with-others with an ethics, a project that is based in his mistrust of the category of Being—a mistrust that he shares with other twentieth century French thinkers like Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-Luc Marion, to name a few. Ultimately, Levinas strove to articulate a theory of sociality based in the language of ethics and responsibility instead of using the language of ontology—a language of Being and presence—that he argues has dominated Western philosophical inquiry into the nature of sociality for thousands of years. And what Levinas objects to in relation to this tradition of thought based in the ontologization of sociality is the way in which the language of Being, presence, meaning, and intentionality is unresponsive to the appeal of the other and works to reduce the alterity of the other.

In the case of Marcel, Levinas' primary objection to his approach to sociality concerns its inherence to Being. Although Marcel is critical of objectivist thought and of any metaphysics rooted in objectification, such as Cartesianism or idealism, Levinas argues that Marcel did not go far enough in his questioning of the philosophical tradition and that, in the end, his philosophy is still objectifying—or reducing—to the extent that his thought remains within the confines of Being and presence and works to reduce the absolute alterity of the other:

although remarkably free from any school, or scholasticism, and so deliberately hostile to the objectivist interpretation of being, [he] remains deeply rooted, despite all the disruption introduced by the idea of the Thou, in ontology. Thus Marcel seems to continue the high Western tradition for which...all relation with being is, in the final analysis, reducible to an experience (that is, to knowledge), and remains a modality of that being. (Levinas 23)

ontological, an error that leads him to ultimately approach incarnation by way of Being instead of by way of existence.

The central given in his argument against Marcel is Levinas' equation of ontological language with a form of knowledge. In particular, what makes Marcel's work suspect is the fact that he affiliates Being with experience through incarnation and reduces the interpersonal encounter to a modality of incarnation, which means that all ontological relations, since Marcel roots them in his investigations into intensely lived personal experiences, are themselves experiences and are, since Levinas himself reduces experience to a form of knowledge, reducible to meaning. Because experience is itself a form of knowing and Marcel seems to root the ontological within our experiences, all relations with Being are simply more of the same, thereby working to reduce the alterity of the other to the meaningful experiencing of the other, to reduce of the approach of the other to a mode of knowing; instead of discovering true sociality, the interpersonal meeting in Marcel is simply the experience of sociality. Marcel reduces sociality to the experience or knowledge of sociality. So, Marcel's philosophical project is, in the end, deeply rooted in ontology and simply works to reduce the alterity of the other as other to a meaningful presence for the self.

But, for Levinas, part of the motivation behind this essay is to draw out for the reader the reason why his thoughts concerning the I-Thou encounter are closer to Buber's than to Marcel's. According to Levinas, the main difference between these mentors resides in how they treat the other. Although both designate the meeting between the I and the Thou using the language of Being and presence, of presence as a modality of Being, Buber holds out the possibility of the other as "a pure exteriority, whereas what is evoked as transcendent, according to Marcel, already grounds that invocation and the invoker. The mystery of being is the way our being which 'goes toward God' already

belongs to God” (Levinas 28). While Marcel recoils from the exteriority of the other *as* other and instead presents the interhuman encounter as a coming together, a unification, a co-presence within Being, Buber characterizes the I-Thou meeting as an absolute relation between the I and an absolute other. For Levinas, the other as Thou, according to Marcel, is more of the same since

the meeting of the neighbor, of the human Thou, presupposes a ‘sharing of the same history’ or a common destiny, and not the unconditionality of the approach [advocated by Buber]. According to Marcel, we do not ‘meet’ everyone we happen to run into. The I-Thou does not occur just anywhere...It is not, as in Buber, the mere appearance of the other that constitutes meeting.

According to Gabriel Marcel, the ontological mystery receives, in meditation, a luminosity of its own—precisely that of faith—which is not seen as an incomprehensible and unreflective act, but as the height of intelligibility. Through the discovery of the I-Thou, Marcel remains faithful to the spirituality of knowledge...Buber eliminates the gnoseological foundation of the Meeting. The unconditioned event of the Meeting overflows thought and being. It is a pure dialogue, a pure *covenant* that no pneumatic common presence envelops. I am destined for the other not because of our *prior* proximity or our substantial union, but because the Thou is absolutely other. (Levinas 28-9)

But how is it that Marcel reduces the unconditionality of the other’s approach *as* other? How does Marcel do away with the absolute otherness and pure exteriority of the Thou and condition the I-Thou encounter according to co-presence and co-participation in Being? The culprit, according to Levinas, is incarnation. Incarnation, as Levinas reads Marcel, ties us to Being since, as incarnated beings, we all participate in a common field of Being, and it is this common participation that founds all relations (Levinas 27). But, as Levinas points out, Buber states that “to say ‘Thou’ is an absolute relation having no foundational principle behind it” (Levinas 27). The problem with Marcel is that he comes to see incarnation, the bond between myself and my body, as a mode of immediate and unobjectifiable lived participation in Being, a lived participation in Being that I share with other incarnate individuals and that is free of difference and otherness because,

through my body, I am already *for-the-other*. Participation, through our access to Being through incarnation, is the founding principle behind the I-Thou meeting in Marcel, and it is the fact that, while being-for-itself, my body is simultaneously for the other that grounds the I-Thou meeting in co-presence. Through the fact that my body is for the other-than-itself, the approach of the other is always already conditioned by my body's receptivity to the other, by its *being-for-the-other*. And it is exactly this pre-disposition towards the other that unifies or ties together all beings and does away with the absolute other. My body, because of its opacity, its being-toward-itself that is immediately a being exposed to others, places me, through its role as mediator, in immediate contact with the other or, more precisely, draws me into immediate contact with the other in Being by way of their presence. As Levinas explains, the body that I am is, for Marcel, "an ontological modality, a modality of the verb *to be* that is mediation itself" (Levinas 26); through the body, the existent participates with the world and, by extension, with the other in and through Being.

Therefore, the problem with Marcel's description of the intersubjective nexus, at least as the case is presented by Levinas, is that it is modeled on the ontological coherence mediated by incarnation, by the existent's immediate relation with its own body that is at the heart of the participatory state of co-existence that exists between the existent and the world. What troubles Levinas about Marcel's philosophy of intersubjectivity is his reduction of sociality to a simple modality of incarnation, his modeling of sociality according to the ontological coherence or ontological relation that exists between the existent and its ownmost or proper body. As Levinas explains, Marcel's philosophical project concludes with the existent and the other being "tied together into unity through human incarnation. The one *with* the other of being is thus

reduced to the incarnation of the *I*, placed on an 'existential orbit,' as in a magnetic field" (Levinas 26). In other words, sociality, the interhuman encounter or meeting, is simply a modality of the relation between the existent and its own personal body, a relation through which the existent finds itself, through the interposition of the body between the existent and the world, participating in Being along with the being of the other-than-itself. Thus, access to Being is by way of incarnation, by way of the body that I am; it is incarnation that places me in contact with Being and facilitates my encounter with the presence of the other. For a true meeting to take place, the I and the Thou must both meet in the common space of Being; the I must encounter the other in terms of the other's presence within the shared unifying space of Being. And one must remember that, according to Levinas, it is incarnation that unifies Being, that ties together Being into a unified field of presence; therefore, Marcel's refusal to break with ontology, his refusal to give up ontological language, is a result of the centrality of the experience of incarnation in his existentialism. My body, my own body proper that interposes itself between me and the world, is the door through which Being enters Marcel's philosophical mediations on intersubjectivity and the interhuman encounter.

4.2.3 The Move Away From Incarnation and Towards Corporeity

However, the centrality that Levinas assigns to the cohesion between the existent and its own body within Marcel's theory of the interpersonal is in marked contrast to the tendency in Marcel's later work, beginning with *Being and Having* (a text from which Levinas draws heavily in the essay), to downplay its importance to his ontological investigations into the I-Thou relation. Levinas seems to have completely overlooked

Marcel's radical re-thinking of the experience of incarnation, a re-thinking that is punctuated by Marcel's eventual decision to shift the focus of his philosophical inquiry away from *my body* and towards *my life*, a shift that Merleau-Ponty points out in his 1936 review of *Being and Having*:

With *Being and Having*, Marcel's philosophy has been enlarged, so to speak. It tends to become an understanding of life, of the entire set of situations lived through by human beings...To an increasing degree the center of the perspective shifts from the body to the soul. If my body is indeed more than an object that I own, it is equally true that it is not me; it is 'at the border of what I am and what I have,' at the line of demarcation between being and having. The central fact of metaphysics is clearly no longer thought of...as the presence and remoteness of my body; it is rather...the presence and remoteness of my life, the adherence of my life to myself, and at the same time my power to sacrifice it, my refusal to become indistinguishable from it. (*Texts* 103)

Although Merleau-Ponty does not offer any explanation concerning why and how this shift in perspective occurred, I would argue that Marcel retreats from his earlier declaration of incarnation as the central given of metaphysics along two fronts, both of which leave Levinas' argument against Marcel open to attack. The first instance involves a rethinking of the opacity of the body, and I want to focus on an entry dated February 29, 1929, from *Being and Having* that signals the beginning of the end for the body proper in the context of Marcel's thought as it opens onto those sections in his journals in which he outlines his entire change in perspective concerning the problem of incarnation: "Have detected, perhaps, an important fallacy involved in the idea (cf. my previous notes on incarnation) that opacity must be bound up with otherness. But surely the contrary is the case. Surely opacity really arises from the fact that the 'I' interposes between the self and the other, and intervenes as a third party" (*Being and Having* 13). The second retreat involves Marcel's backing away from presenting sociality and the I-Thou encounter as a *modality* of incarnation; as the following quotation from *Creative Fidelity* highlights,

Marcel gives up the vocabulary of modality that Levinas ascribes to him and opts instead for the vocabulary of analogy: what Marcel is interested in establishing at this later point in his career is “whether there is not a basis for granting the existence of a fundamental analogy between the sensory receptivity of a living being exposed to the solicitations of his surroundings and the disposability of a consciousness capable of caring for another person” (*Creative Fidelity* 88). And, as we shall see, as Marcel digs even deeper into the experience of incarnation, even the possibility of an analogical relation begins to fade.

4.2.3.1 The Origins of Opacity

In terms of the issue of the opacity of the body, the entry from *Being and Having* that I quoted above marks the turning point in Marcel’s theory of incarnation and eventually leads to the disposal of *my body* in favour of *my life* as the fulcrum of his philosophical project. What Marcel is alluding to in the above quotation is his initial belief, at the time of the *Metaphysical Journal*, that the opacity of the body was the result of its exposure to the other-than-itself that he understood to be the central feature of incarnation as interposition. As Levinas so succinctly explained, the interposed proper body is what gives rise to an existent that is not transparent to itself, an existent that is not simply for-itself because its own body is simultaneously a being-for-itself and a being exposed-to-the-other-than-itself; through incarnation, the I is determined in terms of an openness to and a movement towards the other. And it is this modality of being-towards-the-other-than-itself that constitutes the shadow at the center of human existence. Consequently, Marcel understood the opacity of the body as being a direct result of the prior given-ness of the difference or separation between the existent and the world: the body is opaque because it must, of necessity, occupy the space between the existent and

the world and mediate between those two poles. My body, conceived by Marcel according to the concept of interposition, came to be that which unified or healed a previous difference or separation between the existent and the world.

If one casts one's mind back to the second chapter and to Marcel's claim in the *Metaphysical Journal* that the body, as the interposed hinge or joint between the existent and the world, must necessarily be able to participate in the realities of both the world and the existent, it becomes quite clear that Marcel initially conceived the reality of the body as a being interposed into an always already determined difference. And the given or essential opacity of my body to me was conceived of as a function of this previous difference since its opacity referred to that side of my body that exists for the other-than-myself, to that side or facet of my body as mine that is unavailable to me and makes my body unknowable to me. However, its opacity was not seen as an obstacle to the unification of the incarnate existent and the world because of the bond between the existent and its own body and because of the fact that one's own body is that being that is exposed to the world and through which the existent comes to participate with the world by way of co-existence. So, by way of the body proper, the existent was conceived of as being able to participate with the world in an immediate and non-objectifying manner, and it is this cohesion or adherence of the existent with the world as an incarnate I that becomes the model for the I-Thou meeting in which the subject and the other are co-present to one another and participate in a non-objectifying relation.

But, what Marcel begins to suspect is that otherness is actually the result of opacity, of the interposition of a third party between co-existing terms—an interposition that radically disrupts the unity of those terms; instead of being the result of some a priori difference or given alterity, he comes to understand opacity as the result of a prior

interposition. In other words, Marcel begins to doubt his affirmation concerning the body as the central given of metaphysics, an affirmation that was based on the body's essential opacity to itself that was a necessary outcome of its being-exposed-to-the-other-than-itself, and begins to suspect instead that the opacity of the body simply arises from the fact that the body, because of its existential structuring as interposition, intervenes as a third party and inaugurates the difference or separation between the existent and the world. Instead of being a model for ontological coherence between subject and the other as Thou—a structure in which the body, as opaque, plays the role of absolute mediator—he comes to see the body proper as the source of difference, the source of the separation between existent and that which is other-than-itself. So, instead of opacity being the result of a prior difference, the result of a prior otherness in relation to which the opacity of the body functions to bring together or unify the existent and the world through its structure of being-for-the-other-than-itself, Marcel comes to see opacity as productive of otherness, as that which, through the body's interposition between the existent and the world as an alienating third party, brings difference and otherness into existence or, at the very least, points to the prior interposition of an alienating third term, namely the body proper. Instead of the opacity of the body—its being-for-the-other-than-itself—referring to the interposed body that works to unify the existent and the world, working to bring together that which has been separated by difference, the body becomes for Marcel an alienating term that, through its opacity, inaugurates the separation that produces opacity within the relation through its separation of the existent from the world. And, because the opacity of my body is now understood as that which inaugurates individuation within existence, an originary difference that is at the heart of the difference that structures the sphere of having, Marcel is now forced to come to the conclusion that my body is actually

an obstacle—or, more specifically, *the* obstacle—to co-presence and participation in Being with the other as Thou.

Although Levinas seems to have completely overlooked Marcel's re-interpretation of the opacity of the body, this would only be a minor error in his critique of Marcel if it were not for the fact that the body, as that which ties us to Being, figures so prominently in Levinas' interpretation of Marcel's thoughts on the interpersonal. What Marcel begins to suspect and to later state explicitly when he comes to characterize the nature of bodily reality as corporeity is that the body proper, instead of providing access to Being, actually inaugurates difference within existence. Thus, co-existence, which Marcel at one point was presenting as an existential model of the type of ontological coherence and unity that is possible as a consequence of our incarnation, is no longer founded in coherence or inherence but in difference and tension, both traits that characterize the sphere of having over and against the sphere of Being. Thus, instead of facilitating or supporting the true encounter between the I and Thou in Being, instead of being the founding principle behind all interpersonal relations with the other, I would argue that Marcel, during the time of *Being and Having*, was beginning to realize that incarnation was an obstacle to Being, presence, and ontological coherence and that he needed to move beyond the body proper in order to present his unified vision of the I-Thou relation as a mode of being-with. Thus it would seem that the body becomes, for Marcel, the alienating third party that works to objectify the other *as* other and to reduce the presence of the other to simple otherness.

In the final analysis, it is the body proper that interposes itself between the existent and its various others, that inaugurates difference and alterity in existence. Opacity is no longer, as it applies to the body proper and to one's experience of

incarnation, a sign of ontological coherence, of a common non-objectifying participation or involvement in Being, of a being-for-oneself that is simultaneously a being-for-the-other that, through its opacity, works to overcome an a priori difference and unify the existent and the world in co-existence; instead, opacity comes to designate difference, a produced difference that the opacity of the body at least indicates or at most brings into existence and that is the basis for all pre-reflective relations between the existent and the world and, by extension, between the existent and any other existent. What Marcel seems to be implying is that the relations that prevail at the level of existence between the existent, the world, and others are closer in kind to those that obtain in the sphere of having than in the sphere of Being. Thus, instead of tying us to Being, incarnation seems to tie us to having, at least at the level of existence, because of the difference that the body proper inaugurates in existence. And it is for this reason that Marcel begins to look for ways to cut all ties between his ontological speculations concerning the I-Thou relation and his existential investigations into the nature of bodily reality.

4.2.3.2 Analogy vs. Modality

As I stated above, the second retreat involves Marcel's backing away from presenting sociality and the I-Thou encounter as a modality of incarnation and sees the introduction of the idea of analogy to characterize the relationship between the existential and the ontological. Levinas does a poor job in his presentation of Marcel's work concerning the separation and relationship between the levels of existence, objectivity, and Being. As far as Levinas is concerned, the existential state of incarnation directly opens the existent onto Being; quite simply, incarnation provides the existent with access to Being, access that enables the subject's eventual meeting with the other as Thou

through co-presence. But Marcel never telescopes the existential into the ontological that neatly. The relationship between existence and Being is continually an issue throughout Marcel's work, and the terms that he uses to articulate the relationship also continually change, ranging from notions of recuperation and clarification to that of analogy.

However, Levinas' reading does bring to light the embeddedness of the ontological in the existential that is characteristic of Marcel's early work on incarnation; therefore, it is fair to say that, in the context of his early writings, Marcel's insights into incarnation do provide him with access to Being since all of his ontological insights into the interpersonal are presented as a clarification of obscure outlines or structures that he discovers by way of his excavation into the personal experience of incarnation.

Incarnation does not root the existent in Being; instead it contains within itself the obscure beginnings of a way of being-with the other as Thou within Being that must be clarified and elaborated by way of second reflection. But, in conjunction with his discovery of the fallacy concerning the opacity of the body, Marcel begins to disconnect his ontological writings from his existential insights into incarnation and begins to substitute a language of analogy in place of his earlier theories of clarification, recuperation and deepening. And Levinas' reading fails to take this shift in Marcel's perspective on incarnation into account.

As far as I can gather from the argument in *Creative Fidelity*, the problem with incarnation is the fact that it is centred on the existent, that the exposure of the body to the other-than-itself is entirely taken up with the being of the other *for-the-I*. In other words, the being-for-others of the body is a mode of being that is completely absorbed with the existent, with the *meaning* that the other comes to have *for the existent*, and leaves no room in the existent for receiving the presence of the other. The reality that incarnation

opens up for me or to which it exposes me is completely centred around myself, is entirely *for-me*, and the question for Marcel thus becomes how to make room for the other in myself: “if I am completely absorbed in myself, concentrated on my sensations, feelings, anxieties, it will obviously be impossible for me to receive, to incorporate in myself, the message of the other” (*Creative Fidelity* 88). The problem with incarnation seems to be that its exposure to the other-than-itself is a function of its being-for-itself; hence, when Marcel stated earlier that the being of things is directly linked to my body, he failed to realize at the time that such an affirmation had less to do with the *being* of things than with the *meaningfulness* of things for-the-body or for-the-existent by way of their body proper. Thus, there is no room for an-other existent in incarnation, in its openness to the world in terms of sensory receptivity, because everything received from the world through incarnate sensation is received in terms of its meaningfulness *for-me*. In other words, existence, because all sensation must necessarily have passed through my body and be taken up as a function of my body, is centred on myself as existent; at the pre-reflective level of existence, the existent is completely absorbed in its world as lived by and for itself and all things whose existence it affirms come to co-exist with the existent in terms of their being-for-the-existent. As a result, as Marcel states above, the existent is unable to receive or to incorporate into itself the message of the other; sensation, because it is completely taken up with and by the existent, with the incarnate existence of the existent, does not open the existent to the other, to the message of the other, but only to the world and to others as they exist for the existent. Incarnation does not, in any way, open the existent onto the presence of the other. Consequently, as we shall see momentarily, Marcel is forced to acknowledge that the situation of incarnation is one of

radical unavailability or non-disposability towards the other²⁰. This change of heart has profound consequences for Marcel's thought, and these consequences can be best understood in light of Levinas' (mis)reading of Marcel.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Marcel's central claim against relations of having is that relations of having are not truly ontological, are not modalities of being-with the other as Thou, because they are structured in such a way as to betray the presence of the other and to simply refer the self to the other *as* other. Relations of having are based on the separation of the self and the other *as* other and on the tension established between those opposing positions. Initially, Marcel felt that these relations were based in the determination of the body as object. The sphere of having, in other words, was understood as being established and maintained by way of the difference between the self and the object and between the self and the other that is a direct result of the objectification and functionalization of one's own body, a functionalization that works to determine objects *as* objects and others *as* others; the objectification of the body into an object that I have at my disposal, into one object among others, was the central structural feature of the sphere of having. And, what these relations of having elided or hid from sight was the fact that 'I am my body' and that any objectifying relation was based in the non-objectifying relation between the existent and its own body and between the existent and the world that was facilitated by the interposed body and its receptivity toward the

²⁰ What is rather curious concerning Marcel's argument is the similarity between Marcel's critique of the nature of bodily reality, its rootedness in meaning, and Levinas' better known critique of Merleau-Ponty in which he argues that the body is unable to approach the other in terms of alterity, in terms that are respectful or faithful to the otherness of the other, because of the fact that the body ultimately reduces any other to a simple being-for-the-existent. What Levinas will later object to in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is the reduction of the other to a being-for-me that is achieved through the

world that Marcel developed by way of his theory of sensation. So, initially at least, Marcel felt that the given difference or separation of the existent and the world was actually overcome through the immediate mediation of one's own body and that our contemporary functionalized objectivist society was itself structured according to this difference—or worked to perpetuate this difference—because of its refusal to acknowledge the body proper at the heart of existence. Thus, a social organization that would be based in the body proper, in the interposed body that is the true reality of our lived experience of incarnation, would recuperate, at the level of Being, the immediate participatory involvement of the existent with the world in co-existence made possible through our incarnation and would realize or actualize that relation between the I and the other as Thou. Instead of taking up one's body as an object, a stance that leads the self to approach the other *as* other in the sphere of having, Marcel argued that, by taking up the body as one's own through second reflection upon our experience of incarnation, one could then come to approach the other *as* Thou by understanding the interpersonal relation as a modality of the immediate participatory relation between the existent and its own proper body, a relation through which the body comes to mediate, in an immediate manner, the relation between the existent and the world.

But, as a result of his realization of the fallacy concerning the origins of opacity at the heart of incarnation, I demonstrated above that Marcel was forced to concede that the separation between the existent and the world, far from being overcome through my body, is actually inaugurated by my body, that co-existence, instead of being an existential model of ontological coherence and unity, is actually grounded in the difference between

sense-giving or meaning-bestowing power of the body, an argument that we have just seen put forward by Marcel in relation to his thoughts on incarnation.

the existent and the world that originates with the body proper. Thus, Marcel is no longer able to invoke existence understood as coherence or unitary co-participation as co-existence because incarnate existence itself seems to be rooted in difference and separation instead of in unity, coherence and co-existence; what Marcel begins to uncover by way of his realization concerning the true origins of the opacity of the body is a fundamental difference at the heart of existence, a difference that objectivity exaggerates and deploys to structure relations between the self, the world, and others according to relations of having at the level of objectivity. So, far from enabling the overcoming of difference, Marcel, by the time of *Being and Having*, comes to understand the body proper as the very purveyor of difference. Through my body as mine, difference is introduced into existence, so incarnate existence can only be understood in terms of this fundamental separation or difference that the body proper introduces between the existent and the world, a difference that is the foundation for the existent being able to affirm the existence of the world and others as being *for-me*.

Consequently, the world that comes to exist for the existent and with which the existent comes to participate in co-existence as a function of its incarnate nature—the world that exists *for-me*—is a functionalized world, a world that the existent experiences as being-for-itself. The world with which the existent co-exists pre-reflectively is one that the existent has at its disposal in terms of projects and potentialities; in other words, the unification of the existent with the world within co-existence is one structured by the tension between the existent and the things in that world, in the difference between the existent and the world that the body proper establishes within existence, and not in the ability of the body to overcome an a priori difference between the existent and its other-than-itself. The body inaugurates difference within existence and joints the existent and

the world together, makes them co-exist, by way of this fundamental difference. So, although co-existence is still best understood as inherence, coherence, and intimacy, all these terms must be re-thought in terms of the discordance of difference instead of according to the harmony of identity and unification. Seen from this perspective, it is difficult to support Levinas' claim that the I-Thou meeting for Marcel is "a modality of ontological coherence mediated by the incarnation in which the I is *for* the other" (Levinas 26-7) since incarnation, instead of mediating ontological unity and coherence, mediates difference and separation at the level of existence.

In fact, the longer that Marcel dwells on the problem of incarnation, the more difficult it becomes for him to argue for any analogy at all between the existential relation that the existent has with the world by way of incarnation and the ontological relation between the I and Thou. In fact, in order to highlight the radical difference between the levels of existence and Being, Marcel explains in *Being and Having* that "co-presence cannot be expressed in terms of co-existence. We must never forget that [the other as Thou] is not 'someone who'" (*Being and Having* 81). Here we have another instance where Levinas failed to catch the drift of Marcel's thought. This quite explicit separation of the realm of co-existence, at the center of which one discovers the experience of incarnation and the interposed body, and co-presence, a field of Being in which the I approaches the other as Thou in terms of its presence, completely goes against Levinas' claims that incarnation unifies all Being and provides the existent with access to Being. Nothing could be further from the truth of incarnation for Marcel because, within the realm of co-existence in which the existent participates with the world, the other is still a 'someone who.' The realm of co-existence does not provide access to the being of the other, to the being of the other in terms of presence. Instead, at the level of the existence,

the existent only as access to the other *as* other, *as* someone other over and against whom the existent co-exists within the world; co-existence is a way of being-with the world that, instead of being open to the presence of the other as Thou, works to reduce the presence of the other into a 'someone who.' So, since the presence of the other is not respected or maintained at the level of existence and since the body that I am is the fulcrum of existence, it is reasonable to conclude that it is the personal body itself that undermines Being and reduces the presence of the other as Thou. In this way, the level of existence is closer to the level of objectivity and the sphere of having since relations with others at the level of existence are primarily relations with others *as* others.

But, in light of Levinas' critique of Marcel's ontologization of the encounter between the I and Thou, I want to pause for a moment and offer an alternative reading of the determination of the other as other by way of the body proper at the level of existence. The primary reason why I have engaged Levinas' critique of Marcel's ontologization of sociality has been to bring to light the central role that Levinas assigns to incarnation in his critique. What I have endeavoured to demonstrate is that, while I agree with Levinas' critique of Marcel's work as being part of the Western ontological tradition that works to reduce the alterity of the other through, or by way of, Being, he completely misconstrues the part that incarnation plays for Marcel in the realization of his ontological project. So I am both arguing for and against Levinas. On the one hand, I agree with his critique of Marcel's ontological tendencies. On the other hand, however, I disagree with Levinas' contention that Being finds its way into the interpersonal in Marcel by way of incarnation. According to Levinas, Marcel's grave error was to try to articulate the interpersonal relation as a function of incarnation, of the body proper's being-for-the-other-than-itself. But, in light of the argument that I have presented which demonstrates that, in order to

develop his ontology of the interpersonal according to such categories as openness, disposability and availability, Marcel was forced to retreat from incarnation, it would perhaps be more accurate to argue that it is the body proper that approaches, engages, encounters the other in such a way as to preserve its alterity and otherness and not by way of Being and presence. Since Marcel has to dispose of the body in order to develop his ontology of the interpersonal relation, it would be more accurate to argue that incarnation does not provide access to Being, does not, in fact, tie us to Being. But Levinas does not pick up on this turning away from the body in Marcel's thought. So, as a result, he roots all of Marcel's ontological discoveries in the experience of incarnation instead of realizing that incarnation has to be overcome in order to truly participate with the other as Thou in Being because incarnation only provides access, because of its embeddedness in difference, to the other *as* other. Had Levinas read more closely, perhaps he would have realized that, since Marcel's attempt to think the I-Thou encounter in terms of Being and presence would not have been possible without the disincarnation of his thought, it is by way of incarnation that intersubjectivity comes to overflow thought and Being, that the other is approached as absolutely other.

4.2.4 Conclusions

As I have argued, the linchpin for Levinas in his reading of Marcel is incarnation because incarnation, the body that I am, "is the absolute or originary mediation of being" (Levinas 26): as the body that I am, it is the fulcrum of my existence, the point of ontological stability that guarantees or underwrites my existence, and, as the body that every thing refers back to, my body is that through which things in the world come into

existence as being *for-me*, as a function of their existence in relation to my body.

According to Levinas, incarnation accomplishes this because it is “a modality of the verb *to be* that is mediation itself” (Levinas 26); the body proper establishes my identity by passing it through the other-than-myself, by being a mode of being for oneself as being toward the other-than-oneself. As a result, the existent, by way of its own body, *is* for the other. But the ontological coherence mediated by the body is made possible by, or is a function of, a prior ontological coherence between the existent and their body proper. The fact that I am my body, that I am united with a being that is simultaneously a being that is for-me and for the other-than-me, that I am attached to a being that is mediation itself, is the very possibility for my being with others since, by way of my body, I am always already for the other, whether that other is the world, the universe, or another person. Thus, for Levinas, it is through my body, by way of which I am already for the other, that I am unified with the other and participate with the other as Thou within Being and in terms of co-presence; the relation between the I and the Thou is therefore founded upon the previous relation, or prior proximity, between the existent and the other with whom one participates in existence by way of incarnation. What founds ontological participation with the other as Thou is my participation with the other in existence by way of incarnation, by way of our prior substantial union within existence (Levinas 29).

But, as I have shown, this is exactly what Marcel begins to question about the reality of incarnation. Instead of instituting a prior relation of participation that can be the foundation for the I-Thou relation, a prior co-substantiality between the subject and the other that opens the possibility for an encounter between the I and the Thou, Marcel, by the time of *Being and Having*, begins to argue that (1) incarnation is actually the possibility and necessity for the separation or difference between the existent and the

other and (2) that, as a result, the being of the I for the other is not facilitated by the body proper. In terms of the argument in the preceding section concerning the origins of opacity, Marcel's re-capitulation goes against Levinas' claim that incarnation mediates ontological coherence by structuring the I as being-for-the-other; instead, as the source of difference and separation, the reality of incarnation is actually antithetical to the project of ontological coherence in terms of Being and presence. Incarnation seems to be more about *having* than about *being*. What Marcel uncovers at the level of existence is not ontological coherence but a sphere in which relations are centred around the existent, much as relations based in having are ego-centric and centred on the self, and are structured according to the tension between existent and object, the same sort of tension, in fact, that determines relations in the sphere of having. As we heard above, Marcel concedes that there is no room for the other at the level of sensation, that the existent is unable to make room for the other at the level of existence because, as a result of incarnation, the existent is turned in upon itself and in its dealings with the world. And it is for these reasons that Marcel will, as we shall witness momentarily, move away from characterizing the relation between the existent and its body proper in terms of being—as the body that I am—and will instead refer to the relation as one of *absolute having*.

In part, I have been trying to track the shift in Marcel's conception of the relation between the existent and the world through his uncovering of the fallacy concerning the origins of opacity and his slow retreat from drawing upon incarnation as a model for "the disposability of a consciousness capable of caring for another person [as Thou]" (*Creative Fidelity* 88). And this shift, because of the necessary parallel between the relationship between the existent and their own body and between the existent and the

world²¹, inevitably leads to a serious reconsideration of the nature of incarnation by Marcel. What we shall see in the next section is that, in light of these discoveries, Marcel comes to state that the body, as *corporeity*, is the frontier between being and having; instead of the body that I am, he will reluctantly admit that the personal proper body is at best an absolute possession that is non-bestowable. And, based on his re-evaluation of the nature of body reality, Marcel will also have to back away from his earlier statements connecting his ontological insights into the truly interpersonal encounter to his reflections on incarnate existence. Instead of being able to base or model the ontological relation between the I and the other as Thou on the unification between the existent and world that determines lived experience as an experience of unity and participatory being-with-the-world, Marcel is now forced to locate difference at the heart of existence and argue that true unification is only possible at the level of Being by way of my life. Instead of representing the Gordian knot that Marcel uses to unify the subject and the other as Thou within Being and presence, the body instead comes to inaugurate that difference that separates the existent and the world within the space and time of existence and that is ultimately responsible for the determination of interpersonal relations as impersonal meetings between the self and the other *as other*, relations that can become truly interpersonal only if realized at the level of Being as co-presence. So, instead of providing access to Being, instead of tying us to Being, incarnation inaugurates that difference within existence against which Marcel deploys the vocabulary of Being

²¹ As McCown explains in his study of the concept of availability in Marcel, “my body is in sympathy with things, and I am in sympathy with my body as I act and live in the world. To say that ‘my body is my way of being in the world’ implies both relations: of myself to my body and of my body to the world” (McCown 34).

and presence and the category of *my life* in order to realize the I-Thou encounter in terms of participation.

But what this also calls into question is the exact nature of the relationship inaugurated by incarnation between the existent and the other. One of the most interesting aspects of Levinas' critique is his insistence on the implications of Marcel's theory of incarnation on Marcel's thoughts on sociality, and it is in light of his insistence that I would like to suggest a possible way of understanding the implications of Marcel's re-evaluation of the nature of incarnation as it relates to the issue of the interpersonal relation. As I have endeavoured to show, Marcel does not, contrary to Levinas' claim, reduce sociality to a modality of incarnation; Marcel's characterization of the I-Thou relation as a relation with Being and his interpretation of the encounter with the other in light of the "spirituality of knowledge" (Levinas 29) is, in the end, not a function of incarnation. Eventually, Marcel is led to concede that co-presence, as a mode of Being, is not centred on the experience of incarnation. What this means with respect to Levinas' reading is that he is incorrect in stating that, by way of the body, Being comes to infect the unconditionality of the approach of the presence of the other. In fact, I would argue that it would be more accurate to say that the body itself, because of its structuration as interposition, is intimately related with the otherness of the other, with the other *as* other, since, through its interposition between the existent and the other as a third person, the body—as corporeity—introduces opacity into the encounter, an opacity that works to separate the existent from the world and from others by somehow undermining the unity of co-existence understood as a relation based in co-presence. And this works hand-in-hand with Marcel's equation of existence with the sphere of having because, as you may

recall from the previous chapter, the other is implied in the sphere of having *as* other, as an other who is a threat to the self and whom the self distinguishes from itself as other.

Therefore, Levinas is fundamentally wrong when he claims that, for Marcel, “the interhuman encounter is but a modality of that ontological coherence mediated by the incarnation in which the I is *for* the other” (Levinas 26-7). Instead what Marcel comes to discover is that there is no ontological coherence, a coherence that would function as the foundational principle for the I-Thou encounter, between the existent and the other at the level of existence; instead, between the existent and the other, one finds the body proper that presides over a relation based in difference and separation, not ontological coherence. Thus the chain opacity-incarnation-co-existence-Being-presence is broken, and the ontological coherence between the existent and the world that was based in the relation of the existent with its body proper expressed in the phrase ‘I am my body’ no longer situates the I for the other in terms of co-existence understood as unification. Instead, the body that I am seems to only open the existent to its other-than-itself *as* other. In this respect, corporeity is central to the absolute alterity of the other-than-oneself, to its being as absolutely other. In Levinas’ terms, the body is central to the unconditionality of the approach of the other *as* other. So, I would argue, contrary to Levinas, that, in the long run, Marcel had to *turn away* from incarnation, not embrace it, in order to articulate his concept of the non-objective encounter between the I and the Thou in terms of co-presence and Being because the body would not, for reasons that I hope to explain in a minute, make itself available for such a reductive conception of the I-Thou relation in which “being and presence remain the ultimate support of meaning” (Levinas 23).

What I have stressed in the above reading is that Levinas is absolutely correct in critiquing the reduction of the alterity of the other to the same in the context of the I-Thou

meeting as presented by Marcel; however, what he seems to have overlooked in the course of the essay is the fact that Marcel was only able to articulate the interpersonal relation by way of the signifying chain connecting Being and presence once he began to revoke his earlier claims concerning the body and the fact of incarnation as being the fulcrum of existence. Instead of being the harbinger of Being and presence, incarnation for Marcel proved to be, in the end, another source of non-disposability—in fact, the very non-disposable source of disposability—that works to disrupt the co-presence of the subject with the other as Thou within Being. That means that, since Marcel's project was carried out under the auspices of Being and presence in order to realize the unification of the subject with the other by way of their co-presence to one another within the common space of Being, the fact of incarnation—the fact that I am my body—overflows Being and is instead rooted in some fundamental difference. Instead of being able to use the body to bring the self and other together in the substantial union of the I-Thou, perhaps the truth is that Marcel had to dump the body because of its stubborn insistence at the level of existence on the exteriority of the other *as* other. Instead of the personal body being the “absolute or originary mediation of being” (Levinas 26), the body must be understood as the absolute and originary mediation of difference. The path that Marcel's thought takes in *Being and Having* opens onto an interpretation of incarnation that repudiates Levinas' claims that all Being is tied together into unity through human incarnation and that the body connects us to the Being of the other and provides us with knowledge of the Being of the other, knowledge that enables us to reduce the alterity of the other and to thereby approach the other in terms of the same; instead, as we shall now see, Marcel's discovery of incarnation as an instance of absolute having, as a fundamental non-availability that he

terms corporeity, forces one to conclude that the body is in fact that reality or existence that inaugurates existence through difference.

4.3 Marcel's Theory of Corporeity

What I was arguing in the previous section was that Levinas did not see that, instead of facilitating Marcel's ontological articulation of the I-Thou encounter in terms of Being and presence, the body, during the course of his mediations in *Being and Having*, had become a major obstacle to his ontological ambitions and that he needed to re-focus his existential investigations in order to determine the I-Thou meeting as ontological coherence and co-presence. As a result of his reading, Levinas was not able to exhume the remains of the body that Marcel buried within his text and continued to believe that the state of incarnation was the founding principle behind Marcel's development of the notions of ontological receptivity and hospitality as acts of opening oneself or giving oneself to the other, acts through which one made room in oneself for the other through the realization of the state of *being-at-home*. The pre-ordination or pre-disposition towards the other that is at the heart of Marcel's conception of the betweenness of the I-Thou encounter and to which Levinas objects is erroneously attributed by Levinas to the state of incarnation; as Levinas presents it, the ontological receptivity of the subject towards the presence of the other is, according to Marcel, simply a modality of the pre-disposition of the body to the world and to others as a being for the other-than-itself, a pre-disposition that constitutes the existent as always already being *for-the-other*.

But, as we have seen, Marcel insists that disposability, or making oneself available to the other, is only, at best, *analogous* to the pure existential receptivity of the

body since, at the level of existence, there is no room in my sensations for the other. So the primary problem with incarnate sensation in terms of the relation between the existent and the other is the body's fundamental unavailability. But to whom is the body proper unavailable? Is the body unavailable to the other? If we recall Marcel's contention that ontological availability involves making room for the other in oneself and that there is no room for the other at the level of existence because of the existent's complete absorption in its own sensations, then it becomes clear that the body proper is actually unavailable to the existent. But why is the body indisposed in relation to the existent? The best way to understand the non-disposability of the body in relation to the existent is to consider the dominant characteristics of ontological receptivity, that action through which the subject opens itself to, makes itself receptive to, the presence of the other as Thou. What the existential receptivity of the body does not open onto is the possibility of active preordination or readiness that Marcel claims is at the heart of the ontological posture of disposability or availability in which the I-Thou encounter is rooted. Ontological disposability, in other words, is for Marcel an active state, an active state of readiness that the subject adopts and maintains in a creative manner, as he explains in *Creative Fidelity*: "I hold in principle, that reception, hence receptivity, can only be considered in connection with a certain readiness or preordination. A person receives others in a room in a house, if necessary, in a garden; not on unknown ground or in a forest. Here we might supply further nuances of meaning and introduce in addition to the relation of inherence, the rather subtle...relation embodied in the expression *being-at-home*" (*Creative Fidelity* 89). Marcel comes to understand ontological receptivity as "a gift,...even a gift of *self*, of the person who is involved in the act of hospitality. Actually we are not concerned with filling up some empty space with an alien presence, but of

having the other person participate in a certain reality, in a certain plenitude. To provide hospitality is truly to communicate something of oneself to the other” (*Creative Fidelity* 91).

As I argued in the previous chapter, there seem to be three interwoven conceptions around which the ontological availability of the subject is organized: the concepts of activity and personal involvement or participation and the state of *being-at-home*. In terms of the first two concepts, receptivity towards the other and fidelity towards the presence of the other require that the subject adopt an attitude of continuous active creativity; the subject must be personally involved in opening itself to and maintaining the presence of the other as Thou. As I have mentioned, the other key concept that goes together with receptivity is the state of *being-at-home*. One’s own house must be in order before one can receive the other, or, more precisely, one must put one’s own house in order in order to be in a position to be available to give oneself as a gift to the other. The act of hospitality involves giving oneself as a gift to the other, making oneself available to the other, in such a way that the other is able to participate as a presence within the common space of one’s dwelling. Being-at-home involves preparing a space of Being in which the subject and the other can participate in terms of co-presence and making it available to the presence of the other should the other approach.

In light of my contention that, contrary to Levinas’ reading, Marcel eventually discovers that, at its most basic, the experience of incarnation is something that must be overcome instead of recuperated, one could look ahead and argue that the interposed body undermines the tenets of activity, personalism, and being-at-home that ground Marcel’s discourse of Being and presence around the interpersonal meeting. In fact, the concept of corporeity that Marcel comes to substitute for the experience of incarnation in *Being and*

Having is characterized by a fundamental passivity and impersonality that keeps the existent from being able to give its body to the other as a gift or to make its body available to the other. The problem with corporeity will be that, because the nature of bodily reality is one of interposition, the existent is unable to make room for the other in their own body and cannot pre-ordain or pre-dispose its own body in such a way as to make it receptive to the other in terms of presence. Understood in contrast to ontological availability, the non-disposability of the body in relation to the existent seems to be based in a fundamental inability on the part of the existent to actively make room for the other within its body, to make a gift of its body to the other, or to give its body to the other unconditionally. Simply put, the body cannot be given as a gift.

As I have stressed, Marcel presents the I in the I-Thou relation as an active I and contends that, in order to be faithful to the presence of the other, the subject must actively make itself available to the other, actively open itself or prepare itself to receive the presence of the other. And this ties into the inherently personal nature of the interpersonal relation in Marcel since the subject must personally commit itself to the other in order to receive the other as Thou. This insistence on the active personal nature of ontological receptivity leads me to suspect that bodily reality begins to open, as Marcel digs further into the experience of incarnation, onto an existential attitude of unavailability that is inherently passive and impersonal. As a result of the kernel of non-disposability that he uncovers at the heart of the existential experience of being incarnate, Marcel begins to retreat from any attempt to ground ontological receptivity and hospitality in incarnation. In other words, contrary to Levinas' claim that the body is at the heart of the I-Thou encounter and that it is through incarnation that the I and Thou

come to participate together in a space of Being and presence, Marcel comes to see the body as an obstacle to such a conception of intersubjectivity.

4.3.1 *From Incarnation to Corporeity*

The issue of disposability marks the point in *Being and Having* where Marcel returns to the distinction between the relations of being and having. On March 11, 1931, Marcel contrasts the charitable act—an act of generosity—with having and argues that, while charity involves presence—in particular, the presence of the subject understood as absolute disposability towards the other because “charity is presence in the sense of the absolute gift of one’s-self, a gift which implies no impoverishment to the giver, far from it” (*Being and Having* 69)—the reality of possession is one of non-disposability because the self is tied up with or in its possessions to such an extent that a sense of impoverishment is the result of giving away something that I possess. For Marcel, things that one possesses get in the way of true relations with others because, in the realm of having, one is not likely to respond to the presence of the other by way of a gift (whether that gift is oneself or a possession) because of the sense of loss involved in any such act: the self will either feel the loss of its possessions because the self is “affected, in the strongest sense of the word, by their presence or absence” (*Being and Having* 69) or will be too tied to its possessions, too invested in the objects at its disposal, to give itself to the other. In fact, such non-disposability “is inseparable from a kind of self-adherence” (*Being and Having* 69) in which the self is glued to itself in such a way that there is no room within the self for the other; as Marcel states, there seems to be an essential connection between “non-disposability—and consequently non-presence—and self-

preoccupation” (*Being and Having* 72). In other words, as I have already argued, the sphere of having is centred around the self, around the *qui* that possesses the *quid*. Thus having is a form of self-adherence because, by way of its possessions, the self is occupied with its possessions and, by extension, with itself. This self-adherence in the sphere of having is similar to that which, at the level of existence, structures or determines the being-for-the-other of the incarnate existent; you may recall that the problem with existential receptivity is that the act of sensation is pre-occupied with the existent. But states of ontological disposability or receptivity, such as charity, through which the subject participates with the other as Thou in Being, involve the dissolution of the boundary that separates the subject and the other; instead of being absorbed in itself or completely occupied with itself or its own possessions, the subject places itself at the disposal of the other, places everything in one’s possession at the disposal of the other, including one’s self, and thereby opens itself to receive the presence of the other.

On March 27 of the same year, Marcel begins to explicitly draw out the relationship between non-disposability and his earlier thoughts concerning ‘my body.’ The entry begins with some remarks on co-presence in relation to the presence of God in one’s life. Marcel comments that, in order not to betray the presence of God, the subject must not approach God as ‘someone who’ because this is a denial of co-presence. As is the case with mystery, co-presence denotes the engagement of the subject with the other in terms of presence, which means that such spatial coordinates as *before* and *in front of* become meaningless. Co-presence is therefore rooted in the presence of the subject to the other that is realized by way of ontological disposability; consequently, approaching God, or any other, as ‘someone who’ is rooted in an attitude of non-disposability, the attitude that is at the root of objectivity. Then Marcel turns his attention to relating “the notion of

non-disposability with [his] earlier remarks on 'my body' ...[and to] that property which makes it impossible for me to picture a body as living except on condition of thinking of it as the 'body of...'," a property that he comes to denote as *corporeity* (*Being and Having* 82). This statement of intent seems to equate the body proper, *my body*, with non-disposability and having, at least to the extent that any living body is always someone's body, thereby betraying the presence of that person and causing them to be approached as a person, as a 'someone who' has various powers at their disposal, and not as a presence.

From this point on in the text, one begins to witness a growing separation between the levels of existence and Being around the issue of the disposability of the self towards the other. What Marcel begins to find unsettling about the nature of bodily reality is the fact that, because I am incarnate, I necessarily approach any other at the pre-reflective level of existence as 'someone who,' an approach that is based on the objectification of the presence of that other to myself by way of my body and by way of the other's incarnation; my body and the body of the other necessarily, at the level of existence, involve me in relations with other existents in which I come to reduce their presence to that of a 'someone who.' This structuring of interpersonal relations at the level of existence is in marked contrast to the form that relations between the I and the other as Thou take for Marcel. Ontological interpersonal relations involve participation in Being by way of presence, and approaching the other by way of their presence involves not reducing the other to a 'someone who.' In other words, such mysterious relations involve the dissolution of the boundaries between the subject and the other and result in an inability to separate one's self from the other; instead of reducing the presence of the other to being a someone who stands before oneself or in front of oneself, ontological

participation with the other as Thou involves making oneself available to receive the presence of the other and to be with the other in Being in such a way that the distinction between self and other is put out of play. Consequently, Marcel is left to conclude that incarnation actually impedes participation with the other by way of co-presence; ontological participation can in no way be a function of our existential state of incarnation because the body proper necessarily works to reduce and objectify all others as 'others who.' Thus, the pre-reflective being-for-the-other that is a structural feature of incarnation is a *being-for* that is not open to the presence of the other, that does not approach the other as presence. With this in mind, it would be simply incorrect to argue that the body proper ties us to Being and opens onto the presence of the other; since incarnation necessarily works to reduce the presence of the other to a 'someone who,' the body proper is a stumbling block to co-presence and ontological participation with the other as Thou at the level of Being.

But a mystery resides at the heart of the body proper, namely a mysterious bond between the existent and their own body, that is the very possibility of conceiving of a body as the 'body of...'. The question then becomes how to conceive of the difference between the existential participation of the existent with their own body and the ontological mode of participation that structures the I-Thou relation. For Marcel, the central difference between these modes of participation is a function of their relation to the concept of disposability. My body, because of its fundamental rootedness in non-disposability, necessarily approaches all others and establishes relations with other existents within the sphere of having; because of the kernel of non-disposability that is at the heart of the pre-reflective bodily being-for-the-other of the existent, all relations with

other existents at the level of existence are relations with 'others who,' relations in which the presence of the other is betrayed and objectified by the body proper.

But true ontological participation with the other requires the possibility of making oneself receptive to the presence of the other. So, the subject must be able to make a gift of itself to the other, to place itself completely at the disposal of the other, in order to participate with the other as Thou in Being; in other words, the only way to remain faithful to the presence of the other is to actively place oneself at the disposal of the other, to give oneself over to the presence of the other and to make oneself receptive to the approach of their presence. Thus, the only option available for Marcel is to argue that ontological participation must be fundamentally dis-incarnate since the body proper is for-the-other in such a way that it betrays the presence of the other. And this is exactly what Marcel states in his entry for March 27:

[c]orporeity to be regarded as the frontier district between being and having. All having defines itself somehow in terms of *my body*, i.e. in terms of something which, being itself an 'absolute having' ceases in virtue of this fact to be a 'possession' in any sense of the word. 'Having' is being able to dispose of, having a power over; it seems clear to me that this disposal or power always implies the interposal of the organism, i.e. of something about which, for that very reason, I cannot say that it is at my disposal. The metaphysical mystery of non-disposability may essentially consist in the impossibility, for me, of really being able to dispose of what gives me the disposal of things...But it is obvious that [disposing of my body by killing myself] has as its immediate result the impossibility of disposing of it...My body is something of which I can only dispose, in the absolute sense of the term, by putting it in such a state that I shall no longer have any power to dispose of it. This absolute disposal is therefore in reality a putting out of use. (*Being and Having* 82)

The above entry is the first instance in which Marcel uses the term *corporeity*²² to describe the nature of bodily reality, and it is specifically deployed in reference to the

²² *Corporeity* is a rather archaic word that refers to the state of having or being a body, to the materiality of existence. In the context of the above quotation, Marcel uses the term *corporeity* to denote the body interposed between the existent and the world that is at its

rootedness of incarnation in non-disposability. Although the term is never picked up by Marcel in any systematic manner in his later work, I feel it testifies to Marcel's most profound insights into the nature of the body proper, to his discovery of the kernel of non-availability that structures the relationship that binds the existent to their own body and that seems to be the non-relational relation at the heart of all relations, including ontological relations with others.

Marcel now presents the body as being the frontier between being and having: although the body is a possession, something that I have, it is a possession in an absolute sense in that it is absolutely mine. While being a possession (something that I have), my body is also something that I am (something absolute), although Marcel does not want to use the vocabulary of Being because he wants to reserve those terms for truly ontological states that are determined according to the possibility of disposability. What this shift in terminology signals is Marcel's interest in distinguishing between the way in which incarnation, as corporeity, places the world at my disposal (as something that I have at my disposal) and the way in which, through such ontological acts as charity and hospitality, the subject places itself at the disposal of the presence of the other. As an instance of absolute having, corporeity refers to the organism disposed between myself and the world that places the world at my disposal, that places me in a position of *being able to...* in relation to the world. Through my corporeity, the world is charged with a potentiality that

disposal, the body that is felt to be my body and which, as a result, is not at my disposal as an object; it refers to the body that I am and that makes any use of my body and objects in the world possible by placing them at my disposal. Also, by the time of *Being and Having*, Marcel is reluctant to use the phrase 'I am my body' to refer to the relation between the existent and their own proper body; instead of characterizing the relation using the verb 'to be,' Marcel has recourse to the vocabulary of having and refers to the relation between existent and their body as a case of *absolute having* and to the felt body

enables me to make use of the world, that places that world at my disposal. However, as Marcel states, that which places the world at my disposal is fundamentally non-disposable, unavailable to be disposed of, because that which is the founding principle of all disposability—including ontological disposability—must of necessity precede all relations based in disposability (whether having objects at my disposal or placing myself at the disposal of the other) as their very condition of possibility. Or, to put it another way, the passive pre-reflective interposition of the body proper between the existent and the world is the very possibility of action, of any having at one's disposal. So, one cannot state that the body that I am, my personal body, is at my disposal since, as interposed, it is the very possibility of having something at one's disposal. Thus, the passively—for lack of a better word—interposed body is the very foundation for all activity, including the creative activity through which the subject makes itself available to the other and maintains the presence of the other through creative fidelity.

As a result, having power over something or someone—including power over oneself so as to be able to make a gift of oneself to the other, so as to be able to prepare oneself to receive the presence of the other—necessarily involves a relation of absolute having, a relation based in non-disposability, that unites the existent with its own body. In other words, states of being that are rooted in ontological disposability and are true ways of being-with an other because they involve the subject opening itself to the presence of the other and actively committing itself to the presence of the other as Thou, are rooted, through incarnation, in a fundamental stance of non-disposability, namely the non-disposability of the body to the existent. Thus, the absolute disposability of the

as an *absolute possession*. To further reinforce the distinction, he also refers to this bond as a metaphysical mystery and not as an ontological one.

subject to the other that is realized through the placing of oneself absolutely at the disposal of the other is conditioned by the fundamental non-disposability of one's body, which is a result of the fact that one's body proper is that which places things at my disposal. Ontological disposability is rooted in existential non-disposability.

Approaching the other by way of presence through the active pre-disposition of oneself to the presence of the other—by making oneself available to the other, by placing oneself at the disposal of the other—at the level of Being is made possible by the fundamental non-disposability of my body at the level of existence, and it is this reality of non-disposability that frustrates any attempt at the level of existence to approach the other by way of their presence.

But, since Levinas' critique of Marcel is directed against the fact that the latter reduces the alterity of the other through his reliance on the vocabulary of Being and presence to articulate the interpersonal relation between the I and the Thou, would it not perhaps have been more fruitful to look at how the existent approaches the other by way of the non-disposability at the heart of corporeity? Since the interpersonal relation at the level of Being is based in disposability, in the ability of the subject to place itself at the absolute disposal of the other, and since ontological participation is understood as a being faithful to the presence of the other, would it not be fruitful, if one was interested in articulating the interpersonal relation otherwise than according to the vocabulary of Being and presence, to investigate how the other is approached by way of corporeity?

4.3.2 Corporeity, Non-disposability and the Relation with the Other

What the above exposition has demonstrated is that, far from being a simple modality of the way in which the body is for the other-than-itself, the I that is co-present in Being with the Thou is ontologically for-the-other in a way that is fundamentally different from corporeity. While the I in the I-Thou relation is for the other in terms of disposability, corporeity is a form of being-for-the-other that is based in non-disposability, and, while ontological disposability opens onto Being and the presence of the other by way of the active subject that places itself at the disposal of the other, existential non-disposability seems to open the existent to the other *as* other, as ‘someone who.’ So, contrary to Levinas’ claim, Being is not smuggled into Marcel’s theory of the interpersonal by way of the body since the body, understood as corporeity, does not provide a mode of access to the presence of the other. But is it possible then, since corporeity, rooted in non-disposability, does not open the existent to the presence of the other, that corporeity is necessarily somehow involved with the alterity of the other, with its otherness? Since the body proper is not at my disposal and since I am unable to prepare my body to receive the other in terms of presence and within the field of Being, does that mean that corporeity is necessarily implicated in the alterity of the other?

In response to the above questions, I am of the opinion that corporeity could prove to be a useful term for pursuing interpersonal relations in which the alterity or otherness of the other is respected and preserved. In other words, in light of this newly discovered incompatibility between corporeity and Being, I would argue that perhaps the truth of sociality understood as fidelity to the alterity of the other, to the approach of the other *as* other, should be pursued by way of bodily reality understood as corporeity and not in spite of it. In this respect, Levinas has, unwittingly, repeated the development of Marcel’s thoughts on sociality step for step, except that he has remained sensitive to the

vocabulary of Being and presence in order to articulate sociality otherwise. What is interesting is that, from his critique, it is evident that both Marcel and Levinas pursue the reality of sociality in spite of the body—Marcel because he comes to understand the body in terms of corporeity and nondisposability, terms that denote the irreducibility of relations between the embodied existent, the world, and others to the vocabulary of Being and presence, and Levinas because he misinterprets the body proper as that medium by way of which we communicate with Being and that thus puts us in touch with the presence of the other instead of with its alterity and otherness. As a result, both philosophers, despite their differences, come to locate true interpersonal relations in a transcendent sphere that is placed over and against—or, more precisely, beyond—the sphere of immanence and existence in which the existent is in contact with the world by way of their incarnation. And by dumping the proper body, by disposing of the nondisposable interposed body from their work, both theorists overlook the critical role of corporeity in the realization of a relation to the other that ensures the alterity of the other instead of unifying the other with the subject within Being, that is a function of the exteriority or otherness of the other and not of its sameness, and that places the existent in proximity to the other without reducing the other to its presence in Being.

4.3.2.1 Corporeity, Passivity, and the Impersonal

But what is it specifically about the body as corporeity that makes it unsuitable for articulations of sociality according to the vocabulary of Being and presence? What makes the body, and the relations it mediates at the level of existence between the existent, the world, and the other, fundamentally non-ontologizable? In what is this non-disposability of corporeity rooted? As I argued above, because the body is the very possibility of

having things at one's disposal, of having the power to dispose of things, the existent cannot make a gift of itself to the other at the level of existence because its body proper is fundamentally unavailable to itself. And because of this non-disposability of the body, the existent always already approaches the other at the level of existence as other, as a 'someone who,' instead of in terms of their presence as Thou. What Marcel contends is that, because my body is not completely at my disposal—because it is the very possibility of being able to dispose of something—I have no power over my body in order to give it absolutely to the other and thereby approach the other in terms of presence; while the self-conscious subject is able to give itself completely to the other, to make a gift of itself to the other so that the other can make of it what it will, the pre-reflective existent is unable to give itself completely to the other because its incarnate existence, which is rooted in the bond between the existent and its own body, is unavailable for such absolute disposal. As a result, at the level of existence, the other only exists for-the-existent *as* other and the existent is unable to open itself to the presence of the other as Thou.

For Marcel, ontological interpersonal relations are based in conscious active commitment and creative activity by way of second reflection on the part of the subject with respect to the other, and this is exactly what is impossible for the existent in relation to others at the level of existence because its corporeity is rooted in a fundamental non-disposability. My body, as the very possibility of having things at my disposal and of being able to dispose of things, as the very possibility of placing oneself at the disposal of the other, is fundamentally not at my disposal. In other words, I am unable to dispose of my body as I wish because, as corporeity, it remains outside of my grasp, because something of my body always already remains if I try to dispose of it and put it out of use since any attempt to dispose of my body necessarily requires my collaborating with the

very body that I am trying to dispose of since it is that which places things at my disposal. With respect to corporeity, with respect to that pre-reflective non-relational relation between the existent and its own body that places all things in relation to the existent by placing them at its disposal—enabling one to use them as one wishes, enabling one's *being able to...*—the existent is completely passive since that non-relational relation is the condition for any action or activity. In relation to my corporeity, I am a passive participant, but the term 'passive' must not be understood in relation to the active subject that actualizes or realizes ontological disposability and opens itself to the presence of the other. Instead, one must understand that this form of passivity occurs at the level of existence and involves the relation between a pre-reflective existent, the world, and others as it is mediated by the body proper and that contrasting this pre-reflective passivity with the conscious activity of commitment of the subject is not legitimate because the very distinction between activity and passivity is itself rooted in this fundamental passivity that the existent experiences in relation to their corporeity as the condition for its possibility. Thus, pre-reflective passivity precedes as the necessary condition for the dichotomy between active and passive that Marcel uses in conjunction with other dichotomies, such as between Being and having, presence and absence, observation and testimony or bearing witness to..., to develop his philosophy of the interpersonal.

So, stated differently, this radical passivity at the heart of corporeity means that my body is not mine to give. In relation to ontological disposability, the problem is that participation with the other as Thou within Being, as Marcel has developed it, requires making oneself available to the other and creative fidelity towards the presence of that other; because of the tension between the personal and Being that is at the heart of the ontological, the subject must personally commit itself to the other, to the presence of the

other. However, what Marcel discovers within incarnation is a fundamental non-disposability of the body that makes all disposability, including the ontological disposability of the subject towards the other as Thou, possible. And this nondisposability is based in the inherent passivity—on the part of the existent—of the body interposed between the existent, the world, and others, a passivity that makes the nature of bodily reality as interposition highly *impersonal*. There is something at the heart of incarnation—what Marcel calls corporeity—that is not at *my* disposal, something that I am unable to make mine and dispose of as I see fit, whether that means placing myself at the disposal of the other or using an instrument at my disposal. Corporeity thus refers to the impersonal non-disposability of the interposed body that Marcel uncovers at the heart of the pre-reflective experience of incarnation. It is that aspect of bodily reality that, as the very possibility of disposability, as the opening onto availability, is itself unavailable to the existent. Corporeity is the impersonal pre-reflective and pre-objective opening of the existent onto the world and to others, an *opening onto* that is inherently non-disposable as the very possibility of having at one's disposal, as the very possibility of all activity. It is the inactive/passive incarnate beginning of all activity.

4.3.2.2 The Distinction between *My Body* and *My Life*

Both of these characteristics of corporeity—passivity and impersonality—are antithetical to Marcel's determination of the I-Thou encounter according to ontological disposability and his insistence on the relation being based in active and creative fidelity and personal commitment to the presence of the other, acts that I would argue, following Levinas, work to reduce the alterity of the other to presence and Being. But, keeping Levinas' critique in mind, the question remains as to how Being comes to find its way

into the interpersonal relation in Marcel. If the body is not responsible for opening the I-Thou encounter to Being and presence, how is it that Being comes to contaminate the between-ness of the I-Thou in Marcel? This is where the category of my life that Merleau-Ponty refers to in his review of *Being and Having* becomes important. As Marcel explains on April 10, 1931, “I have only the absolute disposal of my life (we will no longer say, of my body) if I put myself in such a condition that I never dispose of it again” (*Being and Having* 87). As we have seen, the reason that the existent does not have absolute disposal of its own body is that the reality of incarnation, at its root, is opaque and non-disposable to the existent. Because of the existent’s absolute involvement in, or bond with, its own body, the existent cannot wholly and absolutely put its body out of use and place itself at the disposal of the other. As a result, the existent’s participation in existence by way of its corporeity does not grant it access to the presence of another person because the non-disposability of the body works to reduce the presence of the person to that of ‘someone who.’ Thus, our corporeity refers to an irrepressible non-disposability at the heart of incarnate existence that Marcel terms the “irresistable encroachment of my body upon me” (*Being and Having* 83), and it is because of the irresistable encroachment of my body upon my existence, which places my existence under the sign of non-disposability, that Marcel is forced to transcend existence towards Being and to introduce the category of my life in order to realize the truth of human being as disposability or availability.

So, it is according to the category of my life, which is wholly and completely at my disposal, that true interpersonal relations become possible for Marcel. The I-Thou encounter becomes, therefore, a possibility rooted in the desire of the subject to give its life to the other, to place its life absolutely at the disposal of the other. As a conscious

subject, the I no longer needs to worry about corporeity because its life is completely at its disposal. Marcel has discovered, beyond corporeity, an existential category that is completely at my disposal and over which I have complete control: I can objectify my life by approaching as an object, as something that I have but from which I am separate, as in the sphere of having, or I can, through the conscious act of making myself receptive to the presence of the other in my life, become my life and place myself at the disposal of the other. In other words, I am able to place my life completely at the disposal of the other and come to be for the other in Being. This is in marked contrast to the pure receptivity of corporeity, which seems to exist for the other-than-itself passively, at least as it concerns the conscious subject since, as I have argued, this pre-reflective being for the other-than-itself that characterizes corporeity is irrecoverable by the subject because it is the very possibility of recuperation in the first place.

One way to understand the non-disposability of *corporeity* in relation to the disposability of *my life* is in terms of the distinction that Marcel puts in place between the acts of suicide and martyrdom. Both suicide and martyrdom are related to the question of disposability: while suicide is rooted in an attitude of non-disposability, martyrdom is based in an attitude of disposability, where the martyr has given his/her life to God so that God can make of it what He wishes. As Marcel contends on January 16, 1933, “[t]he being who is absolutely disposable for others does not allow himself the right to dispose freely of himself. [It may prove useful to think about the] link between suicide and non-disposability” (*Being and Having* 124). Marcel links disposability to the subject’s openness to the other, an availability that puts any power that the subject might have to dispose of itself out of play; disposability means opening oneself to the potentialities of the other and putting one’s own potentiality completely in the hands of the other. Marcel

also views both acts as attempts to overcome or transcend relations of having towards the realm of Being; however, only the act of martyrdom truly enables the subject to assert transcendency over having. While suicide is an illusionary form of transcendence doomed to failure because it involves disposing of something, namely the personal body, that is not at one's disposal, martyrdom is a true act of transcendency because it involves the subject sacrificing its life for/to the other. While one cannot absolutely dispose of one's body, one can absolutely dispose of one's life, as the reality of sacrifice makes evident: "But the reality of sacrifice is there somehow to prove to us in fact that being *can* assert transcendency over having. There lies the deepest significance of martyrdom considered as witness: it *is* the witness" (*Being and Having* 84). So, at the level of Being, I am unable to dispose absolutely of my body because it is the very possibility of disposal in the first place; however, I am able to be my life and to dispose of it absolutely, as in the case of martyrdom understood as being a witness. Thus, the gulf seems to widen between incarnation and ontological disposability to such an extent that, on March 31, 1931, Marcel asks whether "our 'absolute having' of our bodies (which is, by the way, no 'having' at all) really a condition of a spiritual 'having' such as [in the case of martyrdom understood as the absolute disposal of one's-self]" (*Being and Having* 85)? The eventual answer, in light of his unearthing of corporeity, is no, and he comes to state two years later in *Being and Having* that, "beyond corporeity, we must grasp my relation to my life" (*Being and Having* 147).

This is another example of the divergence between corporeity and ontological disposability that testifies to the rootedness of corporeity in passivity and impersonality, a dissonance that forces Marcel to jettison the body from his work and introduce the category of my life as the fulcrum of one's existence. What Marcel is slowly bringing to

light is the rootedness of corporeity in non-disposability, an aspect of bodily reality over which the subject has no power. While ontological disposability is based in the presence to oneself of one's life over which the subject has power and can dispose of at will, the incarnate existent cannot dispose of their own body because that very body is the possibility of *being able to dispose of*.... As Marcel explains, the body that I am is "a principle of disturbance, whose possibilities we cannot fathom. The order which I have set up within me depends on something over which, in the last analysis, I have no power" (*Being and Having* 146). Ontologically, the subject can absolutely dispose of its life but is unable to dispose of its own body because corporeity is the very possibility of having power over something. In the case of the distinction between suicide and martyrdom, the passivity of the self in relation to its own personal body that it tries to sacrifice ensures the failure of suicide as an act of transcendence beyond relations of having because the self is unable to give its body absolutely and entirely to the other and is unable, as a result, to open itself and make itself available to the presence of the other. In the case of martyrdom, the disposability of the martyr rests in the martyr's making his/her life available to the other, whether to God or to his/her persecutors, so that they can make of it what they will. While the act of suicide rests on the mistaken assumption that my body belongs to me, is at my disposal, martyrdom is rooted in the realization that, while my body does not belong to me, my life is at my disposal: on September 27, 1931, Marcel writes that "[m]y body belongs and does not belong to me; that is the root of the difference between suicide and martyrdom" (*Being and Having* 148). The body that I am is both at my disposal, as in the case of the body that I use as an instrument, as the body that I have, and radically not at my disposal because it is the very possibility of *being able*

to dispose of...; the power over things that constitutes all relations of having is rooted in an existential powerlessness in relation to one's body.

This is in marked contrast to the ability of the subject to dispose of its life, to place its life at the disposal of the other and to realize or actualize a relation of co-presence with the other as Thou within Being that Marcel explains on January 16, 1933, as follows: "The being who is absolutely disposable for others does not allow himself the right to dispose freely of himself" (*Being and Having* 124). As Marcel has stressed in the past, participation in Being occurs as a result of the tension between the personal commitment of the subject and the depths of Being, a tension that is actively realized and maintained in Being by the subject that places itself at the disposal of the other and remains faithful to their presence. Therefore, corporeity cannot be a passage to Being since the participation of the existent with the world and with others that is a function of corporeity's being for the other-than-itself is not active in the sense that Marcel gives to the term; since corporeity is fundamentally radical non-disposability, the subject cannot dispose of its body and give it to the other unconditionally and absolutely, which is one of the requirements for participation with the presence of the other.

4.3.2.3 Inter-corporeity

What Marcel is highlighting by way of the distinction between suicide and martyrdom is the difference between two modes of being-with-others: suicide, which is a relation based in having since it "depends upon something over which...I have no power" (*Being and Having* 146) and involves disposing of something that is external to the subject, that is finally not fully one's own, and martyrdom, which is a relation based in Being because it depends upon something, namely my life, over which I have absolute

power since I can identify myself with it absolutely and dispose of it at will. So, what comes to trouble Marcel about corporeity is the irreducible remainder that the conscious subject is unable to incorporate into itself as its own, as something at its disposal, because that irreducible remainder is that which places such things as one's life at one's disposal in the first place.

And this has a tremendous impact upon interpersonal relations mediated by corporeity and those mediated by the category of one's life. Since one's corporeity is not at one's disposal and cannot be given to or placed at the disposal of the other, an act of giving that, according to Marcel, is the necessary pre-condition for truly interpersonal relations with the presence of the other as Thou, corporeity does not open the existent to Being and to relations of co-presence. Corporeity, because of its rootedness in non-disposability, does not open onto ontological availability that is the condition for the possibility of experiencing true sociality, of approaching the other by way of their presence and within Being; the non-disposability of my body prohibits me from realizing or actualizing myself as one who does not belong to oneself, as one who, through the act of ontological availability, places oneself absolutely at the disposal of the presence of the other. Thus the non-disposability that characterizes the way in which corporeity is for the other-than-itself impacts enormously on how the existent, at the level of existence, exists with others. The way in which the body proper is with the world, the way in which it structures the world in terms of potentiality because the world comes to exist for-me by way of my body which enables me to act in the world, is such that it determines all existential interpersonal relations—existential relations with others—as relations with others *as* others. Thus, corporeity, because it establishes relations between the existent and the world based in power, in a power over, in a *being able to...*, places the existent in

a relation of having with the world; co-existence is, in other words, a relation based in having. As such, my body “is a function of an order which carries with it references to another *qua* another” (*Being and Having* 148-9). Marcel supplements this insight with a footnote that reads as follows: “The connecting link is the fact that the distinction between within and without implies effects of perspective, which are only possible where the distinction is drawn between the *same* and the *other*” (*Being and Having* 149). In this way, at the level of existence, the other is always already there; by way of corporeity and its relation of non-disposability with the existent, the other is always already with the existent, is always already implied in the existent.

Since all relations of having structurally contain within themselves a reference to others *as* others and since corporeity is a case of absolute having, the other is necessarily implicated with the existent, at the level of existence, *as* other. This is in contrast to the way in which the subject is co-present with the other as Thou within Being, since, “in the order of being, the Other tends to melt away and be denied” (*Being and Having* 149). Thus, an extremely pronounced difference begins to emerge between ontological *intersubjectivity* and existential *inter-corporeity* in Marcel’s thought. While the I-Thou relation, based in Being, is a mysterious relation with the presence of the other as Thou in which the boundary between within and without dissolves, existential relations with others carry within them a reference to the other *as* other, are structured according to the difference between the same and the other that is rooted in the non-relational relation between the existent and its non-disposed body proper in which the other *as* other is already there. What Marcel designates by the term corporeity is the fact that the body proper carries within it references to the other *as* other, in terms of its difference and alterity rather than according to its sameness and presence. And these references are

carried precisely in the non-disposability of corporeity. In other words, all existential relations between the existent and the world necessarily carry within them, because of the fundamental non-disposability of the body proper to the existent, references to others as other, are necessarily structured by the difference between the same and the other that is fundamental to the phenomenon of perspective, an important conclusion that we will revisit when we investigate the nature of perspective as presented by Merleau-Ponty in *The Structure of Behavior*. In this way, Marcel's discoveries concerning corporeity also open onto a type of inter-corporeity, a way of *being-for-the-other* or *of-the-other* that is based in the inauguration of the fundamental difference between the same and the other by way of incarnation. And it is this difference at the heart of incarnation that I will designate as *corporeity* in the remainder of the thesis and that Merleau-Ponty, Artaud, and Hejduk attempt, in their own ways, to articulate.

4.4 Corporeity and Ex-appropriation: A Derridean Conclusion

To conclude my engagement with Marcel's work and open onto the next portion of the thesis, I want to draw on the work of French philosopher Jacques Derrida in order to provide one possible way of thinking through relations with others as *inter-corporeity*, even though the primary concern in his writings is language. In general, I would argue that Derrida writes against the ontologization of language, against the conceptualization—and simultaneous reduction—of language according to such terms as presence, self-presence, and fullness of meaning. Derrida's initial deconstruction of the (necessary) establishment of the hierarchy of speech over writing within the philosophical tradition is a case in point; Derrida reads the necessary characterization within philosophy

of writing as a bastardized version of speech as an attempt to dissimulate the reality of language as a system of absences by ontologizing language as speech, thereby reducing it to a system of self-present meanings. In fact, deconstruction illustrates how language itself, despite the best intentions of its author, compromises the equation of language with presence and instead reveals itself as a system of absences, as a non-ontologizable trace-structure that, because of its radical openness to the other, subverts all attempts at closure and totalization. Derrida spent most of his early career deconstructing various attempts—both philosophical and non-philosophical—to ontologize language, to reduce the reality of language to a chain of signifiers that are linked to Being, presence, and essence.

As I noted above, one particular chain of terms related to Being that Derrida continually labours to bring to light in relation to language is the sequence proper, property, and propriety, especially its role in structuring the opposition between the figural and literal—or, proper—meaning of a text. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida comments on the use of the terms related to the concept of the proper by Rousseau in his *Essay on the Origin of Languages*:

Rousseau no doubt believed in the figurative initiation of language, but he believed no less...in the progress toward literal (proper) meaning. “Figurative language was the first to be born,” he says, only to add, “proper meaning was discovered last” (Essay). It is this eschatology of the proper (prope, proprius, self-proximity, self-presence, property, own-ness) that we ask the question of the graphein. (*Of Grammatology* 107)

Rousseau believed in the eventual triumph of the literalness of language over its figurative nature and in the establishment of proper meaning—that moment when all meaning would be self-evident. Rousseau desperately desired the propriety of language; what Derrida demonstrates instead is that Rousseau’s text works against his desire and continually reveals its im-propriety and its evasion of any last word.

Derrida continually highlights moments within the philosophical tradition that testify to the desire to subsume or repress the trace-structure of language, its impropriety, under such categories as proper meaning or the self-presence of speech. In *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, Derrida questions the determination of a language as the property of a speaking subject and scrutinizes the subject's claim to a proper language, to a mother tongue that one can call one's own, to its feeling of dwelling or being-at-home in its own language. He instead proposes that the subject's relation to language can be better understood according to the expression 'I only have one language; it is not mine'. This language, the French language for Derrida, is the subject's only possession, its most important possession, that outside of which one would not be oneself: "I cannot challenge it except by testifying to its omnipresence in me. It would always already have preceded me. It is me... would not be myself outside of it. It constitutes me" (*Monolingualism* 1). However, this language cannot be reduced to being mine, to being my proper language, that language that I can call my own. This does not mean that this language is a foreign language; instead, it suggests that one can speak the language that one has, the only one that one has, but only on condition that that language is not their own in any way, does not belong to the subject as its own, is not appropriated, seized or laid claim to by the subject as their rightful property. As one of the interlocutors in the text explains, "When I said that the only language I speak is not mine, I did not say it was foreign to me. There is a difference. It is not entirely the same thing" (*Monolingualism* 5). What Derrida is drawing attention to is two different modes of relatedness between a subject and a language: having a language, speaking in a language that is not mine, and owning a language as mine, as my own proper language to which I belong and to which I am affiliated. And what he is questioning is the ontologization of

this relationship between subject and language, its articulation or conceptualization according to the vocabulary of ownership, the proper, and property. How can one understand the relation between subject and language otherwise? Is language a simple possession of the subject? “But who exactly possesses it? And whom does it possess? Is language a possession, ever a possessing or possesses possession? Possessed or possessing in exclusive possession, like a piece of personal property? What of this being-at-home in language toward which we never cease returning?” (*Monolingualism* 17).

What Derrida will return to throughout this text is the exclusivity of ownership that is required by the ontological characterization of the relation between subject and language, and he will argue against the desire to establish any form of mastery or propriety over one’s language:

For contrary to what one is most often tempted to believe, the master is nothing. And he does not have exclusive possession of anything. Because the master does not possess exclusively, and naturally, what he calls his language, because, whatever he wants or does, he cannot maintain any relations of property or identity that are natural, national, congenital, or ontological, with it...[and] because language is not his natural possession, he can, thanks to that very fact, pretend historically, through the rape of a cultural usurpation, which means always essentially colonial, to appropriate it in order to impose it as ‘his own.’ (*Monolingualism* 23)

Language is not our natural property, and, as such, we cannot maintain or sustain relations of property or identity—as in the case of my own language—with what we call our language. In terms of ontological relations, what Derrida is arguing is that Being does not reside or dwell in language, at least not the being of Western metaphysics that is delimited by way of the chain of signification that leads to self-presence and identity. Language does not support being understood in the sense of presence, and it cannot be approached as one of my possessions that I call my own and which, because of my

mastery over it, is at my disposal. Language, in other words, is not at my disposal as my own.

Instead, he argues that having a language, instead of referring to the exclusive assimilation of that language by the subject, actually exposes the subject of the having to the other and always already opens the subject to the other in the space of relation that is language: “[M]y ‘own’ language is, for me, a language that cannot be assimilated. My language, the only one I hear myself speak and agree to speak, is the language of the other” (*Monolingualism* 25). What Derrida is highlighting is the fact that language, my language, is the scene of ex-appropriation, of the opening of the self toward the other. What Derrida exposes is the impossibility of conceptualizing the relation between subject and language ontologically, as a relation that would be the site of a closing-in of the subject upon itself within its own proper language; instead, the language that a subject has is the site of the “abiding alienation” (*Monolingualism* 25) of the subject from itself and toward the other:

The language called maternal is never purely natural, nor proper, nor inhabitable. To inhabit: this is a value that is quite disconcerting and equivocal; no one ever inhabits what one is in the habit of calling inhabiting. There is no possible habitat without the difference of this exile and this nostalgia...[without] this a priori universal truth of an essential alienation in language—which is always of the other. (*Monolingualism* 58)

This essential alienation in language is not based in the loss of something that was properly mine and which could, at some point in the future, be re-appropriated; instead, it is an originary alienation in which I always already am and which cannot be fixed or located at some specific point in my past. My language, the language that I have, is not properly mine because it is always already of the other; it is the milieu of my expropriation towards the other, of my exile in the language of the other. Instead of the

medium of my self-presence to myself, language is always already to the other; instead of enabling my closing in on myself, my taking up residence in proximity with myself, language, as a movement of exile and expropriation, shipwrecks me on the shores of the other.

The question of my language, of my experience of language as an essential alienation, also brings into question the opposition between the universal and the unique, between the general and the particular, as it is negotiated in the language that I (cannot but) speak. As a trace structure that deals in absence, language is (both/neither) universal (and/or) unique. Just think of the pronoun ‘I’, which, on the one hand, refers to the unique subject that articulates itself as ‘I’ and enters language and, on the other hand, is simply an empty signifier that, because of its universality, is at everyone’s disposal; only through the universality of language is the articulation of the unique subject possible, making uniqueness a mark that is only possible within the context of the universal law that is language. Language involves the “re-inscription of the structure of a universal law upon the body of an irreplaceable singularity in order to make it thus remarkable,” where remarkable means both unique and open to being re-marked or repeatedly marked, reiterated (*Monolingualism* 26). And it is exactly this double experience of language as both unique and universal, as both something that I have (and, but, yet) is not mine, that makes articulation possible and necessary (*Monolingualism* 27); the experience of language as between universality and uniqueness, as the frontier line between being and having, that is the very possibility of articulation, of one being able to use language to express oneself. It becomes a question of making the body of a singularity remarkable—uniqueness is only possible through the universality of language, through that which dissimulates uniqueness through iterability and, through an anonymous movement of ex-

appropriation, opens onto the other and places the speaker unequivocally and absolutely at the disposal of the other. The iterability at the heart of language is based in a uniqueness, a uniqueness that is the site of application, the site of its inscription into the field of the universal in which the articulation of one's self is possible and necessary although always of the other. Language as the frontier line between the personal and the impersonal.

Then, in a gesture to Merleau-Ponty, Derrida relates the experience of language to the body, to "the body of language and writing, as well as [to] what makes them a thing of the body" (*Monolingualism* 27). What makes language *of the other* also applies to the body that, as we have seen, is the very possibility of articulation—the body is also *of the other*. I cannot maintain any relations of property or identity that are natural (the body as given, as pure in-itself) or ontological (as implied in the phrase 'I am my body') with my body, since my body is always of the other; I cannot assimilate my body as *mine* and establish a relation of identity between myself and my body because it is always of the other and to the other. And then Derrida, although briefly and almost as an afterthought, takes a stab at the body, at articulating the body, at re-marking on the true nature of bodily reality: "We therefore appeal to what is, so hastily, named the body proper, which happens to be affected by the same ex-appropriation, the same 'alienation' without alienation, without any property that is forever lost or to be never reappropriated" (*Monolingualism* 27). The experience of the body is one of ex-appropriation, an experience which makes possible all appropriation, all making mine, all 'being able to...'; it is the powerlessness at the heart of empowerment, the non-disposability that places things at one's disposal. The experience of the body, of my body, is one of alienation, of a forced exile or separation but not from something or someone. There is

no lost property or identity. Only abiding alienation because the body is always of the other. Embodiment is a proximity to the other, to an other that is not one's self and will never be one's self; embodiment is a scar or a wound, an exposure or opening that was never and can never be closed or healed. The experience of embodiment is one of dispossession, of powerlessness, without the accompanying loss of property. It is a loss of self but without there having ever been a self that one could call one's own or that could, at some later date, be re-appropriated.

With the above in mind, I want to suggest that corporeity is *of the other* in the above sense explained by Derrida. Corporeity, which is always already *inter-corporeity* is of the other in such a way that the existent cannot make its own body completely its own and give it absolutely to the other; because of the fact that the other is always already implied as other in my body, because my body always already carries with it reference to the other as other, my own body is not mine to give because of an irreducible difference that puts out of play any attempt by me to completely identify myself with my body. In other words, the body that I am is never completely mine. To some degree, it is always already other-than-me, always already irreducibly of the other to such an extent that the being for the other-than-itself of corporeity is the condition that enables all possible relations with the other, whether they be relations of having, in which the other is reduced to a third person that is simply at my disposal, or relations of Being, in which I make myself receptive to the presence of the other and reduce my encounter with the other to an instance of co-presence within Being. The question remains, though, as to how exactly corporeity is of the other, how it places the existent in relation to the other in such a way as to enable all possible relations.

TRANSITION: From Incarnation to Corporeity

While I opened the portion of the thesis that dealt with Marcel's philosophical project by categorizing it as a philosophy of *incarnation*, I ended by demonstrating how Marcel's thought opens onto the possibility of understanding the nature of bodily reality according to the concept of *corporeity*. What I narrated in the first part of this thesis was Marcel's shift from conceptualizing the nature of bodily reality as incarnation, which referred to the immediate presence of the body to the self as something that one is, a relation based in unity and cohesion, to one of corporeity, a relation of absolute possession and irreducible difference between the body that one is and one has. And, as a result of this shift, the body was usurped from its function as the fulcrum of his thought. The fundamental nature of bodily reality that Marcel uncovered in his excavations, what he came to refer to as *corporeity*—the experience of one's own body that is rooted in difference, in the irreducible difference between the body that one is and the body that one has—proved to be untenable with Marcel's large philosophical project, with his attempt to root ontological receptivity in the pure receptivity of the body. The true nature of bodily reality as an experience of irreducible difference proved to be antithetical with Marcel's desire to theorize a space of intersubjective relation based in co-presence and Being, and, once he uncovered the truth about the body, he was forced to re-centre his philosophical project: instead of pursuing an ontology rooted in the experience of incarnation, he began to work out an ontology organized around the reality of my life.

The second section of this thesis will look at the work of three thinkers whose work is sustained, nourished, and driven by *corporeity*, the experience of irreducible difference that is at the heart of how one experiences one's own body. In each instance, I

bring to light how the logic of their work is organized around the distinction between the body that one is and the body that one has. I argue that, for Merleau-Ponty, Artaud, and Hejduk, *corporeity* is a fundamental principle behind their speculations, that the irreducible difference that resides in the true nature of bodily reality is the generative principle behind their works.

CHAPTER 5: Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Corporeity

5.1 Merleau-Ponty's Review of *Being and Having*

The fact that Merleau-Ponty knew of Marcel's thoughts concerning incarnation is not at issue; although Marcel is rarely mentioned in Merleau-Ponty's longer book-length texts, such as *The Structure of Behavior* and *Phenomenology of Perception*²³, he does take up and engage with Marcel's work, and existentialism in general, in numerous articles. In 1936, Merleau-Ponty wrote a review of *Being and Having* that provides interesting insights into his receptivity towards Marcel's investigations into incarnation, and, because the article precedes the publication of *The Structure of Behavior* by six years, it can also be seen as setting the tone for much of Merleau-Ponty's later thinking on bodily reality. In particular, the book review highlights three aspects of Marcel's thoughts concerning incarnation that become integral to Merleau-Ponty's own work on the nature of embodiment: (1) Marcel's critique of the objectivist representation of the

²³One could argue that Merleau-Ponty takes up Marcel's work in a much more implicit manner in the book-length studies on embodiment. For instance, since *The Structure of Behavior* specifically deals with how, in the sciences, certain ontological presuppositions concerning the reality of bodies cause the data collected by researchers to be misinterpreted, the text can be approached as a testament to Marcel's claim in *Metaphysical Journal* that "the notion of body is *not at all univocal*" (*Metaphysical Journal* 124); in the course of his text, Merleau-Ponty investigates the ontological construction of the body, the way in which the body itself is thought by science (*Metaphysical Journal* 125), and how that interpretation is bound up with scientific conclusions concerning the relationship between the existent and the world. The text ends with a re-configuration of the notion of body, of the meaning of embodiment, and of the relation between the mind and the body that actually supports, or is supported by, the results of the various experiments that Merleau-Ponty looks at throughout *The Structure of Behavior*. Similarly, *Phenomenology of Perception* can be read as a turning away from the personal body at the heart of Marcel's thoughts on incarnation that is motivated by Merleau-Ponty's embracing of Husserlian phenomenology and its quest for a new objectivity; consequently, Merleau-Ponty shifts the focus away from my body and towards the body that I have, although he deploys having in an ontological

reality of the body and its implied theory of perception, (2) Marcel's development of a model of incarnate human knowledge rooted in presence and intimacy that he presents as presupposed by all claims to objective knowledge, and (3) Marcel's use of the category of Being in the expression 'I am my body' to establish incarnation as the very possibility of my involvement in personal situations and in Being.

5.1.1 Introduction

For the most part, the article presents an overview of Marcel's thought, especially of how the theme of incarnation is interwoven with Marcel's critique of objectivism and idealism. Merleau-Ponty begins the article with a brief investigation into the model of human knowledge as "a dialogue between a 'subject' and an 'object'" (*Texts* 101) that governs philosophy and common sense: "Philosophy as well as common sense has taken our contemplation of inanimate objects and indifferent things as representing the model and ideal of human knowledge" (*Texts* 101). He draws on two examples in the opening paragraph to prove his case: Cartesian philosophy and nineteenth century psychology. In the case of Descartes' theory of perception, Merleau-Ponty argues that Descartes theory of the *cogito* separates the perception of objects or other people into two distinct elements: the indistinct and unclear data provided to me by my body (by way of the senses) and the power of judgement that resides in my mind "through which I confer upon these inert givens a living meaning" (*Texts* 101). Quoting directly from Descartes, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that, according to the Cartesian model of perception and

manner. But I shall draw out these connections in more detail throughout the chapter.

knowledge, all understanding resides in the mind: “Thus I understand, by the sole power of judgement that resides in my mind, what I thought I was seeing with my eyes” (*Texts* 101). The second example concerns the knowledge that one has of one’s own body as depicted in the context of nineteenth century psychology and how that knowledge is also rooted in a judgement that occurs within the mind. While my body is given to me as a mass of privileged sensations that “is constantly given to me,” privileged to the extent that they are qualitatively different from sensations of external objects, I can only acquire knowledge of my body through “a judgement by which I circumscribe the limits of my body” (*Texts* 101). What is common to both models is the way in which they represent human understanding. As a result of this determination of the judging mind as the seat of knowledge about the world, a very specific relationship between the world and the existent is posited, one in which “we are used to setting out from a certain type of knowledge considered normal: the contemplation of a set of qualities or characteristics that are scattered, meaningless. Against these givens, this spectacle, a subject is posited, who interprets and understands them and who is consequently no more than a ‘power of judging,’ a Cogito” (*Texts* 101). As I have already discussed, such a theory of knowledge is rooted in a very specific representation of bodies as passive objects in the world that function to receive messages from the external world. These disorganized messages that impinge upon the body are received as senseless and meaningless data, and it is up to the cogito as the active organizer of the world and giver of meaning to synthesize a meaningful whole through its power of judgement.

The opening paragraph sets out two important related issues that will figure prominently in Merleau-Ponty’s work. The first concerns the accepted model of human

knowledge that is based in the power of judgement that resides solely in the mind; according to this model, the mind is the sole proprietor of meaning since it is the mind, through the power of judgement, that imbues the meaningless spectacle of the world with meaning. The second issue is the meaninglessness of the givens upon which the mind confers meaning. This model of knowledge contends that the set of characteristics and qualities about the world or about others in the world that are constantly given to me through perception and that the mind contemplates and ultimately judges are scattered and meaningless in themselves. And it is in relation to these two issues that Merleau-Ponty takes up Marcel's work. What specifically interests Merleau-Ponty about Marcel's work is his attack against the theory of knowledge as a "dialogue between a 'subject' and an 'object'" promoted by the Cartesian representation of the reality of bodies as simple objects of extension and his effort to unearth an alternative model of knowledge that does not elide our situation as incarnate beings.

Merleau-Ponty opens his reading of *Being and Having* by recalling Marcel's earlier critique of Descartes and his development of the term 'presence' to refer to that aspect or facet of objects and others that the stance of objectivity does not exhaust. As I have already pointed out, the primary concern for Marcel in his early work was to distinguish between two ways of knowing an object or of having knowledge of the world, a distinction encapsulated in the title "Existence and Objectivity." This early article is essentially an attack against idealism and the theory of perception that underwrites it. Against the objectivizing tendency of a philosophical tradition in which thinkers "positioned themselves in the 'spectator's point of view'" (*Texts* 102) by disregarding our incarnate presence in the world, Marcel develops a theory of sensation (what Merleau-

Ponty refers to as ‘perception’ throughout the review) based on the presence to me of objects that I encounter in the world by way of *my body*; Marcel, at this point in his thought, is working to unearth a more intimate and incarnate relation with the world, a relation that Descartes, by characterizing the knowledge of the world that the body gives as unclear and indistinct, buried beneath the concept of the cogito. As Marcel argues, Descartes’ theory of the cogito is based in an understanding of sensation as an objective process through which the existent, by way of their body, receives a disorganized set of characteristics and qualities that it then judges to be some object.

The example that Descartes uses to prove his theory is the situation in which one, from behind a window, observes fully clothed people walking outside and is unsure as to whether they are clothed phantoms and automatons or real people. According to Merleau-Ponty, what Marcel objects to in this example is that “what has been taken as the model of our perception of others [as a meaningless set of characteristics that the cogito must synthesize into a coherent and understandable whole] is a distracted sort of knowing, one in which it is in fact the case that I do not perceive human beings but rather human shapes vaguely moving about” (*Texts* 102). In other words, the theory of the cogito rests upon Descartes’ decision to take as a model of perception a situation of distracted knowing in which the object of the subject’s perception can be reduced to meaningless characteristics and qualities instead of an instance in which one encounters a human being according to their (meaningful) presence before me: “a human being who is present to me, the one to whom I address myself, who is truly a second person before me, this you...[who] cannot be reduced to a set of characteristics I could coolly catalogue” (*Texts* 102). In contrast to Descartes’ presentation of the intersubjective encounter,

Marcel puts forward a model that describes the interpersonal encounter by way of, or as a function of, the presence of my body to myself; as Merleau-Ponty explains,

when I consider my body as it is given to me, it is clear that the knowledge that I have of it cannot be assimilated to the supposedly normal type described above. The striking fact that my body is precisely my body cannot be accounted for by merely adding...judgement and an entire body of knowledge to a mass of visual and tactile sensations. My body does not appear to me as an object, a set of qualities and characteristics to be linked up with one another and thus understood. My relation to it is not that of the Cogito to the cogitatum, the 'epistemological subject' to the object. I and it form a common cause, and in a sense I am my body. Between it and me there cannot properly be said to be a relation, since this term designates the behavior of one object in reference to another. Here it is more a question of presence, adherence, and intimacy. But similarly, to the extent that I really believe in objects and grasp their physiognomies rather than their 'characteristics,' their presences rather than their essences, they become something like the extension of my body. (*Texts* 102)

In contrast to the Cartesian model of knowledge that situates meaning at the level of the cogito that judges the meaningless and inert givens of perception, Marcel argues that the initial spectacle of the world in which the incarnate existent participates by way of sensation is itself already meaningful. Unlike Descartes, Marcel insists that the obscure and indeterminate experiences at the level of existence must be considered as a type of knowing or understanding and that the model for this type of pre-reflective knowing is the bond of intimacy that unites me with my body, a form of involvement and participation that precludes the placing of my body before me as an object of contemplation.

As Merleau-Ponty points out, this model is in direct contrast to the model of human knowledge based in our intellectual contemplation of inanimate objects and indifferent things, and Marcel uses the vocabulary of presence and adherence to emphasize the distinction between these two model of knowledge. But the central insight for Merleau-Ponty is the contention that this model of knowing is intimately related to my incarnation, to

my presence in and to the world by way of my body, and not on the cogito and the power of judgement through which it confers meaning upon the spectacle of the world. And it is exactly this type of embodied knowledge that is degraded or negated in the objectivist model of understanding set forth by Descartes. In contrast to objective characteristics and abstract essences, knowledge at the level of existence in Marcel is more qualitative, more physiognomical, in that it deals with meanings generated by way of outward appearances, and is based in co-existence, which means that objects are encountered as meaningful within the context in which they appear, within their surrounding, and within the world (as opposed to being encountered within the abstract and disembodied theatre of the mind). And this type of knowledge is fundamentally rooted in the relationship that I have with my body because it is in relation to my body, it is by extending my body, that the world comes to exist *for-me*.

The other lesson to be learned from Marcel concerns the relation between the representation of the reality of bodies and how the relation between the existent and its surrounding world and others is conceptualized. By focusing on “my body as I experience it,” Marcel opens an avenue for investigating “objects as understood by people who live among them” (*Texts* 102). This is especially true of the vocabulary of existence and sensation that Marcel develops for expressing the reality of the world that is centred around my body, a reality that must be approached in terms of the human aspect of objects, of their hold on us, and in terms of their physiognomies (*Texts* 102). In fact, Merleau-Ponty will, in his own work, strain towards expressing this pre-objective and pre-reflective world that my body opens onto and in which the objective world is rooted. As he explains in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the task of his philosophical inquiry is

to return to the world of actual experience which is prior to the objective world, since it is in it that we shall be able to grasp the theoretical basis no less than the limits of the objective world, restore to things their concrete physiognomy, to organisms their individual way of dealing with the world, and to subjectivity its inherence in history. Our task will be, moreover, to rediscover phenomena, the layer of living experience through which other people and things are first given to us..., to reawaken perception and foil its trick of allowing us to forget it as a fact and as perception in the interest of the object which it presents to us and of the rational tradition to which it gives rise. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 57)

Thus, phenomenology for Merleau-Ponty is simultaneously a philosophy of being-in-the-world and a philosophy of intersubjectivity since phenomena contain within themselves references to the ways in which things and others are given to the existent. In the context of this chapter, I will demonstrate this dual nature of Merleau-Ponty's thought by investigating how the existent is implicated, by way of its own body, with the world and with others at the level of pre-reflective and pre-objective existence by way of the concepts of behaviour and perspective that Merleau-Ponty uses in *The Structure of Behavior* to describe incarnate existence. At the same time, I will try to argue that the way in which other people and things are given to us as—or, perhaps it would be more precise to use the word *within* or the phrase *implicated in*—phenomena points to the way in which the body proper, as corporeity, approaches the other as other, approaches the exteriority of the other and encounters the other as exteriority. Also Merleau-Ponty's quest to rediscover “the layer of living experience through which other people and things are first given to us” resonates with Marcel's decision to enact his philosophy as an operation of drilling and digging; from the above quotation, it is quite clear that Merleau-Ponty works from Marcel's contention that the objective world, the world approached as a set of problems, is rooted in a pre-objective existential world of presences and physiognomies at the centre of which one finds “the body's consciousness, which may

well underlie all affirmations of the existence of physical objects. ‘Embodiment, the central given of metaphysics...is the given on the basis of which a fact is possible’” (*Texts* 102). The key for Merleau-Ponty is that Marcel’s unearthing of the distinction between existence and objective brings to light a new type of knowledge, a type of incarnate knowledge, that supports objectivity and “introduces us to a new world that contains the physical world [in the objective and problematic sense] and is not contained by it” (*Texts* 105). And it is towards the world of existence, the world with which the existent co-exists by way of the body proper, that Merleau-Ponty directs his philosophical gaze.

5.1.2 Marcel and Phenomenology

However, his own research into the pre-objective world does not simply recycle or repeat Marcel’s terminology and, as a result, does not have the same style or affective value. And, as I hope to demonstrate, the shift in terminology is very significant and helps greatly to explicate the differences between how Merleau-Ponty and Marcel approach the incarnate existent. But before dwelling on their differences, Merleau-Ponty stresses Marcel’s indebtedness to the phenomenological method for opening up specific avenues of research and for offering him a way of “drawing out and justifying what his first reflections implied” (*Texts* 103). According to Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology, in that it does not postulate a thing in-itself beneath or beyond the actual or virtual object, a thing that would be irreducible to that object’s phenomenal presence to the subject, enables Marcel to argue for a new form of knowledge that would not simply “add another chapter to the psychology of knowledge” (*Texts* 103). Instead of simply being reduced to

a distinction between two distinct contents of thought in which one's sensations of one's body would be inferior (because indeterminate and indistinct) contents of thought as opposed to such clear and distinct facts as mathematical formulae, phenomenology enables Marcel to effectively argue that existence and objectivity are "two distinct regions of being" (*Texts* 103).

Consequently, this new type of knowledge that Marcel brings to light cannot simply be marked off from the regions of the physical world and the scientific universe with the eventual hope that it may some day be overtaken and annexed by way of scientific understanding; instead, because phenomenology confers undeniable value upon such distinctions as those between existence and objectivity by way of the fact that it refuses to put forward the illusion of "*things* that might bear any resemblance to [the actual or virtual object of our thoughts]" (*Texts* 103) and thereby present a common foundation or real behind the simple phenomenal appearance of objects, this new type of knowledge is itself a specific way of being-in-the-world. While Descartes would have us believe that the body presents the subject with knowledge that is inadequate in relation to the distinct ideas presented by the mind, a model of perception that hinges on perception as providing an impoverished form of knowledge that is indistinct and incomplete until it has been subjected to the judgements of the cogito, Merleau-Ponty argues that Marcel, by way of phenomenology, was able to present existence and objectivity as two distinct regions of Being, each with its own specific form of knowledge. What Marcel had discovered in the region of my body was a new type of knowledge, a new way of being-in-the-world.

And what distinguishes these various regions of Being—such as my body and the

encounter with the other as Thou—is the manner in which the existent intends the object towards which it, because of the intentional structure of its consciousness, is directed; as Merleau-Ponty states, “the phenomenological method...binds the subject closely to being by defining the former as a tension or an intention oriented toward an end point” (*Texts* 103). The primary concern for Marcel is how the existent intends the object towards which it is oriented, the end point towards which it is oriented. In the case of existence, the knowledge that the existent has of the world is based in how the existent intends the world as a function of their own body proper; as we witnessed in the earlier chapters, existence is characterized by the link between the world and my body, by the way in which things in the world take the existent into account and come to exist *for-me*. In terms of intersubjectivity, knowledge of the other depends on how the subject intends the other. If the subject intends the other objectively, then the subject will encounter the other as a ‘someone who’; if, however, the subject intends the other in terms of ontological disposability and places itself at the disposal of the other, then the subject will encounter the other according to its presence and will truly experience being-with the other as a co-presence. For example, the presence of a deceased friend in one’s life depends entirely on how one intends that person in the act of remembrance; although that friend no longer exists, they could *be* present to me in a more meaningful way than someone who is alive but whom I dislike. In this way, the intentionality that orients the act has a direct impact, is directly involved in, the determination of how the thing or individual being acted upon comes to be known or experienced.

The problem that Merleau-Ponty sees with Marcel’s appropriation of the phenomenological method is that Marcel uses it to enlarge the scope of his philosophical

enterprise and to shift its centre of perspective away from my body and towards all the involvements of the soul. Beyond the involvement of the incarnate existent in the world by way of the body proper, Marcel extends the scope of his excavation by way of the concept of intentionality to

all the 'involvements' of the soul...With *Being and Having*, Marcel's philosophy has been enlarged, so to speak. It tends to become an understanding of life, of the entire set of situations lived through by human beings, each with its own atmosphere. To an increasing degree the center of the perspective shifts from the body to the soul. If my body is indeed more than an object that I own, it is equally true that it is not me; it is 'at the border of what I am and what I have,' at the line of demarcation between being and having. The central fact of metaphysics is clearly no longer thought of, as stated a moment ago, as the presence and the remoteness of my body: it is rather, in Marcel's new book, the presence and remoteness of my life, the adherence of my life to myself, and at the same time my power to sacrifice it, my refusal to become indistinguishable from it. (*Texts* 103)

According to Merleau-Ponty, the theme of incarnation recedes into the background quite noticeably when Marcel works out such distinctions as problem and mystery, having and being, and observation and testimony. It is at this point that Merleau-Ponty's reading of Marcel diverges most dramatically from that presented by Levinas. As I explained in the previous chapter, Levinas situates the body proper at the heart of the interpersonal relation that the I has with the other taken as Thou. However, what Merleau-Ponty realizes in this review is that Marcel's investigations of the interpersonal is carried out from the perspective of my life, from the point of view of my own presence and remoteness to my life; as Marcel begins to focus more and more on the nature of the interpersonal relation with the other in *Being* by way of co-presence, the centre of the perspective of his work—of which incarnation was, initially, the central given—shifts from my body to my life. And it is exactly this shift in perspective that Merleau-Ponty tries to correct in *The Structure of Behavior* as he works to develop the idea of

perspective from the point of view of the body, from the position of its embeddedness in the reality of corporeity.

But why turn away from the body and towards the involvements of the soul? Why shift perspectives from the presence and remoteness of my body to the presence and remoteness of my life? Although Merleau-Ponty does not explicitly try to explain the shift, he does highlight for the reader those aspects of my life that are the centre of the theory of the interpersonal that Marcel develops in *Being and Having*—namely, the simultaneous adherence of my life to myself and my power to sacrifice it and my refusal to identify myself with my life so as to be indistinguishable from it. Interestingly enough, Merleau-Ponty singles out exactly those aspects of my life that rendered it more suitable than the category of my body because of the latter's rootedness in non-disposability. First, as we saw, I am unable to sacrifice my body to the other because my corporeity is fundamentally not at my disposal; while I can sacrifice my life to the other, I am unable to make a gift of my body because, in order to give my body absolutely to the other, to place it absolutely at the disposal of the other, means making use of my body in order to do so since my body is the very possibility of having power over something. And this brings us to the second aspect, which involves the fact that, while I have the choice to either refuse to identify myself with my life, to be my life, or to embrace my life and identify myself with it completely, I cannot become indistinguishable from my body since it is both something I have and something that I am. By being able to identify myself with my life, I am able to absolutely give myself, by way of my life, to the other; as a martyr, I am able to give my life to the other absolutely so that they can make of my life what they will. But my body, which is located at the frontier between being and having, is both

something I am and something I have, so I cannot identify myself absolutely with it; as a result, I am not able to give my body to the other absolutely because my body, as corporeity, is fundamentally non-disposable.

Since Marcel is interested in unearthing that which we truly are—remember that the question that motivates Marcel’s inquiries is ‘What am I?’—he is forced to proceed beyond the body proper because, even though my body is more than an object that I own, it is equally not me. The existent is always more than their body because their body exists as both object (something one has) and subject (something that one is); as James Collins explains in *The Existentialists: A Critical Study*, “one’s body is a focal point not only for significant acts of existing but also for objects and possessions. This convergence of being and object in ‘my body’ obtains not only in respect to other things but also in respect to myself. There is an ultimate blending of being and having in the case of one’s body. Corporeality or one’s bodily life is simultaneously something that one has and something that one is” (Collins 157). And, because of the irreducible possessive nature of the bond between the existent and its personal body, Marcel is forced to shift the perspective of his work to the category of my life since, as we saw in the previous chapter, the existent, as a result of the objective and instrumental facet of the body, is “exposed either to the misuses of one’s own freedom or to the assault of others. One’s being is vulnerable precisely at the point where it is prolonged in its possessions” (Collins 156). My body, as both me and not me, cannot therefore be reduced to my most essential trait or to my true essence, as is the case with my life. Corporeity, instead of leading to Being, always already exposes the existent to the world of having; the personal body, as absolute possession, is an originating wound in the existent that exposes the existent to

the dangers of the world but which cannot be healed in an effort to transcend having towards Being. As a result, Marcel is forced to shift his focus from incarnation to the situation of one's life in order to reveal our participation with the presence of the other in Being.

The central concern for Merleau-Ponty at this point in the review becomes how to conceptualize existence, how to investigate a region of being in which the observer necessarily participates. In light of Marcel's work on incarnation, the question becomes how to understand the sensible knowledge of the world by way of which things are given to us carnally and in the flesh, a type of knowledge in which the perceiver is necessarily engaged; as a cited quotation from *Being and Having* explains, the question becomes how to "[bring] to the discursive level of thought an act that is entirely different" (*Texts* 104).

How does one go about proving, or showing, the existence of this sensible knowledge of the world? But what Merleau-Ponty discovers as Marcel's thought on incarnation evolves is a rejection of objectivity, of any criteria for confirming the validity of one's insights and intuitions, in favour of an overarching personalism at the level of the ontological. As Merleau-Ponty explains in relation to the ontological commitment to bear witness, "there is only one way to confirm that witness: to show that, by essence, it is more valid than any confirmation" (*Texts* 105). For Marcel, the personal commitment of the subject is enough to confirm the validity of their bearing witness; as long as the subject is sufficient available or accessible to the presence of the other, the subject will bear witness truthfully for the other, will be faithful to the presence of the other. What disturbs Merleau-Ponty about the personal tone of Marcel's ontological investigations is its freedom from any sort of criteria for establishing the validity of one recounting from

another. As Merleau-Ponty explains, “[o]nce we have reached that point, if ‘I saw’ is an argument beyond further questioning, does that philosophy not authorize to an equal extent any pseudo-intuition whatever? How do we distinguish between an authentic intuition and an illusion? That is the question that the author brushes aside, because we are asking for a criterion for something that, not being of the order of the ‘it,’ cannot have a criterion” (*Texts* 106). What Merleau-Ponty is objecting to is the personalism that comes to dominate Marcel’s investigations into other regions of being and his failure to develop criteria for evaluating the validity of various insights or knowledge gained in those regions.

In particular, what Merleau-Ponty objects to is the lack of *binding force* in Marcel’s philosophy in the sense that there is nothing in Marcel’s thought that ties the subject to reality, that obliges the subject to engage with the structures of reality and proceed from inadequate knowledge to more adequate knowledge: “The objection that comes to mind in the presence of such a philosophy is that it somehow lacks binding force. ‘There is something called living, and something else called existing: I have chosen to exist.’ That is a choice, and it cannot be otherwise. But we must ask ourselves whether reflection cannot monitor that option more closely” (*Texts* 106). The problem is not that Marcel has chosen to exist; the problem is more that the choice to exist is simply based on personal intuition, on a sort of pseudo-intuition that Marcel feels no need to verify or validate for the reader. How is one to judge Marcel’s claim concerning existence and sensation? How is one to judge the validity of his insights into incarnate existence and co-existence with the world? In the context of his life, Marcel certainly feels that he has made the decision to exist; his philosophical enterprise—namely his

subjection of his most intensely lived personal experiences to the scrutiny of second reflection—is completely taken up with an investigation of his own existence. But, as Merleau-Ponty states, Marcel's philosophy lacks any binding force that would extend his insights into existence to others; beyond his attempt to evoke the same intense lived personal experience, such as incarnation in his readers, Marcel is uninterested in proving or reasonably persuading his reader as to the validity of his insights. Marcel's philosophy reads as a series of personal intuitions into existence, which would be fine if he did not, at the same time, present his own life as a model for good living.

One must keep in mind that Marcel's philosophy is, in the final analysis, an ethics, a prescription for leading a better life, for transcending the reality of functionalised life in contemporary society and attempting to achieve co-presence with the other as Thou within Being. In other words, there is nothing holding Marcel's corpus together. There is no coherent reasoning that binds his thoughts together and structures them as a cohesive mass. Instead, Marcel's thoughts seem to meander along unrestrained and unrestricted. As a result, the reader has no way of ascertaining whether or not Marcel's thought truly leads to a truer picture of reality. How is one to validate Marcel's version of existence, a version based in personal intuitions and pseudo-intuitions? In other words, Merleau-Ponty is responding to the inherent personalism of Marcel's philosophy, a personalism that the former feels detracts from the latter's truly revolutionary insights into incarnate existence. What Merleau-Ponty realizes is that any philosophical enterprise that promises to investigate existence must adopt a posture of objectivity and divest itself of unmitigated personalism in order to be taken seriously. What is needed now is an objective, scientific approach to that most obscure and ambiguous realm of pre-objective

or pre-reflective existence in which we co-exist with the world and with each other and which provides the ground for all scientific discovery.

What Merleau-Ponty is interested in is developing a new form of objectivity that would enable the reflective subject to investigate the structures of existence that lead us from our own imperfect intuitions towards more reality, towards a truer understanding of the nature of our existence in the world. Earlier in the article, Merleau-Ponty characterizes the phenomenological method that guides Marcel's earlier work on incarnation also using the terminology of *binding*: "The phenomenological method—at the same time that it brings being closer to the subject, for the simple reason that the only being we can discuss is the one we know, albeit inadequately—binds the subject closely to being by defining the former as a tension or an intention oriented toward an end point" (*Texts* 103, emphasis added). For Merleau-Ponty, the tension between having and being defines the human condition, and his concern is with focusing reflection upon the sphere of immanence, the sphere of having and living, in order to gain some understanding of the structure of the existences that one comes to know at that level. What concerns Merleau-Ponty is the way in which the real has been disqualified by Marcel from any involvement in the domain of Being, from participating in those personal experiences through which the existent ascends, in the context of my world, towards the truth of Being: "If all intuition were sufficient in itself, if there were no path, no dialectic leading from inadequate knowledge, how would each being, locked up in his or her own imperfect intuitions, feel the need to go further, to move toward more reality? Do not the existences we come to know have a certain structure, and do they not present partial aspects that are felt to be just that—facets, each of which is an invitation to go farther?" (*Texts* 106).

What Merleau-Ponty senses in Marcel's style of existential philosophy is a dangerous subjectivism that could undermine Marcel's pioneering work on the body proper, and it is for this reason that Merleau-Ponty takes up Husserlian phenomenology, especially Husserl's interest in re-objectifying philosophical inquiry. As Kerry H. Whiteside explains in *Merleau-Ponty and The Foundation of an Existential Politics*, "one of the great strengths of [Merleau-Ponty's] philosophy...stems from his awareness of and response to [the threat of subjectivism in existential theory]. He knows that if his theory is to have any credibility vis-a-vis the dominant scientific understandings of man...he must explain how it accounts for the public character of knowledge. He formulates a new concept of 'objectivity,' one that is internal to phenomenal experience" (Whiteside 54). And Whiteside also argues that Merleau-Ponty's interest in objectivity is a direct challenge to Marcel's choice to exist rather than live, that it was a result of Merleau-Ponty finding Marcel's "procedure too private, too intuitive: 'it lacks an obligatory force.' Merleau-Ponty maintains that in phenomenal experience, existing things have 'a certain structure'; they present 'partial aspects that are sensed as such; each side is an invitation to go further.' A multiplicity of views supports rather than undermines our impression of coherent objects because perspectives are mutually confirming" (Whiteside 54-5)²⁴. The necessarily partial nature of perceptual experience opens the existent to the possibility of other perspectives and to the other existents inhabiting those perspectives, and, instead of undermining the integrity of the perception, this multiplicity is the necessary condition for

²⁴ It is also interesting to note that Whiteside reads 'obligatory' where Micheal B. Smith, the translator of Merleau-Ponty's review of *Being and Having*, reads 'binding.' While the term binding suggests the situatedness of the existent in the world, obligatory suggests some form of interpersonal or intersubjective relation between the existent and some other or group of others.

its coherence and actuality. Reality is necessarily multiple, and this multiplicity, and the relation with others that it implies, is a fundamental structure of all perceptual experience²⁵.

And Merleau-Ponty's decision to work towards articulating the multiplicity of the real, its structural polyvalence, and the way that this multiplicity or structural openness binds the existent to the world and obliges the sensible existent to go further towards more reality is in marked contrast to the direction of Marcel's thought away from the multiplicity implied in having—"having is in fact multiplicity"—and transcending it towards the unity of Being—towards a "being wholly simple, that is, entirely one" (*Being and Having* 86).

5.2 Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Corporeity

The Structure of Behavior is quite literally a reaction against the shift in the centre of perspective in Marcel's thought from my body to my life. What Merleau-Ponty refers to as the enlargement of Marcel's philosophy to include all involvements of the soul is a direct result of the shift in his concrete existential philosophy from an investigation into our being in the world and with others from the perspective of incarnation towards an ontology that focuses primarily on our relation with others from the perspective of my life, an enlargement that, as I argued in the fourth chapter, was the direct result of Marcel's uncovering of the embeddedness of bodily reality in non-disposability—what he termed his discovery of *corporeity*. What I wish to argue in this chapter is that Merleau-Ponty, in *The*

²⁵ Filming techniques provides an excellent example of the multiple perspectives through which the world is presented to us if one considers the number of cameras used to film a typical sitcom for television; one could argue that the multiple camera angles that are edited together into the final show provide the program with an aura of reality that would be lost if only one camera was used.

Structure of Behavior, actually sets out to re-capitulate Marcel's findings concerning incarnation as a function of corporeity, to return the body to the centre of the philosophical investigation into existence. But not only does the body come to function as the focal point for Merleau-Ponty's investigations into the structure of existence, as the centre of his perspective on the way in which one is in the world and with others. More dramatically, Merleau-Ponty also re-centres the existent's perspective on the world in the body quite literally by contending that human being-in-the-world is necessarily perspectival, that all relations between the existent, its own body, the world, and others are necessarily perspectival in nature—partial and incomplete but, as such, inviting and inexhaustible.

What I will work to demonstrate is that perspective is the way in which Merleau-Ponty re-tools, in light of corporeity, Marcel's determination of the nature of bodily reality as being one of interposition. In *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty develops an argument for understanding the nature of bodily reality in terms of perspective, where perspective is developed as a function of the main features of corporeity—namely, impersonality, an interpersonal relation with the other based in difference, and passivity. All of these features figure as important aspects of the structure of perspective as presented by Merleau-Ponty. Firstly, since corporeity is the line of demarcation between being and having, perspective has one foot in the personal subjective body that I am and another in the objective useful body that I have at my disposal: both aspects of corporeity, namely its personal nature and its irreducible aspect as possession, structure the phenomenon of perspective. And this irreducible duality or difference—or, as he states later in *The Visible and the Invisible*, reversibility—that structures perspective is not a difference that undoes a prior unity or that can eventually be overcome or transcended. Instead, this difference

inaugurates perception as perspectival, as necessarily so, because perception is always already perspectival. For Merleau-Ponty, there is no prior unity that one can restore by healing the wound at the heart of corporeity, just as there is no possibility for every attaining a totalising transcendent and perspectiveless knowledge of the world. Existence is always already structured according to the difference, and the accompanying tension, between being and having, between the personal and the impersonal, between the same and the other.

But what is truly revolutionary about Merleau-Ponty's account of perspective is his contention that it is the objective body—the body that I have at my disposal and which is one object among others in the world—that places the existent in relation with others within a common sphere of existence, within a common reality that is the basis for intersubjective understanding and participation or engagement; thus, since it is by way of the body that I have at my disposal that I encounter the other at the level of existence by way of the necessarily perspectival character of all perception, then my relation with the other at the level of existence is structured as a relation of having and is determined by the tension between the self and the other *as* other. In other words, Merleau-Ponty develops a theory of inter-corporeity through the concept of perspective that implicates the existent with the other as other within a field of co-existence according to the non-disposability of the body, according to its refusal to become indistinguishable from the existent.

And this leads to the third aspect of perspective that is a function of corporeity, passivity. In *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty argues against understanding perspective as an accidental feature of phenomena that, once overcome by the subject, will lead to a complete knowledge of reality, to a description of reality from some transcendent

position outside of one's bodily involvement or participation in the world. Perspective is not the result of a flaw in perception; instead it is the very possibility of perception and is that aspect of perception that ensures the inexhaustibility of the world. Perspective, while it will not lead to complete knowledge, does open onto more knowledge. And what ensures the incompleteness of our knowledge of the world, its necessarily perspectival character, is the hiddenness of my own position in the world. My corporeity, as non-disposable, is fundamentally invisible to me. As the blind spot that makes—necessarily perspectival—perception possible, my corporeity is not available to me to observe or to bring to my attention. This blind spot, in other words, is the very possibility of bringing anything to my attention, of perceiving anything, but is itself indisposed with regards to the perceiving existent.

As an entry into *The Structure of Behavior*, the following chapter will show the rootedness of the text in Marcel's intuitions concerning the reality of bodily existence but will then demonstrate how Merleau-Ponty works towards proving that the aspects of bodily existence that Marcel unearthed by way of the concept of corporeity are embedded within the very structure of our pre-reflective experience of existence. The first section will highlight the ontological dimensions of *The Structure of Behavior* and the role of phenomenology in the text in relation to Marcel's statement in his *Metaphysical Journal* that "the notion of the body is *not at all univocal*," an insight that leads Marcel to suggest that "the notion that the mind can form of the relations...[between the existent and its] body must be in function of the movement by which the notion of the body is constructed" (*Metaphysical Journal* 124-5). In *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty focuses on how the relationship between the existent and its body is thought or articulated in the

sciences—in the behavioural sciences, in particular. As I will demonstrate, Merleau-Ponty applies this insight to the behavioural sciences and argues that the idea that the scientist can form of behaviour—which is the term used in the sciences for the relations that exist between the body and the mind—“must be in function of the movements by which the notion of the body is constructed.” More specifically, Merleau-Ponty works to prove, by showing that the observations themselves, looked at in isolation from the ontological assumptions of the observers, do not support the conclusions drawn, that the conclusions reached by the behavioural sciences concerning the structure of behaviour are incorrect because of the ontological assumptions concerning the nature of the body and of bodily reality that the scientists bring to bear on their results. In this way, Merleau-Ponty lays the groundwork for the philosophical enterprise that is the focus of the last two sections of the text—namely, articulating the true nature of bodily reality in terms of perspective.

I will also demonstrate how Merleau-Ponty manages to deduce, from the very structure of pre-reflective experience that he brings to light by way of his investigation into the experiments conducted in the behavioural sciences, the various aspects of existence, such as co-existence and the manifestation of the world to the existent, that Marcel intuited in his own work. But one of the main differences between their projects that will begin to emerge at the end of *The Structure of Behavior* is the anonymous aspect or atmosphere that Merleau-Ponty uncovers within pre-reflective experience—it is this anonymous aspect that Whitehead refers to as the new concept of objectivity—and it is this divergence that has led me to characterize Merleau-Ponty’s work as a philosophy of corporeity. While the question of incarnation is, in Marcel’s case, always a question of *my* incarnation, of my own personal and unique being in the world, corporeity points towards the tension between the personal

and the impersonal²⁶ that is at the heart of bodily reality understood in terms of perspective.

5.2.1 Merleau-Ponty's Opening Moves

The project outlined in *The Structure of Behavior* owes a great deal to Marcel's insight concerning the fact that the body is not at all univocal, that the various theories developed about the relationship between the mind and body "must be in function of the movement by which the notion of the body is constructed" (*Metaphysical Journal* 124-5). In fact, the last section of the text is entitled "The Relations of the Soul and the Body and the Problem of Perceptual Consciousness," and this last chapter opens onto the question of perceptual experience that becomes the central focus of his next major work, the *Phenomenology of Perception*. The movement of Merleau-Ponty's thought towards the question of perception is an uncanny repetition of the development of Marcel's thinking once he decided to investigate existence from the point of view of its incarnation. As you may recall, Marcel's argues that the Cartesian conceptualization of the relation between the mind and the body in which the body is simply determined as a mechanical complexus, which he presents as being a direct cause of the functionalization and objectification of contemporary existence, is based on a misreading or misinterpretation of the true reality of the body; consequently, he ends the first part of the *Metaphysical Journal* with the realization that "the problem of the reality of the body is shown to be the central problem and upon its solution everything else depends" (*Metaphysical Journal* 126). This statement sets the stage for the second part of the journal in which Marcel eventually turns his attention

²⁶ Or the voluntary and the involuntary, to use Ricoeur's terms

to excavating his own experiences in order to unearth the true reality of the body as *my body*, as the body that I am. Marcel is then led to reconceptualize the relation between the mind and the body based on what he sees as the true representation of the reality of the body and to re-evaluate, based on the fact that 'I am my body,' the idealist and realist theories of perceptual experience.

Merleau-Ponty seems to retrace Marcel's progress in his early work, at least as Marcel's conclusions relate to science in general and the behavioural sciences in particular. *The Structure of Behavior* begins with the presupposition that the nature of lived bodily reality as understood by science is not at all univocal, a challenge that Merleau-Ponty levels against the sciences in light of their inability to draw coherent conclusions from data collected from various experiments aimed at studying behaviour. What Merleau-Ponty argues is that the ability of scientists to draw coherent conclusions from the data that they have collected, conclusions that are supported by the results of their experiments, is a direct result of the ontological presuppositions that the scientists have concerning the nature of bodily reality; the problem lies in the fact that either a realist or idealist model of embodiment that the scientists apply to the organisms in their experiments and that they use to conceptualize the behavioural relation between the organism and an external stimuli do not accurately depict the true nature of embodied existence. In other words, the scientists are being bad philosophers. In response, Merleau-Ponty introduces the terms *structure* and *form* in an attempt to describe how an embodied organism interacts with its surroundings in a dialectical manner. And then, after demonstrating the structural nature of embodied behaviour in general, the issue of human behaviour becomes explicit by the end of the text as Merleau-Ponty tries to explain the specific *perspectival* structure of human perception,

where perception—or sensation—is understood to underwrite all human behaviour.

Merleau-Ponty opens the text with a demonstration of how the ontological assumptions concerning the nature of the body and of lived existence that science brings to its experiments lead to conclusions that the very facts of the experiments themselves contradict. As Alphonse De Waelhens notes in his foreword to the second French edition of *The Structure of Behavior*,

Merleau-Ponty unstintingly collates and examines the facts given us by scientific experimentation or psychiatry...with the single aim of making the ontological frames of reference—generally implicit—in which they are presented literally fly to pieces...[This process] simply signifies that for this philosophy, the scientist—as any man—spontaneously thinks in terms of ontology—and that, in the present circumstances, this ontology—which seems self-evident because of a long habitation—is in radical opposition to the views which natural and ingenuous experience—in which all scientific experience is rooted—seems to impose when we undertake to understand it without prejudice. (De Waelhens xxvii)

Instead of attempting to refute the findings of science, De Waelhens argues that Merleau-Ponty aims at demonstrating the inconsistency between the facts that psychiatry and various scientific investigations into natural and ingenuous experience bring to light and the ontological presuppositions in which science and the scientific attitude are rooted; the major problem with science concerns the contradiction between the facts it uncovers about the nature of embodied experiences in the world and the scientist's implicit assumptions concerning the nature of embodied existence. What Merleau-Ponty is attempting to highlight in *The Structure of Behavior* is the contradiction between the implicit ontological assumptions concerning the nature of embodied existence that inform all scientific experiencing of the world and the information about embodied existence that is revealed through experimentation into natural and ingenuous experience²⁷.

²⁷ In many ways, Merleau-Ponty's oeuvre can be understood as a sustained search for an

alternative framework for describing the nature of existence than according to the concepts of consciousness and intentionality that Husserl developed in his early phenomenological writings and which formed the basis for Jean-Paul Sartre's explication of the nature of the relationship between the for-itself and the in-itself in *Being and Nothingness*. In his text, Sartre carries the phenomenology outlined by Husserl in the *Cartesian Meditations* to its logical conclusion. Sartre radicalizes the Cartesian split between the subject and the object, between consciousness and the world, and makes it the cornerstone of his philosophical enterprise. According to Sartrean existentialism, existence is primarily structured by a separation between the being-for-itself and the being-in-itself and any relationship between these terms is considered to be a modality of consciousness; thus, *Being and Nothingness* reduces existence to the categories of consciousness, which is structured, following Husserl, as intentionality. As Jean-François Lyotard explains in *Phenomenology*,

in the investigation of the immediate data prior to all scientific thematization, and the justification of such, phenomenology lays bare the fundamental manner, or essence, of the consciousness of this data, which is intentionality. In place of the traditional consciousness which 'digests,' or at least ingests, the external world (as in Condillac, for example), phenomenology reveals a consciousness which 'bursts outward' (Sartre)—a consciousness, in sum, which is nothing if not a relation to the world...[Consequently it will] prove necessary at least to begin [any investigation of the nature of existence] by laying out and making clear the diverse modes according to which consciousness is 'interwoven with the world.' (Lyotard 33-4)

As Sartre would say, consciousness is always consciousness of something; that is, consciousness is directed outwards towards the world as the object of its intentions. Consequently, all consciousness is motivated consciousness, directed towards the transcendent object in the external world and the original relationship between the for-itself and the in-itself is brought about according to the intentional nature of consciousness. Since consciousness is the structure in human beings that directs us outside of ourselves and towards the transcendent world, all original relations with the world are determined by consciousness; therefore, according to Sartre's ontology, all relationships with the external world are structured as modes of consciousness and that the only relation one can have with the world is as consciousness of that world. In other words, the fundamental structure of our relationship with the world that is prior to all scientific thematization is a result of the intentional nature of consciousness.

However, as Merleau-Ponty argues in *Phenomenology of Perception*, our intentional relation with the world, as a structure of consciousness, reduces the "ontological world...which we find at the core of the subject...[to] the world...as idea" and not as lived or experienced by a corporeal consciousness (*Phenomenology of Perception* 408). In other words, Merleau-Ponty works to undermine the priority given to consciousness in philosophical descriptions of pre-reflective being-in-the-world, a priority that works to determine our pre-reflective relationship with the world as a function of intelligibility. One of the consequences of placing the transcendental subject understood as consciousness at the centre of one's philosophical systems is that one reduces our primordial relationship with Being and the world to a matter of intelligibility. Consequently, the pre-reflective relationship between the cogito and the world in Sartre is structured as a form of knowing and ontology is reduced absolutely to the abstract

In particular, De Waelhens argues that Merleau-Ponty is specifically interested in his first major work in proving that scientific experience,

that is, the ensemble of facts which, brought to light by scientific investigation, constitutes behaviour, is not comprehensible within the ontological perspectives which science spontaneously adopts...[and that one] succeeds in obtaining a coherent view of behaviour only if it is interpreted with the help of a conception which places no more credit in the hypothesis of a behaviour-as-thing than that of behaviour-as-manifestation of a pure mind. (De Waelhens xxv-xxvi)

The two characterizations of behaviour that Merleau-Ponty is contesting in this text—the conceptualization of “behaviour-as-thing” and “behaviour-as-manifestation of a pure mind”—are themselves descriptions of human behaviour that are underwritten by certain metaphysical assumptions, particularly assumptions concerning the nature of human corporeality and embodiment. For Merleau-Ponty, what is at issue in this text is the incompatibility of the facts concerning human behaviour brought to light by scientific investigation and the ontological framework according to which scientists attempt to

sphere of ideas and concepts. Living in the world is, therefore, simply a modality of knowing the world; scientific thematization is, in other words, based upon an earlier impersonal and egoless thematization of the world as an object of knowledge. Hence, both the ontic and ontological domains of being are simple modes of knowing and our relationship with Being and beings is a simple matter of knowledge. What Merleau-Ponty questions about the transcendental subject, such as it appears in Sartre, is the already constituted, and unquestioned, separation between the for-itself and the in-itself, that distance across which consciousness acts. How was this separation constituted? What was the source of this differentiation? How is the space between for-itself and in-itself into which consciousness bursts realized and actualized in the world? In an article entitled “Perception and Structure in Merleau-Ponty,” philosopher Bernhard Waldenfels argues that Merleau-Ponty, in an attempt to answer these questions, spent his life “searching for a third dimension this side of subject and object,” a milieu which Merleau-Ponty characterizes as “common to philosophy and the positive sciences, and...[where] something like a third dimension opens up, this side of the pure subject and the pure object, where our activity and our passivity, our autonomy and dependence no longer contradict one another” (Waldenfels 21). He argues that Merleau-Ponty’s work attempts a radical revision of phenomenology and our understanding of our being-in-the-world by moving away from the idea of “consciousness as a fundamental fact” (Waldenfels 26) and towards an understanding of existence in relation to the fundamental fact that we are our

understand these facts. Since the various scientific accounts of the experiences of the living body in the world do not coincide with the ontological perspectives concerning the nature of human existence in which the scientific interpretation of these experiences are rooted, then one must conclude that either the facts themselves are false or that the ontological presuppositions are incorrect. For Merleau-Ponty, the problem lies with the ontological presuppositions; consequently, he does not try to debunk the scientific methods of investigation but instead is interested in re-vising the ontological assumptions in which scientific interpretations are rooted, assumptions that contend that existence is primarily structured according to the separation between the for-itself and the in-itself. In the case of “behaviour-as-thing,” scientists interpret behaviour as a conditioned physiological response to a particular stimulus in which consciousness is not involved at all; in other words, this interpretation follows the empirical and realist conceptualization of existence in which the structure of the external world—in this case, the structure of the stimulus—determines absolutely the actions of the subject. In the case of “behaviour-as-manifestation of a pure mind,” a subject’s behaviour is interpreted as being absolutely determined by internal processes, an interpretation rooted in the intellectualist and idealist philosophical tradition that contends that all actions are absolutely determined and structured internally by the subject through consciousness.

The problem for Merleau-Ponty in *The Structure of Behavior* is that scientific investigations into behaviour have revealed facts that cannot be explained in terms of the dualism between the pure object that determines the subject’s response and the pure subject that absolutely determines its own behaviour. Instead, the odd structure of behaviour points

embodiment (*Phenomenology of Perception* 206).

towards the existence of a middle dimension on this side of the subject and object dichotomy; as Merleau-Ponty explains, he is interested in exploring the concept of behaviour since “it is neutral with respect to the classical distinction between the ‘mental’ and the ‘physiological’ and thus gives us the opportunity of defining them anew” (*The Structure of Behavior* 4). In other words, behaviour, as a concept, holds open for Merleau-Ponty the possibility of understanding the relationship between the subject and its environment in ways other than as “a series of blind reactions to external ‘stimuli,’ [or as] the projection of acts which are motivated by the pure ideas of a disembodied, worldless mind” (Wild xiv). Moreover, the concept of behaviour will enable him to envision the relationship between organism and environment not as “exclusively subjective nor exclusively objective, but as a dialectical interchange between man and the world which cannot be adequately expressed in traditional causal terms” (Wild xiv).

5.2.2 *The Concept of Behaviour*

In his article entitled “Perception and Structure in Merleau-Ponty,” Bernhard Waldenfels focuses on the concepts of structure and form that Merleau-Ponty develops in relations to behaviour to describe the experiential third dimension that underlies the splitting of the world into the in-itself and the for-itself. In particular, Waldenfels focuses on what he refers to as the “structures of behaviour” and investigates Merleau-Ponty’s use of the concepts of structure and form in characterizing “the behaviour of an organism towards its environment, that of a human being to [its] world” as it unfolds in “a third dimension which lies on this side of the split into pure nature and pure consciousness, pure

externality and pure internality” (Waldenfels 22-3). He explains that, in *The Structure of Behavior*,

[s]tructure and form belong to a middle dimension, they are neither ‘things’, i.e. pure existents, complexions of externally connected data, nor ‘ideas’, i.e. products of an intellectual synthesis [but are rather] the result of a process of self-organization of experiential, actional and linguistic fields, which is not governed by pre-existent principles and yet itself is prior to any possible disintegration into disparate elements and individual events. Husserl’s goal of a ‘Logos of the aesthetic world’ begins to assume a concrete form here, and the transcendental dimension is here shifted into a pre-egological region. (Waldenfels 23)

In other words, the pre-egological middle region of behaviour is that realm of existence that is prior to the disintegration of the world into the poles of subject and object and to the disintegration of the situation into separate, individuated parts. More specifically, in this middle dimension, not only can the individual not be reduced to a knowing consciousness but the stimulus itself cannot be reduced to a simple set of real parts. Instead, “since the decomposition into real parts can never be completed, it is never as an individual physical reality that the stimulus becomes reflexogenic; it is always as a structure” (*The Structure of Behavior* 103). Structure is the concept that Merleau-Ponty uses to characterize the dimension of experience that is characterized by “certain givens of [an organism’s] experience” (*The Structure of Behavior* 102) and certain givens of the external environment that ensure that “the real world is constituted in its specificity” (*The Structure of Behavior* 220). This shift in terminology is part of the larger project of placing the stimulus into the larger context of the situation in which the behaviour unfolded; as a result, the reaction of the organism to a stimulus is seen as being partly dependent upon the structure of the situation in which the organism is acting and partly on the structure of the organism itself.

The middle dimension unearthed by Merleau-Ponty should sound quite familiar by now since it has a similar physiognomy to the category of existence brought to light by

Marcel. Just as Marcel was reacting to the objectivization and functionalization of the human being by contemporary culture, Merleau-Ponty is reacting to the scientific objectification of living behaviour as simple reflex. But Merleau-Ponty's attack on the objectivity that governs reflexology is only the opening by way of which he extends his critique to encompass all the sciences. What troubles Merleau-Ponty about the scientific project in general is its attempt "to construct the image of [a self-enclosed] absolute physical world, of a physical *reality*...[that] should be only a point of departure..., a provisional intermediary between us and the ensemble of laws; and these laws—explaining by their combined interplay the appearance of such and such a state of the world—should thus close the circle and stand independently" (*The Structure of Behavior* 144-5). In particular, reflexology, by way of its attempt to establish a one-to-one correspondence in organisms between actions and physical stimuli, works to solidify the illusion of a self-enclosed, independent physical reality that exists objectively apart from the organism as subject and thereby "revealing forms of life or even of mind as already in a physical world in-itself (*en-soi*)" (*The Structure of Behavior* 145). But, through the category of behaviour, Merleau-Ponty works to surpass the alternative of subject and object, *pour-soi* and *en-soi*, in order to demonstrate the interrelation, interdependence, or correlation, between the organism and the world that "opens up at the place where behavior appears" (*The Structure of Behavior* 125). In fact, Merleau-Ponty even adopts the term *existence* in order to designate the reality that he is trying to articulate, that pre-reflective participation or inherence of the living organism in the world which has actually become, because of certain privileged perceptual structures, the basis for the scientific image of the world as an absolute given reality:

The gestures of behavior, the intentions which it traces in the space around the animal, are not directed to the true world or pure being, but to being-for-the-animal,

that is, to a certain milieu characteristic of the species; they do not allow the showing through of a consciousness, that is, a being whose whole essence is to know, but rather a certain manner of treating the world, of 'being-in-the-world' or of 'existing.' A consciousness, according to Hegel's expression, is a 'penetration in being,' and here we have nothing yet but an opening up... There is, then, no behavior which certifies a pure consciousness behind it... In fact I am aware of perceiving the world as well as behavior which, caught in it, intends numerically one and the same world, which is to say that, in the experience of behavior, I effectively surpass the alternative of the for-itself (*pour-soi*) and the in-itself (*en-soi*)... The structure of behavior as it presents itself to perceptual experience is neither a thing nor consciousness; and it is this which renders it opaque to the mind. (*The Structure of Behavior* 125-7)

The importance of the concept of behaviour for Merleau-Ponty concerns the relationship between the existent and its surroundings that it brings to light, a relationship that precedes the separation between the for-itself and the in-itself that, for example, organizes Sartre's ontological description of human existence. Behaviour points towards the pre-scientific life world in which the existent finds itself involved in a pre-reflective manner and in which the existent encounters the world as presence and in a meaningful manner. What Merleau-Ponty denotes with the term behaviour is the complex of the organism and its surroundings as expressed by way of the gestures of behaviour. As Merleau-Ponty deploys the term, behaviour does not allow for the atomization of the act into a distinct external stimuli that solicits, as a cause, a reflexive response from the organism. Instead, behaviour is essentially structural, in that the stimulus cannot be thought apart from its place within the larger structure of the situation and surroundings and its meaningfulness therein and the response cannot be thought apart the internal laws that structure the organism and ensure that the response is global instead of local. As Merleau-Ponty explains,

we cannot treat reactions to the structure of the situation as derived or give a privilege of objectivity to those which depend on elementary excitations. For instance, the excitations received on the sensory terminations and the movements

executed by the effector muscles are integrated into structures which play a regulating role in their regard. These structural processes...establish a relation of meaning between the situation and the response...In other words, the real parts of the stimulus are not necessarily the real parts of the situation. The efficacy of a partial stimulus is not tied solely to its objective presence. It must make itself recognized as it were by the organism in the...constellation in which it appears. There is a reason for distinguishing the presence of the stimulus in-itself and its presence 'for the organism' which reacts...Since the decomposition into real parts can never be completed, it is never as an individual physical reality that the stimulus becomes reflexogenic; it is always as a structure. (*The Structure of Behavior* 102-3)

Therefore, Merleau-Ponty argues that behaviour is meaningful—a term that, as we saw earlier, Marcel also uses to overcome the separation between the subject and the object that structures the realm of objectivity. More specifically, he presents behaviour as a relation of meaning that coordinates the situation and the response; in other words, both the situation and the response are part of a structural whole that is behaviour. As Merleau-Ponty explains, “situation and reaction are linked internally by their common participation in a structure in which the mode of activity proper to the organism is expressed” (*The Structure of Behavior* 130). And that structure is behaviour.

In what follows in Chapter II of *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty suggests three categories of behaviour—what he refers to as the syncretic, amovable, and symbolic forms—for articulating three possible relationships between the organism and its surroundings and for the accompanying meaning of space and time at each of these levels. At each level, Merleau-Ponty demonstrates that behaviour is structural, that it can no longer be situated at either the level of the in-itself or the for-itself but must be understood to unfold in a middle dimension that is neither simply objective space nor the space of intentional consciousness; more specifically, behaviour must be understood as “the projection outside of the organism of a *possibility*”—a possibility that results from

the transformation by the organism of both a singular situation of an experience into a typical situation by making it stand out as a 'now' in relation to a series of 'nows' and its reaction into an aptitude—"which is internal to it" (*The Structure of Behavior* 125).

Under these conditions, stimuli are not the cause of reactions but are instead their occasion:

Hence, between the variables upon which conduct actually depends and this conduct itself there appears a relation of meaning, an intrinsic relation. One cannot assign a moment in which the world acts upon the organism, since the very effect of this 'action' expresses the internal law of the organism. The mutual exteriority of the organism and the milieu is surmounted along with the mutual exteriority of the stimuli. Thus, two correlatives must be substituted for these two terms defined in isolation: the 'milieu' and the 'aptitude,' which are like two poles of behavior and participate in the same structure. (*The Structure of Behavior* 161)

Thus, behaviour can only be understood as a sort of dialectic between the organism and its surroundings, an "embodied dialectic which radiates over a milieu immanent to it" (SB 161), a circuit of exchange between the surroundings and the various aptitudes of the organism that establishes the world for the organism, where aptitudes are defined as "the general power of responding to situations of a certain type by means of varied reactions" (*The Structure of Behavior* 130). Instead of being already given, instead of being an objective and self-enclosed stage upon which behaviour is enacted, the world, according to Merleau-Ponty, is a function of the possibilities for behaviour of the organism, of its aptitudes; in other words, "the world, inasmuch as it harbors living beings,...opens up at the place where being appears" (*The Structure of Behavior* 125).

The world only appears in relation to the possible behaviours established within the organism, aptitudes that, as structures, are a direct result of a communication or exchange between the structure that is the organism and the structure that is its surroundings; the world is that milieu that is contained within the organism's gestures of behaviour, that is

intended—not in a conscious manner, however—by its behaviour. And these possibilities or aptitudes are all part of the organism’s unique “manner of treating the world, of ‘being-in-the-world,’ or of ‘existing.’ A consciousness, according to Hegel’s expression, is a ‘penetration in being,’ and here we have nothing yet but an opening up” (*The Structure of Behavior* 125-6). So the central issue now becomes the opening onto the world that is the organism, the “manner of elaborating the stimuli which is proper to it; thus the organism has a distinct reality which is not substantial but structural” (*The Structure of Behavior* 129). As we are seeing, the concept of structure comes to refer for Merleau-Ponty to the way in which the organism comes to live the situation for itself, to the way in which the organism responds or receives stimuli “according to what they signify and what they are worth for the typical activity of the species considered” (*The Structure of Behavior* 130) and not simply according to the physical nature of the stimuli as it is in itself. The structural aspect of behaviour concerns the way in which the organism opens up, to, or onto its surroundings, to the way in which the organism makes itself present to receive the world and receive any stimuli with respect to its value and significance and with respect to the meaningful behaviour that the organism is trying to accomplish or realize. And it is exactly this opening up that is pre-reflective life.

In conclusion, behaviour, as the internal relationship between the environment and the organism, is itself a structure. As Merleau-Ponty discovers in his investigation, behaviour, as the bond between the organism’s specific way of dealing with the world and the physiognomy of the thing, is not a simple fact; instead, his “objective description of behaviour uncovers in it a more or less articulated structure, a more or less rich interior signification and reference to ‘situations’ which are sometimes individual, sometimes

abstract and sometimes essential” (*The Structure of Behavior* 109-10). Behaviour is therefore a segmented and jointed structure in which the interior significance of the world for the organism and the structure of the external situation are organized into a coherent and meaningful whole. Or, as Waldenfels would have it, behaviour is a structure which appears within the middle dimension between subject and object, in that interval which for Merleau-Ponty is not yet space: through his investigation of behaviour, “the retinal image and the object [come to be understood as] two phenomena that resemble and correspond to each other in a magical way across an interval which is not yet space” (*The Structure of Behavior* 219). Across this interval, the world comes to correspond to its appearance as a retinal image while the retinal image comes to correspond to the structure of the world; as Merleau-Ponty would later comment in *Phenomenology of Perception*, it is across this interval that I come to understand the world and the world comes to understand me (*Phenomenology of Perception* 408). As John O'Neill explains in *Perception, Expression, and History: The Social Phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, the logic of behaviour “is a ‘living cohesion’ in which I belong to myself while belonging to the world” (O'Neill 18). In *The Structure of Behavior*, therefore, behaviour is the concept through which Merleau-Ponty attempts to develop the “complementary relationship between ‘the omnipresence of consciousness and its involvement in a field of presence’” that characterizes the middle dimension of existence (O'Neill 19).

In part, *The Structure of Behavior* is a reaction to the atomist theory of stimulus-response that separates the stimulus from the situation in which the response occurs and is instead suggesting that the stimulus cannot be thought apart from the larger structure of the situation and its meaning for the organism (*The Structure of Behavior* 102). As O'Neill

explains, Merleau-Ponty is arguing that the results of scientific experimentation demonstrate that “the sensible configuration of an object is not a datum of immediate experience; what is immediate is the meaning or structure of the object correlative with the ‘articulation and melodic unity of my behaviour’” (O'Neill 4). As a correlative relation, the meaning of an object cannot be thought apart from the structure of the subject's behaviour towards that object. According to this model of behaviour, the meaning of the object is implied, or actualized, in the behaviour of the subject while the structure of behaviour is implied, or actualized, in the meaning that the object has for the subject. As a result, one cannot investigate the meaning of the object without investigating the structure of the behaviour of the subject towards that object; and, likewise, one cannot investigate the structure of behaviour without also investigating the meaning of the object as articulated in the subject's behaviour. Consequently, both the structure of the environment and the structure of what Merleau-Ponty refers to as an organism's “specific capacity to respond” (*The Structure of Behavior* 154) to the environment are involved in determining the structure of the organism's behaviour in a certain setting. As Merleau-Ponty states, the facts revealed by scientific experimentation lead one to conclude that,

in describing the physical or organic individual and its milieu,...their relations [are] not mechanical, but dialectical. A mechanical action...is one in which the cause and the effect are decomposable into real elements which have a one-to-one correspondence. In elementary actions, the dependence is uni-directional; the cause is the necessary and sufficient condition of the effect considered in its existence and nature...On the contrary,...physical stimuli act upon the organism only by eliciting a global response which will vary qualitatively when the stimuli vary qualitatively;...the reaction depends upon their vital significance rather than on the material properties of the stimuli. Hence, between the variables upon which conduct actually depends and this conduct itself there appears a relation of meaning, an intrinsic relation. One cannot assign a moment in which the world acts on the organism, since the very effect of this ‘action’ expresses the internal law of the organism. (*The Structure of Behavior* 160-1)

In terms of the response of an organic individual to stimuli, the mechanical model is inapplicable because the stimuli does not completely condition the response, understood as the effect which the stimuli has on the organism; in other words, the structure of the stimuli is not a sufficient condition for understanding the nature of the organism's response. Instead, one must understand the effect of the stimuli, its action on the organism, in terms of the behaviour of the organism as a structure determined by the structure of the stimuli and the internal law of the organism that Merleau-Ponty refers to as "the organism's manner of modifying the physical world and of bringing about the appearance in the world of a milieu in its own image" (*The Structure of Behavior* 154).

5.2.3 *The Phenomenal Body*

But exactly how is one to understand the concept of an internal law according to which the organism modifies the physical world? What is the source of the internal law that enables "the organism itself to measure the action of things upon it and itself delimit its milieu" (*The Structure of Behavior* 148)? Where does the internal law originate and how is its expressed by the organism? How does the internal law modify the physical world for the organism? Where does this milieu that interposes itself between the organism and the world originate? I deliberately smuggled in the concept of *interposition* to forewarn the reader about the direction in which the argument is heading. Merleau-Ponty deliberately separates behaviour into two parts: geographical behaviour, which is "the sum of the movements actually executed by the animal in their objective relation with the physical world," and behaviour proper, which are those "movements considered in their internal

articulation and as a kinetic melody gifted with meaning” (*The Structure of Behavior* 130).

The actual behaviour that the organism realizes and which can be related to the physical world in which the action is actualised is the geographical aspect of behaviour; this is the objective component of behaviour that science studies. But, underlying this behaviour as its enabling condition, behaviour proper refers to that structural aspect of behaviour in which the situation and the reaction are internally linked or related as a meaningful whole, as an articulated—by way of meaning—structure. And it is behaviour proper that occurs in the milieu proper to the organism, in that not-yet-space in which the internal structure of the organism and the structural features of its surroundings participate with one another:

“Behaviour, it is said, has its roots and ultimate effects in the geographical environment even though, as has been seen, it is related to it only by the intermediary of the environment proper to each species and to each organism” (*The Structure of Behavior* 133). So, the question at this point is how this middle sphere, the milieu, is constituted and interposed between the organism and the geographical world. What is at the heart of the milieu?

Up to this point, Merleau-Ponty has argued that the internal law of the organism is one of the central structures that determines the structure of an organism’s behaviour—the actions according to which it conducts itself in a certain milieu. In other words, the internal law of the organism is related to its capacity for action, to the possible set of actions which the organism is able to perform at any given time; as Merleau-Ponty states, in order to properly understand an organism’s behaviour, one is required to “accept the fact that the organism itself modifies its milieu according to the internal norms of its activity” (*The Structure of Behavior* 154). Hence, the organism is able to delimit its milieu according to the internal laws that determine all possible activity for the organism. In the case of human

beings, this means that our behaviour is largely determined by the structure of our bodies; since “the particularities of an individual organism are more and more closely connected with its capacity for action...[, it is only reasonable to argue that] the structure of the body in man is the expression of character” (*The Structure of Behavior* 155). But, the body can only be understood as the potential for activity in relation to the environment in which it establishes itself; one must remember that, outside of any environment, the body only exists as the potential for activity and that, similarly, apart from the body, an object only exists as the potential for meaning. This notwithstanding, the question still remains as to how the structure of the organism actually functions to modify its milieu. And, in a similar vein, how does the structure of the environment act upon the organism?

As the source of potential activity, the body delimits the physical world by structuring it according to the potential actions that the body can perform; consequently, by superimposing its internal norms of activity over the world, the organism is able to modify the physical world and bring into appearance a milieu, organized according to its own image, in which the organism can function. But this milieu is also a function of the structure of the physical world to which the organism, as body, must respond. In order to take this into account, Merleau-Ponty argues that the unity of the milieu, as the correlation between organism and environment, must be understood as a unity of signification and not one of correlation, as is the case in physical systems in which cause and effect are separable and exist in a one-to-one correspondence (*The Structure of Behavior* 155-6). Behaviour is therefore a structure of signification, and meaning is the material out of which behaviour, as a structure constituted by the structure of the environment and the structure of the organism, is constituted. In other words, the structure of the world and the internal norms of the

organism are related to one another in behaviour through signification. As O'Neill explains, "the meaning of an object is revealed as a possibility which is only actualized as being-in-the-world when inserted into a certain conduct which distributes functional values according to the demands of the total configuration" (O'Neill 4). The structure of the object is a possible set of meanings which is then actualized when, through the internal law of the organism, it is placed in the context of a certain behavioural structure; the action of the object on the organism is a possibility which the organism, as a potentiality for activity, actualizes as a meaning through behaviour. The effect of the stimuli, the behaviour of the organism, is the result of the structure of the stimuli made meaningful in relation to the internal law of the organism. Consequently, the concept of behaviour enables Merleau-Ponty to point towards the middle dimension of signification in which the subject and object are as yet indistinguishable; behaviour is as much a structure of the world as it is of the internal law of the organism. But how exactly is one to understand the role of the body in behaviour? Since the internal norms of activity for an organism seem to refer only to the structural particularities of that type of organism, it seems quite reasonable to suggest that the body, as the totality involved in behaviour, is not equivalent to the internal law of the organism. Then how is one to understand the body—that totality of functional values into which the object is inserted—involved in behaviour?

One possibly is as the result of the dialectic between the organic individual and the physical world. In fact, one outcome of Merleau-Ponty's investigation into the structure of behaviour is the introduction of the concept of the *phenomenal body* to explain the structure of the body. In *The Structure of Behavior*, the phenomenal body denotes "the perception of the living body" (*The Structure of Behavior* 156), those

structures through which the organism, as a potentiality for activity in the world, modifies the physical world. In other words, the concept refers to the structure of the body, to its internal law, as that body is lived by the organism. And, as a lived body, Merleau-Ponty contends that the phenomenal body must have “a proper structure, an immanent signification; from the beginning the phenomenal body must be a centre for actions which radiate over a ‘milieu’; it must be a certain silhouette in the physical and the moral sense; it must be a certain type of behavior” (*The Structure of Behavior* 157). Through the phenomenal body, that body through which the organism meets the world as a lived experience, the organism brings an immanent signification into contact with the physical world and, as such, will function as the centre for all activity. In other words, the phenomenal body is the seat of behaviour; as O'Neill explains, “the organism is a phenomenal body in the Kantian sense of a unity of signification in which the environment and response are polarities in the same structure of behaviour” (O'Neill 12). As “the centre for actions which radiate over a ‘milieu’”, the phenomenal body must be understood as the structural and significant correlation between the physical world and the internal law of the organism, as the constituted interrelation between interior and exterior that is the very possibility of the idealist separation between the for-itself and the in-itself:

The phenomenal body is the matrix of human existence. It is the centre around which the world is given as a correlate of its activities. Through the phenomenal body we are open to a world of objects as polarities of bodily action. The phenomenal body is a modality of being-in-the-world which is privileged because it is the archimedean point of action and neither a passive agency of sensory perception nor an obstacle to idealist knowledge. (O'Neill 13)

Instead of arguing for the priority of consciousness, Merleau-Ponty situates the phenomenal body as that which gives origin to human existence, as the source of the

milieu in which the world of objects is opened as the implied goal of bodily actions.

For Merleau-Ponty, the phenomenal body resides at the heart of an organism's behavioural field or environment, organizes the milieu in which the organism lives, and is the point where behaviour begins and the world appears for the organism. Merleau-Ponty's investigations into behaviour have, up to this point, been aimed at establishing the incompatibility of the results of scientific studies on behaviour and the conclusions drawn by the scientists concerning those results, an incompatibility that Merleau-Ponty attributes to the ontological presuppositions brought to bear by the scientists on their results. In addition, Merleau-Ponty has also been trying to give a more accurate description of behaviour and the way in which (and the milieu in which) behaviour unfolds—primarily, he has been concerned with showing that behaviour can only be properly understood if one surpasses the distinction between the for-itself and the in-itself, between pure consciousness and the absolute objective self-enclosed world.

What he has uncovered is that behaviour unfolds as a dialectic between the organism and its surroundings that occurs below the level of consciousness and within a milieu proper to the organism and delimited according to the internal norm of that organism. But such an understanding of behaviour as pre-reflective and as occurring in a region between the for-itself and the in-itself demands a radically different representation of the reality of bodily existence, of the role of embodiment in one's existence in the world. Instead of simply being a matter of extension, it is by way of what Merleau-Ponty comes to refer to as the phenomenal body that the organism establishes the intermediary of the environment proper to itself through which it is able to ultimately effect the geographical environment (*The Structure of Behavior* 133); it is by way of the

phenomenal body that an organism is able to execute “a work beyond its proper limits and constitute a proper milieu for itself” (*The Structure of Behavior* 146). The phenomenal body, in other words, is the expression of the internal norm of the organism within the world, of that organism’s general attitude toward the world, which means that “the organism itself measures the action of things upon itself and delimits its milieu by a circular process” (*The Structure of Behavior* 148). In this way, living organic beings can be said to have behaviour, “which is to say that their actions are not comprehensible as functions of the physical milieu and that, on the contrary, the parts of the world to which they react are delimited for them by an internal norm” (*The Structure of Behavior* 159). Consequently, it is by way of this internal norm—this way of being-in-the-world, this initial manner of treating and modifying the physical world—that the organism is capable of “bringing about the appearance in the world of a milieu in its own image” (*The Structure of Behavior* 154).

And it is the phenomenal body that one discovers dwelling at the heart of this milieu, and it is in terms of the phenomenal body that one must come to understand an organism’s reactions within the world, “not as muscular contractions which unfold in the body, but as acts which are addressed to a certain milieu, present or virtual” (*The Structure of Behavior* 151). Or again, as Merleau-Ponty explains, “the gestures and the attitudes of the phenomenal body must have therefore a proper structure, an immanent signification; from the beginning the phenomenal body must be a center of actions which radiate over a ‘milieu’; it must be a certain silhouette in the physical and the moral sense; it must be a certain type of behavior” (*The Structure of Behavior* 158). It is in terms of the phenomenal body that the organism comes to express itself in the world, comes to

comport itself in the world, according to a “characteristic rhythm, a general attitude toward certain categories of objects” (*The Structure of Behavior* 158).

5.2.4 *The Human Order and the Phenomenon of Perception*

Merleau-Ponty introduces the concept of the phenomenal body in relation to behaviour in the third chapter entitled “The Physical Order; The Vital Order; The Human Order.” In the chapter, he labours to distinguish physical systems, vital systems and the human order from the point of view of their differing structuration. Initially, the task that Merleau-Ponty sets for himself at this point is to demonstrate the essential difference between the structure of physical systems, which is governed by cause and effect, and the way in which living organisms interact with their surroundings, which is inherently acausal; then, he tries to further distinguish between the vital structures that govern the behaviour of organisms and that type of behaviour that can be called properly human.

By drawing on his previous investigations in the text, he begins the chapter by explicitly articulating the fact that the behaviour of organisms in relation to stimuli from their external environments is fundamentally different from the behaviour of a physical system in response to changing external conditions. As Merleau-Ponty stresses, “[r]eactions are not therefore a sequence of events; they carry within themselves an immanent intelligibility. Situation and reaction are linked internally by their common participation in a structure in which the mode of activity proper to the organism is expressed. Hence they cannot be placed one after the other as cause and effect; they are two moments of a circular process” (*The Structure of Behavior* 130). In physical systems,

there is no internal link or relation between the cause and the effect; there is no immanent meaning in the response of a physical system to an external force. All the physical system is interested in realizing is a state of equilibrium with respect to the real and present conditions or external forces to which it is being subjected. But, when dealing with vital structures, “equilibrium is obtained, not with respect to real and present conditions, but with respect to conditions which are only virtual and which the system itself brings into existence; when the structure, instead of procuring a release from the forces with which it is penetrated through the pressure of external ones, executes a work beyond its limits and constitutes a proper milieu for itself” (*The Structure of Behavior* 145-6). And the organism is able to constitute a milieu for itself through a meaning relationship that it establishes between its own internal structure and its surroundings: while “the unity of physical systems is a unity of *correlation*, that of organisms is a unity of *signification*. Correlation by laws, as the mode of thinking in physics practices it, leaves a residue in the phenomena of life which is accessible to another kind of coordination: coordination by *meaning*” (*The Structure of Behavior* 155-6).

While cause and effect exist in a one-to-one correlation in physical system, the situation and the response of the organism are coordinated in a meaningful way, in terms of the value and significance of the action for the organism as a whole. And this leads Merleau-Ponty to assert that the relationship between an organism and its milieu is not mechanical in nature but dialectical: “A mechanical action...is one in which the cause and the effect are decomposable into real elements which have a one-to-one correspondence...On the contrary,...physical stimuli act upon the organism only by eliciting a global response...; with respect to the organism they play the role of occasions

rather than of causes; the reaction depends upon their vital significance rather than on the material properties of the stimuli” (*The Structure of Behavior* 160-61). And the significance of the stimuli for the organism is determined in light of the possible actions of the organism and on the present and possible structure of its environment. In short, the vital significance of the stimuli is a function of their participation or involvement in the proper milieu of the organism, in the vital significance of the overall situation of which they are a part. And the action of the organism, actualized through the interposition of the milieu by its phenomenal body between itself and its surroundings, must be approached as an “internal unity of signification which distinguishes a gesture from a sum of movements” (*The Structure of Behavior* 162). And this discovery of an internal unity of signification leads Merleau-Ponty to state, in general, that the “phenomenon of life appeared therefore at the moment when a piece of extension, by the disposition of its movements and by the allusion that each movement makes to all the others, turned back upon itself and began to express something, to manifest an interior being externally” (*The Structure of Behavior* 162).

The structure of physical systems and the vital structure of the behaviour of organisms in relation to their milieu are two dialectics, two degrees of coordination or relation between internal and external structures; while the first is governed by the one-to-one correlation between cause and effect, the second is a unity between the organism and its environment governed by signification. What differentiates the phenomenon of life from that of a physical system is the degree to which the interior and the exterior intertwine or fold into one another; as Merleau-Ponty explains, “while a physical system equilibrates itself with respect to the given forces of the milieu,” the behaviour of an

animal organism, as “the manifestation of an interior in the exterior,” is governed by its ability to “construct a stable milieu for itself corresponding to the monotonous *a priori* of need and instinct” (*The Structure of Behavior* 162). And this brings us to the third dialectic, which is referred to as the human order and is inaugurated by human work, that

between man and the physico-chemical stimuli, projects ‘use-objects’ —clothing, tables, gardens—and ‘cultural objects’—books, musical instruments, language—which constitute the proper milieu of man and bring about the emergence of new cycles of behavior. Just as it seemed to us to be impossible to reduce the pair: vital situation-instinctive reaction, to the pair: stimulus-reflex, just so it will doubtless be necessary to recognize the originality of the pair: perceived situation-work. (*The Structure of Behavior* 162)

Merleau-Ponty explains that he deliberately chooses the term *work* to characterize the ensemble of possible activities or actions by which the human being “transforms physical and living nature” (*The Structure of Behavior* 162) in order to clearly distinguish between the vital and instinctual actions of organisms and properly human actions. What is essential at this point is to demonstrate that “the word ‘life’ does not have the same meaning in animality and humanity” (*The Structure of Behavior* 174), and Merleau-Ponty pursues this distinction by attempting to articulate the difference between human action as work and the simple vital action “by which the organism maintains itself in existence” (*The Structure of Behavior* 163). The major difference concerns the type of milieu in which the action is carried out. If one considers the pairing vital situation-instinctive reaction to the pairing perceived situation-work, the most striking difference is between the milieus in which the accompanying actions are carried out; while the instinctive reaction is actualized within a vital situation—a milieu structured by the vital concerns of the organism, its aim to maintain its existence—human work is actualized in a perceived situation, in what Merleau-Ponty refers to as “the zone of our possible action” that is

marked out in detail by our perception and that is not a function of our vital instinctual need to maintain our life (*The Structure of Behavior* 162). And it is at this point that the problem of perception moves to the foreground in his work. In other words, the proper structure of the human order, the structure of the human zone of action, is mapped out or structured by way of perception. The question now becomes how perception structures the properly human milieu of action. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, “the problem is still to understand how the objects of nature are constituted for us...and...whether or not it is to objects [determined in the sense of vital interests] that human action and perception are first addressed” (*The Structure of Behavior* 165).

The whole point of the discussion in the section on the human order is to come to understand how perception structures the milieu in which human actions are actualized or realized and to account for the descriptive characteristics of perceptual experience (*The Structure of Behavior* 166). In fact, Merleau-Ponty comes to refer to the perceived situation constituted by way of the primitive life of consciousness under the rubric of nascent perception, which he characterizes as having “the double character of being directed toward human intentions rather than towards objects of nature or the pure qualities (hot, cold, white, black) of which they are the supports, and of grasping them as experienced realities rather than as true objects” (*The Structure of Behavior* 166). The importance of this double determination of nascent perception is the way in which the perceiving subject is intertwined with others within nascent perception since it is the intention of others that the subject perceives instead of objects as such and the fact that nascent perception, instead of opening the subject to the truth of an object, opens it to its reality. The field of nascent perception, the proper milieu of human action, is thus

constituted by the various human intentionalities that haunt the field by way of the human body—that “transparent envelope of the attributes and desires of others, the place of manifestation [in the exterior of the interior intentions of others], the barely material support for a multitude of intentions” (*The Structure of Behavior* 167)—and the use values that the concrete subject perceives. What this refers to is the fact that nascent perception does not simply perceive objects and other bodies in the world; instead, nascent perception opens onto the intentions of others that radiate from their bodies and haunt the phenomenal field and onto the intentions that produced the objects in the field. As Merleau-Ponty explains, “[t]o use a human object is always more or less to embrace and assume for one’s self the meaning of the work which produced it...[In this way,] a child would understand the human meaning of bodies and of use-objects or the signifying value of language before any logical elaboration because he himself would sketch the acts which give their meaning to words and gestures” (*The Structure of Behavior* 170). And what opens bodies and use-objects to nascent perception is their signification, their meaning as it reveals itself to the perceiving subject at the moment of experience itself. This is why Merleau-Ponty stresses that nascent perception opens onto the reality of objects as opposed to their truth, that “perception opens on a reality that solicits our action rather than on a truth, an object of knowledge” (*The Structure of Behavior* 169). Bodies and objects in the phenomenal field are not objects of knowledge but are experienced as significations, as inhabited by meaningful intentions; nascent perception opens onto a lived reality rather than onto a known reality: “[Primitive objects of perception] are lived as realities...rather than known as true objects” (*The Structure of Behavior* 168). Or, in other words, what nascent perception opens onto is the intrinsic

meaning of the perceived.

But nascent perception, or the lived consciousness of the world, is not the end of the human dialectic. Human beings are not simply capable of perceiving the meaning of created structures, of perceiving the intentions that inhabit those created structures, but are also able to go beyond those structures and create other structures. As Merleau-Ponty explains, “[w]hat defines man is not the capacity to create a second nature—economic, social, or cultural—beyond biological nature; it is rather the capacity of going beyond created structures in order to create others” (*The Structure of Behavior* 175). Instead of taking our ability to create a specifically human milieu as being our defining characteristic—an ability that he has already argued is present in all living organisms in that they interpose a milieu constructed in their own image between themselves and their geographical or objective environment—Merleau-Ponty locates the specifically human capability in our ability to inhabit the already constituted world—a world of use-objects, language, and other human artifacts—and to move beyond this created world to create other worlds.

But how is this activity, what Merleau-Ponty refers to as work, possible? How are we able to go beyond created structures in order to create others, a capability that Merleau-Ponty contends is beyond the ability of monkeys? What Merleau-Ponty is referring to is our ability to create instruments that can be used to create other instruments, an ability that monkeys are scarcely able to succeed at: “[I]f a monkey picks a branch in order to reach a goal, it is because it is able to confer a functional value on an object of nature. But monkeys scarcely succeed at all in constructing instruments which would serve only for preparing others; we have seen that, having a stick for the monkey,

the tree branch is eliminated as such—which is equivalent to saying that it is never *possessed* as an instrument in the full sense of the world. Animal activity reveals its limits in the two cases: it loses itself in the real transformations which it accomplishes and cannot reiterate them” (*The Structure of Behavior* 175, emphasis added). While an organism is able to confer a functional value onto an object of nature, it is unable to confer a functional value onto a created object, onto a cultural object, in such a way that that created object could be used to create other objects. The natural object only has a relation to the possible behaviour of the organism; the organism has no relation to the possible behaviour of the object, to what the object may be capable of doing on its own apart from the vital situation in which the organism finds itself. In this respect, in the case of vital action, the organism is always the center of action, is always the subject performing the action, and the object can never become an active subject on its own. Or, to put it differently, the organism is unable to shift its perspective from its position as the subject in the vital situation.

However, for human beings, “the tree branch which has become a stick will remain precisely a tree-branch-which-has-become-a-stick, the same thing in two different functions and visible *for him* under a plurality of aspects. This power of choosing and varying points of view permits man to create instruments, not under the pressure of a *de facto* situation, but for a virtual use and especially in order to fabricate others” (*The Structure of Behavior* 175). What Merleau-Ponty is trying to bring to light is the structure inherent to the phenomenal field, to that properly human zone of possible action onto which nascent perception opens, as opposed to the vital structure of animal behaviour. And what seems to most determine the phenomenal field is the human ability to possess

objects, to have objects at one's disposal, a relation between the subject and the world that is structured according to the tension between subject and object. What is truly human is the ability to possess objects as instruments in the full sense of the word, which requires being able to perceive the object from varying points of view, a fact that, as Marcel demonstrated, is made possible by our ability to exist our bodies as one object among others; our ability to go beyond created structures to engender new ones is the result, in other words, of our ability to possess objects as possessions, a capacity that is conditioned by the fact that bodies are absolute possessions and can exist in the world of objects as objects. And, what the ability to possess opens up for the perceiving subject is a future, the space of the not yet:

The meaning of human work therefore is the recognition, beyond the present milieu, of a world of things visible for each 'I' under a plurality of aspects, the taking possession of an indefinite time and space; and one can easily show that the signification of speech or that of suicide and of the revolutionary act is the same. These acts of the human dialectic all reveal the same essence: the capacity of orienting oneself in relation to the possible, to the mediate, and not in relation to a limited milieu... Thus, the human dialectic is ambiguous: it is first manifested by the social or cultural structures, the appearance of which it brings about and in which it imprisons itself. *But its use-objects and its cultural objects would not be what they are if the activity which brings about their appearance did not also have as its meaning to reject them and to surpass them.* (*The Structure of Behavior* 175-6)

So, while animals live in the immediacy of their milieu, or live their milieu immediately without any mediation, human beings are able to abstract themselves from their immediate milieu and orient their actions with respect to the possible and the virtual, are able to shift their perspective on the world without losing themselves in the transformation. The pre-reflective 'I' that is the seat of nascent perception is invariant under transformations in or of its milieu; while contemplating the possible, the subject does not lose itself in the possible milieus opened up for it by way of nascent perception;

instead, the subject is able to understand itself as the same subject in two different situations or milieus and does not lose itself or its position by way of the transformations that it brings about through instinctive reactions in its milieu. In other words, while the animal is entranced by its immediate milieu and is unable to establish a centre of invariance in the world, human beings are able to objectify their milieu, experience their milieu in a mediate way, and thereby experience their milieu in terms of possibilities and potentialities. In other words, the true distinction between the animal and the human milieu is as follows: while animals are completely immersed in vital situations and experience objects in their milieu immediately in terms of their immediate presence or physiognomy, human beings have “the power of elevating to the status of objects the centers of resistance and reaction” of their milieu and experiencing their milieu according to the tension between subject and object (*The Structure of Behavior* 176). In vital situations, although life is characterized by the ability to manifest an interior being externally, the boundary between inside and outside is quite permeable since the animal lives its milieu in the immediacy of sensation; perceived situations, however, are structurally determined by, or are a function of, the boundary between inside and outside, or subject and object, since the perceiving subject experiences its milieu in a mediate manner, as a milieu of possibilities.

In this respect, the term *existence* that Marcel used to characterize the region of sensation, or pre-reflective life, actually describes the structure of vital behaviour, which is governed by a relation of immediacy between the organism and its milieu and which is characterized by the lack of any clear boundary between inside and outside. Thus, it would seem that *The Structure of Behavior* is, in part, a re-working of Marcel’s theory of

sensation and his representation of pre-reflective life; although the text is primarily centred around his investigations into scientific research into behaviour, Merleau-Ponty does, in the last two chapters, attempt to re-work Marcel's notion of pre-reflective existence and his characterization of it in terms of presence, inherence, immediacy and intimacy. What is becoming clear in these chapters is that, instead of attempting to trace a relation of Being, Merleau-Ponty places a relation of having at the heart of the human dialectic since it is our ability to possess instruments absolutely—to have objects at our disposal through a plurality of aspects without the object losing its consistency or without losing ourselves, our objective position, in the real transformation of the tree branch into a stick—that drives the dialectic beyond the present milieu into a possible beyond, a beyond of possibilities. As I explained above, the phenomenal field onto which nascent perception opens is composed, partially, of created use-objects that the perceiving subject experiences or lives in terms of the meaning that produced it, and, in part, the meaning of the work contains within itself the possibility of rejecting or surpassing itself²⁸. And this ability to take possession of an indefinite time and space, this temporality of futurity inherent within human work is a result of our objective relation with the cultural world, of our ability to situate ourselves within the world of objects and to have objects visible for us under a plurality of aspects. In this way, nascent perception structures the milieu of human work as a zone of possible actions since the perceiving subject participates in the phenomenal field as both subject and object, which enables it to perceive the field of action from a variety of different perspectives and to then act in accordance with those

²⁸ At first glance, this constitution of use-objects and cultural objects seems to resonate with the movement of territorialization and de-territorialization that drives the work of Deleuze and Guattari.

possibilities; what nascent perception opens onto is not simply the phenomenal field and the human intentions that created it but also onto the possible negation of that immediate milieu which is pre-figured within the intentions that constituted the field in the first place. Thus the perceived situation itself is structured according to the tension between subject and object, or, at the very least, human behaviour in the phenomenal field is structured by way of that tension, of the distinction between inside and outside. But the question remains as to how perception structures the phenomenal field as a zone of possibilities. How is it that perception opens the object to the subject under a plurality of aspects? What is it about perception, about the inherent structure of perception, that provides the subject with the power to choose or vary points of view in the world, thereby taking the subject beyond the present milieu and allowing it to grasp an indefinite time and space of possibilities?

In part, the difference between Marcel's theory of sensation and Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception rests upon how the two thinkers give voice to the nature of bodily reality. In the case of Marcel, sensation is organized around the fact that 'I am my body,' around a bond between the existent and their own proper body that gives that body priority over all other bodies and objects. And then, since the existent experiences a relation of immediacy, of immediate participation, with its proper body and since the proper body is interposed between the existent and the world, Marcel determines that the relation between the existent and the world must itself be a form of non-mediate immediacy. In other words, he gives priority to the proper body, instead of to the body that I have, when he turns his attention to working out the relation between the existent and the world, a decision that leads to his determination of the immediate participation of

the existent with the world by way of their proper body as a form of co-existence.

But, in light of Marcel's discovery of *corporeity* and his determination of the body as an absolute possession instead of as something that I am, I would argue that *The Structure of Behavior* represents Merleau-Ponty's first attempt at re-configuring human perception from the point of view of corporeity and the priority of having over Being at the level of the body. What begins to become clear near the end of the text is that what distinguishes the human order from the vital structures that characterize animal behaviour is precisely the fact that one experiences one's body as both subject and object instead of simply as a subject; while the phenomenal body that is at the centre of the vital situation is a subject, the phenomenal body that is at the heart of the perceived situation, of the phenomenal field, is both subject and object, and it is as object that the phenomenal body leads the subject beyond their present milieu and opens them onto the indeterminate space and time of the possible and the virtual. By way of its subjective body, the organism is simply and completely entranced or absorbed in its immediate milieu; however, by way of the body that I have, the subject is able to live beyond its immediate situation and be in dialogue with the possible. It is in this respect that "human action and...human perception...are irreducible to the vital dialectic of the organism and its milieu" (*The Structure of Behavior* 176). The only thing that remains to be done, then, is to demonstrate how human perception is structured by the duality—or reversibility—that is at the heart of human corporeity; what is missing, and which is the focus of the last chapter of the text, is for Merleau-Ponty to begin to sketch out a theory of perception from the point of view of corporeity, a theory of perception that takes into account the impersonality and passivity at the heart of human corporeity and the fact that our bodies

participate in a type of intersubjectivity based in difference.

5.3 Perception, Corporeity, and Perspective

Having laboured to demonstrate the irreducibility of the human dialectic to the vital dialectic of the organism, Merleau-Ponty now turns his attention, as Marcel did before him, to the question of perceptual experience in the context of the pre-reflective—or pre- and extra-scientific—life world; both thinkers, once they have brought to light the existence of the pre-objective life world realize that they must work towards an understanding of human sensation and perceptual experience at the level of pre-reflective existence because perception at this level is inherently different from the type of knowing perception that is the norm in conceptualizations of being-in-the-world that are centred around consciousness, in general, and the cogito, in particular. In other words, what each thinker attempts to articulate is the difference between the world as it is lived and as it is known, and, for both thinkers, Descartes appears as the key figure, as that thinker that initiated the bringing together of all perceptual experience under the rubric of consciousness: “One can say that...Descartes was very close to the modern notion of consciousness understood as the center in which all the objects about which man can speak and all the mental acts which intend them take on indubitable clarity” (*The Structure of Behavior* 196). In the last chapter of *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty begins by taking issue with Descartes’ analysis of perception and the fact that it does not take into account the way in which the object manifests itself in perception. Descartes’ investigations concerning the perception of the piece of wax only reveals for

the reader “the intelligible structure” of the perceived object (*The Structure of Behavior* 196), the object as it appears in the cogito. What is left out of this description of perception is the way in which the object is present to the perceiving subject, the way in which the object manifests itself in perception: “In perception, the object ‘presents’ itself without having been willed. There is an existential index which distinguishes the perceived or imaginary object from the idea and which manifests ‘something’ in them ‘which differs from my mind’... Thus the experience of a sensible presence is explained by a real presence” (*The Structure of Behavior* 196)²⁹.

Initially, Merleau-Ponty introduces a distinction between the reality and the truthfulness of an object in an attempt not to discredit Descartes’ theory of the cogito but to argue that he overlooked the lived reality of objects as experienced in favour of the truth of objects as understood solely in terms of their intelligible structure. Merleau-Ponty is trying at this point to distinguish between perception and cognition, where the former is a form of pre-reflective bodily consciousness. What he is arguing is that it is the reality of an object, as distinguished from its truthfulness, onto which perception, as pre-reflective, opens; through nascent perception, the subject lives objects as realities, and this is how the subject experiences objects at the level of the pre-reflective. Merleau-

²⁹ Merleau-Ponty’s use of the word *presence* to characterize the reality that the object has for the perceiving subject apart from the way in which the object exists as an idea in the cogito is testimony to Marcel’s influence; however, in contrast to the highly personal nature of sensation as described by Marcel, what comes to concern Merleau-Ponty with regards to the way in which the object ‘presents’ itself to the perceiving subject is the dialectical nature of this presence, this existential index through which perceived or imaginary objects actually appear as real. Presence will come to signify something quite different by the end of *The Structure of Behavior* as Merleau-Ponty endeavours to bring to light the structure of the existential index through which objects are lived as realities—that structure through which the subject perceives objects and lives their meaning that is intrinsic to their phenomenal appearance or to their appearance in the phenomenal field

Ponty argues that it is exactly lived reality, or how the perceiving subject lives the world as a reality, that Descartes' theory of the cogito overlooks. The theory of the cogito only focuses on that aspect of experience whereby the subject comes to know objects as true objects; what it overlooks or elides is lived experience, is how the subject lives the reality of the world or lives the world as a reality. What the concept of the cogito fails to take into account is the existential index of the perceived object, what Merleau-Ponty refers to as "the ensemble of existential knowledges" that remain outside of the universe of consciousness that the cogito reveals (*The Structure of Behavior* 197).

As Merleau-Ponty argues, the problem with Descartes' theory of the cogito is the fact that he did not try to integrate the knowledge of truth and the experience of reality, intellection and perception: "The intellection which the *cogito* had found in the heart of perception does not exhaust its content; to the extent that perception opens out on an 'other,' to the extent that it is the experience of an existence, it arises from a primary and original notion which 'can only be understood in its own terms'" (*The Structure of Behavior* 197). And that is exactly what Merleau-Ponty spends a large portion of his career trying to do—namely, to come up with a vocabulary distinct from the vocabulary of the cogito and of consciousness, as well as from Marcel's vocabulary of Being and presence, that would enable one to understand the experience of existence on its own terms. It is not a question of disproving the theory of the cogito but of demonstrating that the intelligible aspect of the object is only one facet of the object and does not exhaust the content of perception, and Merleau-Ponty needs to develop a new vocabulary that will allow him to articulate the whole reality of perception.

(*The Structure of Behavior* 175).

In fact, perception itself is the first term to which Merleau-Ponty dedicates himself; in the context of *The Structure of Behavior*, he decides to use a constellation of terms that are centred around the concept of perception³⁰—such as nascent perception, the perceived situation, perceptual experience, and the phenomenal field—to talk about the experience of existence and the way in which the embodied existent opens onto an other, a realization that was also key to Marcel’s attack on idealism. However, as I have been contending throughout this chapter, Merleau-Ponty’s theory of perception does not simply repeat or reproduce Marcel’s earlier theory of sensation for which Marcel used the non-mediated relationship between the existent and its body proper, the body that it is, as his model; instead, working from Marcel’s discovery of *corporeity*, the term that Marcel uses to refer to the irreducible duality of the relation between the existent with its own body (a relation that is animated by a tension between the body that I am and the body that I have), Merleau-Ponty labours to bring to light the inherently dialectical nature of perception³¹.

³⁰ I ask that the reader keep in mind that the term perception as used by Merleau-Ponty is meant to mean so much more than simply seeing or looking. Perception is the term that Merleau-Ponty uses to refer to the way in which an embodied human subject senses the world. Perception is a form of bodily sensibility, a bodily knowledge of the world that is acquired by way of all the senses. In fact, perception itself becomes the key concept around which his next major work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, is organized, and it is there where he most thoroughly develops his sense of the term as it applies to our specific form of being-in-the-world.

³¹ Throughout his career, Merleau-Ponty will deploy a number of different terms or sets of terms to denote the dialectical structure of perception: some of the more well known are the reversibility of the flesh and the foreground-background structure. But, in each case, I would argue that the terms refer to a primordial difference—that between the body that I am and the body that I have—that resides at the heart of human existence and which necessarily structures perception in such a way as to ensure its inexhaustibility. However, for the time being, I want to focus my attention on *The Structure of Behavior*, specifically on the sensitive-sensible pairing and the structure of perspective that Merleau-Ponty deploys in the last chapter of the text. What these terms are meant to embody is the

5.3.1 The Sensitive and the Sensible

The connecting thread of Merleau-Ponty's argument from the beginning of the text up to this point has been his attempt to demonstrate the inability of science to draw the correct conclusions about the data it has collected from its experiments into behaviour because of the erroneous ontological assumptions brought to bear by scientists concerning embodied existence; just as Marcel argues that realist and idealist conceptions about existence are incorrect because they are founded upon erroneous assumptions concerning the nature of bodily reality, Merleau-Ponty questions the conclusions drawn by behavioural science from its experiments on the grounds of its misconstrual of the true nature of bodily reality. But, while Marcel begins his re-evaluation of existence from the point of view of the body that I am, Merleau-Ponty, sensing that the nature of bodily reality is in fact an irreducible tension between the body that I am and the body that I have, returns to the findings of behavioural science—to the results of its experiments—and, using this scientific data, works to demonstrate how the relationship between the existent and the world—what has been referred to throughout this chapter as perception—is structured by this irreducible duality that lies at the heart of the relation between the existent and its own body.

One example of the way in which this irreducible and primordial difference manifests itself at the level of pre-reflective perception is through the dialectic between

dialectical nature of human perception, its rootedness in the tension between being and having that I would argue is perhaps the primordial difference that animates human existence.

the sensitive and the sensible that structures perception as a form of sensible knowledge, as both a blind contact with the world and meaningful perception. What structures perception as sensible knowledge for Merleau-Ponty is the irreducible duality of its movements: perception is both an opening onto, a movement of participation or involvement with objects that he explains as a form of blind contact, and a detachment from, a movement of withdrawal from the world through which the existent is able to grasp the intentional meaning of objects. And, what is important to keep in mind at this point is that this dialectic of participation and withdrawal also structures the relationship between the existent and their proper body as something that it both is and has:

this 'conscience,' this blind contact with a singular object and this participation in its existence would be nothing in the history of a mind and would leave no more acquisitions and available memories in the mind than would a physical pain or a fainting spell if the contrary movement by which I detach myself from the thing in order to apprehend the meaning were not already contained in them. Red, as sensation, and red, as *quale*, must be distinguished; the quality already includes two movements: the pure impression of red and its function, which for example is to cover a certain extension of space and time. To know therefore is always to grasp a given in a certain function, in a certain relation, 'in as much' as it signifies to me or presents to me such or such a structure. (*The Structure of Behavior* 197-8)

What becomes readily apparent in this concluding chapter on perception is that Merleau-Ponty begins to work on backing away from Marcel's determination of co-existence between the existent and the world as a form of absolute participation and involvement in which the distinction between existent and thing breaks down. Instead, Merleau-Ponty presents the movement of perception that structures the human dialectic as an oscillation between blind contact and detachment, between the pure impression of the object and a sensing of its functionality, between the grasping of a given quality and its place in a functional context. Perception as sensible knowledge involves perceiving a

given object in a relational context in which the function of the object, its intrinsic meaning, is also perceived. What Merleau-Ponty stresses about the human dialectic is that participation in the existence of the object or blind contact with its existence or being would be meaningless without the movement by which the existent apprehends the object in terms of its function. The experience of such a pure contact with the given would simply die out with the present, with the 'now' in which the existent participates in its existence. But Merleau-Ponty argues that such a contact is, by definition, impossible because the sensation of quality already contains within itself two movements or moments: the given is always already grasped in terms of its function, in a certain relation, because it is always structural. Thus, according to Merleau-Ponty, access to the pure presence of an object is impossible since perception is necessarily meaningful—or, which amounts to saying the same thing, structural: "What is profound in the notion of 'Gestalt' from which we started is...the idea of *structure*, the joining of an idea and an existence which are indiscernible, the contingent arrangement by which materials begin to have meaning in our presence, intelligibility in the nascent state" (*The Structure of Behavior* 206-7). Perception as sensible knowledge is therefore structural in the sense that it opens onto a network of original significations or meaningful relations. Consequently, "it is the thing itself which I reach in perception since everything of which one can think is a 'signification of thing' and since the act in which this signification is revealed to me is precisely called perception" (*The Structure of Behavior* 199). The given is constituted for the existent in perception by way of both the movement that brings one into contact with the existence of the object and the (objective) movement through which one detaches oneself from the given in order to apprehend its meaning or function. Or, in

other words, perception, just as the relation between the existent and its body proper, is both immediate and mediate. To perceive involves both being in blind contact with the object and participating immediately in the existence of the object while simultaneously experiencing the object, by way of its function, in a mediate relational manner.

The dual movement that constitutes perception—one of sensitivity and one of sensibility—is the site of a major difference between the theory of perception at the level of pre-reflective existence articulated by Marcel and Merleau-Ponty. For Marcel, sensation is simply a type of immediate sensitivity in which the existent co-exists with the world and in which the being of objects in the world is affirmed; in this way, the existent, by way of their body proper, is involved in or participates with the being of things by way of sensation, and this type of being-in-the-world is diametrically opposed to the stance of objectivity through which the self objectifies and functionalizes objects in the world and experiences them as simple possessions. But Marcel's theory of sensation is centred on the body proper, the body that I am, and on his erroneous assumption that the nature of bodily reality can simply be reduced to a relation of being and identity. In this way, since the body is interposed between the existent and the world and since the relation between the existent and the world is a function of the bond between the existent and its own body, it is only natural for Marcel to give priority to the immediacy of sensation; as Marcel states, "the world *exists* in the measure in which I have relations with it which are of the same type as my relation with my body." But, in *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty realizes that Marcel's early theories concerning sensation do not hold together in the light of his unearthing of corporeity and the devastating evidence that the body is an absolute possession—that the bond between the existent and its own body is

irreducibly a function of both being and having. In fact, I would argue that, in his re-figuration of perceptual experience, Merleau-Ponty actually substitutes the dialectic between being and having that structures the bond between the existent and their body, that dialectic that Marcel terms corporeity, for the simple relation of being between existent and body proper that Marcel situates at the heart of his theory of sensation as being representative of the true nature of bodily reality.

What Merleau-Ponty uncovers at the pre-reflective level of perceptual experience as sensible knowledge is not homogenous co-existence between the subject and the world as is the case in the vital behaviour of organisms; instead, he discovers that human existence, as he stated in his earlier review of *Being and Having*, is lived in the tension between being and having, between the object as given and its existential index, its intrinsic meaning or structure that is involved in a referential manner in the world of human intentions. What Merleau-Ponty discovers is that the subject, by way of perceptual experience and the sensible knowledge of the world that it gives, experiences objects in the world simultaneously and irreducibly both qualitatively and instrumentally or functionally, both subjectively and objectively, and both personally and impersonally. In other words, Merleau-Ponty incorporates objective knowledge of the world—where objective for Merleau-Ponty refers to a certain detachment of the perceiving subject from its immediate involvement in the world in order to allow the subject to relate to its present situation from different points of view and in relation to different possibilities—as part and parcel of perceptual experience, as being a structural feature of perception.

As we have seen, the irreducible tension between being and having that characterizes the human dialectic and marks our immanence on the world marks the

dividing line between properly human and non-human behaviour, and it has to do with the degree to which an organism is able to detach itself from the object and the 'now' in which it encounters that object, with what Merleau-Ponty refers to as symbolic behaviour.

As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty argues that animals are rooted in the present of their environment by their bodies, because they are unable, as is the case with humans, to apprehend themselves, by way of their body, as an object among other objects and thereby situating ourselves in a virtual space. The behaviour of animals "manifests a sort of adherence to the here and now, a short and heavy manner of existing" (*The Structure of Behavior* 126); for animals, "the object appears clothed with a 'vector,' invested with a 'functional value' which depends on the effective composition of the field" (*The Structure of Behavior* 116-7). More explicitly, Merleau-Ponty states that various spatial relations between animals and objects

are accessible to animal behavior only in one direction, that is when their pattern consists in a movement of the organism toward the goal; the goal is the fixed point, the organism the mobile point, and they cannot exchange their functions. The organism is not an object among objects, it possesses a privilege... The animal cannot put itself in the place of the [im]movable (sic) thing and see itself as the goal. It cannot vary the points of view, just as it cannot recognize something in different perspectives as the same *thing*. (*The Structure of Behavior* 117-8)

Therefore, as I have been arguing, the difference between human and non-human behaviour—where human behaviour addresses a world or milieu and non-human behaviour addresses an environment—resides in the relationship between the organism and its own body proper. What structures animal behaviour is the animal's immediate identification with its own body, with its own body as that which it is; objects are organized in the animal's environment in relation in their body proper that has absolute priority within the environment as its center, as the only movable or mobile point. All

behaviour is therefore a function of the priority of the animal's phenomenal body as the only mobile point within the environment. In other words, animal behaviour is vital in nature—meaning that all reactions are determined in relation to the immediate vital needs of the animal within the context of its present environment, are determined as a function of survival—since its reactions are all a function of the priority that its animate body possesses. And, what distinguishes human behaviour from vital behaviour is in fact the ability of the perceiving subject to place itself within its milieu as an object and to vary its point of view within that milieu, to situate its body as an object, as something that it has at its disposal, within its phenomenal field, which enables the perceiving subject to vary its point of view within a perceived situation and to recognize the same thing from different perspectives. And what makes this possible is the fact that one's body is for the existent both that which one is and something that one has at one's disposal; while my body does possess a privilege for me within the perceived situation, it is also experienced by me as one object among others within the phenomenal field that is at my disposal. It is this detachment from my body, from my immediate involvement in my body, that is at the root of my detachment from my immediate environment, a withdrawal that opens up the situation as a field of possibilities or virtualities.

It seems almost perverse, after having heard Marcel's side of the story, for Merleau-Ponty to argue that what distinguishes the human from the vital dialectic—what is our most human trait, in essence—is the fact that my body is irreducibly objective in nature. For Merleau-Ponty, what distinguishes the vital from the perceived situation is the fact that the human body is experienced both as that which one is and as a possession, as one object among others within the phenomenal field. While animals are incarnate,

while their bodies are forms of immediate mediation interposed between the organism and its environment, human beings experience their bodies as absolute possessions, in terms of corporeity. Just listen to how Merleau-Ponty characterizes the inability of the chimpanzee to translate its own body into objective space in terms of the body proper:

Why is the detour of the object not just as actual as the detour of the body proper? This is because, in animal behavior, the external object is not a thing in the sense that the body itself is—that is, a concrete unity capable of entering into a multiplicity of relations without losing itself. As a matter of fact, we do come up against the privilege of the body proper and it can only be a question of defining it correctly. What is really lacking in the animal is the symbolic behavior which it would have to possess in order to find an invariant in the external object, under the diversity of its aspects, comparable to the immediately given invariant of the body proper and in order to treat, reciprocally, its own body as an object among objects. (*The Structure of Behavior* 118).

Thus, what separates humans from other animals is the fact that humans are able to treat their bodies as objects and thereby undertake symbolic behaviour, which involves establishing “a relation between relations” (*The Structure of Behavior* 118). Beyond simply arranging objects within the behavioural space of the phenomenal body, a relational space at the centre of which is the phenomenal body, symbolic behaviour involves placing such relational spaces within a common space in which those relational spaces can themselves be brought into relation with one another; in other words, it requires the ability to treat one’s own body as an object among objects, an ability that is based in the immediately given invariant of the body proper that is felt by the existent as something that is at its disposal, that it possesses as an instrument.

In terms of the distinction between being and having used by Marcel, what is essentially human about our relation with our own body is the fact that I experience my body at the pre-reflective level of existence as both something that I am and something that I have. What Merleau-Ponty is beginning to uncover is that the relation of having is

a necessary fact of being embodied, that the true nature of bodily reality is not as simple incarnation but as corporeity. And, since “the world *exists* in the measure in which I have relations with it which are of the same type as my relation with my body” and since my relationship with my body is itself animated by the tension between being and having, the existence of the world—the relationship that the perceiving subject has with the world—must also be structured according to that same tension between the personal and the impersonal, the active and the passive, the self and the other that structures corporeity.

In fact, all of these abovementioned tensions are interwoven into the concept of perception as sensible knowledge, as a tension between the sensitive and the sensible. As you may recall, the perceiving subject, while it is in blind contact with the world, also experiences that world objectivity from a position of detachment—or, as Merleau-Ponty continually refers to it, in a meaningful way. In other words, it is our objective position in relation to the world, which is a result of the fact that our bodies are, in one aspect, objects in the world, that opens the world to us as meaningful, that enables us to experience the world in a meaningful manner, to live objects in the world as realities. It is by way of the body that I have that I am able to vary my point of view on my situation and to recognize objects in these perspectives as the same thing. The importance of this statement for Merleau-Ponty is that it points to the way in which perceptions opens onto objective reality, onto that essential reality of things that is invariant under transformation. What Merleau-Ponty has discovered is that objective reality that perception opens onto, that reality that I share with others by way of the nature of our bodies as absolute possessions, that aspect of nascent perception in which I, along with other perceivers, am able to gain access to the objective nature of things and that enables

me to recognize things from different perspectives as being the same things. In this way, perception as sensible knowledge opens the perceiving subject to an objective reality in which it participates with other perceiving subjects, an objective reality that the perceiving subject experiences as meaningful. And the meaningfulness of objects lived as realities is partly informed by the intentions of other perceiving subjects, by the web of intentionalities in which the object finds itself interwoven and which appear within the phenomenal field opened up for the perceiver through perception.

The determination of perception as significance, as meaningful, is the point at which Merleau-Ponty takes direct aim at the personalism inherent in Marcel's theory of sensation. While perception is, in part, immediate participation with the world, it is also mediate in that it opens onto the objective meaning of things, onto their reality, which is necessarily structural. While perception is a blind contact with the world, it is also an opening onto the relational context in which things manifest themselves, a context in which they manifest themselves as irreducibly meaningful. This intersubjective meaning that is intrinsic to the visibility of things is a result of the relational web of human intentions—whether generated through other bodies or through the structure of use-objects—into which all things are interwoven, and it is the basis for the objective world or reality in which I co-exist with others. And this brings us to the theory of intersubjectivity implied within Merleau-Ponty's development of the concept of perception.

Since I am able to live objects as realities—by way of their intrinsic meaning because I experience them as structures—by way of the body that I have, the objective world in which I am implicated with others, that common reality that we share, is

necessarily a world rooted in relations of having, relations that necessarily involve the perceiving subject with others *as* others. In the objective world, I encounter others and other intentions as a necessary structural feature of the meaningfulness of the perceived situation. And, since I experience the meaningfulness of the perceived situation only mediately, I encounter others and other intentions within a space organized by the distinction between inside and outside, self and other. Lastly, the tension between active and passive is also built into the structure of perception as sensible knowledge by way of the duality between blind contact and the movement of detachment. While an animal is a passive participant in its environment to the extent that it necessarily lives its environment in the immediacy of the 'now' and can simply react with regards to issues of survival, the perceiving subject is both in immediate blind contact with the 'now' and in mediate contact with the possibilities that exist in relation to the 'now' as virtual futures. In other words, the perceiving subject actively detaches itself from its immediate situation, by way of its objective body, and, by looking at itself as one object within a relational field of objects, is able to consider its present in relation to the possible. However, as we shall see in the case of perspective, it is not very accurate to speak in terms of activity or passivity at this level because the subject of any action or movement, whether of participation or detachment, is a pre-reflective subject to whom it makes no sense to apply such categories since all of this happens beneath consciousness or at least beneath explicit self-awareness.

5.3.2 The Perspectival Structure of Perception

The other way in which Merleau-Ponty demonstrates how the tension between being and having that defines the bond between the existent and its body proper is interwoven into perception is through the concept of *perspective*. To my mind, Merleau-Ponty's determination of the dialectical nature of perception as being perspectival is the most elegant part of *The Structure of Behavior* because of the way in which he is able to intertwine the personal and impersonal aspects of perception together within this one concept. When one considers the concept of perspective, the word itself oscillates between the personal—as in the case of my perspective on the world, which arises from my embodied place in the world—and the impersonal—perspectival space is a relational space in that it relates the objects in that space, including the viewer, to one another objectively, without any priority being given to an object within that space. What is interesting about perspectival space is that, while the viewer has a privileged point of view on the scene in that it seems to open out from them, the viewer is also an object within the scene in that its position is objectively related in a measurable manner the other objects in the space. But it is also a virtual space in that it opens the phenomenal field to the horizon, to the infinite space beyond the horizon; although the space opens out from the viewer, it opens onto an infinite horizon that determines the space as incomplete and inexhaustible.

But in his description of the phenomenal field as being necessarily perspectival in nature, Merleau-Ponty is not claiming to have discovered something new about perceptual experience. He is not the first to recognize by reflecting upon his own experience of things—such as a desk—that “my present experience of this desk is not complete, that it shows me only some of its aspects” (*The Structure of Behavior* 186) nor

to claim that “I know that ‘the desk’ is not reducible to the determinations with which it is presently clothed” (*The Structure of Behavior* 186). The perspectival nature of perception has never been disputed by philosophy; for Merleau-Ponty, what is at issue is its valuation. Traditional theories of knowledge and perception have always looked upon this necessary perspectival aspect of experience as a negative, as a subjective deformation of experience that the sciences work to repair or overcome in their progress towards true knowledge. The devaluation of perspective, of the perspectival property of things, goes hand-in-hand with the scientific project that promises to get to the thing itself, to arrive at true knowledge of the thing that is obscured or deformed within perspective. As he explains,

in immediate consciousness this perspectival character of my knowledge is not conceived as an accident in its regard, as an imperfection relative to the existence of my body and its proper point of view; and knowledge by ‘profiles’ is not treated as the degradation of a true knowledge which would grasp the totality of the possible aspects of the object all at once. Perspective does not appear to me to be a subjective deformation of things but, on the contrary, to be one of their properties, perhaps their essential property. It is precisely because of it that the perceived possesses in itself a hidden and inexhaustible richness, that it is a ‘thing.’ (*The Structure of Behavior* 186)

In reaction to its devaluation within philosophy and science, Merleau-Ponty argues that perception is necessarily perspectival and that it is as a result of their perspectival nature that objects are lived as realities. The perspectival feature of things is their existential index, is that aspect under which they manifest themselves within the perceptual or phenomenal field and by way of which the existent comes to live the objects as realities. So, in addition to being a property of perception, a structure that is brought to perceptual experience by the subject, perspective is also a property of things, is the way in which things themselves communicate with the subject and reveal to the subject that they are

communicating with a real world. In the words of Marcel, it is by way of its perspectival appearance to the perceiving subject that the object takes the subject into account and makes itself visible to the perceiving subject, and it is through the property of perspective that the subject comes to know that they are dealing with a real object: "From the beginning the perspectival character of knowledge is known as such and not something to which we are subjected. Far from introducing a coefficient of subjectivity into perception, it provides it on the contrary with the assurance of communicating with a world which is richer than what we know of it, that is, of communicating with a real world" (*The Structure of Behavior* 186).

In other words, what distinguishes the real from the illusory is its depth, its perspectival nature that indicates to the perceiver the transcendental aspect of the things in the world, but an immanent transcendence that is an openness or an invitation to the perceiver to explore further since the world is infinitely richer than what the perceiver knows of it. Hence, the perspectival feature of perception actually opens the perceiving subject onto an intersubjective, impersonal, and shared world and not onto a personal world of one's own making. The perceived situation is necessarily perspectival since that is how the phenomenal field is constituted for human beings as a species. In this way, the perspectival aspect of perception is the index of the reality of one's perceptions, is the manner in which one comes to know that the world that one inhabits and that one shares with others is real in an objective sense. The lived world is real in an objective sense because of its perspectival structure; on the other hand, the known world is true because of its perspectiveless structure. By way of this argument, what Merleau-Ponty has achieved is to make impersonality and objectivity a structural feature of perception.

What is intriguing about his description of the perspectival structure of perception is its rootedness in the tension between the perceiving subject and the object. While the subject is certainly a unique perspective on the world and the perspectival nature of perception certainly is, in part, a result of the subject's corporeity or corporeal presence in the world, Merleau-Ponty also contends that the object only gives itself to the subject perspectivally. In other words, perspective is both a result of the subject's position in the world as well as the object's structure; while the perceiving subject has immediate access to a facet of the object that is perspectivally open or given to it, the subject has only mediate access, because the object itself withholds aspects or facets of itself while making itself manifest, to those aspects of the object that remain hidden in order to make the object visible. What the perspectival perception of the object opens onto is the object itself, the objective existence of the object, which its perspectival appearance mediates for the perceiving subject through the visibility of one of its possible aspects but which always transcends one's perception of the object:

It is essential to them, both to offer themselves without interposed milieu, and to reveal themselves only gradually and never completely; they are mediated by their perspectival appearances; but it is not a question of a logical mediation since it introduces us to their bodily reality; I grasp *in* a perspectival appearance, which I know is the only one of its possible aspects, the thing itself which transcends it. A transcendence which is nevertheless open to my knowledge—this is the very definition of a thing as it is intended (*visée*) by naïve consciousness. (*The Structure of Behavior* 187-8)

As was the case with sensible knowledge, perspective, as the structural way in which the world manifests itself through perception, is itself animated by the tension between the immediate and mediate. Objects necessarily offer themselves in an immediate manner; when an object becomes visible through one of its aspects, the perceiving subject experiences that aspect immediately, without any mediation. That facet of the object is

lived by the perceiving subject immediately, without any interposed milieu. However, in the immediacy of perception, one is only exposed to a facet of that object and not to its totality, or at least not immediately, since, in a mediate way, the perceiving subject grasps the always already transcendent thing itself through its perspectival manifestations. The thing itself is implied, therefore, in its perspectival appearance but only in so far as it implies itself as an always already transcendent thing that is open to my knowledge but whose reality will never be exhausted through its perspectival appearance. Consequently, the perspectival structure of perception is animated by a tension between the personal and the impersonal, between the subjective and the objective. While my own embodied position in the world immediately brings objects to light for me by way of their perspectival appearance, the objects themselves that transcend or are beyond their appearances mediately manifest their objective reality through their perspectival appearance. In other words, it is through their perspectival appearance that the perceiving subject is brought into contact with the real world that is the territory of one's actions, with the objective world that one shares with others and that we agree upon as being the shared universe of our actions.

It is quite obvious that Merleau-Ponty is using the idea of perspective in a rather specialized manner, and I want to spend a moment exploring his particular use of the term in the context of perceptual experience, especially since I believe that it represents the opening up of Merleau-Ponty's thought onto the notions of depth and thickness that come to play a central part in his later work. Firstly, as I stated above, it implies that there is no screen or interposed milieu between the thing itself and reality; offering itself through its perspectival appearance does not mean that the thing itself is withholding itself behind that appearance: "Although naïve consciousness never confuses the thing with the manner it has

of appearing to us, and precisely because it does not make this confusion, it is the thing itself which naïve consciousness thinks it is reaching, and not some inner double, some subjective reproduction. It does not imagine that the body or that mental ‘representations’ function as a screen between itself and reality” (*The Structure of Behavior* 186). In other words, it is the thing itself that appears in its perspectival aspect, and it is its very nature as perspectival that lends the thing its reality. Secondly, the perspectival being of things denotes that things only offer themselves to the perceiver partially, but, although they never reveal themselves completely, the entire thing is implied in its perspectival appearance in that its appearance invites or opens up the thing to further exploration; as Merleau-Ponty explains, “[f]or there to be perception, that is, apprehension of an existence, it is absolutely necessary that the object not be completely given to the look which rests on it, that aspects intended but not possessed in the present perception be kept in reserve” (*The Structure of Behavior* 212). In this way, the thing offers itself to me or for me through its perspectival appearance. Consequently, as a perspectival being, the thing is simultaneously both in-itself and for the perceiver but without exhausting its meaning in either aspect. Thus,

[t]he perceived is grasped in an indivisible manner as ‘in-itself,’ that is, as gifted with an interior which I will never have finished exploring; and as ‘for-me,’ that is, as given ‘in person’ through its momentary aspects. Neither this metallic spot which moves while I glance toward it, nor even the geometric and shiny mass which emerges from it when I look at it, nor finally, the ensemble of perspectival images which I have been able to have of it *are* the ashtray; they do not exhaust the meaning of the ‘this’ by which I designate it; and, nevertheless, it is the ashtray which appears in all of them. (*The Structure of Behavior* 186-7)

As both in-itself and for-me, a thing understood according to its reality as a perspectival being, as a being whose manner of being is necessarily perspectival, is a mixture of both personal and impersonal elements; while the perspectival view on a thing necessarily takes the viewer or perceiver into account because it is according to the perceiver’s perspective on

the world, to their embodied position in the world, that the thing appears to them, the thing in-itself solicits the perceiver, by way of perspectival being, to explore further since perceptual experience never manages to exhaust the meaning of the in-itself that is implied in its perspectival appearance—or, as Merleau-Ponty states, perceptual experience, or the perceiver's acts of behaviour, expression or reflection, "intends an original text which cannot be deprived [or exhausted] of meaning" (*The Structure of Behavior* 211).

This metaphor through which the world as intended by the perceiving consciousness is compared to a text that can be read but whose meaning cannot be exhausted is an especially powerful depiction of the perspectival structure of perception. All perception opens onto the same text, and, although the meaningful of each individual's perception of the text may vary, each signification, if valid, was itself adherent in the text whose reality, although perhaps not its interpretation, is beyond doubt for the perceivers. The thing as it exists is a text that is open to the perceiver but which can never be exhausted, but the signification that I discover through my perception of the thing is itself inherent in the thing itself: as Merleau-Ponty explains, "the signification which I find in a sensible whole [by way of perspective and the embodied nature of perception] was already adherent in it" (*The Structure of Behavior* 211). What Merleau-Ponty is referring to by way of the phrase 'sensible whole' is the total structure of the thing as in-itself, "the proper nature of the thing," that is the root of all perception (*The Structure of Behavior* 212). Beyond or behind (although neither term is correct) the personal aspect of perspective—namely the being-for-me of the thing—lies the thing as it exists and in which all perception takes place and to which all perception refers. And this is where the concept of form becomes important, since what appears to me in the here and now of perception is the form of this or that thing;

but form “does not in the least concern the proper nature of the thing and is, on the contrary, an episode of my life” (*The Structure of Behavior* 212).

Form is the point of conjunction between the perceiver and the thing as it appears for-me, and it is form that is the determinant of all acts of behaviour for an organism. But beneath the form of the thing that appears in perception, there rests the total structure of the thing itself that is the common ground for all individual perceptions: “If two subjects placed near each other look at a wooden cube, the total structure of the cube is the same for both; it has the value of intersubjective truth and this is what they both express in saying that there is a cube there... We have said that this ‘perspectivism’ of perception is not an indifferent fact, since without it the two subjects would not be aware of perceiving an existent cube subsisting beyond the sensible contents” (*The Structure of Behavior* 212). Hence, the perspectival being of things opens onto their existence, implies their existence, and the perceiver senses that existence through the necessarily perspectival property of perception. What the perspectival appearance of things opens onto is their reality, is their objective existence that remains the same and is invariant in relation to their being considered from different points of view. In other words, it is through the perspectival structure of perception that two subjects can come to agree that they both perceive the same object but from two different points of view; in this way, both subjects, through perception, open onto the same objective reality of the object, a reality that is transcendent and continually calls them to explore further but that will never be exhausted. Thus, it is the perspectival appearance of a thing—its simultaneous existence as in-itself and for-me—“which makes access to inter-individual significations possible” (*The Structure of Behavior* 219).

What I have endeavoured to demonstrate above is that perception, as Merleau-Ponty

presents it in *The Structure of Behavior*, is both personal and impersonal, and that it is by way of this ambiguity that the world opens up to the perceiver and continually solicits their attention and calls them to explore further. This ambiguous structure of perception, its existence between the in-itself and the for-itself, between being and having, is, therefore, what keeps the world open and from becoming the self-enclosed reality in which science situates itself. By way of our embodied existence,

we find ourselves in the presence of a field of lived perception which is prior to number, measure, space, and causality and which is nonetheless given only as a perspectival view of objects gifted with stable properties, a perspectival view of an objective world and an objective space. The problem of perception consists in trying to discover how the intersubjective world, the determinations of which science is gradually making precise, is grasped through this field. The antimony of which we spoke above is based on this ambiguous structure of perceptual experience. The thesis and antithesis express the two aspects of it: it is true to say that my perception is always a flux of individual events and that what is radically contingent in the lived perspectivism of perception accounts for the realistic appearance. But it is also true to say that my perception accedes to things themselves, for these perspectives are articulated in a way which makes access to inter-individual significations possible; they 'present' a world. (*The Structure of Behavior* 219)

In other words, Merleau-Ponty draws two interrelated conclusions concerning the perspectival nature of lived perception: first, that it is prior to abstract geometric representation and logical articulation because of my unique presence to the world in the here and now of embodiment and, second, that it opens onto or points towards an objective world and space because of the sensible stable whole that is implied through my perspectival view of objects. Consequently, lived perception is both personal—a flux of individual personal events—and objective—in the sense that my perspectival view of the aspects of things opens me to the world proposed by things themselves to the objective world, or reality, that is the basis for inter-individual significations. By way of this keeping in reserve that is an essential characteristic of perspective, lived perception can be

understood as a participation in the thickness and opacity of the world for it is exactly the opacity and hiddenness of the sides of a cube that make it visible as a cube; otherwise, “in order to be visible all together, the sides of a wooden cube would have to be transparent, that is, would cease to be the sides of a wooden cube” (*The Structure of Behavior* 213).

Because of the perspectival nature of lived perception, Merleau-Ponty argues against any form of pure perception in which the perception would be identical with the object being perceived. In terms of the wooden cube, “it is the cube as signification or geometric idea which is made of six equal sides” (*The Structure of Behavior* 213), but, the cube taken in terms of its existence, in terms of its necessary perspectival appearance, does not have six equal sides since it only opens itself to the perceiver through its aspects, aspects which, as sides of the cube, imply (although not logically) the total structure of the cube. What is unique about existing sensible things is their perspectival nature, is the fact that the relation “of the aspects to the total object is not a logical relation like that of sign to signification: the sides of the chair are not its ‘signs,’ but precisely the sides” (*The Structure of Behavior* 213). Therefore, the thickness of lived perception is not referential in nature; instead of being signs that point to their meaning, that would point to the signification ‘chair,’ the sides of the chair refer to the whole object precisely as that which is kept in reserve but that is open to the exploration of our knowledge. Thus, lived perception depends on that which is not seen. In terminology that is more contemporary with us, the visibility of objects is a function of its invisible and hidden aspects; lived perception, in other words, necessarily participates in the thickness of the world.

In addition, as I have tried to indicate, other subjects are also intertwined or implied—in the sense of the French word *pli*—in the perspectival structure of perception to

the extent that the perspectivism of perception opens all perceiving subjects to the existent object subsisting beyond the sensible contents of their perception; in this respect, individual perception is backed up against, or occurs against the background of, the total structure of the object being perceived to which each perceiving subject is sensitive as the guarantor of intersubjective truth, of the fact that there really is an object being perceived, that the object really is there beyond the sensible content. Thus, through the non-indifferent perspectival structure of perception, a perceiving subject opens onto the world of intersubjective truth, the world that, as sensed, subsists beyond the sensible world; consequently, one could argue that the perspectivism of perception implies other perspectives, implies the existence of other perspectives that open onto the same total structure that one senses as subsisting beyond one's own personal sensible world. Perspective, in other words, is a structure through which the perceiving subject encounters the other *as* other, as another perspective that is irreducible to my position or perspective but which is another perspective on the same total structure that neither position can encompass or exhaust. My perspective, the perspective that I have on the world, is, through its necessary and fundamental incompleteness, made incomplete by the existence of other perspectives, a necessary reality that the perspectivism of perception opens onto and with which it acquaints me. But these other perspectives can never be completely totalised into one perspective on the world since the total structure of the world is only visible to the subject perspectivally. All perspectives on the world are, as a condition of their visibility and sensibility, incomplete and fractured—a feature of perception that Merleau-Ponty will come to refer to as its inherent *ambiguity*—and are incapable of exhausting all the *other* perspectives on the world because the world is always already perspectival in nature. In this respect, the structure of

perception is one of inter-corporeity, and I would argue that, even in his first major work, Merleau-Ponty was attempting to account for intersubjectivity and alterity or otherness in a manner that would not simply eliminate the difference between the self and others, that would reduce the other to the category of the same.

5.3.3 The Perspectival Structure of Corporeity

As I have continually argued throughout this chapter, the relationship between the existent and the world is a function of the relationship between the existent and its body proper. So, in conclusion, I want to briefly address how Merleau-Ponty presents the relationship between the existent and its own body as being perspectival in nature. Merleau-Ponty brings the two issues together in the following quotation: “to say that *I have a body* is simply another way of saying that my knowledge is an individual dialectic in which intersubjective objects appear, that these objects, when they are given to knowledge in the mode of actual existence, present themselves to it by successive aspects which cannot coexist; finally it is way of saying that one of them offers itself obstinately ‘from the same side’ without my being able to go around it” (*The Structure of Behavior* 213, emphasis added). What the above quotation makes clear is that the perspectival property of perceptual experience is, for Merleau-Ponty, related to the fact that I have a body; it is the body that I have, that body that I experience as one object among others in the world, that opens me onto the world of intersubjective objects. While the body that I am places me in immediate contact with objects, with that perspectival facet of objects that is immediately available to me, it is the body that I have that presents to me, as implied in a mediate manner within

their perspectival appearance, their transcendental intersubjective aspect, that aspect of objects that enables me to recognize the same object from various perspectives. But, it also opens onto the inexhaustibility of the world because, as a result of the fact that I have a body, I can never completely go around an object and grasp it in its entirety; consequently, the world remains openly, but inexhaustibly, transcendent in relation to the perceiving subject. Interestingly, what the perspectival appearance of the world highlights is a fundamental passivity of the perceiving subject in relationship to the world. For the perceiving subject, the world remains absolutely unavailable in its transcendence; although the perceiving subject can continually explore the depth of the world further, it can never exhaust its meaning completely. No object can, therefore, be grasped in its entirety and be completely available to the perceiving subject. And this is not the result of some mistake on the part of the subject that it can actively correct by trying harder; instead, it speaks to a fundamental passivity of the perceiving subject in relation to an always already transcendent world. Or, to follow through with the argument that I have been pursuing in this thesis, what it points to is a fundamental passivity at the heart of the relation between the existent and its body.

Merleau-Ponty's final gesture in *The Structure of Behavior* is to describe corporeity in terms of the phenomenon of perspective, to demonstrate how the perspectival structure of perception is rooted in the perspectival structure of the relationship between the existent and its body. What Merleau-Ponty argues is that, if I was to look at my body, to investigate the relationship between myself and my body, I would come up against its perspectival property, the fact that my body presents itself to me "by successive aspects which cannot coexist" (*The Structure of Behavior* 213). While my body is presented to me, my

perspective on my body is opened up for me by my body itself as it is in the world; my perception of my body is backed up against my body. My body, therefore, is my particular embodied point of view on the world but is also, as my background and as that which implies my presence in the world, is in some way hidden from me; consequently, I cannot affirm that I am my body since my body is not available to me in its entirety, since aspects of it remain unavailable and invisible to me. And this unavailability of the body is itself the very condition for the possibility of perspectival perception; as Merleau-Ponty explains, “to be situated within a certain point of view necessarily involves not seeing that point of view itself, not possessing it as a visual object except in a virtual signification. Therefore, the existence of an external perception, that of my body and, ‘in’ this body, the existence of phenomena which are imperceptible for me are rigorously synonymous. There is no relation of causality between them. They are *concordant phenomena*” (*The Structure of Behavior* 217). In this way, the body presents itself to me, is present to me, in the same perspectival manner in which external things offer themselves to me “through profiles which I do not possess as I possess an idea” (*The Structure of Behavior* 215), and it is this unavailability of the point of view to the perceiving subject—its blind spot—that is the necessary condition for the phenomenal (or perspectival) appearance of the world. As Merleau-Ponty explains, “how could I receive an object ‘in a certain direction’ if I, the perceiving subject, were not in some way hidden in one of my phenomena, one which envelops me since I cannot go around it? Two points are necessary for determining a direction” (*The Structure of Behavior* 214). Because one finds oneself enveloped by one’s body, because one’s intentions are enveloped or clothed in the actions of one’s body, the perceiver, at the level of nascent perception, is unable to step outside of their embodied

position in the world. But this impossibility, instead of being an obstacle, is the very condition of naïve pre-reflective consciousness since a blind spot that is hidden from the perceiver is the necessary condition for perception. The untotalizable nature of the blind spot, the incompleteness that it institutes in the perceiver, is the very condition of nascent pre-reflective consciousness. So, because one is enveloped by one's body and cannot go around it in perception as one would around an obstacle, one can no longer simply affirm along with Marcel that 'I am my body' because it always, as a perspectival being, exceeds my grasp.

For Merleau-Ponty, it would be more accurate to recall Marcel's contention concerning corporeity as "the frontier district between being and having" when describing the reality of embodiment as being perspectival (*Being and Having* 82). Recall that the perspectival property of things means that a perceived thing faces in two directions: (1) towards the unique position of the perceiver as embodied in the present and (2) towards the totality of itself as in-itself that is implied in its perspectival appearance—the hiddenness that solicits the perceiver to explore the thing further. The same holds true for the body in the context of the relationship between the perceiver and their own body. One's own body, as a perspectival being, is present to oneself in its uniqueness in the here and now as my body, as my unique position in the world; by way of my own body, I find myself "in the presence of a field of lived perception which is prior to number, measure, space, and causality" (*The Structure of Behavior* 219). In one sense, then, I can affirm that 'I am my body' since my body is the phenomenal body that is the organizing centre of my field of lived perception. But, because it envelops me and is thereby hidden from me, it is also invisible to me as the blind spot that makes perception possible, that opens perception and

the perceiver to the presence of the world, that opens the perceiver to receive a thing in terms of its embodied reality, in terms of a certain direction. As a perceiver, I receive my own body from a certain direction, and implied within those aspects is the totality of my body that is necessarily hidden from view, just as with things that I perceive; therefore, since I receive my body according to a series of successive aspects that cannot co-exist and which are thereby inexhaustible, my body also appears to me as an object gifted with stable properties because my perspectival view of it implies an objective world and an objective space (*The Structure of Behavior* 219). In this way, my body presents to me an intersubjective world, a reality that is separate from my unique existence and which is the basis for inter-individual signification (*The Structure of Behavior* 219). So, in another sense, I can state that 'I have a body' in that I perceive it according to its perspectival appearances that open onto, or imply within them, an objective world—in the same manner in which I perceive things. Thus, at the level of naïve consciousness, the body that envelops me is more than I am and I exist within its horizons, unable to step around its presence to me. Perception, in other words, unfolds within an anonymous horizon; the opening up that is nascent perception, that Merleau-Ponty opposes to the thrusting outwards of consciousness through which it penetrates the world, is based in the anonymous, in the impersonal aspect of our own embodiment. In this way, corporeity or embodiment is at the frontier between being and having or, as Merleau-Ponty states, is an individual dialectic between being and having, between the individual and the intersubjective (what I refer to as the anonymous or objective) aspects of embodiment. And, as we saw above, it is this dialectical quality of embodiment that Merleau-Ponty encapsulates in the phrase 'I have a body.'

CHAPTER 6: Artaud's Dispossessed Body

6.1 Introduction

Although strange bedfellows, my initial intention to extend the line of argument that I was weaving through the writings of Marcel and Merleau-Ponty to the work of Antonin Artaud made sense to me in the beginning since the issue of corporeality animates each of their bodies of work. However, as I began to narrow the focus of the thesis to the tension between being and having in relation to the question of the bond between the existent and its own body proper to the question of one's proper embodiment, my apprehension concerning the appropriateness of Artaud's work within the context of the thesis grew, especially since I was hard-pressed to find any systematic or sustained use of the distinction between the body that I am and the body that I have in his writing. For this very reason, Artaud remained absent from early drafts of the thesis. In fact, it was not until I read Jacques Derrida's essay on Artaud in *Writing and Difference* entitled "La parole soufflée" that I began to realize that I was not done with Artaud and that he deserved a second reading.

6.1.1 A Brief Synopsis

"La parole soufflée" was written in 1965, before Derrida had realized the curious aporiatic relation between speech and writing that seems to inaugurate Western metaphysics as its founding (im)possibility. What intrigued me about Derrida's initial reading of Artaud was that, instead of tracing the contours of Artaud's phono-logo-

centric legacy, the essay dealt with the way in which Artaud develops his thoughts on his relationship with his body and with God by way of a narrative of possession and dispossession, a narrative that, to my mind, seemed reminiscent of the narrative of disposability and non-disposability that I was at the time tracing through the writings of Marcel and Merleau-Ponty. Taking Derrida at his word, he argues in the essay that the story of dispossession that Artaud narrates—a narrative in which Artaud casts God as a thief that takes Artaud's breath away and dispossesses Artaud of his proper body—is complicit with the Western tradition against which Artaud rails because, instead of valourizing difference, it works to eradicate the difference ingrained in the body by re-fashioning the body as a non-differentiated proper whole, by trying to re-claim the body's earlier propriety and self-identity in the face of God's malevolent transgression. According to Derrida, the idea of the body proper understood as an absolute proprietary possession is at the heart of this narrative of dispossession. Working his way backwards, he argues that, if God is really responsible for stealing Artaud's body, for dis-possessing Artaud of his body proper, then it must be true that Artaud's lifted body must be understood as having been truly his own; in other words, this narrative of dispossession, in Derrida's eyes, is grounded in a prior relation of self-presence and absolute self-possession between Artaud and his body, a relation into which God insinuates Himself and disrupts through the introduction of difference.

To this end, Derrida comes to read Artaud as labouring to eradicate the difference that is ingrained in the flesh and that I have been arguing is at the heart of the relation between the existent and its own body understood in terms of *corporeity* and as struggling to dissimulate the fundamental posture of dispossession that this difference

inaugurates in the relation between the existent and its body proper through the substitution of a more primordial identity between the existent and its own body. So, by using Artaud as a foil, Derrida actually tries to trace out the contours of a fundamental dis-possession, ex-appropriation, “alienation without alienation,” or difference that structures our relation with our own bodies, a fundamental difference that Derrida reads Artaud as trying to stitch up by way of the Body without Organs so as to exorcise the God of difference from his body. In other words, since it is a question of the proprietary relation that Artaud has with his own body, what is at issue in the essay is the nature of the bond between the existent and its own body proper and whether that relation is one of absolute possession based in Being—in identification and self-presence as in the case of the body that I am—or difference and dis-possession.

So, contrary to my stated intentions, Derrida’s essay actually provides an argument against including Artaud in the thesis since he reads Artaud’s work as aiming at eradicating difference and cleansing the body of its inherent corporeity. In this respect, it would seem to be more productive to read Derrida for his thoughts on the nature of the relation of dispossessed or dispossessing possession that names the reality of the bond between the existent and its body proper. However, as I will demonstrate as I work my way through Derrida’s argument, I believe that he misrepresents Artaud; although I do feel that, in the context of the essay, Derrida does present some interesting insights into the body proper, these insights seem to me to occur in spite of Artaud—or to spite Artaud. It is almost as if Derrida himself stole his insights from Artaud, as if he lifted Artaud’s voice and proceeded to speak in his place. So, in this chapter, I will approach Artaud’s work by arguing counter to Derrida’s contention that Artaud labours to eradicate

difference, to plug up the wound of difference through which God entered and that enabled him to steal Artaud's body; instead, I will argue that Artaud, through his concept of the Theatre of Cruelty, tries to re-instate the difference at the heart of his relation with his body, a difference that God tries to dissimulate through the importation of a body proper based in Being.

In short, I will read Artaud as providing fundamental insights into the relation of non-disposability or dis-possession that I have argued until now as being at the heart of *corporeity*, and part of this endeavour will involve recasting the narrative of dispossession in terms of the distinction between *being* one's own body and *having* a body that I have used up to this point in the thesis as a point of entry into the philosophies of both Marcel and Merleau-Ponty. Although Derrida never explicitly addresses the distinction between being and having in his reading of Artaud, his reading of the narrative of dispossession can be recast according to that distinction quite easily. On the one hand, Artaud's labouring for his proper body, his attempt to give birth to a Body without Organs and to exorcise God from his body can be understood as a quest for the body proper, for a pure body untainted by difference and that is solely his own; according to Derrida, Artaud is searching for the body that he truly *is*, that is truly *his* own. Thus, in the context of Artaud's story of dis-possession, the Body without Organs that Artaud is struggling to achieve in spite of God can be understood, from Derrida's point of view, as the body proper, as the body that one *is*. The body that one has as an absolute possession, that body that, as corporeity, is characterized by non-disposability and dispossession, is thus the articulated organ-ic body that God substitutes in place of the proper body; the articulate body, the body with organs is, according to Derrida's take on Artaud, the body

imbued with difference. Understood in this way, Derrida argues in his essay that the relation between the existent and its body proper is based in a fundamental dispossessed or dispossessing possessing rooted in difference; thus, he ends the essay by arguing that this difference is the active principle in the articulation of the body as organs and that the Body without Organs is a body without difference, a self-present and self-contained unarticulated body of Being.

But what Derrida's reading overlooks is Artaud's insistence throughout his work on equating God with Being and on viewing organs as functionaries of God that work to impose the order of God upon our bodies. If viewed from this perspective, Artaud's narrative of dispossession and his desire to *have* a body can be read as an attempt by Artaud to reclaim his dispossessed and dispossessing body of difference from the proper organ-ic body of Being that God substitutes in its place. Understood in terms of the distinction between being and having, I will argue that, for Artaud, the body that I am, that is linked to Being and is constituted under the auspices of the spirit, is the body upon which God imposes the rule of the spirit. And it is this body and the order imposed upon it that Artaud attacks in his struggle to have a body. The organized body, the body reduced to functional organs, is the body of Being and is the order that God imposes upon one's body once one has consented to be. It is by way of this body, the body that one feels to be one's own and that one identifies as the body that one is, that one is condemned to live dead. As a result, Artaud is actually struggling to re-claim the body that he had, that Body without Organs that he understands as being ingrained with difference, and it is this body that one has as absolute possession—what I have been referring to as corporeity—that God, by way of the spirit, works to destroy. What I will

argue is that, according to Artaud, God does not want one to have a body in the sense that this body would be a dispossessed and dispossessing possession; what God wants is to impose an order on the body, to ensure that I am my body so that, in identifying with that body, I do not question its givenness and its a priori structuring or ordering. For Artaud, the spirit is that vehicle through which God imposes order on the body, imposes a wholeness—in the case of the modern body, an anatomical wholeness by way of organs, where each organ has its proper place in the closed system of the body and is in a fixed functional relation to other organs in the body—upon the body that is meant to control, through suffocation, the fragmentary and deterritorializing nature of one's corporeity.

The point concerning the differentiated nature of the Body without Organs, concerning its rootedness in primordial difference, is important to keep in mind because it is the crux of my argument against Derrida's reading of Artaud's project to cruelly divest the body of its organs. In what follows, I will outline how Derrida reads Artaud's attack against the organ-ization of the body as an attempt to eradicate difference and to return the body to a state of wholeness and undifferentiation; then, drawing on some of Artaud's writings, I will demonstrate that Artaud actually equates organs with a lack of difference, with a sense of wholeness, and that the Body without Organs is meant to be just that—a body divested of an imposed order through which the body is reduced to a mere functional object. In this respect, Artaud is in agreement with Marcel in fighting against the functionalised body, against the objective abstract body that is bestowed upon us by science and anatomy, against the new God that is imposed upon us through the reduction of the body to a set of organs. So I will argue that the Body without Organs is not some idealized undifferentiated presence to which Artaud is attempting to nostalgically return,

an undifferentiated presence that predates the fallenness of the body into a world of difference, the undoing of its wholeness by difference; instead, the Body without Organs, as I read Artaud, is related to the fragmenting or fracturing ability of bodies—the ability of the body to, instead of working to facilitate integration and cohesion, to produce fragments that are free to circulate within the body and between bodies. In this way, the Body without Organs is a state of potential, a moment of flux and possibility through which the body is able to re-invent or re-make itself. And, for Artaud, returning to that state, returning to one's Body without Organs, is only possible by placing the body under the knife that is the Theatre of Cruelty.

In large part, my own critique of Derrida's argument that Artaud's anatomical project is aimed at recuperating self-presence and eradicating difference will revolve around how Derrida understands Artaud's use of the term *God*, a word that has very different connotations for the Catholic Artaud than for the Algerian-Jew Derrida. One of the central features of the Catholic God is His claim to the body of the faithful by way of such factors as the bodily sacrifice of Christ and the consumption of that body during communion; also, Judaism does not share the vehemence and violence that the Catholic Church demonstrates towards corporeality and bodily existence. In light of this, I read Artaud as fighting against the Catholic God's occupation of his body, an occupation that is predicated upon the eradication of Artaud's improper body through the substitution by God of the body proper of Being. This is where I understand Artaud's Catholicism as telescoping into the Western philosophical tradition; according to my reading, God is equivalent to Being for Artaud, meaning that God is part of the signifying chain that links Being to presence and identity. Thus, contrary to Derrida's interpretation, the breath

stolen by God is actually the breath of difference and the dispossessed body, that body for which God substitutes the properly articulated body of Being, is actually the body of difference. Read this way, Artaud could actually be seen to be arguing that Being—and all the associated concepts of identity, presence, self-presence, masculinity, speech and unity (to name a few) that Derrida has spent a great deal of ink tracing within the Western philosophical tradition—is smuggled into human existence by way of the body proper that one comes to feel as one's own, by way of that body that one is and that covers over the improper body of difference that stands for the true reality of bodily existence. Consequently, I will argue that Artaud determines the body proper, the body of God, the body that one is, as the carrier of Being, as the contagion that infects human existence with Being, and determines that which the body of God dissimulates beneath Being according as the body of difference, the Body without Organs that is non-disposable in relation to the existent—the improper body of corporeity.

In fact, it would be more accurate to state that Being is one of the ways in which God tries to steal one's improper body, that Being is a weapon that God uses against the radical difference that is corporeity. What one has to understand about God as Artaud constructs Him is that He is continuously changing, that He is continuously developing new techniques and strategies in His war against corporeity. What I will present at the end of the chapter is a reading of Artaud's radio play *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* as an account of various methods that God has used throughout history to combat corporeity. Another one of the weapons in God's arsenal is the concept of *organs*; in this respect, the anatomical ordering of the human body is understood by Artaud as the latest attempt by God—this time, using science—to substitute His body proper in the place of

our improper bodies. The problem with Derrida's reading of the Body without Organs is that he interprets it as a unitary body, a body without difference, and presents the articulated body made up of organs as a body rooted in difference, thereby associating God with difference and Artaud with Being and propriety. What Derrida fails to take into account is the way in which anatomical ordering actually works against difference and towards a unified functionalised body, and I will argue that it is exactly against just such an organ-ized body that Artaud develops his concept of a Theatre of Cruelty.

6.2 Artaud and Derrida

If one were to trace the lineage of the distinction between being and having into post-68 French philosophy, then one would have to seriously take up the work of Jacques Derrida and his deconstructive investigations into "the accomplishment of what I have elsewhere called the *metaphysics of the proper* [*le propre*—self-possession, propriety, property, cleanliness]" (*Of Grammatology* 26). Throughout his writing, Derrida's thought continuously engages with the problematic of the proper on different registers. For example, his work, both in terms of content and style, involves a questioning of what is properly philosophical, of what is properly called philosophy; in addition, Derrida also labours to deconstruct various properly ontological relations, such as those between the self and its proper death and, as we saw earlier, between the self and the language that it claims as its own, as its mother tongue, by arguing that these relationships of ownership are a function of a prior relation of dis-possessing possession, of an originary alienation without alienation that in no way speaks to a prior unity or presence that either has been

forever lost in a distant past or will be regained at some time in the future. But the specific question of Derrida's inheritance is beyond the scope of this thesis because his work, instead of taking up the issue of embodiment, is primarily involved with the question of language and the imposed dominance in Western metaphysics of speech over writing that works to limit "the sense of being within the field of presence" (*Of Grammatology* 23). But there are moments when his corpus does touch the body, the proper body that has been the focus of my own investigations, and I want to look at two instances in particular where his corpus engages with the question of the body proper in relation to Artaud.

6.2.1 Artaud and his Proper Body

Artaud was there at the beginning. He was in attendance at the opening, at the initial staging, of what is referred to today as deconstruction. The work of Artaud, in other words, is part of the legacy—and perhaps even the destiny—of deconstruction. Early in his career, Derrida wrote two essays on the work of Artaud that are part of the fabric of *Writing and Difference*, essays that were written around the time that he was working on articulating the theoretical portion of the deconstructive treatise *Of Grammatology*, the text that inaugurates the beginnings of Derrida's grammatological writings and that, as Alan Bass explains, is the theoretical matrix that "systematizes the ideas about the sign, writing and metaphysics which are scattered throughout *L'écriture et la différence*" (*Writing and Difference* x). What is intriguing about the way in which Derrida himself suggests that *Of Grammatology* should be read in conjunction with

Writing and Difference, a reading that divides *Writing and Difference* into two parts because “between the sixth and seventh essays a ‘theoretical matrix’ was elaborated whose principles are to some extent derived from the first six essays and are more systematically put to work in the last five” (*Writing and Difference* xi), is the fact that it places Artaud on both sides of the dividing line; Artaud is both one of the originating figures of the theoretical development of deconstruction (in the article “La parole soufflée,” published in 1965) and the name of a corpus to which Derrida returns in order to put his theory to work in a more systematic manner (in the paper “The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation,” delivered in 1966). Deconstruction both derives from and applies to Artaud.

The articles themselves point to the interposed theoretical matrix that Derrida birthed in the interval between their publication. The second essay is a focused discussion of Artaud’s striving towards an authentic language, and, in it, Derrida traces how Artaud’s work re-produces through his elevation of speech over writing the very philosophical and cultural tradition that he was attempting to destroy. But this article also prolongs the argument that Derrida presents in “La parole soufflée” that contends that Artaud’s work is motivated by a desire for self-presence, for closure, for a full possession of his self and especially of his body that was stolen or spirited away from him by God. More specifically, “La parole soufflée” picks up on two common threads that run through Artaud’s work: (1) his attempt to re-fashion or re-make his body, to reclaim his proper body from God, and (2) his attempt to think the theatre beyond the written word, because, according to Artaud, language is a force that spirits away the truth from the speaking subject, a force that causes what one expresses to fall far from oneself.

What Derrida endeavours to demonstrate in the article is that Artaud's reactions to his dispossessed body and the dispossessing force in language are actually the reality of the experience of embodiment and of language. Therefore, Derrida's argument works negatively in that he struggles to highlight the experiences of dispossession that punctuated Artaud's life and that Artaud worked against in all aspects of his oeuvre—his writing and painting—because those are the experiences that come closest to articulating the reality of embodiment and our experience of language. What Derrida works to bring to light is that which ruins thought, that which ruined Artaud's thought and which he fought against all his life in order to achieve unity and self-identity. In particular, Artaud struggles against language and God, both of which he presents as forces of dispossession: language dispossesses one's speech and one's breath and God dispossesses one of one's proper body. And much of his oeuvre is directed towards re-claiming or re-appropriating that which has been taken from him; his writing attests to his urgently felt need to re-make or re-create both language and his own body.

In keeping with the theoretical program that Derrida puts forward in *Of Grammatology*, the later Artaud article focuses almost exclusively on the binary opposition between speech and writing within the context of Artaud's theories concerning authentic theatre. What Derrida points to is how Artaud's text reproduces the very metaphysics that puts classical theatre on stage, that very theatre that he is intent on destroying; what Derrida labours to point out through his readings is how Artaud's own metaphysics, "at its most crucial moments, fulfills the most profound and permanent ambition of Western metaphysics" (*Writing and Difference* 194). Although Artaud rails against classical theatre and the metaphysics that supports it, Derrida demonstrates that

Artaud's text participates in the metaphysics of presence through its deployment of the hierarchical binary opposition between speech and writing—in which the valorization of speech as the presentation of the true self is concomitant with the degradation of writing as simple (contaminated) representation—that Derrida comes to understand as being the necessary opening move of philosophy that makes (the history of) philosophy possible. The question of Artaud's dispossessed body recedes into the background in the later article while the question of language takes centre stage, as was forecast or foretold by Derrida by way of his theoretical outline of the method of deconstruction and its proper object—the hierarchical opposition between speech and writing that inaugurates the metaphysics of presence and determines Being within the horizon of presence and self-presence—that comprises the first section of *Of Grammatology*. But I want to return to the earlier essay in order to look more closely at the dispossession that God enacts on Artaud, at the judgement that God hands down on Artaud, and how the distinction between being and having figures into both Artaud's and Derrida's articulation of the dispossessed body that the former strives desperately throughout his work to re-claim.

6.2.2 The Dispossessed Body

By the time Derrida writes “The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation,” he had already made up his mind concerning the proper body that Artaud works to re-claim through his work. According to Derrida, what Artaud was after was to restore the unity of his body, to restore the whole body that God had spirited away from him, to be re-born into the fullness of life:

Artaud lived the morrow of a dispossession: his proper body, the property and propriety of his body, had been stolen from him at birth by the thieving God who was born in order 'to pass himself off/ as me.' Rebirth doubtless occurs through—Artaud recalls this often—a kind of reeducation of the organs. But this reeducation permits the access to a life before birth and after death ('through dying/ I have finally achieved real immortality,' p. 110), and not to a death before birth and after life...For Artaud, the primary concern is not to die in dying, not to let the thieving god divest him of his life. 'And I believe that there is always someone else, at the extreme moment of death, to strip us of our own lives'...And this dispossession occurred from the origin on, is the very movement of origin, of birth as death. (*Writing and Difference* 232-3).

The problem for Derrida lies in the chain of signifiers that weave their way through Artaud's articulation of his experience of dispossession: the proper, propriety, stolen property, thieving, divesting, and life, which are all complicit with/in the metaphysics of presence. As Derrida states, Artaud lived the future of his dispossession—the future of reclamation, of restoration, of re-appropriation. He lived in the hope that tomorrow he could reclaim or re-appropriate the proper body that the thieving God had stolen from him and thereby reunify himself and reclaim his proper presence to himself. But, according to Derrida, this is not how the dispossession that operates in our experience of the body (and language) should be lived. Dispossession does not open onto a life before birth and after death, and it does not support the future hope of re-possession; instead the experience of dispossession opens onto a death before birth and after life, to the absence that is at the very heart of life. In other words, dispossession must be lived outside of any sense of property or propriety because what one has been dispossessed of is dispossession itself, is the sense of dispossession as tied to any past presence that can be reclaimed or restored. What lies at the heart of the sense of dispossession that Derrida finds at the origin, that is the very movement of origination, is a radical absence and not our own lives.

According to Derrida, Artaud missed the point concerning his experiences of dispossession at the hands of God and language. Instead of understanding that the movement of radical dispossession that is absence is the fundamental reality of both the experience of language and embodiment, Artaud approaches those experiences from the perspective of the metaphysics of presence and the dream of unity and re-appropriation of his lost wholeness and self-identity. Artaud failed to grasp the truth of dispossession to which his life bore witness: “Artaud’s pathetic error: the weight of example and existence which keeps him remote from the truth he hopelessly indicates: the nothingness at the heart of the word, the ‘lack of being,’ the ‘scandal of thought separated from life’... That which no longer belongs to Artaud, as soon as we can read it through him, and thereby articulate, repeat, and take charge of it, that to which Artaud is only a witness, is a universal essence of thought” (*Writing and Difference* 171). And what Artaud bore witness to was a twofold dispossession: (1) the spiriting away of his speech from his body and (2) the theft of his proper body by God.

In the case of the former, Derrida roots out the desire for ‘full speech,’ for proper speech, that informs Artaud’s attack against language, especially his railing against the written word: “Artaud knew that all speech fallen from the body, offering itself to understanding or reception, offering itself as a spectacle, immediately becomes stolen speech. Becomes a signification which I do not possess because it is a signification. Theft is always the theft of speech or text, of a trace. The theft of a possession does not become a theft unless the thing stolen is a possession” (*Writing and Difference* 175). The uniqueness of the spoken word—which participates in the unique body of the speaker—falls into the universality of language, and the word is thus spirited away from the body.

The full speech of the body falls prey to the universality of language as a system of signifiers in which meaning is absent (or is the absence, space or difference between the words). In other words, Artaud is unable to speak in his own name, using his own voice, because language is a movement of dispossession—language is always already spirited away from me and it always already steals from me the very thing to which it puts me in relation (*Writing and Difference* 176). The problem is that dispossession is a structural necessity of language that leads to “not knowing who speaks at the moment when, and in the place where, I proffer my speech” (*Writing and Difference* 176). As Derrida explains in *Monolingualism of the Other*, language is always already of the other.

But, according to Derrida, Artaud overlooked the centrality of this necessary experience of dispossession that is the very possibility of language in general and instead took it up as a failing of his own being, as a sign of the collapse of his own being, as an experience unique to Antonin Artaud: in the case of Artaud, “the origin and urgency of speech, that which impelled him into expression, was confused with his own lack of speech, with ‘having nothing to say’ in his own name” (*Writing and Difference* 177). What Artaud exists, but fails to universalize, is “the nothing that separates me from my words,” that always already divests me of my words, what Derrida refers to as “the quality of dispossession which always empties out speech as it eludes itself” (*Writing and Difference* 177); instead of recognizing the dispossession at the heart of language, Artaud takes up the experience as being uniquely his and sets out to be heard in his own name, to become “the I who takes speech *without ever cutting off* the I who thinks that he speaks” (*Writing and Difference* 177-8). What Artaud tries to plug, at least according to Derrida, is the hole through which I incessantly escape myself in such a way that, when I speak, it

is no longer myself, or myself alone, who speaks and which makes my speech of the other. Artaud works at trying to reduce or overcome the irreducible secondarity of the speaking subject (*Writing and Difference* 178).

But the theft or dispossession that Artaud lived was not unique to him but was the structural necessity of language itself understood as a trace structure in which the word is “always stolen. Always stolen because it is always *open*. It never belongs to its author or to its addressee, and by nature, it never follows the trajectory that leads from subject to subject. Which amounts to acknowledging the autonomy of the signifier as the letter’s historicity...My meaning-to-say finds itself lacking something in relation to the signifier, and is inscribed passively” (*Writing and Difference* 178). And it is in the face of this radical passivity, of the passive dispossession at work at the heart of language, that Artaud actively seeks to articulate himself fully, to be in full possession of himself and to speak what he means and in his own name. Artaud, as Derrida sees it, works to root out the difference that separates me from my words and separates my speech from my breathe and my words from my speech.

For Derrida, the key word, that word that connects Artaud’s thought back into the metaphysics of presence that he is struggling against, is theft. As I have tried to demonstrate, Derrida’s argument hinges on the association of difference (that differentiation that always already divides identity as its very possibility) with theft—dispossession, specifically Artaud’s disincarnated voice, is the result of difference, of the difference that separates me from myself. Theft, as Derrida reads it in the context of Artaud’s corpus, refers to that unique possession that God has stolen or spirited away from him; it refers to the theft of that which was properly mine. In other words, the idea

of theft, of having a possession stripped from you, is itself rooted in the metaphysics of presence, of presence to oneself in which one is in complete possession of one's self and the rightful owner of one's property. More to the point, the sphere of having in which the concept of possession is based, as Marcel argues during the course of his thought, is constituted by the separation between the subject and the object that is the fundamental dualism of Western thought, a dualism that, paradoxically, Artaud works to destroy: "Artaud attempted to destroy a history, the history of dualist metaphysics...: the duality of the body and the soul which supports, secretly of course, the duality of speech and existence, of the text and the body, etc." (*Writing and Difference* 175). But, by invoking the concept of theft in relation to his speech, Derrida argues that the dualist metaphysics that Artaud strove to pulverize slips back into his work through the back door. It would actually be more accurate to say that Artaud's attack against dualist metaphysics is itself founded in that metaphysics; his thought is itself informed by that very tradition and history that his corpus targeted for demolition. And it is this necessity, this incessant and insistent return of the philosophical tradition that one is attempting to undo but which ultimately ends up undoing the text of its attacker, that interests Derrida. And it is at textual moments such as these that Derrida begins to sharpen his focus and to interrogate the work concerning that which is dissimulated, erased, silenced, or repressed at that very moment when the metaphysics of presence re-appears within the text.

In the case of Artaud, Derrida listens to that dispossession that speaks within Artaud's texts as the other side of theft, as that which is the very possibility of theft. What is it that makes theft possible in the first place? How is it that God is able to spirit away my words? As Derrida understands it, theft, at least as it refers to language and to

one's own words or voice, is not rooted in a prior fullness of possession and self-possession but in a prior incompleteness of dispossession and difference; theft is not made possible by the identity of the subject with itself, an identity that marks the subject as a subject in a relation of having with an exterior object, but by the original difference that separates the subject from itself and inaugurates existence as an existence of dispossession that must be thought outside of any hope for re-appropriation. In the case of Artaud, what steals my voice and my words is difference, is a passively instituted difference that is the very possibility of articulation. But what is unique about Artaud is the intensity with which he lives this dispossession, this difference that steals his own proper voice, and it is this intensity that Derrida taps into in his account of the difference at the heart of language. So, instead of understanding that he was living the dispossession that Derrida presents as the fundamental characteristic (although one would have to argue that one is even dispossessed of this very experience of dispossession that is the reality of our experience of language because we are never in complete possession of ourselves, never completely (self-) present to ourselves, so as to be able to fully experience this experience of dispossession) of our experience of language, Artaud substituted a wholeness and a unity at the origin of his relationship with language and strove to overcome the suffering inflicted on him by difference, by that God that had (always already) absconded with his voice. Artaud is interested in reclaiming or re-appropriating for himself, in its fullness and unity, that language torn from his body through an act of theft, in eliminating that furtive difference that intervenes between himself and his words.

What Derrida refers to as Artaud's "anguish of dispossession" also extends to his relationship with his body; the difference that dispossesses Artaud of his language is also responsible for spiriting away his body. Or, more precisely, Artaud's language is not his own because of the spiriting away of his own flesh, because of the difference that has insinuated itself into his flesh and destroyed its integrity and wholeness:

If my speech is not my breath, if my letter is not my speech, this is so because my spirit was already no longer my body, my body no longer my gestures, my gestures no longer my life. The integrity of the flesh torn by all these differences must be restored in the theater... This metaphysics of the flesh is also governed by the anguish of dispossession, the experience of having lost life, of separation from thought, of the body exiled from the mind. (*Writing and Difference* 179-80)

This is the same anguish of dispossession that dominated Artaud's writing on speech, an anguish based in the loss self-presence, of the presence of one's own speech to oneself, through difference; it is an anguish of the flesh governed by the dream of re-appropriation and re-unification. But, as was the case with Artaud's thoughts on language, Derrida does not want to highlight "the dream of a life without difference" that informs this metaphysics of the flesh but wants to ask instead "what difference within the flesh might mean for Artaud" (*Writing and Difference* 180).

What Derrida wants to foreground in his reading is Artaud's experience of difference within the flesh, the experience of dispossession at the heart of one's relation with one's body that Artaud lived with such intensity, but apart from the dream of an origin of integrity and wholeness that is grafted to Artaud's metaphysics of the flesh. What Derrida is trying to think through by way of Artaud is a type of dispossession outside of presence, outside of the subject/object dualism that structures relations of having and informs the signifying chain stretching from property, propriety, and the proper to Being and presence. What Derrida is trying to articulate negatively through

Artaud is the foundational dispossession that is at the origin (but, of course, an origin of which one finds oneself always already dispossessed or deprived of because of its constitutive movement of dispossession) of one's relation with one's own body, that is the very opening of one's relation with one's body: "Ever since I have had a relation to my body, therefore, ever since my birth, I no longer am my body. Ever since I have had a body, I am not this body, hence I do not possess it. This deprivation institutes and informs my relation to my life. My body has thus always been stolen from me" (*Writing and Difference* 180).

But stolen by whom? The answer is God. God is the proper name of that other that dispossesses Artaud of his own body at the moment of his birth: "God is thus the proper name of that which deprives us of our own nature, of our own birth; consequently he will have always spoken before us, on the sly. He is the difference which insinuates itself between myself and myself as my death" (*Writing and Difference* 180). God is the difference that undermines self-identity and my (self-) presence to myself; God is the other that absences me from myself and ruins (always already) my coincidence with myself at the moments of birth and death. As Artaud's states in his own dispossessed voice as it appears bounded within quotation marks in Derrida's essay, "'No one was ever born alone. / Nor has anyone died alone.../...And I believe that there is always someone else, at the extreme moment of death, to strip us of our own life'" (*Writing and Difference* 180). And listen to how Artaud narrates the dispossession of his body that accompanied his birth, again as it appears in the context of Derrida's essay:

Now, the hideous history of the Demiurge
is well known
It is the history of the body
which *pursued* (and did not follow) mine

and which, in order to go first and be born,
projected itself across my body
and
was born
through the disemboweling of my body
of which he kept a piece
in order to
pass himself off
as me.
Now, there was no one but he and I,
he
an abject body
unwanted by space,
I
a body being mad
consequently not yet having reached completion
but evolving
towards integral purity
like the body of the so called Demiurge
who, knowing that he had no chance of being received
and yet wanting to live at any price,
found nothing better
in order *to be*
than to be born at the price of my assassination. (*Writing and Difference* 181)

Through an act of substitution, God was born by way of Artaud's body, through an act of dispossession in which he disemboweled Artaud—in effect, depriving him of his body, of any power over his body—projected himself across Artaud's body, and passed himself off as Artaud all in an effort *to be*. In order to exist, God had to be born, had to project his body onto a body being born and usurp that body for his own. What God stole for himself was Being, Artaud's being, and the only way to accomplish this was by spiriting away Artaud's body at the moment of its birth and substituting his own abject body, a body that being or life would not receive except through an act of subterfuge or substitution. As Derrida explains, "God does not take hold of any one of our innate attributes, but of our innateness itself, of the innateness proper to our being itself: 'There are some fools who think themselves as beings, as innately being. / I am he

who, in order to be, must whip his innateness. / One who must be a being innately, that is, always whipping this sort of nonexistent kennel, O! bitches of impossibility'” (*Writing and Difference* 181). According to Derrida, God does not steal from us one of the natural or given attributes of our being; instead, He dispossess us of our very being, of the very givenness of our being, of our being inborn into being, of our inborn quality of being. But that is not exactly what Artaud says in the quotation that is grafted onto Derrida’s take on Artaud’s argument. God actually substitutes innateness in the place of the proper body, thereby enabling those fools to believe that they exist as beings, that they exist as innately being. The body of God that is projected across my body and is born in my place is a body of being, a body that places me in a relation of innateness with my own being—through the body of God, I come to think of myself as innately being, of being as an innate quality that was given to me and with which I was (in)born. But Artaud refuses to think of himself as innately being; he refuses the being of God, the being that is God and that God insinuates into our existence through our disemboweling. Being, for Artaud, is not innate, is not a given, but is instead a movement or an active pursuit—something that must be attained. But first, in order to be, to truly be, Artaud feels that he must whip his innateness, whip the being with which he was born, that he was given at birth by God by way of his assassination. Artaud must be a being innately, must be a being as originally intended, must exist being as it was intended before God dispossessed him of his body and substituted his own abject body in its place. And the only way to be a being innately is to somehow reclaim his proper body, that body of which God disposed when he assassinated Artaud at the moment of his birth. But more on this in a moment.

What Derrida highlights in his argument is how Artaud portrays his dispossession, how he represents it, especially in terms of the language of theft and of a lost purity that he uses to articulate God's attack on his body. What Derrida questions is why Artaud conceives of this original alienation "as pollution, obscenity, 'filthiness,' etc... Why does Artaud, bemoaning the loss of his body, lament a loss of purity as much as he laments dispossession, lament the loss of propriety as much as the loss of property? 'I have been tortured too much... / ... / I have worked too hard at being pure and strong / ... / I have sought to have a proper body too much'" (*Writing and Difference* 181). Again, the problem, as Derrida sees it, is that Artaud's thought—as is evident in his vocabulary—is informed by the very metaphysics of presence that he is trying to destroy; instead of simply trying to articulate dispossession in some universal sense as the reality of one's relation with one's body, Derrida argues that Artaud's corpus falls prey to an anguish for purity and integrity that causes him to shackle his experiences of dispossession to an imaginary origin of purity and wholeness. What troubles Derrida—or perhaps, more accurately, what troubles Artaud's writings—is the grafting of Artaud's expression of his experiences of dispossession in relation to his own proper body to a vocabulary of purity, propriety, integrity, and wholeness that reduces dispossession to a state of fallenness away from some self-identical origin, a state of impurity and contamination. As Derrida explains, Artaud equates the God that slips into the originary interval that separates Artaud from his own proper origin, from his proper beginnings, with filth and excrement: "that which dispossesses me and makes me remote from myself, interrupting my proximity to myself, also soils me: I relinquish all that is proper to me" (*Writing and Difference* 183).

God, the thief, robs me of all that is proper to me, and he comes to stand between me and my self-presence or self-identity because he insinuates himself into the difference that “opens my history” at the moment of my birth (*Writing and Difference* 182). Thus, dispossession in Artaud is linked to a proper appropriate origin as that property which Artaud works to reclaim or re-appropriate:

Proper is the name of the subject close to himself—who is what he is—and the abject the name of the object, the work that has deviated from me. I have a proper name when I am proper...The unity of these significations, hidden beneath their apparent dispersion, the unity of the proper as the nonpollution of the subject absolutely close to himself, does not occur before the Latin era of philosophy (*proprius* is attached to proper)...Artaud *solicits* this metaphysics, *shakes* it when it lies to itself and establishes the proper departure from that which is proper to oneself (the alienation of alienation) as the condition for the phenomenon of the proper; and Artaud still *summons* this metaphysics, draws upon its fund of values, and attempts to be more faithful to it than it is to itself by means of an absolute restoration of the proper to the eve prior to all dissociation. (*Writing and Difference* 183)

This is the double movement that determines Artaud’s corpus; while Artaud scrutinizes this metaphysics of the proper at the moment when it works to elide that experience of the alienation of alienation—alienation without the nostalgia for any lost origin of unity and integrity—that is the very possibility of the phenomenon of the proper, he simultaneously invites the economy of the proper to circulate in his work and ultimately articulates his experience of dispossession in terms of a hoped for re-appropriation of oneself, a dreamed-of reclamation of proximity with oneself. In other words, the very reserve of values and resources of the proper that Artaud attacks and attempts to destroy find themselves insinuated into his work—and this is the double gesture of the text that is at the heart of deconstruction, that is the heart of the matter for deconstruction.

And it is exactly at the apex of this double movement, at the juncture of this *soliciting* and *summoning*, that Derrida insinuates himself into Artaud’s body of work and

begins to articulate the “difference within the flesh” that is proper to one’s relation with one’s body, that is the experience of the alienation of alienation that is the reality of our experience of embodiment. What Derrida listens for is the murmur of difference that rises up from beneath the proper origin of self-presence that Artaud summons forth into his work as its proper goal. In terms of Artaud’s body, what Derrida strains to hear is the difference ingrained in the flesh that Artaud works to overcome through his reappropriation and restoration of his proper body by way of his art; in other words, working negatively, Derrida trusts Artaud to lead him to the site of bodily difference through his attempt to rid himself, through his refashioning or re-working of his body, of the body of God that stands between him and his proper origin. What Derrida is watching for is that place in the body of God where Artaud will begin to make his incision and start to remake his anatomy and “give me back the institution of my flesh itself” (*Writing and Difference* 185).

And, sure enough, Derrida’s patience pays off, revealing the *organ* as the vestige of the body of God that Artaud virulently attacks in his attempt to reclaim the integrity and purity of his own flesh. In terms of the theatre, Artaud concentrates his energy on reducing the organ of the word, of the stolen word, that is the basis for the classical Western stage as a “theater of the organ”: “The differences upon which the metaphysics of Occidental theater lives (author-text / director-actors), its differentiation and its divisions, transform the ‘slaves’ into commentators, that is, into organs. Here they are recording organs” (*Writing and Difference* 185). But this proliferation of organs in the theatre is grounded in a prior organic differentiation, namely that of the flesh through its articulation into organs; in other words, for Artaud, it is the organic differentiation that

ravaged the integrity of the flesh that “corrupted the metaphysics of the theater” (*Writing and Difference* 186). Consequently, any attempt to refashion one’s body must begin with the reduction of its organs and a reclamation of one’s undifferentiated flesh. Artaud’s attack against his body is an attack against its organ-ization, against the “play of differentiation” that is carried out by organs upon the integrity of the flesh. And it is exactly against this work of differentiation that Artaud, in Derrida’s mind, summons and deploys the fund of values associated with the proper:

Organization is articulation, the interlocking of functions or of members (*artho*, *artus*), the labor and play of their differentiation. This constitutes both the ‘membering’ and dismembering of my proper body. For one and the same reason, through a single gesture, Artaud is fearful of the articulated body as he is of the articulated language, as fearful of the member as of the word. For articulation is the structure of my body, and the structure is always a structure of expropriation. The division of the body into organs, the difference interior to the flesh, opens the lack through which the body becomes absent from itself, passing itself off as, and taking itself for, the mind. Now, ‘there is no mind, nothing but the differentiation of bodies’ (March, 1947). The body, which ‘always seeks to reassemble itself,’ escapes itself by virtue of that which permits it to function and express itself... ‘The body is the body, / it is alone / and has no need of organs, / the body is never an organism, / organisms are the enemies of bodies, / everything one does transpires by itself without the aid of any organ, / every organ is a parasite, / it overlaps with a parasitic function / destined to bring into existence a being which should not be there’ (84, p. 101). The organ thus welcomes the difference of the stranger into my body: it is always the organ of my ruin, and this truth is so original that neither the heart, the central organ of life, nor the sex, the first organ of life, escape it. (*Writing and Difference* 186)

The play of differentiation, which results from the differences between organs, articulates the proper body—it both members it, in the sense of delimiting specific organs, and dismembers it in the sense of rending the integrity of the proper body. In other words, it is the organization of the body itself, its articulation, that opens the body to the other, that leads the body away from itself. At this point, I want to be clear on the function of organs as Derrida understands it because this is central to how Derrida

renders Artaud's work; consequently, the sequence of events, as rendered by Derrida, is crucial and must be followed closely. My body is always already articulated, divided against itself in its very structure, and, as articulated (either as jointed or, taken in the sense of the spoken word, as fallen from self-presence), the structure of my body is a structure of expropriation, a structure that leads my body away from itself. And it is this structure itself, this difference interior to the flesh that is the articulation of my body into organs, that opens the lack through which the body comes to escape itself. Organs are therefore always instruments of my own ruin because they are of the other, they lead my body away from itself and its own self-presence. Organs (the articulation of my body) thus welcome the difference of the other into my body; the organization of my body in terms of organs is the difference of the other that resides in my body and divides my body from itself.

According to Derrida, the difference that resides in the flesh is rooted in organization, where organ-ization is the result of the playful work of differentiation that both 'members' the proper body through the intertwining of organs and functions and 'dismembers' the proper body through the movement of expropriation that, through articulation, structures the body from the very beginning as improper. Both aspects of bodily organization—membering and dismembering—understood as articulation are the result of the originary difference that opens the lack through which the body escapes from itself, becomes absent from the dream of a proper self. This difference within the flesh that the organization of the body bears witness to is the difference that separates the body from itself. The difference within the flesh that enables, as its very possibility, the articulation of the body into organs is responsible for the spiriting of my body away from

itself and towards the mind; the difference interior to the flesh is therefore best characterized as a “structure of expropriation” because it leads my body towards the other. It is through this originary difference—this structure of expropriation that permits the body to ex-press itself—that the body escapes itself towards the other. Thus organization is a response to the other; organization is the way in which I welcome the other because organs are the result of the play of differentiation that makes my body, originally, of the other. The experience of dispossession that is the experience of the constitutive difference that resides within the flesh is the experience of a structure of expropriation that opens my body to the other, and it is through the labour and play of this originary movement of expropriation through which the body becomes absent from itself that the body comes to organize or articulate itself in relation to, or in response to, the other towards which the body escapes.

Consequently, what appears to frighten Artaud is the division of the body into organs because the organ is always already improper—it is the organ of my ruin. The organ, as Derrida articulates, is experienced by Artaud as an *embouchure*, as both an opening from which one’s breath escapes from one’s mouth and as an opening onto the other through which the other flows into my proper body: “The organ: place of loss because its center always has the form of an orifice. The organ always functions as an embouchure. The reconstitution and reinstitution of my flesh will thus always follow along lines of my body’s closing in on itself and the reduction of its organic structure” (*Writing and Difference* 186-7). Artaud’s attack against the organ, against the organization of the body, is seen by Derrida as a mad quest for bodily integrity and unity, as an insane attempt to close the body over onto itself, to make the body whole again by

plugging up all its holes, by ridding it of all its organs. For Artaud, the imperative is clear—evacuate all otherness from my body, all polluting influences, and restore my proper body through the liquidation of its organic structure. At least that is what the following quotation from Artaud that Derrida argument opens onto seems to suggest:

I was alive
And I have been *here* since *always*.
Did I eat?
No,
But when I was hungry I retreated with my body and did not eat myself
But all that has been decomposed,
A strange operation has taken place...
Did I sleep?
No, I did not sleep,
One must be chaste to know not to eat.
To open one's mouth is to give oneself over to miasms.
No mouth, then!
No mouth,
no tongue,
no teeth,
no larynx,
no esophagus,
no stomach,
no belly,
no anus.
I will reconstruct the man that I am. (*Writing and Difference* 187)

In order to avoid the polluting influence or atmosphere of the other that threatens the integrity of the proper body, Artaud envisions a body closed in on itself, sealed up against the infecting otherness or alterity of the outside. And the epicentre of this reconstitution or reconstruction of the body is the theatre of cruelty; the theatre of cruelty is that place where the work of reconstituting the proper body will be undertaken. Again Derrida asks us to listen to how Artaud expresses his project:

Reality has not yet been constructed because the true organs of the human body have not yet been assembled and put into place.

The theater of cruelty has been created to complete this putting into place and to undertake, through a new dance of the body of man, the disruption of this world of microbes which is but coagulated nothingness.

The theater of cruelty wants to make eyelids dance cheek to cheek with elbows, patellas, femurs and toes, and to have this dance be seen. (*Writing and Difference* 187)

But, upon reading the above characterization of the theatre of cruelty, I was struck by how accurately the dance of the body depicts the play of difference within the flesh that Derrida argues is the possibility of the organization of the body. It seems clear to me that Artaud is only interested in liquidating our false organs and re-placing them with the true organs of the human body; he seems interested in putting our organs back into the play of difference, having them circulate again within the difference that is the flesh and re-organize and rearticulate themselves as a body. As he claims, the theatre of cruelty is meant to enable a radical re-distribution of the organs of the body through a re-thinking of the functional relations that result from the labour and play of differentiation constitutive of the flesh; the function of the theatre of cruelty is to put our organs back into circulation and to orchestrate a new dance of the body, a new dance that, through the labour and play of difference inscribed within the flesh, would re-organize the body otherwise. So, the question arises as to whether or not we should take Derrida at his word. Perhaps we need to take a closer look at his argument and at Artaud's project of bodily re-making.

6.2.3 Artaud's Anatomy Lesson

Instead of understanding Artaud's project as one of purifying the body of a polluting otherness, of closing off the body in itself and re-discovering some impossible

dreamed-of integral proper body, I want to advance a more sympathetic reading of the theatre of cruelty. But this is not to suggest that Derrida missed the point. In the end, Derrida works to recuperate Artaud by arguing that his corpus is located on the margin or at the limit of metaphysics, that it participates in the furtive movement that is the very (im)possibility of metaphysics; he contends that Artaud understood the cruelty of the law of dispossession or difference that made his work complicitous with the very tradition he was attempting to liquidate. What Derrida recovers from Artaud's anguished corpus is exactly this complicity that is at the heart of "all destructive discourses: they must inhabit the structures they demolish, and within them they must shelter an indestructible desire for full presence, for nondifference: simultaneously life and death" (*Writing and Difference* 194). It is in this way that Artaud's metaphysics comes to recall and recuperate "the most profound and permanent ambition of Western metaphysics" (*Writing and Difference* 194)—namely its labour to determine "Being as the life of a proper subjectivity" (*Writing and Difference* 193); what Derrida's essay highlights is the inevitable spiriting away, or carrying away, of Artaud discourse by the very philosophical tradition that he works to destroy. And it is exactly against the grain of this complicity with the metaphysics of presence implied in the rhetoric of destruction that deconstruction is itself deployed as a practice of "sojourning in a place which is neither within nor without [the history of metaphysics]" (*Writing and Difference* 192). Deconstruction, in other words, is all about inhabiting a space at the limits of metaphysics, a space in which one dances ever so lightly between the extremes of the metaphysics of presence and the desire for its destruction, which itself is also part of that very history; deconstruction is an ever so subtle playing at the limits that must, by

necessity, play both sides against the middle in order to listen to what murmurs beneath the history of Being.

What I disagree with in Derrida's reading is his conflation of Artaud's writing as it pertains to language with his work on embodiment. What the essay makes clear is that Derrida sees no difference between Artaud's attack on writing and on his dispossessed body, and the reason for this reduction is the fact that Artaud discusses both language and the proper body in terms of dispossession, as aspects of existence that have fallen away from the self or that have been spirited away by God as the evil other that robs one of one's self-presence and integrity. As we have seen, Derrida bases his argument in "La parole soufflée" around a certain phenomenal truth concerning theft—that I possessed or was in possession of at one time that which was stolen or spirited away from me; in the case of my speech, my words or my body, the structure of theft implies the originary notion of the proper. The proper is that which is stolen from me; my proper speech or proper body, that with which I was identical, has been lifted from me by a thieving other. Instead, I find myself speaking in someone else's voice and with someone else's name, and I discover the body that I am to be a substituted body that was born at my expense.

But such experiences of dispossession are predicated upon an original difference, an originary separation that opened my speech and my body to the other in such a way that they could be stolen from me in the first place. In other words, the very structure of theft, instead of originating in identity, is determined by difference; the experience of dispossession is only possible on the grounds of an originary difference at the heart of my relations with language and my body that makes both language and my body *of* the other. In the case of the body, Derrida argues that Artaud, instead of understanding the originary

nature of the difference that resides in the body, that is the body, subordinates his insights to the dream of originary unity and body integrity. In other words, Derrida accuses Artaud of attempting to purify his body of difference. Instead of understanding his experiences of bodily dispossession as constitutive, as “the total dispossession which constitutes me as the deprivation of myself, the elusion of my existence” (*Writing and Difference* 179), Derrida argues that Artaud despairingly dissimulates his beginnings in difference beneath a dreamed-of origin of self-presence and self-identity in Being.

In what remains of this chapter, I will focus my attention on Artaud’s labour to have a proper body, on his project, through the theatre of cruelty, to re-make his body, beginning with what I understand to be Derrida’s forced reading of this portion of Artaud oeuvre in “La parole soufflée.” I do not intend to argue against Derrida’s reading of Artaud as ultimately re-investing his work with the language of the metaphysics of presence, mostly because I think that his analysis is quite accurate. What I do want to advance, however, is an alternative reading of the theatre of cruelty as “the exercise of a dangerous and terrible act/.../ [that] aims for a true organic and physical transformation of the human body” (*Antonin Artaud Anthology* 169), one that understands Artaud’s project to have a proper body as an attempt to reclaim his flesh, the difference within his flesh, from the God of Being instead of as the pursuit of some dreamt-of pure and self-identical original body. As I understand Artaud, he spent his life fighting against the forces of God, the denizens of Being, that were attempting to reduce the difference within the flesh, that were attempting to place his body, the body that he had, under the sign of Being. In retrospect, I think that the concept of the theatre of cruelty must be enlarged

beyond simply being understood as an attack against the metaphysics that support classical theatre.

The true aim of Artaud's critique of classical theatre is the fleshy presence of the metaphysics of presence on stage, its embodied presence as body at the heart of the theatre; the true support for classical theatre is the body itself that is put on stage, and it is the body itself, organized or framed as an organism, in which the economy of the classical theatre is rooted. What classical theatre displays on stage is the body of God, a body thoroughly invested with Being; in this way, classical theatre "belongs to the epoch of metaphysics that determines Being as the life of a proper subjectivity" (*Writing and Difference* 193). As I understand Artaud, the metaphysics of presence that supports the economy of classical theatre is embodied in the organized body, the body with organs as it has been determined in our epoch of metaphysics that equates Being with presence and the proper, and it is this closed body, this body that I am and that is the self-identical body of Being, is the body of God that pursued my body and was born in my place through my assassination. And it is this body that Artaud railed against, this body that elides all difference and passes itself off as innate, as innately mine. Perhaps more to the point, I will argue that Artaud wanted to have a body instead of simply being a body, instead of simply being a body of Being, taking into account all that this distinction implies.

In other words, I disagree with Derrida concerning his presentation of Artaud as being against articulation in general, as against the structure of ex-propriation through which the body always already escapes itself and becomes absent from itself; instead, I read Artaud as being against this particular articulation or organization of the body that

belongs, as its support, to the epoch of metaphysics that determines Being as the life of a proper subjectivity. And the way in which Artaud believes that the metaphysics of Being and presence realizes itself—or gives birth to itself—in existence is through our organs, is through the very particular organic articulation of the body that has dominated our epoch. The metaphysics of Being ingrains itself in the body by way of organs, and, because each organ overlaps with a parasitic function—each organ is functionalized in terms of Being, is given a function that it performs in the name of Being—and is thereby destined to bring into existence a being thoroughly invested with Being which should not be there (*Writing and Difference* 186). What Artaud is attacking is not the general structure of the body as articulated, as a general possibility for articulation, but the particular articulation of the body in terms of Being, the particular organization of the body through a very specific functionalization of the body into organic parts that coincides with the history of Western metaphysics—a body that Artaud equates with nondifference, self-identity, solidity, and totality. And it is the undoing, or liquidation, of this particular body of Being, this body that I am, that is the goal of the theatre of cruelty; what Artaud works to realize in the theatre of cruelty is the liquidation of the functional arrangement of the body in terms of Being and a re-vitalization of the difference within the flesh that this functional organization elides, a re-vitalization that would lead to the institution of a new dance of the human body in terms of its true organs.

6.2.4 Derrida Dispossessed

As I have already hinted at above, Derrida's argument derails at two points in the essay: (1) when he takes up the body of Being that God has substituted for Artaud's proper body and (2) when he presents the theatre of cruelty as a project for the liquidation of all organs, for the plugging up of all orifices, and the ultimate (re)realization of a unified and purified body that can properly be named Antonin Artaud. In the first case, what I briefly tried to highlight earlier in the context of a quotation from Artaud that appears in "La parole soufflée" was a distinction between the given and being that seems to take on a life of its own in relation to Derrida's argument. In line with his interest in the structure of theft that appears throughout the essay, Derrida argues that God appropriates, or spirits away, our very innateness; according to his interpretation, God absconds with "the innateness proper to our being itself" (*Writing and Difference* 181). But Derrida does not seem to read the quotation in the spirit in which it was intended. In fact, there is no mention of theft, or of dispossession, in the quotation itself; instead, Derrida reads the structure of theft into the text. There is no reason, upon reading the quotation, to think that Artaud presents the body of God, the body that takes my place after the assassination of my own proper body, as taking root in, or taking hold of, my own innateness.

I think that it is more accurate to read Artaud as saying that God gives us our innateness, that God enables us to think of ourselves as innately being; instead of understanding God as stealing away with our being, I understand God to be the one that slips us Being in such a way that we come to think of ourselves as innately being. By way of God and the original act of substitution, we come to accept Being as an innate, inborn quality. God, in other words, slips us Being and makes us believe in its innateness

as its most proper quality; what is most proper about the Being that God slips us is the fact that we are born within Being, or that it is born within us, that each of us bears Being, innately, within us. God's betrayal lies with his ability to get us to accept Being as inborn, to accept Being under the sign of innateness, as being properly our own, as our property. Thus, God does not dispossess us of Being; instead, he gives us Being and tries to pass it off as something that properly belongs to us as an innate quality. God is not spiriting away Being but is instead getting us to accept, as inborn, that very spirit of Being that is born into existence at my expense.

Seen in this light, Artaud's furtive God is actually complicitous with the Western metaphysical tradition as the agent that links Being to the proper; it is God who makes us believe in the innateness of our Being, who works to pass off our being as inborn, as our most proper quality or possession. As a reaction against this deception, Artaud presents himself as someone who, in order to be, must whip his own innateness; in order to (re)gain control of the pack of hounds that is his being and to truly be, Artaud must strike out at them. What Artaud refuses to accept is his very innateness, is the very innateness of Being that is proper to all beings; instead of accepting Being as inborn and simply being, Artaud, in order to be, actively sets out to establish control over his own innateness, to wrestle control over his being away from God who works to pass off this nonexistent kennel of Being as innate and proper³². But the question still remains as to how God slips us Being in the first place and how he comes to pass it off as innate. As

³² The act of whipping also brings to mind the religious practice of flagellation in which the faithful worked to whip their flesh into obedience; the hope was that desire could be whipped out of the flesh, that one's flesh could be tamed and brought under control. But whipping can also be used to get desire moving again; as both Sade and Masoc demonstrate (although using very different techniques), one can use pain to re-awaken the flesh and get desire circulating again.

Derrida points out in “La parole soufflée,” God is the name that Artaud uses for the other who substitutes himself for me at my birth, who is born in my place, whose body is born at the price of my assassination, who steals my place at my birth. The order of events surrounding Artaud’s birth is quite clear. While Artaud was waiting to be born, the body of God, an abject body that space would not accept, that existence would not receive, but that wanted to live at any cost, projected itself across Artaud’s body and was born. The history of God the Demiurge is the history of the body of God that, in order to be, pursued Artaud’s body until the moment of its birth and then, disemboweling it and retaining a piece of that body, passed itself off as Artaud and was born in his place. Therefore, what God slipped Artaud was his body; the only way that God could come into existence, that God’s abject body could actually come into *being* and live, was to be born at the price of Artaud’s assassination. From this, it seems reasonable to argue that God slips us Being through our bodies or in our bodies, that Being is ingrained in the body that God substituted for our own at the moment of our birth. And it is this body that God must get us to accept as our proper body, as innately our own. In other words, God is the one that introduces the disease of the proper into human existence, and he accomplishes this deception by passing off his abject body as innately and properly our own.

One of Derrida’s central criticisms of Artaud concerns his use of the language of pollution and contamination to articulate this originary experience of dispossession by God; as we have witnessed, Derrida presents Artaud’s conception of this originary alienation as pollution, obscenity, filthiness as an anguished lament of the loss of some more originary purity and integrity. What Artaud is bemoaning, as Derrida understands

him, is the contaminating difference that deprives or dispossesses Artaud of his body, of his proper body. But the reading that I am advancing argues that Artaud is not lamenting the difference that is interior to the flesh and structures the flesh as ex-propriation, that originary difference that separates the body from itself and works to welcome the difference of the stranger (God) into my body, but is instead lamenting God's smuggling in of the proper into Artaud's being. The disease that Artaud refers to, or continuously works to remedy, is not the difference within the flesh but is the quality of the proper or the innate that God deploys to pass off his substituted body as innately our own. Consequently, Being is established in relation to the proper, property, propriety, and innateness through the body that I am; Being, understood in relation to the proper, as properly and innately our property enters existence through the deception that God enacts by passing off his body as our own, as the body that I come to believe myself to be. And it is this body that I am, the body through which God smuggles in the innateness and propriety that enables one to think of oneself as innately being, and its anatomical order that Artaud works to change; or, more accurately, Artaud works to recover the body's very possibility to change, that difference within the flesh that Derrida refers to that always leads the body away from itself, that structural necessity that ensures that the body becomes absent from itself or escapes itself.

In a piece called "Theatre and Science," Artaud explicitly addresses this relationship between givenness or innateness and the body that I have been trying to bring to light. What Artaud finds most troubling about our current ideas about the body is the fact that "now nobody believes a body can change except through time and death," that "we have forgotten how to transform it and change it" (*Antonin Artaud Anthology*

169). What Artaud laments is not disrupting difference but unchanging and petrifying innateness. The innate body, that body that, through God's deception, we take up as properly our own (as our own property), is, because of its quality of innateness, meant to be taken up as unchangeable. This is the great ruse as Artaud presents it. God, whose abject body space is unwilling to welcome and that existence will not receive, must *be* in order to allow his body to evolve to integral perfection or completion, and the only way that God can see for birthing his body through my own assassination. Therefore, God engineers the substitution of his body for my body at the moment of my birth. But the problem remains as to how he will get us to accept the substitution. The answer, as we have seen, is through the category of the proper. In other words, God slips us his abject body by qualifying it for us as innate, thereby enabling us to think of ourselves as innately being. As a result, existence is made easy for us because we come to take our being as our most proper inborn quality; as the body that I am, my existence or my being is already affirmed or realized even before I begin to act, which means that I do not have to be anxious about my own existence.

Through the body that I am, I can rest easy in the security of my own unquestionable being as embodied. The unchanging fact of my proper body, that body that I always already am and that is the unchanging kernel of my existence, is my existential fulcrum, the immovable point of my existence. But what is God hoping to accomplish through this deception? What is the purpose of his ruse? According to Artaud, God needed to have his body to be, to live, in order to continue its evolution towards completion. But this is the evolution of an abject body towards perfection, a body that neither space nor existence would receive except by way of an elaborate

deception; therefore, since the body of God would seem to be a threat to space and existence, to reality in general, it would seem acceptable to call this body inhuman. And it is the destiny of this body, of the proper body of God, that Artaud does not accept because, as I will argue, this body is thoroughly complicitous with the destiny of the proper, of an epoch of metaphysics that determines Being and presence as the life of a proper subjectivity. The body of God is inhuman because it is radically opposed to difference, to the difference within the flesh that Artaud sees as the truth of human destiny.

But how exactly does the body of God embody the destiny of the proper? What is it that makes the body of God abject and an anathema to space and existence? This is where Derrida makes a grave mistake in his reading, because the destiny of Being as the proper is rooted for Artaud in the *anatomical order* of the body. Artaud is not against the organization or articulation of the body; in fact, I will argue that he understands the articulation of the body, the organization of its organs, as our most pressing ethical responsibility. What Artaud attacks is the specific anatomical order of the body of God and all that has been built upon that order, an order that perpetuates itself through the myth of its innateness. For example, listen to how Artaud speaks about the type of revolution that would be necessary to free us from the grip of God:

So the question here is revolution,
and everyone is crying out for a necessary revolution,
but I don't know if enough people have understood that this
revolution would not be real as long as it was not physically
and materially complete,
as long as it would not turn and face man,
face the body of man himself
and decide once and for all to demand that *he change*
...And no political or moral revolution will be possible
so long as man continues to be magnetically held down—

even in his most elementary and simple organic reactions—
by the sordid influence
of all the questionable centers of the Initiates,
who, sitting tight in the warmth of the electric blankets of their
duality-schism
laugh at revolutions as well as wars,
certain that the anatomical order on which the
existence as well as the duration of actual society is based
will no longer know how to be changed. (*Antonin Artaud Anthology* 170-1)

What Artaud rails against is the idea of a proper body, of the body that I am, and the blind acceptance of its anatomical order as innate and inborn, as unchanging or unchangeable. In other words, it is the proper body of God, that body that God passes off to us as our own, that elides or works to excise or reduce the difference within the flesh. Passing itself as proper, as inborn, the body of God saddles us with an anatomical order that we take as given and unchanging, as our proper property, as our most human possession; in other words, we come to accept the body of God, what I understand as the body without difference, as properly our own and thereby fail to experience the dispossession or difference within the flesh that was the opening through which God smuggled in the proper body.

And this brings us to Derrida's second oversight, his reading of the theatre of cruelty as a nostalgic attempt to reunify the body through the liquidation of its organs, of its organic structuration or articulation—a project that Derrida argues is complicitous with the very tradition of Being and the proper that Artaud is labouring to destroy. As I have argued, Derrida presents the theatre of cruelty as the staging of an attack on difference, on that difference that resides in the flesh and divides the body into organs, remembering that it is the organ for Derrida that “welcomes the difference of the stranger into my body” (*Writing and Difference* 186). In terms of the body, Derrida's reading

centres around his association of the organic structuration of the body by way of organs with difference itself, and it is as a result of this association that he is able to present the theatre of cruelty as an attempt to stage both the purification of the body of all contaminating difference and the re-emergence of the proper body in its wholeness. Against the reality of the organ—which is always situated around an orifice—as “a place of loss,” the theatre of cruelty “follows along the lines of my body’s closing in on itself and the reduction of its organic structure” (*Writing and Difference* 186-7); Derrida reads Artaud’s attempt to liquidate his organs as an attack on the difference that resides within the flesh.

As I have already shown, Derrida puts forward various quotations from Artaud to support his claim. Earlier in the chapter I re-produced one of those quotations at length, a quotation in which Artaud speaks of liquidating all the organs that make up his digestive track, which also include the articulated organs of articulation: “ ‘No mouth, then! / No mouth, / no tongue, / no teeth, / no larynx, / no esophagus, / no stomach, / no belly, / no anus. / I will reconstruct the man that I am’ ” (*Writing and Difference* 187). Again it is a question of the innateness of one’s being. What Artaud is working towards is the reconstruction of the human being that he *is*; instead of simply accepting his being, instead of taking his being as an inborn quality, Artaud works to re-invent or re-make himself, and, as I have shown, re-making one’s self must be a “certain operation of the physiological transmutation and true organic metamorphosis of the human body” (*Antonin Artaud Anthology* 172). According to Artaud, reconstructing one’s self (or oneself) must necessarily involve a re-ordering of one’s anatomy, not, as Derrida suggests, a closing in off the body on itself through the complete liquidation of all organs.

As the quotation that Derrida places in the context of his essay testifies to, the theatre of cruelty has been created as exactly the place where this operation or reconstitution or reconstruction will occur: “ ‘The theatre of cruelty has been created to complete this putting in place [of the true organs of the human body] and to undertake, through a new dance of the human body, the disruption of this world of microbes which is coagulated nothingness. / The theatre of cruelty wants to make eyelids dance cheek to cheek with elbows, patellas, femurs and toes, and to have this dance be seen’ ” (*Writing and Difference* 187).

Derrida is right on one count, namely that the theatre of cruelty aims at rescuing the human body from its organs, from the anatomical order through which the destiny of God comes into being. In his radio play *To Have Done With the Judgement of God*, Artaud explains how one must go about emasculating the human body:

By having him undergo once more but for the last time an autopsy in order to remake his anatomy.
I say, in order to remake his anatomy.
Man is sick because he is badly constructed.
We must decide to strip him in order to scratch out this animalcule
which makes him itch to death,
god,
and with god
his organs.
For tie me down if you want to,
but there is nothing more useless than an organ.
When you have given him a body without organs,
Then you will have delivered him from all his automatisms and restored him to
his true liberty.
Then you will teach him to dance inside out
as in the delirium of dance halls
and that inside out will be his true side out. (*Watchfiends* 307)

But this does not mean, as Derrida argues, that Artaud is working towards the reduction of the organic structure of the human, of the difference that is structurally implied in the

flesh by its division into organs. The theatre of cruelty is not about the liquidation of all organs; instead it aims at the liquidation of those organs that are a function of the anatomical order of God's body, those organs that function in the service of the proper body (of God) that God slipped me at my birth; it is about getting the body to remember that it can change, that the innateness of its current proper anatomical order is an illusion perpetrated by God in order to get us to take up his body and bring it into being. The theatre of cruelty, in other words, sets the stage for putting the organs of the body back into circulation, for liquidating the rigid anatomical structuring of the proper body of God and initiating a new dance in which the organs of the body will form new relations with one another. Derrida is right to argue that Artaud is seeking to reassemble the body, but this reassembling is based in difference, in an understanding of the innate possibility of the flesh, through difference, to change, to dance a new dance, to perpetually escape itself and become absent from itself and to renew itself.

6.2.5 The Part vs. the Whole

This entire debate that Derrida carries out with Artaud is rooted in the former's perception that the latter's thoughts on the body are structured by the rather simplistic dualism between whole and part. According to Derrida, the proper body for which Artaud is striving is an integral whole, a body closed in on itself, a body that has plugged up all its orifices and liquidated all of its organs, and that is self-contained and self-coincident; in contrast, Derrida argues that the proper body is an illusion of pure (self-) presence that Artaud deploys to avail himself of his anguish over the dispossession that

God has always already enacted upon him. As Derrida has laboured to point out, what Artaud was unable to articulate was the universality of the originary dispossession that Artaud so uniquely felt and experienced; what Artaud was unable to articulate was that which was most uniquely his and which he felt with such intensity—the furtiveness that is the very opening of existence, the difference within the flesh that makes us always already of the other. Therefore, Artaud’s corpus is all about achieving bodily integrity and wholeness through the eradication of all difference from the flesh—which, as we have seen, is the reason for Artaud’s attack against our organic structure.

But, as I have endeavoured to demonstrate, Derrida, through his investigation of the structure of theft, simply works to reduce Artaud’s quest for a proper body to the simple dualism between part and whole. Because of the actions of the furtive God, Artaud has been dispossessed of his proper body; God has spirited away his body and replaced it with his own. Therefore, what Artaud laments, at least according to Derrida, is the loss of his property, of his propriety, of the body that was properly his own until God stole it away from him. But what Derrida rightly points out is that any relation of possession, as we learned in Marcel, is structured around a central difference—what I possess is always exterior to me and is separated from me through its difference from me. The relation of possession, in other words, always already implies a difference between the subject and the object, a difference that is the impossibility of the realization of any relation of identity between the possessing subject and the possessed object³³, and it is by

³³ But one must remember the difficulty that Marcel encountered in trying to clearly delineate the subject and the object in the relation of possession. Although the reduction of the difference between the subject and the object and the achievement of a relation of identification is an impossibility when dealing with relations of having, the distinction between the subject and the object in the relation is problematic because, while the subject could feel that they are in possession of the object, the object can come to possess

way of this originary difference that separates the subject and the object in the relation of having that God is able to purloin one's possessions. But Artaud's anguish at being dispossessed by God, at having his proper body spirited away by God, causes him to overlook this originary difference and the flesh as a structure of expropriation and to instead work towards recovering or re-instituting his body in its wholeness and fullness, towards re-constituting his proper body to its original state of integral wholeness before its purity was afflicted by the pestilence of God and his organs.

Instead of realizing the difference within the flesh, instead of realizing the fact that the flesh itself is a structure of expropriation that leads the body away from itself and "welcomes the difference of the stranger into my body," Derrida takes Artaud to be arguing that God himself is the cause of the ruin of his proper body; instead of understanding that it is the difference *within* the flesh that ruins my body, Artaud comes to blame an *external* malevolent thieving God for introducing difference into his body by way of the division of the body into organs. As Derrida explains, what Artaud overlooks is the fact that it is "the division of the body into organs, the difference interior to the flesh, [that] opens the lack through which the body becomes absent from itself" and not the actions of a furtive God (*Writing and Difference* 186). Therefore, what the theatre of cruelty thus aims to remedy, at least according to Derrida's reading, is God's pollution of the purity and propriety of the proper body of Artaud through his division of the body into organs; in other words, the aim of the theatre of cruelty is to re-make the human body in its wholeness and self-identity through the eradication of all difference. The division is clear. Artaud deploys the fantasy of wholeness and integrity of a body without

its possessor and become the active subject pole in the relation, as when one becomes consumed by one's possessions.

organs against the fragmented and impure organized and articulated body that God has afflicted with difference: the proper body is equated with identity, wholeness, integrity, purity, unity, closure, propriety and the improper body is equated with difference, fragmentation, articulation, organization, impurity, openness, filth, disease, theft, and organs. The theatre of cruelty is, therefore, a response to Artaud's anxiety concerning the body in parts, the fragmentation of the proper body—its orderly partitioning into organs as opposed to some chaotic body that is shattered in bits and pieces. Or, more precisely, Artaud is anxious about what David Hillman and Carla Mazzio in their introductory essay to a collection called *the body in parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* refer to as “the body that is ‘in’ parts, that is constituted by a multiplicity of individuated organs” (Hillman and Mazzio xi).

In “La parole soufflée,” Derrida attempts to convince the reader that Artaud is working to undo the organization of the body as a multiplicity of parts, to liquidate its anatomical ordering or articulation in terms of parts or organs. He struggles to place Artaud on the side of cohesion and integrity and against what Elisabeth Grosz, quoted by Hillman and Mazzio, refers to as the body's ability to produce fragmentations and fracturings: “human bodies have the wonderful ability, while striving for integration and cohesion, organic and psychic wholeness, to also provide for and indeed produce fragmentations, fracturings, dislocations that orient the bodies and body parts toward other bodies and body parts” (Grosz, quoted in Hillman and Mazzio xii). According to Derrida, Artaud is against the difference that is within the flesh and leads the body, by way of its structure of expropriation that is articulated in its organic structure, towards other bodies, towards the other, that makes one's body always already of the other. And

this is the crux of Derrida's argument: the theatre of cruelty sets the stage for the purification of the body of all difference, of the difference that resides in the flesh and is manifested through the division of the body into organs through which the body is oriented towards other bodies and organs. The theatre of cruelty is a set of techniques, in other words, for ridding the body of its organic structure, of all those orifices that open the body to the other, to the noxious influence of the other, and for closing the body in on itself and achieving self-identity and propriety. The liquidation of organs is therefore an attack against alterity and difference, against that very difference that is structurally implied in the flesh, that is the very structure of the flesh as a structure of expropriation. According to the logic of Derrida's argument, what Artaud fears about the organ is its "remarkable density of implication" (Hillman and Mazzio xii), its impropriety in relation to the proper self; the organ is an instrument that leads the body away from itself and implicates the self in the other.

Perhaps...But there is another possibility, another way of reading Artaud that is not so 'flat.' As I have been striving to demonstrate, the theatre of cruelty was about constituting truly 'human' organs—in the case of Artaud, the human itself is in question and the term 'human' as it appears in his work must not be understood in its humanist sense because Artaud clearly associates humanism and its attendant values as one of the deceptions perpetrated by God—and re-making our human anatomy. It aims at the anatomical order of the human body, at liquidating the organs that institute that order of God in the body as the proper ordering of the body, and remaking our anatomy. The problem that Artaud has with organs is the fact that they are in the service of God, that it is through his organs that God lives in, or takes his place in, our bodies. It is not the

organs themselves that are the problem but their ordering, the anatomical ordering that God has projected onto our bodies. For Artaud, it is not a question of part vs. whole but of “the totalizing system of categorical order” (Hillman and Mazzio xvi) that God projects onto our bodies, an anatomical order that, through the quality of innateness, God tricks us into accepting as inborn. The real target is the anatomical order in which all the parts of the body are subordinated to or integrated into an all-encompassing bodily totality and order, an order in which all the parts are located in their proper place and have a proper function. As I stressed earlier, I take Artaud’s comment on innateness to mean that the quality of the proper comes into being through God, that it is through the category of the proper that God tricks us into taking up his body as our own, a body that, as properly our own, has no need of being changed. This is exactly what is most threatening for God about the body that we have, its ability to change, and it is only through his deployment of the proper that God can get us to forget the difference within our flesh, that difference that leads the body away from itself, that enables the body to escape itself and to constantly strive to reassemble itself otherwise. And it is God’s anatomical ordering of the body, understood as its proper organization into parts that have a proper function and place in relation to, and subordinate to, the whole that is the target of Artaud’s attacks.

Artaud’s attacks against the anatomical ordering of the body by way of organs takes up Marcel’s insight, although not directly, that the mind realizes itself in the world through the way in which it defines or represents the body to itself. What I am arguing concerning Artaud is that he is interested in understanding how the mind, or spirit, realizes or actualises itself through the way in which it represents its body, through the

idea that it has of its body. Instead of seeing the language of anatomy as simply an error or as a neutral scientific language for understanding the body, Artaud understands the organization of the body by way of organs as a specific cultural practice or technique through which a certain conception of self or spirit—a new idea of god—realized itself in the world; he comes to see it as a new method for subjugating the body, for suffocating the body and, as a result, for keeping us from ourselves.

In this respect, Artaud's work has a greater affinity with the later work of Edmund Husserl who, in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, suggests a connection between the ego and organs that places organs in the service of the ego, as the ways in which the ego—what I would call a very particular sense of self and what Artaud would refer to as a new idea of God, as that concept of man that humanity has come to believe in after the death of God—realizes itself in the world. In Part III, Section A, of the text, Husserl states that in my perceptual field, that field or space that I occupy by way of my living body, “I find myself holding sway *as ego through my organs*...functioning as an ego in this peculiar way, primarily through seeing, hearing, etc.; and of course other modes of the ego belong to this (lifting, carrying, pushing, and the like)” (Husserl 108). The notion of holding sway in the world as an ego is central to Husserl's larger argument because the true object of his inquiry is the more general intersubjective holding sway that is the very possibility of consciousness being in the world as a particular ego—that aspect of perception in Merleau-Ponty that opens the object as a lived reality to all perceiving subjects and posits the possibility for the individual subject to go further into reality³⁴.

³⁴ Husserl draws a distinction between this manner of holding sway as an ego and a more general access of consciousness to the world as a ‘we’, a manner of holding sway in

But what is significantly different in Husserl's analysis is his suggestion of a correlation between the ego and organs. What the above quotation contends is that the mind realizes itself in the world *as ego* through its definition or representation to itself of its body as an assemblage of organs; the language of anatomy is exactly the way in which the mind as ego realizes itself in the world, is able to intervene in the affairs of the world. For Husserl, the individual ego *as ego* holds sway—or has control—over its surroundings through the use of the organs that make up its living body; as a living body, the I is able to realize itself in the world as a particular I—what is termed an ego—through the use of my organs. Organs represent those sites from which the ego can exercise immediate control over its environment; the organs of the living body enable the 'I' to realize itself as a particular and unique ego in the world. But the living body is not the only manner in which we are related to all objects that exist for us.

The phrase 'holding sway' translates the German word *walten*, which the translator explains in his footnote is an archaic term often used in religious language "to signify God's rule and power over the world and his intervention in its affairs" (Husserl 107). Artaud would argue that Husserl's use of a religious term to express the power of the ego over its immediate surroundings through its organs is no accident, that it instead points to the fact that the ego, like the spirit, is the agent of God or is, more precisely, the

which we are "conscious of the world as universal horizon, as coherent universe of existing objects" (Husserl 108). He goes on to argue that "we, each 'I-the-man' and all of us together, belong to the world as living with one another in the world; and the world is our world, valid for our consciousness as precisely through this 'living together.' We, as living in wakeful world-consciousness, are constantly active on the basis of our passive having of the world" (Husserl 108). This world-consciousness, this consciousness of the world as universal horizon, is a more generalized form of holding sway; it is a more generalized way in which the I holds sway over its surroundings as an ego-subject, and it is against this background of this consciousness informed by 'living together' that the I can specifically come to hold sway as an ego through its organs, through its living body.

new idea of god that the spirit imposes upon our bodies. God, as ego, intervenes in the affairs of the world through the organs of the living body. In other words, God finds himself holding sway as ego-spirit through my organs; it is through the organs of the living body that God is able to intervene in reality. Initially, the translator considered using the term 'wield' to translate *walten*, but thought that its transitivity would misrepresent Husserl's intentions; in other words, the translator thought that it was important to use an intransitive English equivalent to *walten* in order to preserve the pre-objective or pre-thematic nature of the power that the living body has over its surroundings. The intransitive nature of the living body's general power or control over its surroundings is interesting because it refers to the body's general power of being able to act in the world, a being able to... that precedes as its very possibility any specific act directed towards an object in the world and because it also opens the possibility for a more nuances reading of Husserl's argument. The intransitivity of the living body's ability to 'holds sway' in a general way in the world is thus the background against which, or from which, the I as ego is able to realize itself, through the transitive use of its organs, in the world. In other words, while the living body 'holds sway' in a general manner in the world, the I as ego—as an ego-subject, which would be one possible way for the mind to determine itself—'holds sway' or exercises power or control in a very particular way over its surroundings, namely through the organs of the living body.

While the living body is a source of general intransitive control or access to the world, the living body articulated as organs is a tool wielded by the ego to give it transitive control over its immediate surroundings. The I, as ego, wields the organs of the body in order to hold sway over its immediate surroundings because organs give the ego

a form of transitive access to specific objects in the world—transitive in the sense that the ego can act in a thematic way on specific objects that make up its surroundings. The living body, however, is a general source of holding sway and provides access to the world as such in an unthematic, intransitive manner, and the I has the power to determine how it specifically wants to hold sway (in a transitive fashion) in the world—as an ego on its surroundings through its organs or as another type of subject through another aspect of the living body. What Husserl provides is a way of understanding the living body that is the source of one’s general power of holding sway in the world as a *body without organs*. But it is not an undifferentiated body because it is always already articulated or folded into the world, but it is also not the body plagued by organs, reduced to the functional level of organs.

6.2.6 *The Problem with Organs*

To return to our subject, namely *punishment*, one must distinguish two aspects: on the one hand, that in it which is relatively *enduring*, the custom, the act, the ‘drama,’ a certain strict sequence of procedures; on the other, that in it which is *fluid*, the meaning, the purpose, the expectation associated with the performance of such procedures. In accordance with the previously developed major point of historical method, it is assumed without further ado that the procedure itself will be something older, earlier than its employment in punishment, that the latter is *projected* and interpreted *into* the procedure (which has long existed but been employed in another sense), in short that the case is *not* as has been assumed by our naïve genealogists of law and morals, who have one and all thought of the procedure as *invented* for the purpose of punishing, just as one formerly thought of the hand as invented for the purpose of grasping.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

In their introductory essay to *the body in parts*, Hillman and Mazzio probe the anxieties that accompanied the beginnings of modern anatomy in terms of the way in which the relationship between the part and the whole was being re-aligned or re-

conceptualized at the time of early modern Europe. The traditional medieval Christian understanding of the body placed bodily wholeness and unity over and above corporeal fragmentation, bodily unity over bodily disorganization and fracturing. But, because of the rising prominence of human anatomy and its techniques for the partitioning of the body into parts, the traditional “confidence in the ultimate unity of...bodily organization was no longer viable...[t]he rise of anatomy and its corresponding ‘culture of dissection’...put increasing stress on the possibility of the recuperation of part into whole” (Hillman and Mazzio xiii). And it is this stress, this anxiety regarding the re-integration of parts into the whole, this tension between part and whole, that is at the heart of early modern anatomical texts; as they explain, “early modern anatomies—texts that depend upon the textual and pictorial isolation of parts of the body—are conspicuously fraught with anxiety regarding the dialectic of unity and partition. These texts are repeatedly characterized by a defensive insistence that the part is by definition a part only in relation to the whole” (Hillman and Mazzio xv). Therefore, what the collection of essays in the volume attest to is a growing interest at the time in the parts themselves as parts that exist separately from the dominance of the whole, in “the way in which the impossibility of fully integrating parts into wholes brought about a privileging of the body part as such” (Hillman and Mazzio xiv).

Although many critics have suggested that anatomical dissection and its accompanying dismemberment of the body must be understood to have been in “the service of the creation of ‘a new, more comprehensive order,’ a unified ‘body of knowledge’,” what the essays in the collection give voice to is “the elaborate attention given [at the time] and significance attributed to the body part *in and of itself*” (Hillmen

and Mazzio xiv). But, as the very word ‘part’ itself suggests, these parts themselves were never conceived of during this historical period in terms of autonomy but always as implying relations. What the texts of this time attest to is the fact that “the individual part, though singled out in a range of textual and iconographic spaces, always suggests a series of relations—to a normative, pathological, or to other (dominant or submissive, cooperative or uncooperative) parts, and to the range of symbolic structures that are based on those relations” (Hillman and Mazzio xv).

At this point, Hillman and Mazzio present a way of understanding body parts that is in line with Derrida’s conception of organs and the organic structure of the body—namely that body parts, not the integral body itself, orient the body towards the other and open the body onto the world. The body part, in other words, is a structure of expropriation in that, instead of facilitating a project of self-appropriation in which the self is able to appropriate its organs for itself and thereby constitute its own body and establish a relation of self-identity with that body, the organs is the site of loss, a place where the body loses itself and becomes absent from itself, moving outwards towards the other and undermining any attempt to close off or totalize the body as a self-contained interiority, as a site of self-identity. The organ is precisely that site at which the body as a whole escapes itself towards the other; it is the organ of ruin for the project of self-appropriation and self-presence based in bodily cohesion and wholeness. The organ is the site of relation, the site of difference within the flesh that always already places the body in relation. And it is the organ itself, in and of itself, that threatens the proper body that I am. But is it this organ that Artaud works to liquidate? How are we to understand the organs of God that are causing us to itch to death?

In order to avoid further confusion, I want to make an important distinction before continuing. One of the reasons why I brought up the essay by Hillman and Mazzio was to introduce the term *body part* and to eventually substitute it for the word *organ*. In the remainder of this chapter, I will use *body part* as Hillman and Mazzio use the term in their essay—as sites of expropriation and relation; in other words, *body parts* are organs as understood by Derrida. The term *organs* will be reserved for those body parts as they appear within the anatomical order; *organs* will now refer to re-integrated body parts, to body parts that have been given a proper place within the new anatomical order introduced during the Enlightenment. The fact that the essays in *the body in parts* collection focus their attention on the works of early modern Europe is no accident. What the essays in the collection bring to light is the textual play of body parts during this period, their relatively unfettered circulation within the symbolic economy of the early Renaissance and before the coming of the dominance of the anatomical order of the Enlightenment over the body. At this historical crossroads, what comes to the fore is the tension within the body between the striving for cohesion, wholeness, and self-identity and the ability to produce fragmentations and fracturings that “orient bodies and body parts toward other bodies and body parts” (Grosz, quoted in Hillman and Mazzio xii).

In the beginning, the techniques of dismemberment that define the practice of anatomy put body parts into play by freeing them from the totalizing order of the unified body as imagined by the medieval Christianity. For a time, corporeal partitioning was freed from the fantasy of reintegration; the corporeal fragmentation that accompanied the rise of anatomy gave way to a new aesthetic of the part, “which is to say an aesthetic that did not demand or rely upon the reintegration of the part into a pre-determined whole”

(Hillman and Mazzio xiv). But eventually the bodily imperative towards cohesion and organic wholeness came to dominate and body parts were once again integrated and unified under a dominant code—that of the anatomical order of the body. The anatomical order reassembled the scattered body into a unified totality in which each *body part* had its proper place as an *organ*; in other words, with the re-institution of bodily organic order and wholeness through anatomy, the dance of body parts ended. It was not the case that, with the Enlightenment, one no longer conceived of the body as a series of parts in relation with one another, because that is exactly how one must understand the anatomical ordering of the body—as a new order. What the procedure of bodily dissection eventually opened onto, or uncovered, was a new bodily order, a more comprehensive order in which all of the parts of the body were unified according to their function as organs in relation to the larger body and the surrounding environment; eventually, the desire for bodily cohesion and wholeness won out over the elaborate attention given to body parts in and of themselves that the essays in the collection highlight, and the parts were given over to the comprehensive order of anatomical knowledge. The “remarkable density of implication” that the body part exhibited during the Renaissance (Hillman and Mazzio xii) was overcoded by anatomical order, by a series of functional relations between organs within a pre-determined whole. The ability of body parts to establish relations in and of themselves—what Artaud refers to as the ability of the body to dance—is elided beneath an innate and given functional order uncovered through the techniques of anatomy.

By introducing the distinction between body parts and organs, I am attempting to provide a more nuanced reading of Artaud’s anatomical project. Instead of following

Derrida and simply claiming that Artaud seeks to re-instate his proper body through the reduction of its organic structure and its internal difference, I have put forward an argument whereby one can read Artaud as attacking the propriety of the body of God and the innateness of its anatomical order. In working to *have* a proper body instead of simply *being* or *existing* his proper body, Artaud labours to reclaim his body's ability to change, an ability that God dissimulates through his equation of Being with the proper; Artaud refuses to be the proper body endowed with organs, refuses its organ-ic anatomical ordering, and instead tries to realize his body in parts and re-orient his body by placing his organs back in circulation as parts and fragments. In the words of another, Artaud is attempting to re-activate or re-energize the reality of the flesh as a structure of ex-propriation; his work is an attempt to free the body from its organization into organs, from the propriety of God, and to thereby realize or actualize the difference that resides within the flesh.

The quotation from Nietzsche that opens this section further extends the distinction that I am working to establish—that between the proper body of God that, because it is projected as inborn and enduring, is the body that I am and the fluid body in parts that, through difference, has the ability to change, to continuously fragment and detotalize itself. Although Nietzsche's attention is given over to a genealogical investigation of punishment and its two aspects, he does, at the end of the quotation, draw an interesting analogy with the body when he states that traditional approaches to the question of punishment have subordinated its enduring aspect—the set of procedures—to its fluid aspect—the meaning assigned to these procedures—in much the same way that the hand is believed to have been invented for the purpose of grasping. His disagreement

with traditional genealogical investigations into punishment revolves around the fact that the meaning or purpose of the set of actions is presented as a given, as the *raison d'être* for the development of a set of procedures for punishing someone. The problem is one of origins. While traditional genealogists have proposed that the function or meaning of punishment preceded the set of techniques, Nietzsche contends that the set of procedures is older than its deployment in punishment, that the techniques predate their particular functional employment. Thus, what is historically malleable is not the set of procedures but the meaning or purpose attributed to those procedures—namely, how they are employed. Just as the structure that is the hand pre-existed its use in grasping, the sequence of procedures that are currently in the service of punishment predates its deployment for the purpose of punishing someone. What Nietzsche is warning against is a form of historical revisionism in which the given is subordinated to its meaning or use, a reversal that results in one attributing permanence and ahistoricity to the historically constituted meaning or function of those procedures. In other words, the fluid meaning or purpose of the procedures is taken up as enduring and unchanging, as the *proper* meaning of that set of techniques. Instead of the hand being understood as a particular structure with a range of possibilities, this sort of naïve genealogy establishes one of its possible uses—that of grasping—as the *proper* use or deployment of the hand, as the function for which the hand was developed. Through the establishment of a proper, given meaning, the fluid aspect of the procedure is ossified; in other words, the hand is simply reduced to an instrument for grasping.

It is at this point that Nietzsche's discussion begins to overlap with the earlier distinction between body parts and organs in such a way as to provide a plausible

interpretation of the dance of the body—as a dance of difference—that Artaud works to instigate through the techniques of the theatre of cruelty. This convergence of Nietzsche with Artaud is no accident, since the latter, following Nietzsche’s lead, comes to take up dancing as a central motif in his later writing; in fact, I would go so far as to argue that Artaud is perhaps the most serious thinker of Nietzschean dancing. In a piece entitled “The Theater of Cruelty” from 1947-48, Artaud characterizes the theatre of cruelty as an attempt to reorient the human body towards “all the errant availabilities / of the infinity of the void, / of the increasingly incommensurable / holes of void / of a never fulfilled organic possibility” and to “make the human anatomy dance at last” (*Watchfiends* 313). Artaud is not writing against the organic structure of the body and the difference within the flesh that the structuration manifests; instead, he attacks the anatomical structuration of the body by way of organs and works to return our bodies to their open-ended and necessarily untotalizable organic possibilities. What I have endeavoured to make clear is that Artaud presents the anatomical ordering of the body through its organ-ization as the petrification of the body by God and as an attack against the true organic possibilities of the body; organs are in the service of God because they dissimulate the difference within the flesh beneath their innateness and keep the body from dancing.

So how is one to understand “the new dance of the human body” that Artaud strives to put on stage in which eyelids and elbows dance cheek to cheek? How are these body parts meant to circulate among themselves and change their positions? How is Artaud planning to dismember or dissect the human body? When reading Artaud, it is easy for the reader to get caught up in the spectacle of the theatre of cruelty, with the blood and the gore that necessarily accompany its theatrical performance or actualization,

and to overlook its metaphysical aspect; in other words, there is a danger in taking Artaud too literally. Artaud is not literally encouraging the physical dissection of the human body. But then how can one understand the theatre of cruelty as the “anatomical trampling of bone, limbs and syllables / [through which] bodies are renewed / and the mythical act of making a body presents itself / physically and plainly” (*Antonin Artaud Anthology* 169)? I would argue that Artaud’s attempt to re-make our anatomy can be understood in terms of the fluidity of meaning. In light of the above distinction between the enduring and the fluid, what I want to argue is that, while a *body part* participates in the fluidity of meaning that surrounds a particular bodily structure such as the hand, an *organ* is the result of the imposition of a proper meaning to a bodily structure.

The body itself, as an organic structure, is quite stable and enduring, but what the brief quotation from Nietzsche makes clear is that the meaning or function of the various structures within the body are fluid or open to historical determination and change. Organs are the outcome of a reversal of historical causality through which the meaning or function of the enduring bodily structure is understood as the proper origin of that particular structure, a reversal that conceals the historicity of meaning and its fluidity or its ability to change. The anatomical ordering of the human body according to organs structures the body as a series of organic locations that are functionally related to one another according to some greater over-arching logic; in other words, organs are the instruments of bodily coherence through their proper functioning in relation to the larger body. As organs with specific and proper functions, body parts are overcoded and reduced to a predetermined and innate (at least, that’s what we are led to believe) order or set of relations. In particular, organs are the enemies of difference, of the dance of

difference that is the very organic possibility of the body. By reifying meaning and subordinating the structure to its historically determined function, God stops the play of body parts; He petrifies their fluidity, their meaning, and frames them within a predetermined hierarchy of functional relations: “For the biggest lies ever was to frame man as an organism / of eating, assimilating, / incubating, excreting, / that which existed creating a whole hierarchy of latent functions / to elude the field of the *deliberate* / will” (*Antonin Artaud Anthology* 164). Therefore, re-making our anatomy means freeing our bodies, the difference that resides in our bodies, from the tyranny of organs, from the straightjacket of functional anatomy. It does not mean, as Derrida suggests, that one works towards re-unifying the body or closing the body in upon itself. In fact, it means the exact opposite; the theatre of cruelty sets the stage for the dance of difference, for the dance of the body and its parts freed from their articulation according to the anatomical order of organs.

For instance, when Derrida has Artaud speak within “La parole soufflée” about the closing in of his body upon itself through his liquidation of his mouth, tongue, teeth, larynx, esophagus, stomach, belly, and anus, Derrida overlooks the particular series of organs that Artaud lists and their specific interrelation. Artaud is attempting to exorcise the specific organ-ization of the body and not the body’s organic structure; Artaud does not liquidate his mouth in an anguished nostalgic gesture of re-unification but in order to free the mouth from the organic series that places the mouth in the service of its proper function for eating. The same is true for the other organs in the series. Artaud wants to free the organs from their overcoding within the anatomical order in which the teeth serve the purpose of mastication and the anus is an organ whose sole function is the expulsion

of excrement. As he explains in his “Letter to Pierre Loeb,” Artaud wants to free the body and its parts from “the upholders of a digestive humanity” (*Antonin Artaud Anthology* 168). But, as he states in “The Theatre of Cruelty,” this does not mean that human beings must both stop eating and stop orienting their abilities and emphases towards sexual life (*Watchfiends* 312). Instead, these must be understood as only two (rather limited, in his mind) possible dances of the human body: “The human body needs to eat, / but who has ever tested other than on the plane of sexual life the incommensurable abilities of the appetites? / Make human anatomy dance at last” (*Watchfiends* 312). By accepting the anatomical determination of the functioning of the mouth in the service of eating as its proper purpose, the mouth as *body part* is put out of play and becomes a simple *organ* that has its proper meaning in the performance of eating—taken in all its connotations, including sexual.

What the anatomical ordering of the body refers to is the reification of the relationships between bodies and between bodies and the world by way of the functional relationship between organs, and the motif of dancing is continually deployed by Artaud against the anatomical ordering of the human body in terms of organs—dancing is on the side of difference and fluidity while anatomy is understood as reifying and petrifying: “The human body has been made to eat, / has been made to drink, / in order to avoid / making it dance” (*Watchfiends* 313). Or, even more specifically, the body with organs is just one of the possible dances of the human body, a dance that must be destroyed: “the bodies that dance there / are undetachable from the obscene, / they have systematically embraced obscene life / but this dance of obscene bodies / must be destroyed / in order to replace them by the dance / of our bodies” (*Watchfiends* 316). Artaud’s project is to free

the mouth from its functional reduction to an organ for eating and to put the mouth back into circulation within difference in order to have it establish new and ever changing connections and relations. What Artaud is precipitating is the loss of coherence of the anatomical body, of the body with organs. He is working to free the body part from its articulation as an organ in order to engender a loss of cohesion in the unified and totalized anatomical body, in order to provoke a loss of bodily cohesion that would enable the body to dance anew and explore its “never fulfilled organic possibilities.”

And, as is evidenced by an account given of Artaud in 1932 by Jean-Louis Barrault that Clayton Eshleman quotes in his introductory essay to *Watchfiends & Rack Screams: Works from the Final Period by Antonin Artaud*, one can begin to see how Artaud’s body continuously strove to free itself, its body parts, from their anatomical ordering:

‘He had an extraordinary forehead that he always thrust in front of him as if to light his path...His piercing blue eyes sank into their sockets as if in a way they could scrutinize further...His mouth, like the whole of Artaud, preyed upon itself. His spine was bent like a bow. His lean arms with their long hands, like two twisted forked trunks, seemed to be trying to plough up his belly. His voice, rising up from his innermost caverns, bounded toward his head with such rare force that it was dashed against the sounding board of his forehead.’ (*Watchfiends* 44)

What is striking about Barrault’s rendering of Artaud is its emphasis on body parts, on their functioning and their interrelation beyond their simple existence as organs. His mouth, no longer part of the digestive tract, preys upon itself, devours itself, thereby undoing the very possibility of eating; his spine is taut like a bow, ready to launch invectives and projectiles against his enemies; his arms and hands are poised against his belly with the intent of razing it from his body; and, instead of resonating on his palette, his voice, no longer confined within the anatomical series of larynx, teeth, and mouth,

crashes against the sounding board of his forehead. Artaud's body was itself a body of parts in relation, parts that continuously circulated and danced through the body by way of the difference that resides within the flesh. And it was this improper body that Artaud felt was constantly under attack by the forces of God and that society was constantly trying to suicide: it was this body that God tried to assassinate and for which He tried to substitute his own body, and it was this body that society, through electroshock therapy, tried to suicide.

6.3 Conclusion: Artaud's Anatomical Theatre

Artaud's own body was the true stage on which the theatre of cruelty was performed, and it was his own body that Artaud tirelessly worked to reconstruct. The body, for Artaud, was never just a backdrop for the workings of the spirit, a fact that Derrida deflates through his incessant concentration on the spirit in "La parole soufflée." Derrida's argument concerning the thieving furtive God reads the structure of theft as the original opening of difference and relates it to the original experience of dispossession that accompanies difference. The furtive spirit that dispossesses, according to Derrida's diagnosis, is the symptom of the difference that Artaud uniquely lived and experienced in all its intensity but that his anguish caused him to overlook as a universal aspect or experience of existence. The furtive God that spirits away my words and my body from myself is itself difference, is that difference that always already separates or divides me against myself and, through its structuration as expropriation, leads my words and my body always already away from me. I find Derrida's dismissal—or deconstruction—of

Artaud's struggle against the spirit to be extremely disconcerting, especially coming from such a careful and sensitive reader; it seems that Derrida simply re-installs the furtive spirit to a position of prominence within Artaud's corpus.

As I have shown in this reading, there is evidence to suggest that the furtive God is the God of the proper, that this God has spirited away difference by slipping us proper Being, that He dissimulates the difference within the flesh through the propriety of the spirit and mind over the body. In other words, the spirit/body duality schism is, at least as I understand Artaud, the moment in which the proper invades or infests Being, and it is through this duality that God propagates Being on the side of identity over and against Being understood in relation to difference and the body. Instead of reading the spirit as related to difference, which I think is a gross misreading of Artaud, I want to argue that it is through spirit that God slips—through the originary difference that renders the flesh as a structure of expropriation, that orients the flesh away from itself and to the other—the proper into Being.

The elevation of the spirit over the body, the dominance of the spirit over the body within Western culture (a culture supported by Western metaphysics), is the constant theme of Artaud's work, from his argument against psychological theatre in *The Theatre and Its Double* to his radio play *To Have Done With the Judgement of God* in which he works to free his own body from the weight of God's judgement "to live without a body" (*Watchfiends* 295) and to realize "the menacing, / never tiring / presence / of my / body" (*Watchfiends* 301). What unifies his oeuvre are his attacks against "the false monsters of the schism / of spirituality / and sensibility" (*Antonin Artaud Anthology* 168) that impose the spirit over and above the body, that work towards "the suffocation /

within me / of the idea of a body / and of being a body” (*Watchfiends* 303). And it is this centrality of the conflict between the spirit and the body that Derrida seems to easily dismiss or resolve in favour of the spirit in “La parole soufflée.” Derrida’s defence of organs is a case in point. For Artaud, organs are the agents of God that reside in the body; it is through the body’s articulation into organs that the spirit comes to exercise its control over the body. And Derrida reads Artaud’s attack against the anatomical ordering of the body in terms of organs as an attack against difference, against articulation in general, and proceeds to defend the organs of God against Artaud’s fury.

But is the organ-ic structure of the body the true target of Artaud’s critique? To agree with Derrida is to overlook Artaud’s continual invective against passive acceptance of one’s being, against the quality of propriety and innateness with which God coats our being: “I hate and renounce as a coward every being who is only willing to be for being’s sake and does want to live to work. / I’d rather work than feel myself alive. / I hate and renounce as a coward every being who consents to having been created and does not wish to have recreated himself, i.e., who agrees with the idea of a god, at the origin of his being as at the origin of his thought” (*Antonin Artaud Anthology* 222). What Artaud is attacking is the acceptance of the body with organs as my proper body, as the body that I am. The body with organs is, for Artaud, that “authoritarian organism at the origin of his personal being...[and] his entire body” that God created and inserted at the origin of my being and which, through the notion of the proper, I am able to simply accept as my own (*Antonin Artaud Anthology* 223). Derrida’s argument for organs is nothing but a defence of the spirit and of its proper ascendancy over the body. What Derrida is defending is the proper articulation of the body into organs, a division that renders the body subordinate to

the spirit since the spirit exercises its proper control over the body by way of organs; in other words, the disguising of the articulation of the body into organs as a proper ordering of the body is a strategy used by God to reduce the difference that resides within the flesh and to establish the authority of the spirit over the body. As a result, Derrida's argument, instead of working to bring out the difference within the flesh that is the fact of the body, that is the reality of the body, comes to see things once again from the height of the spirit over the body (*Watchfiends* 256).

6.3.1 To Have Done With The Judgement of God

The fundamental mistake is simply that, instead of understanding consciousness as a tool and particular aspect of the total life, we posit it as the standard and the condition of life that is of supreme value: it is the erroneous perspective of *a parte ad totum*—which is why all philosophers are instinctively trying to imagine a total consciousness, a consciousness involved in all life and will, in all that occurs, a 'spirit', 'God'. But one has to tell them that precisely this turns life into a monstrosity; that a 'God' and total sensorium would altogether be something on account of which life would have to be condemned—Precisely that we have *eliminated* the total consciousness that posits ends and means, is our great relief—with that we are no longer *compelled* to be pessimists—*Our greatest reproach* against existence was the *existence of God*.

Friedrich Nietzsche

The body is a contested site in Artaud's work, and it is in, on, or through his body that he battles against what he continually refers to the forces of God. Writing after the death of God, Artaud repeats Nietzsche's earlier warnings about the abiding presence of God in the world; in a reformulation of Nietzsche's famous contention that God, although dead, lives on within grammar, Artaud argues that God, after his death, lives on in our bodies. So, even though the death of God has been proclaimed, it is Artaud's contention

that God still persists in the world, is still present in our lives by way of our bodies. And this body, as the legacy that God has left us, is the judgement that Artaud tries to free himself from in his radio play *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* written in 1947.

One possible perspective on the text of the radio play is that Artaud chronicles different stages in the subjugation of the human being to God through their devaluation or betrayal of their bodies. The opening section decries the practice of semen collection in the United States, which Artaud presents as a means for the State to produce, artificially, the soldiers it needs to conduct its various wars, the soldiers that it requires to conduct its imperial expansion against those forces that fight against God and work to split the CROSS. What Artaud narrates is how the reproductive sciences have come to colonize the body and to reduce it to a simple instrument of re-production; in this scenario, the modern body, especially a woman's body, is reduced to its re-productive function, an argument that has been convincingly made concerning the way in which, throughout history, women have been systematically oppressed by their determination as re-productive machines.

In the second section, Artaud recounts the rite of the black sun that was performed by pre-Columbian Indians and that he presents as “a form of civilization based on the exclusive principle of cruelty,” a form of civilization that imperialism, out of necessity, must insure remains “despised by all precedent mankind” (*Watchfiends* 304). The importance of this section is to provide an example of a civilization that worked actively to achieve the abolition of the cross, to actively resist the enslavement of humanity by God, and to demonstrate that cruelty—a highly unstable term in Artaud's work—is the only weapon against God.

In the next section, Artaud seems to narrate the beginnings of Western philosophical thought, that moment at which humanity tied itself to Being and consented to live dead instead of choosing to live. The subjection of humanity by way of Being is a consistent theme in Artaud's work, and, as in all cases of subjugation, it revolves around the body. In this case, he connects the decision *to be* to our taking on of a very specific type of body, one that is able to shit. The decision to be, in other words, was a decision to agree to shit, to agree to live with a body of meat instead of one of bone, to reduce my body to a tongue, anus and glans:

There where it smells of shit
It smells of being.
Man could very well have avoided shitting,
And kept his anal pocket closed,
But he chose to shit
Like he could've chosen to live
Instead of consenting to live dead.

The fact is that in order not to make caca,
He would've had to consent
Not to be,
But he could not resolve to lose
being,
In other words to die alive.

There is in being
Something particularly tempting for man
And that something is precisely
CACA. (*Watchfiends*291)

These associations continually appear in Artaud's writing: Being is related to shit, to consenting to shit, and shitting is related to our agreeing *to be*. Or, in other words, consenting to be is equivalent to consenting to a body of meat instead of one of blood and bone, is equivalent to losing life, to living dead in the world: "In order to have shit/ in other words meat, where there was only blood/ and the scrap iron of bones/ and where

there was no question of earning being/ but where there was one of losing life.../ There man withdrew and fled” (*Watchfiends* 292). And it is in their withdrawal, in their withdrawal from life and the world, that humans abased themselves and consented to live with a body that produced CACA, an abasement that God Himself hastened through the descent of Jesus Christ into the world because Christ was the first person to consent to living without a body. By introducing the Christian body in this same section, Artaud is presenting a case for reading the Christian assault upon bodily nature, its condemnation of corporeality, as being part of the same lineage as the Western philosophical tradition that tied humanity to being; both are presented as moments when humanity consented to live dead in the world, as moments when humanity betrayed their bodies in favour of CACA.

In the penultimate section of the play, Artaud rehearses Descartes’ attack on the body. The section begins with the same presupposition that fuelled Descartes’ inquiries, namely that the world that I perceive is a world that is riddled with doubt, so that it must open onto another world that is beyond all scepticism: “What is serious/ is to know/ that after the order/ of this world/ there is another” (*Watchfiends* 296). The only problem is to discover which world it is, and Artaud follows Descartes along his sceptic’s journey into himself all the way back to his body. He describes this adventure as a need to abolish consciousness, to abolish the idea, the idea and its myth, and to enthrone in its place a fulminating necessity “to dilate the body of my internal night,/ of the internal nothingness/ of my self/ which is night,/ nothingness,/ irreflection,/ but which is an explosive assertion/ that there is/ something/ to make way for:/ my body” (*Watchfiends* 300). Once he has doubted everything and questioned all that seems central to life, once

he has abolished all that which means nothing to him, all that he is left with is “the presence/ of my corporal/ pain,/ the menacing,/ never tiring/ presence/ of my/ body” (*Watchfiends* 301). Once he has abolished everything, once he has squeezed everything out of himself, all that remains is his body. But, instead of stopping, he continues the questioning, just as Descartes did before him. He follows Descartes’ example and works to abolish his body, to squeeze his body out of himself, but what he finds at this point is that all that remains is a feeling of suffocation. By bringing himself up against his body and then trying to enact the suffocation within himself “of the idea of body, of being a body” as was the case with Descartes before him, Artaud realizes that one is simply strangling oneself, and it is at this point where he begins to smell the obscene and finally brings himself to shatter everything (*Watchfiends* 302-3).

What Artaud has rehearsed, at least in part, is how throughout history humanity has subjugated its body—by way of Being, shitting, consenting to live without a body, and then suffocating its own body—in order to live dead in the word, in order to forego the possibility of living. In large part, what Artaud has narrated is the history of the spirit, that force or pulsation within humanity that is directed against our true bodily reality³⁵, and, in the last section of the play, Artaud cautions the reader that this spirit,

³⁵ In *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, Pierre Klossowski advances a similar conception of history underlying Nietzsche’s work. For Nietzsche, the world consists of impulsive movements and our bodies happen to be “only the *fortuitous encounter* of contradictory impulses, temporarily reconciled” (Klossowski 28). And it is this cohesive whole, namely the body, that gives rise, through its chance (but quite unstable) cohesion, to the self; in this way, the body becomes the physical agent of my self, becomes the material support for my self. And, once established, the self works very hard to maintain itself, which means that it works to protect its body from the forces of dissolution that threaten its existence. As a result of this logic, Klossowski is able to argue that, for Nietzsche, “the *ages* of the self are those of the body’s cohesion” (Klossowski 29). Klossowski’s reading of Nietzsche is identical to my reading of Artaud in that I am arguing that, for Artaud, God, in order to continue to exist, continually fights against the dissolution of the

after its death as God that Nietzsche announced so triumphantly, “is reappearing a little bit everywhere today in scientific guise which serves only to reveal this spirit’s morbid infectious hold, the salient state of vice, but a vice pullulating with disease, for...what have been called microbes is in fact god” (*Watchfiends* 305). God, as microbes, has entered our bodies and has placed us again under His judgement, has again subjugated us to His idea and order. What Artaud is warning us against is the new form that the spirit has taken in our lives, that new form through which the spirit has imposed on us a new idea of God and continues to exercise domination over our bodies; what Artaud is bringing to light is the way in which, or the guise in which, God, after his death, continues his war upon the body. And the new God is precisely humanity, what could be referred to as the human order. As Artaud explains, “if nobody believes anymore in god everybody believes more and more in man,” and man is exactly the problem (*Watchfiends* 306). Man is the new God that has been imposed upon all bodies by the spirit, that every body now believes in. So, as a result, “it is man that we must now decide to emasculate...by having him undergo once more but for the last time an autopsy in order to remake his anatomy. I say, in order to remake his anatomy. Man is sick because he is poorly constructed” (*Watchfiends* 306-7). Since, by consenting to be, we also consented to live dead, it is not surprising that Artaud calls for an autopsy of man in an attempt to see what it was that killed us, that caused us to stop living, and this will be the last autopsy necessary because, once we are remade, we will die living and have no need for autopsies. But the point of the autopsy would be to remake our anatomy, to re-constitute our bodies.

body, continuously struggles to maintain the cohesion of the body. And it is against this imposed order that Artaud rails.

It is at this point that a number of different strands of Artaud's thought come together. What one discovers at this point is that the new idea of god that the microbes—or god—has imposed upon us, with which it has inoculated us, is anatomical in nature. The new God is an anatomical ordering that has been imposed upon us; however, one could go back and argue that this was the case once we consented to be since, instead of keeping our anal pocket closed, our anus opened and we began shitting—consenting to be involved the imposition upon us of a certain anatomical arrangement of the body. And what Artaud is arguing is that, through the anatomical ordering of the body, God continues to exert domination over the body but by other means.

Prior to the promise of unified and whole body offered by anatomy, God was the guarantor of bodily wholeness and integrity. As Caroline Walker Bynum argues in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, the importance of the process of redemption in religious thought during the time of Medieval Christianity was as a way for God to combat the fragmentary nature of the human body. God, through redemption, ultimately mastered the scandal of fragmentation posed by the material body; wholeness, in opposition to the incomplete and fragmentary nature of the body, was “God’s ultimate promise to humankind” (Bynum 12). The horror of fragmentation, whether through the decay of death or the ravages of life, was redeemed for early Christians “by a vision of last things in which not just wholeness but reassemblage is the ultimate promise” (Bynum 13). But, after the death of God, how were we to be protected from “the recalcitrance of matter,” from the propensity of the body towards fragmentation? Who or what takes the place of God as the guarantor of bodily wholeness?

According to the historical narrative presented by Hillman and Mazzio, anatomy came to take the place of God as a secular, scientific practice that struggled against the fragmentary nature of the body and worked to produce a systematic and complete picture of the body. Artaud also presents the latest order to be imposed upon our bodies as being organ-ic in nature. According to Artaud, the new idea of god is the organization of the human anatomy by way of organs, and it is precisely these organs that are the focus of his attacks:

We must decide to strip him in order to scratch out this animalcule
which makes him itch to death,

god,
and with god
his organs.

For tie me down if you want to,
But there is nothing more useless than an organ. (*Watchfiends* 307)

What Artaud focuses on is how the human body has been organized into a set of different and separate organs, and how this organization of the human body is the new idea of god, that new form of the spirit, that God has imposed on our bodies in order to subjugate it to the spirit and in order to keep us from living. What is required now is to give humanity “a body without organs,” and then, once one have accomplished this, “you will have delivered him from all automatisms and restored/ him to his true liberty./ Then you will teach him again to dance inside out/ as in the delirium of dance halls/ and that inside out will be his true side out” (*Watchfiends* 307). Anatomy plays a large part in Artaud’s thought³⁶ throughout his career, but what is interesting about the above

³⁶ To my mind, the technique of anatomy is at the heart of Artaud’s concept of the theatre. When Artaud speaks of the theatre, I would argue that he is talking about the anatomical theatre and that he is attempting to import anatomical techniques into the theatre proper—or into what is traditionally conceived of as the theatrical space; in fact, Artaud’s

reference to remaking man's anatomy is how, once we have become our Body without Organs, we will be able to, once again, dance inside out—a reference to the fact that the bodies that accompany anatomical texts are often pictured with their insides out but in a static manner that enables the anatomist to situate the organs and place them in functional relation with one another. A dancing cadaver with its insides out would cause havoc for the anatomist since they would be unable to conduct their studies and establish the functional relations between the parts. But perhaps this is exactly Artaud's point about our consenting to live dead since the anatomical ordering of our bodies as organs is achieved by the superimposing of the anatomical order gleaned from a dead body onto a living body; living one's body as a structure of overlapping organs is to consent to live dead because, in thinking about our bodies in terms of organs, one imposes an order upon the body taken from the investigation of dead bodies, an investigation that only manages to establish the functional relationships between the elements of a body that lies immobile before the anatomist. But the anatomical ordering of the body by way of organs overlooks the various relationships that may exist between different parts of the body and between the body and its environment as that body is lived, and it is these relationships that obtain once one has been given a body without organs and has learned to dance inside out.

sketches of the ideal theatre—a round central space surrounded by seated spectators—are themselves patterned on the arrangement of space in an anatomical theatre.

Consequently, I believe that the theatre of cruelty can best be approached as a theatrical space in which the body is dealt with by way of anatomical techniques. Also, this helps to explain the title of Artaud's theatrical manifesto, *The Theatre and its Double*, where the double is meant to refer to life. In the anatomical theatre, the investigations into the body that are being undertaken are meant to provide insights into life itself, into the workings of the living body; as I have argued, cutting open dead bodies provides a glimpse into the secrets of life. In this respect, life is curiously doubled in the anatomical

theatre, or in the very least the relationship between theatre and life becomes extremely close in that the two spheres are considered almost indistinguishable.

Chapter 7: Marcel, Derrida, Hejduk and the Space of Corporeity

7.1 Introduction

This was always going to be the hardest chapter to write, in large part because it is the most speculative. I am not an architect; however, my interest in corporeality has led me to try to learn more about architecture, and, once I decided to pursue the problem of the body within philosophy, I realized that I would need to study architecture since, as an art that is intimately related to the scale of the human body, it could potentially yield valuable insights into the nature of being embodied. Since architecture constructs spaces for bodies and addresses itself directly to the body—architecture, more than any other art, is experienced corporeally or viscerally since one walks through the space and since the built space in some respects communicates with the inhabitant by way of their body—I have always been of the opinion that one can acquire a unique understanding of the reality of embodiment by trying to understand how architecture approaches the question of the body.

However, my conviction about the importance of architecture notwithstanding, I found it very difficult to relate architecture to Marcel's philosophy and to his notion of *corporeity* around which I have organized this thesis. Nothing seemed further removed from the problematic of being one's body and having a body than architecture; the problem was how to relate architecture to the distinction between the body that I am and the body that I have, to that primordial experience of irreducible difference that is at the heart of this thesis. The solution was twofold. The first breakthrough occurred when I had the chance to see an exhibit of the work of John Hejduk at the Canadian Centre for

Architecture in Montreal. The second involved writing a paper that examined the concept of hospitality in the writings of Marcel and Derrida.

After seeing Hejduk's works on display, I immediately decided to include him in the thesis. His work struck me as being extremely visceral, as being an intimate meditation on embodiment...Because the viewer is confronted by the fact that there is nothing easy about inhabiting his structures, his architecture seems to force the viewer to confront his/her own embodiment. His built spaces seem to defy occupation but also to demand it; thus, inhabiting his conceptual works is never easy but always involves risk, and the risk is often bodily as spikes and sharp edges dominate his work. In his article on Hejduk entitled "The Renovation of the Body: John Hejduk and the Cultural Relevance of Theoretical Projects," architectural theorist Alberto Perez-Gomez constructs his argument around these impressions and suggests that Hejduk's architecture "postulates a renovation of the body" (Perez-Gomez 27). According to Perez-Gomez, Hejduk's projects must be understood as a critique of the Cartesian body and be seen as referring to "a body image which is very different from that of the body of the classical tradition" (Perez-Gomez 26); his constructions are not derived from the classical body and avoid "the classical illusion of assuming an objectified unitary body as the point of departure" (Perez-Gomez 28).

More precisely, Perez-Gomez argues that Hejduk's architecture insists on a renovation of the body because of the ways in which it questions both the unified body that, through its harmonious organization and proportional construction, functions as the model for classical architecture and the body of the inhabitant that was meant to feel at home within well-proportioned and well-organized constructions. Hejduk's work is

highly geometric and relational, but not in any sense that relates to the classical body and the proportional relations between its parts. Initially, the spectator is at a loss to discover the body that is the model for these works; however, as I will show in this chapter, what is required is for the reader to re-think the body and try to uncover the renovated corporeal model, such as the headless body, that informs Hejduk's works. At the level of dwelling, Perez-Gomez explains how Hejduk's constructions address the body of its inhabitants. He argues that, quite concretely, Hejduk's structures, although physically inhabitable, deny "the classical scale relationships expected in buildings of such size. The scale and perceptual size of the object represented in the drawings remains identical in the large 'built' structure. This continuity is their salient characteristic. They establish their own distance with the spectator and become contradictory to *traditional* ritual participation" (Perez-Gomez 28). In other words, his structures are difficult to inhabit because they are not designed for 'functional' bodies; they disrupt ingrained habits and force their inhabitant to re-learn the process of dwelling.

In addition to their functioning at the level of the individual spectator or inhabitant, Hejduk's projects also include a larger social dimension. Buildings are never designed in isolation; they, as well as their inhabitants, are always part of a larger context, whether that context is the surrounding town that Hejduk is designing or an already existing city that the buildings invade much like a circus trope. In such projects as *The Lancaster Masque*, the buildings are closely related to how the inhabitants that populate the town actually occupy their surroundings and live within their social milieu. In the case of *Vladivostok*, the buildings and their inhabitants, like uninvited guests, establish themselves within the existing cities and begin to circulate within their space. In this

respect, Hejduk's architecture can also be read as a speculation on the nature of belonging, of dwelling, of the guest...which is at least somewhat more promising in relation to Marcel's thought.

The chance to work out the similarities and differences concerning how Marcel and Derrida think through hospitality proved to be vital because it made me realize that, in order for Marcel to articulate hospitality in terms of a vocabulary of presence and plenitude, of absolute giving and disposability, he necessarily had to abort trying to centre his philosophy on the experience of embodiment. What became quite clear as I worked on the paper was that, in order for Marcel to present hospitality as the activity of making oneself ready to receive the other, of preparing oneself within a hospitable place so as to be ready to be with the other in co-presence, he could not draw on one's experience of one's first home in the world, one's own body, because of the irreconcilable and irreducible difference that resides at the heart of the experience of *corporeity*; as a result of the tension between being and having, one's first home in the world, that primary home that makes being in the world possible, cannot support a coming together or being-with in terms as co-presence. According to Marcel, the home that one prepares for the other and in which one readies oneself to meet the other and to welcome the other in terms of their presence has to be a place in which the subject can give himself/herself absolutely to the other, to place himself/herself at the disposal of the other absolutely. And, as I have argued, such absolute giving or disposability cannot be founded on the experience one has of one's own body. So, in order to construct a more hospitable home from which the act of hospitality could originate and be realized as co-presence, Marcel had to abandon the body and anchor his thought elsewhere.

When these two trains of thought began to converge, I began to wonder if Hejduk's architectural speculations could be understood as an architecture founded or originating in the difference at the heart of corporeity, in the difference between being and having a body. Hejduk's projects, while being extremely bodily, are also fractured. They lack the coherence, unity, and stability normally associated with architecture, at least with that architecture that models itself on a stable and unified body in which all the parts exist in proportional relations with each other within a unified and well-proportioned whole. The interior spaces in which the inhabitants dwell are themselves fractured, are spaces constituted by the initial presence of an inaugurating outside. In this respect, they appear to be anything but spaces for habitation, and yet Hejduk insists that they be understood as dwellings: the buildings are often named in relation to their inhabitants or else he provides narratives concerning those that inhabit his structures. And, since habitation is difficult, hospitality would necessarily be impossible, and yet...

In what follows, I will begin by speculating on the phenomenon of hospitality as presented in the writings of Marcel and Derrida in order to highlight the constituting role of place in any attempt to think through the (im)possibility of enacting hospitality. What becomes clear early on in the comparison is the importance of a sense of *being at home* in relation to the possibility of being hospitable; in fact, the primary difference between Marcel and Derrida is how they understand the space of this home. While Marcel presents home as a place of plenitude, presence, and pre-ordination, a space in which the subject is able to give itself absolutely to the other without reserve, to place itself at the absolute disposal of the other, Derrida takes on the space of the house as being fissured, fractured, constituted by an always already present outside, an outside that, through its

absence, is present at the heart of the home and makes the space of the interior (im)possible—possible as a space but impossible as a self-contained and self-sufficient space, full enclosed and sealed off from the outside. For Derrida, the space of the home is not a space of pre-ordination in which one waits for the other, waits to receive the other in terms of their presence, because the space does not support such preparation and calculation; the experience of *being at home* is one of radical and irreducible difference that closely resembles the experience of embodiment that I have named, by way of Marcel, *corporeity*.

Then, I will turn my attention to Hejduk's architectural speculations and try to work out how I understand his work to be similarly constituted by the experience of difference at the heart of *corporeity*. By tracing the fractures, fissures, and instabilities in some of Hejduk's projects, I will aim to demonstrate how his work represents, for me, an architecture of difference, of difference informed by or rooted in the experience of one's own *corporeity*. However, instead of tracing the use of the distinction between *being* and *having* in the context of Hejduk's work—which is how I approached the writings of both Merleau-Ponty and Artaud—I will apply the distinction to Hejduk's architectural projects as a lever in order to provide me with a perspective from which to begin to make some critical observations concerning his work. At issue is the relationship between architecture and the body, a relationship that has been of central importance in the history of architectural theory and practice. My central concern will be to demonstrate that, since Hejduk's architectural masques have characteristics in common with the experience of corporeity, his work can be understood as attempts to re-figure the relationship between architecture and the body and to develop an architecture of *corporeity*.

7.2 Hospitality in Marcel and Derrida

7.2.1 Introduction

One of the things that I have discovered while working on this dissertation is that I have experienced the invitation to philosophy, to thinking, much more deeply in the writings of Marcel than in those of Merleau-Ponty. Before beginning my doctoral studies, I was somewhat familiar with Merleau-Ponty's work but had never heard of Marcel; in fact, as I explained in the introduction to the thesis, I came to Marcel through Merleau-Ponty, specifically by way of a footnote in *Phenomenology of Perception*. My goal at the time was to find a way into Merleau-Ponty's work because I was finding at that time—and this is still true today—Merleau-Ponty's work difficult to inhabit as a reader and even more so as a commentator or critic. I was finding that his work left me feeling inadequate and unable to perform—a case of philosophical impotence. In large part, I think that this had to do with the fact that I did not have the proper tool set necessary to adequately inhabit the space of his work; all of my early reading in philosophy was in contemporary post-68 French thought. But, as I began to read Marcel with the hope of gaining some insight into Merleau-Ponty's thought, I came to realize that Marcel's texts were, for me, more hospitable, whatever that might mean—I came to find Marcel's thought to be more sustaining, maintaining, entertaining and supportive, and I found myself to be much more willing to abandon myself before Marcel, to let the text take hold of me, to be drawn along by the movement of his thought.

But then why Marcel? As I stated, my adoption of Marcel, his substitution for Merleau-Ponty as the key philosophical figure in my thesis, was an attempt to gain an entrance into Merleau-Ponty's work. However, if my experience of inadequacy in the face of Merleau-Ponty's work was rooted in the fact that his philosophical vocabulary was foreign to me because of my initial philosophical training, I should have felt equally alienated while reading Marcel. But my affinity for Marcel proved to be quite strong. Marcel sounded so familiar to me, and the experience of reading his journals left me with the impression that I had been here before, that I was treading on familiar ground. I felt such pleasure reading his work, a pleasure that recalled earlier times, that harkened back to my first introduction to philosophy, my first invitation to a life of philosophy; the experience brought back memories of my encounters with the work of another philosopher in whose work I have always been able to take or find refuge—although it is quite an odd sort of shelter since his texts deliberately undercut or undermine any sense in the reader of being able to dwell or inhabit his work. The experience of reading Marcel recalled for me or called me back to my earlier experiences of reading Derrida.

At first, I was unsure of what to make of this uncanny felt resemblance between Marcel and Derrida, between their respective philosophical projects. What possible relationship could there be between the writings of a Christian Existentialist and the Progenitor of Deconstruction? How was it that dwelling on Marcel's work evoked memories of my feelings of being-at-home (as much as that is possible) in the writings of Derrida? But, as I began to make my way back to Derrida, I came to realize that the two thinkers share a certain constellation of common concepts and themes that structure their inquiries, such as friendship, gift giving, hospitality, betrayal, justice and testimony—a

group of related terms around which, or through which, Marcel and Derrida develop their philosophical projects and articulate their philosophical concerns.

As I have already stated, both Marcel and Derrida share a common interest in acts of hospitality, in its very possibility and the conditions in which true hospitality can be realized. But the issue of hospitality is not simply a passing concern for these thinkers; instead, one could argue that hospitality is at the heart of their writing, is that concept around which their work is organized. In the case of Marcel, his concrete philosophical inquiries into human existence are all undertaken with an eye to establishing the conditions for true intersubjective relations; hospitality is a necessary act that the subject must perform in order to establish a relation with the other that is true being-with, true co-presence between an I and a Thou. And the reason that such relations are important is that it is only through these relations with others that one is able to participate in Being, is able to realize oneself in Being or fulfill one's ontological needs and be truly human; full participation in Being is only possible through co-participation. The act of hospitality, for Marcel, is our, as well as the other's, point of entry into Being. In the case of Derrida, I believe that the past fifteen years of his career have been an attempt to develop an alternative set of terms, a set of terms that are drawn both from the margins of the Western philosophical tradition and from various religious traditions, that he can use to adequately articulate the structure of hospitality, a concept that Derrida equates in the context of his seminars organized around the theme of hospitality, with culture itself, as being at the heart of culture as its destiny: "Not only is there a culture of hospitality, but there is no culture that is not also a culture of hospitality. All cultures compete in this regard and present themselves as more hospitable than the others. Hospitality—this is

culture itself" (*Acts of Religion* 361)³⁷. And their affinities run much deeper than a shared sense of the importance of hospitality in relation to what it means to be human. As I will demonstrate, they articulate the act of hospitality, the structure of hospitality, through very similar vocabularies. Both argue that hospitality is a gift structure, an act of giving that entails a response on the part of the host; however, for both, the host is also in the position of receiver since the host receives the gift of the other.

But these affinities belie two radically different understandings of hospitality. What one begins to discover beneath the affinities is a radically opposed methodology or desire on the part of the two thinkers. In contrast to Marcel's attempts to reconcile and transcend differences, Derrida works to expose the irreducible contradictions and tensions at the heart of the act of hospitality and, instead of trying to overcome or dissimulate this originating and inaugurating aporia, uses the energy of this tension to fuel his thinking. On the one hand, Marcel takes up all duality and contradictions as possibly debilitating and threatening and uses all of his available resources to overcome or resolve all tensions—to such an extent that the act of hospitality itself, which, as we shall see, he characterizes as an act of creative fidelity, is itself an act of reconciliation and unification through the transcendence of opposites. On the other hand, tensions abound in Derrida's writings and are left unresolved; instead of trying to transcend differences, Derrida exploits them in his text and employs them as the engine behind his thoughts. In no way does he try to resolve these differences but instead works to show how these differences are themselves enabling. Derrida also works to inscribe tensions and contradictory logics within certain terms that he himself constructs and uses in his

³⁷ In relation to 9-11, it is interesting how such a tragedy that struck at the heart of the USA immediately raised the issue of hospitality to the forefront of the debate.

writing. For example, Derrida writes the fact that the unconditional law of hospitality is always already violated by each conditional act of hospitality, where the act of hospitality, in order to be enacted, must be conditional and therefore a violent and ruinous imposition of conditions upon an unconditional law into the very title of his seminar—*Hostipitality*, a combination of both hospitality and hostility that signals the irreducible structural feature of hospitality in which the law obliges the host to act unconditionally while simultaneously forcing the host to act conditionally (and therefore violently, to set limits and boundaries) in order to enact or realize hospitality in the world.

In the context of this brief introduction, allow me to dwell on the issue of their differences for a moment longer and present you with another example of how each thinker uses tension or contradiction in their work. Uncannily, both thinkers, in order to try to more clearly define hospitality, to find the adequate words to describe or characterize hospitality, resort to the English language but with very different results; at exactly those moments where they are working out the essence of hospitality, both thinkers have recourse to a foreign language to aid in their exposition. As they try to define or provide a clearer understanding of hospitality, both thinkers open their texts to a foreign language and welcome this other language into their texts.

In the case of Marcel, the welcomed other is meant to overcome a perceived inadequacy in the French language; in order to transcend the French language's inability to reconcile and unify opposites, to adequately refer to those situations—related to the issue of hospitality and being with the other—in which tension and opposition are overcome, Marcel invites the English language into his text. I will look at two examples in particular. In *The Existential Background to Human Dignity*, Marcel introduces the

English word ‘togetherness’ as a suitable word for referring to the co-presence of the I with the other as Thou within Being, as signifying true being-with, since the French language has no comparable term for signifying the unity between the I and Thou achieved through hospitality:

If I simply *find myself* in a train compartment or in a airplane *next to* someone to whom I do not speak and whose face *tells me nothing*, I cannot really say that I am *with* him. We are not *together*. I might note in passing that the English noun *togetherness*, which has not been unfortunately travestied in popular usage, has refused to make a substantive of—that is, to conceptualize—a certain quality of being which is concerned with the... ‘between you and me.’ (*The Existential Background to Human Dignity* 41)

Similarly, in *Creative Fidelity*, Marcel turns for help, in a quotation to which I will return later, to the English word ‘belongings’ to adequately describe the relationship that must obtain between a subject and its home, its possessions, in order for that subject to be *at home*, which is the condition for the possibility for the act of hospitality towards the other. Sensing the danger posed by the duality between the subject and its possessions, an irreducibility into which some other can insinuate itself and thereby undo the conditions for the realization of hospitality, Marcel works to resolve the opposition by using the English term ‘belongings’ to suggest the way in which one’s possessions belong to oneself just like one has a sense of belonging among friends: ‘The term ‘possession,’ however, is quite inadequate; here again the English term (belongings) seems clearly preferable” (*Creative Fidelity* 90).

Derrida, on the other hand, seems to obtain the opposite effect when he plays host to the English language in his meditations on hospitality. In fact, his seminars on hospitality, which are mostly in French, play host to numerous other languages, such as Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, German and English; similarly, the seminars trace a path

between texts drawn from the Western philosophical and literary tradition, Jewish philosophy and religious thought, Islamic religious thought, and Christian theology, just to name a few. However, when foreign texts and languages are placed within the context of Derrida's larger French language meditation—in a sense dialoguing with his own text, although it is hard to know where Derrida's text begins and the other texts end—Derrida exploits their differences, puts their differences to work opening up new paths for his thoughts to follow. In one instance in the seminars, Derrida equates the French *hôte*, which is both the one who gives and receives, with the problematic English term word *ghost*, a being that is between being and not-being, that is neither alive nor dead, in order to link the issue of hospitality together with that of waiting: “through the tears, the welcoming smile, the *hôte* as *ghost* (spirit as *revenant*, holy spirit...), here is what awaits us perhaps...for the question of hospitality is also the question of waiting, of the time of waiting and of waiting beyond time” (*Acts of Religion* 359). The inclusion of ‘ghost’ in the context of his meditations on hospitality, on the *hôte*, opens onto a new perspective on the question of hospitality, which is now *also*, in addition to everything else, a question of waiting. In some respects, one could argue that, instead of simply hosting the other language in his text, welcoming and asking the foreign words to participate in his text, with the other words in his text, in their home and within their line of argument, Derrida allows these foreign words to take his text hostage, to hijack his train of thought.

7.2.2 The Experience of Being at Home in Marcel

Of the various themes that Derrida has taken up throughout his career, two stand out in their relation to the work of Marcel—the gift and hospitality. Interestingly, Marcel developed his understanding of hospitality, as part and parcel of his conception of the relation between the I and Thou, using a vocabulary that was drawn from his earlier investigations into incarnation. From his earlier metaphysical meditations on the body (his concrete philosophy), he appropriated such concepts as receptivity, response, disposition, and availability in order to articulate the ontological structure of being-with the other as Thou. And it is in *Creative Fidelity*, that text in which Marcel claims to have traced out a metaphysics of *at home*, that Marcel presents this progression from incarnation to intersubjectivity, from metaphysics to ontology in a linear and systematic manner; it is in this text in particular that Marcel articulates his attempt to discover a new home which would be truly his own, a home that would fulfill his childhood fancies and longings for a true place of belonging.

Throughout his essay in autobiography, Marcel links his childhood experiences in his father's house with his philosophical quest for a habitable place. For example, Marcel explains that his initial interest in abstraction and idealism was hygienic in nature; abstraction appeared to him as “a habitable place” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 105) while experience as understood by the empiricists would simply drag down the spirit like a quicksand (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 106). Later, concrete experiences, instead of presenting a danger to the spirit, would become for him his promised land (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 107). In the same essay, Marcel also expresses his philosophical project, his search for a promised land, in opposition to his life at home, which he characterizes as having been a desert universe in part because of the sudden

death of his mother. Death visited itself upon this household, came uninvited, without any warning or foreshadowing, and irrevocably shattered this idyllic family scene, fracturing its unity and introducing an irreconcilable tension into the family home³⁸. After his mother's death, Marcel's childhood comes to be dominated by what he terms a "strange duality" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 112). His life, after the unexpected visit from death, is lived between two poles, between "a being who had vanished...and another—dominating, self-assertive and convinced that it was her duty to shed light on the crevices of my mind" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 112). This second individual was his aunt, who, after his mother's death, came to live with Marcel and his father in order to look after the young Marcel. But, instead of bringing peace to the house, she seems to be associated with division and tension. Instead of sharing his father's outlook on life, his aunt was a source of tension; while his father had an aesthetic outlook on life, his aunt approached life from an ethical standpoint, a tension that, as Marcel explained, "created around me an unstable and arid climate in which...I found it difficult to breathe" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 110). Eventually, Marcel found God and discovered the joy of clean air, the breath of life, in the rarified transcendental realm of the Christian God. What divided his first home—death—and what it unlivable and the air unbreathable—the agnosticism of his father and substitute mother—led him to search for an elsewhere, for a new home, for a new local in which to take root, a quest that eventually led him to the promised land of Catholicism.

³⁸ It is interesting to note the implicit Christian teleology in Marcel's recollection of his childhood, a teleology that Derrida has also worked to uncover as part of the legacy of Western philosophy. The progression is from an idyllic state of original unity, through a fall and towards re-unification and reconciliation—a teleology of transcendence, of the transcendence of difference.

Curiously, Marcel's intellectual travels through philosophy followed a similar path. Although he was initially drawn to idealism, he soon discovered that it was, as a way of thinking, as uninhabitable as his childhood home, a realization that led him to search for a "way out of the labyrinth into which [he] had been led by [his] abstract thinking" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 108). At this point, Marcel sought refuge in "the depths of reality," and he began to look for a hospitable place within the subterranean regions of himself (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 108). Ultimately, his travels through the real and the concrete, through his most intimate experiences, led him to Being and to the other as Thou; for Marcel, being at home with (in) himself required passing through concrete and personal experiences and discovering, within those experiences, the obscure outlines and contours of ontological states or structures that Marcel believed opened onto Being, onto the presence of the other as Thou, where God is the absolute Thou. Marcel's work, to use his own words, has been "to discover an *elsewhere* which should be essentially a *here*. [In a world that is an indeterminate place, the only course of action is] to extend as much as possible the region where one is at home and to decrease that which is vaguely imagined or known only by hearsay, in an abstract and lifeless manner" (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 115).

But it is in *Creative Fidelity* where Marcel explains the centrality of the experience of being *at home* to his philosophy. The text is organized as a series of essays that address, chronologically, the various issues and concerns that are at the heart of his philosophical enterprise, beginning with a chapter on the concept of incarnate, followed by an exposition of the method of concrete philosophy and then some chapters on belonging and situational being, in which he broaches the question of receiving guests,

and finally ending with chapters devoted to the relationship between religion and philosophy. The progression of the chapters follows the development of his thought from a metaphysics of incarnation to an ontology of the I-Thou relationship³⁹.

One of the central examples of the movement in Marcel's thought from the metaphysical to the ontological has its beginnings in his investigations into incarnation and the distinction between being one's body and having a body and eventually leads him to formulate intersubjectivity, true being-with or togetherness, as a structure of absolute availability of disposability on the part of the subject in relation to the other. It is this trajectory that determined the direction of my discussion of Marcel's work in the first section of this thesis, and it has to do with Marcel's attempt to uncover "whether the positive aspect of [ontological] disposability is not already performed or prefigured somehow in [metaphysical] pure receptivity" (*Creative Fidelity* 89). As I have argued, Marcel develops concrete philosophy with an eye towards bringing to light "the existence of a fundamental analogy between the sensory receptivity of a living being exposed to the solicitations of his surroundings and the disposability of a consciousness capable of caring for another person" (*Creative Fidelity* 88). However, while trying to draw a connection between sensory receptivity and ontological disposability, while trying to discover the path that leads from metaphysical receptivity to ontological disposability,

³⁹ In fact, what is interesting about this text, beyond its content, is exactly the systematic nature of its exposition. For some reason, in order to explain what is involved in true hospitality, in true receiving of the other as guest, Marcel opts not to use the more intimate and unsystematic format of his journals; instead, he takes a more systematic approach to his writing when he begins to deal with the issue of hosting and ontological receptivity. In order to construct a home in which to welcome his readers in which to discuss the very nature of receiving, Marcel chooses to employ a systematic style of exposition to make himself available to his readers, to place his thoughts at the disposal of his audience, to construct a space of plenitude, a space in which he can "truly communicate something of [him]self to the other" (*Creative Fidelity* 91).

Marcel, as I have argued, runs headlong into the body, into the body as *corporeity*, a reality that does not admit of absolute availability.

In light of Marcel's project to "transmute experience into thought" (*Creative Fidelity* 26), his intense interest in sensation is hardly surprising since his intention is to distill the structure of ontological receptivity, a receptivity to the other, from the metaphysical receptivity of the existent with regards to its surroundings. And the entire problematic for Marcel revolves around the opposition active/passive as it relates to both metaphysical and ontological receptivity. In terms of sensation, Marcel concentrates on demonstrating, in both the *Metaphysical Journal* and in the article "Existence and Objectivity," that sensation "is not and cannot be passivity" (*Creative Fidelity* 28); in other words, beginning with the experience of one's incarnation, Marcel focuses on the experience of sensation and argues that "is not reducible to undergoing although it is still a feeling" (*Creative Fidelity* 28). Having shown the error in determining sensation as a simple undergoing, as a passive receiving of information, Marcel then hopes to "be able to discover the presence of an active element in feeling, something like the power of taking upon oneself, or better, of opening oneself to...[so that] a continuity may be discovered between the fact of feeling and creativity—something which would be inconceivable if we were concerned with simple passivity, on the one hand, and pure activity on the other" (*Creative Fidelity* 28-9). However, Marcel has difficulty in distilling out this active element in feeling, of reducing the irreducible duality of the experience of incarnation—the experiencing of one's body as both that body that one is and the body that one has—but not because feeling is inherently passive. Instead, the problem is with how Marcel conceptualizes the activity of sensation as an activity of

‘taking upon oneself’ or of ‘opening oneself to’ since the subject of sensation is not a self-conscious subject but is instead a pre-personal and pre-reflective anonymous corporeity. Instead of finding a subject capable of taking up its own body and opening itself up to the world by way of its own body, Marcel uncovers within the experience of incarnation the bodily reality of *corporeity*, a pre-personal and pre-reflective consciousness that is before the distinction between active/passive since activity and passivity only make sense in relation to some self-conscious subject that can either take itself up or sit back passively and receive sensations as simple impressions.

And it is this lack of personal agency in sensation, in the pure receptivity of the body, that ultimately scuttles Marcel’s attempt to ground ontological disposability in the experience of incarnation since, as Marcel understands it, the posture of absolute disposability towards the other is necessarily active, necessarily involves a consciousness turned towards the other in a gesture of openness and availability. Ontological disposability, according to Marcel, is a form of active receptivity towards the other in which one enacts *hospitality* to the other by making a gift of what is one’s own, namely oneself (*Creative Fidelity* 28). At the ontological level, at the level where one is referring to the relationship indicated when one says that someone received another, *to receive* means “to admit in or welcome an outsider into one’s home...to introduce the other person, the stranger, into a region which has these qualities, and to admit him in to participate in it” (*Creative Fidelity* 27-8). For Marcel, disposability is a function of activity, is a stance enacted or taken on by the subject in its effort to welcome or receive the other as Thou.

At this point, I will simply present two more examples from *Creative Fidelity*. In the first, Marcel explains that, at the ontological level, “to receive...is to open myself to, rather than undergoing an external action” (*Creative Fidelity* 91). In the second, ontological receptivity is presented as

a *gift*, and in the final analysis, even a gift of *self*, of the person who is involved in the act of hospitality. Actually we are not concerned with filling up some empty space with an alien presence, but of having the other person participate in a certain reality, in a certain plenitude. To provide hospitality is truly to communicate something of oneself to the other. (*Creative Fidelity* 91)

And what is central to the activity of receiving, at least as is testified to by the preceding quotations, is the experience of, or state of being *at home*. The other is received into a plenitude, into a personal reality so that the other can participate in that space with the subject in the fullness of Being and presence. As opposed to the depersonalizing space of contemporary society in which all people are reduced to simple functions and all relations to those of having, the space of one’s home is presented by Marcel as a space of Being, as a space in which the other can participate with me as presence. One’s home is the personal space of Being, that space that is felt to be one’s own and in which one can say *I*, and it is the space in which the subject prepares itself, readies itself to receive the other.

These aspects of readiness, preparedness, and preordination in relation to ontological disposability are central for Marcel because they highlight the inherent activeness of ontological reception. The subject must prepare itself to receive the other, must actively ready itself to welcome the other when the other comes calling, and the only way to prepare oneself is to work towards placing oneself in a state of being *at home*. Making oneself available to the other involves placing oneself at the other’s disposal by creating a space in which to welcome the other. The subject can only make

itself available to the other if the subject works to build a home for itself in which it can receive the other, from where it can enact the gesture of hospitality. Quite literally, it involves making room or space for oneself and in oneself to receive the other—preparing a physical room or place in which to await the other and in which the other will feel welcome.

As Marcel explains, ontological disposability, unlike pure receptivity, requires me to “somehow make room for the other in myself; if I am completely absorbed in myself, concentrated on my sensations, feelings, anxieties, it will obviously be impossible for me to receive, to incorporate in myself, the message of the other” (*Creative Fidelity* 88). So, since there is no room in the body for the other, since there is no way for the subject to make room in the body for the other since sensation is always already sensation for-me (all sensations are felt as mine, as immediately mine), the experience of incarnation cannot function for Marcel as the place from which the subject can enact hospitality, from which the subject can place itself in a posture of absolute availability with respect to the other. In other words, the subject, according to Marcel, cannot be considered to be at home in its own body, a realization that comes from the irreducible duality that structures the experience of corporeity as both something that one has and something that one is. So, in order to enact ontological receptivity, the subject must create a home for itself in which it feels at home and in which it can establish itself in readiness for the coming of the other:

I hold in principle, that [ontological] reception, hence receptivity, can only be considered in connection with a certain readiness or pre-ordination. A person receives others in a room in a house, if necessary, in a garden; not on unknown ground or in a forest. Here we might supply further nuances of the meaning and introduce in addition to the relation of inherence, the rather subtle and almost inexplicable relation embodied in the expression *being at home...Being at home*

is only relative to a *self* which, moreover, can be that of another person, and I understand by *self* some one who says or presumably can say *I*, who can posit himself or be posited as an *I*. (*Creative Fidelity* 89)

Being able to say *I*, or being able to posit oneself as an *I*, is essential for ontological receptivity because the I must open itself to the other, must actively ready itself to meet the other, to prepare the space in which the subject will participate with the other as presence. Corporeity, because of its irreducible impersonality, anonymity, and being of the other, cannot function as the ground from which the subject can posit itself as an *I*. The pre-reflective existent is always already fractured by the other; therefore, the experience of corporeity does not provide any ontological indications as to how the subject, through second reflection, can establish itself in a state of readiness or pre-ordination. The pre-reflective existent is always already open to the world, to the solicitations of the world. But this lack of active preparation of the existent for the world as other troubles Marcel and disturbs his sense of hospitality, so he turns towards the experience of being *at home* with the hope that it will provide the solid ground necessary for the subject to realize itself in the posture of ontological disposability. For Marcel, the feeling of being *at home* is a condition for the subject to be able to “emerge from itself and realize itself primary in the gift of oneself” (*Creative Fidelity* 49) through the active taking up of the posture of absolute availability.

What should be self-evident by this point is the architectural metaphor in Marcel’s thought that I intended to bring to light in this chapter—the house that the subject builds around itself and in which the self begins to ready itself in preparation for the coming of the other by creating a space of Being in which the other can participate as a presence, as Thou, and not simply as an objectified him or her. The house is the site of the experience

of being *at home* for the subject. It is the place from which the subject is able to say *I* and, as a result, is able to give itself absolutely to the other, to make itself absolutely available to the other. The house is that space in which the subject can receive the other, in some respects because there is no room for the other in the body, within one's body. One's own home is that space in which the subject makes room for the other, in which the subject actively prepares itself to receive the other and in which the other will come to participate with the self as presence since it is impossible for the other to participate as presence—due to the difficulties surrounding sensation—within one's body⁴⁰. The house—instead of one's body—becomes the space of Being into which the subject invites the other to participate along with the subject in terms of presence. All hospitality, all receptivity, is made possible, in Marcel's mind, by the activity of realizing oneself in the space of one's own home, by the activity through which the subject establishes itself in its own home and begins to feel at home, a feeling that is the very condition for the possibility of placing oneself absolutely at the disposal of the other.

But the act of hospitality does not end there for Marcel; in fact, one could argue that the ontological state of availability or disposability, that state of readiness and openness that the subject must assume in order to experience the other as Thou, must constantly be renewed by the subject. The subject of hospitality must maintain themselves in the state of availability in relation to the other. The responsibility, in other words, is infinite, opens out into the infinite future. Marcel eventually elects to use the concept of creative fidelity when discussing the comportment of availability that is at the

⁴⁰ The question remains if the other could participate as absence within one's body, possibly through language—the withdrawal of the other, the absent presence of the other to one's body, the body as *of the other*.

heart of the act of hospitality. The subject of hospitality is a subject that must enact creative fidelity, a faithfulness to the other that must be continuously and infinitely renewed and reworked, towards the other in order to realize the other as Thou. So, by aligning the act of hospitality with a certain creativity, Marcel suggests that hospitality, the act of receiving the other, is itself poetic in some way.

But poetic how? How is the subject of hospitality supposed to be creative? To what end? According to Marcel, the creativity points in two directions simultaneously. On the one hand, the subject of hospitality must creatively maintain the presence of the other, of the other that has been granted to the subject as presence. As Marcel explains, in the case of the act of hospitality, “everything depends on me, on my inward attitude of maintaining this presence which could not be debased into an effigy” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 37). On the other hand, the only way to maintain the presence of the other is to maintain the space in which the other participates with the subject, to maintain the space of one’s home in its plenitude and openness: “A presence is a reality; it is a kind of influx: it depends on us to be permeable to this influx, but not, to tell the truth, to call it forth. Creative fidelity consists in maintaining ourselves actively in a permeable state; and there is a mysterious interchange between this free act and the gift granted in response to it” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 38).

Hospitality, availability, disposability, creative fidelity—Marcel articulates these concepts using a very specific terminology that one could even venture to call ‘technical’. These major themes are presented using a vocabulary of presence, Being, permeability, influx, being *at home*, mystery, testimony that are supplemented by a group of very specific actions—giving and receiving of gifts, giving oneself as a gift, abandoning

oneself to the other, relaxing in the presence of the other, maintaining the presence of the other, maintaining one's permeability, making oneself available and maintaining oneself at the disposal of the other, making room for the other in oneself, positing oneself as an 'I', remembering and recollecting the other. What is curious about all of the above concepts or themes is how they work to reconcile the opposing forces that seem to animate them. These terms are at once both active and passive. The act of hospitality is both an active giving of oneself to the other and pre-ordination or active readying of one's home for the coming of the other and a passive waiting for that other, a waiting that does not call the other forth but is instead an abandoning oneself to the other. Availability and disposability are both states of being that involve active preparation—making oneself available and maintaining oneself in a state of availability and disposability—and a giving of oneself over to the other so that the other can make use of oneself as they wish. Availability is a placing oneself at the disposal of the other, an active giving of oneself that is simultaneously a relinquishing of all power to the other—the host becomes a hostage of the other.

As I stressed earlier and as Marcel himself states in his autobiography, his philosophical project is an attempt to realize a unified home in which tensions are resolved or overcome; his metaphysics of *at home* is exactly about identifying ontological states in which the subject can exist and which unify or overcome the contradictory demands placed upon the concrete subject in the world. The issue of remembering in relation to the imperative of creative fidelity is instructive for demonstrating how Marcel deploys these terms in his thought. Recollection is itself involved in the real, in a concrete experience; however, if the subject remembering is unable to detach

himself/herself from the experience in which the memory is rooted, then the subject will only gain access to the content of that experience and fail to truly recollect the truth of that experience in its being. Only through detachment from the real and the concrete is true recollection possible—a remembering that invokes the presence of the other or the experience in its very being, in its ontological nature. And recollection for Marcel is one of the ways in which we are able to detach ourselves—attain a stance of indifference towards the world—from experience, from the concrete. As he explains, “no ontology—that is to say, no apprehension of the ontological mystery in whatever degree—is possible except by a being who is capable of recollecting himself, and of thus proving that he is not a living creature pure and simple, a creature...which is at the mercy of its life and without a hold on it” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 23).

But then, once the subject has separated him/herself from the concrete by recollecting him/herself, then the subject, in order to remain faithful to the presence of the other encountered within one’s experience, must abandon him/herself to the presence of the other, to their being, in order to gain access to the experience at the level of Being. In this way, recollection is an act through which the duality between active and passive, action and being, is overcome: “recollection... transcends the dualism of being and action or, more correctly, because it reconciles in itself these two aspects of the antimony. The word means what it says—the act whereby I re-collect myself as a unity; but this hold, this grasp upon myself, is also relaxation and abandon. *Abandon to...relaxation in the presence of...*—yet there is no noun for these prepositions to govern. The way stops at the threshold” (*The Philosophy of Existentialism* 23). And crossing that threshold, assigning a noun to these prepositions, would take the subject from the livable space of

mysteries into the uninhabitable terrain of problems, an action that, in Marcel's mind, would amount to an unforgivable infidelity towards the other, a devastating betrayal of the presence of the other, a turning of one's back on Being—where the gesture itself of turning one's back, whether to an individual or an audience is a gesture of unavailability.

I mention this last point because of the fact that, throughout his work, Marcel is painfully conscious of the possibility of betrayal, of the fragility of these states of being and of the difficulties involved in maintaining oneself in these states of openness and readiness. Marcel's work is punctuated by moments of betrayal, of defeat and of resignation, but, as a good Catholic, he tirelessly and continuously works to rescue the subject from despair by holding out the possibility of attaining Being, of actually realizing a relation with others in which their presence is maintained. In other words, Marcel's philosophy is predicated upon the hope that one feels towards the possibility for realizing unity and co-presence with the other as Thou. The subject that enacts hospitality is a hopeful subject, one that believes that it is able to realize and actualize the profound conditions for being-with the other, for participating with the other as Thou in Being.

7.2.3 Derrida and Hospitality

From the above exposition that followed the thread of the issue of hospitality through the work of Marcel, I am sure that those who are familiar with Derrida's work have already begun to see those places and points at which Derrida's thought shares affinities with that of Marcel. In what follows, I will work to highlight some of the

affinities but with an eye towards elaborating what I understand to be the central and most profound difference between their respective philosophical positions—their thoughts on the *subject* of hospitality, on the subject that works to enact hospitality. In many respects, the difference lies in how these two thinkers understand the term ‘poetic’ in relation to hospitality. As I explained above, hospitality for Marcel requires the host to enact creative fidelity towards the guest, a poetic act through which the subject must continually maintain themselves in a posture of openness towards the presence of the other, thereby ensuring that the subject does not betray the being of the other and reduce their presence to mere effigy or representation. According to Marcel, the goal is for the subject to overcome this tension, to reconcile the active and passive elements that are essential for realizing or enacting hospitality through the act of creative fidelity. In an uncanny repetition or echo, Derrida himself refers to the poetic nature of hospitality in his seminars: “The act of hospitality can only be poetic” (*Of Hospitality* 2). However, one must recall at this point that the term ‘poetic’ has a special sense for Derrida, that he uses the concept of the poetic to refer to the aporatic conditions that underwrite the act of writing itself. From Derrida’s perspective, hospitality, instead of being enacted with the possibility of unity in mind, in light of the possibility of reconciliation and true being-with through co-presence, must be enacted within the horizon of its impossibility, with the understanding that hospitality is always already to betray the other, to betray their alterity and otherness, and in exactly the manner or exactly according to the manner described by Marcel. Concrete realizations and enactments of hospitality are unavoidably intertwined with Being and presence, terms that work to betray the otherness

and alterity of the other, a fact of life that leads the subject to inevitably betray the unconditional imperatives of hospitality to remain open to the coming of the other.

I do not get the impression from reading Derrida that he would disagree with Marcel on his characterization of the act of hospitality as a giving of oneself to the other, as a making of oneself into a gift that one gives to the other, makes available to the other, places at the disposal of the other. What Derrida questions is the relation of this active and concrete realization and enactment of hospitality towards the other and the dictates or demands concerning hospitality that are announced by the Law of hospitality and the effect that the relation between the unconditional Law and its conditional relation or enactment have on the subject of hospitality. All hospitality is necessarily enacted from within a home, from within a proper space, an enclosure from which the subject is able to extend an invitation to the other—all invitations are an act of inclusion, of in-viting inside, and opening of an inside to some outside. In tracing the connection between hospitality and power, Derrida talks about “the necessity, for the host, for the one who is receiving, of choosing, electing, filtering, selecting their invitees, visitors, or guests, those to whom they decide to grant asylum, the right of visiting, of hospitality. No hospitality, in the classic sense, without sovereignty of oneself over one’s home” (*Of Hospitality* 55). Or again, “hospitality requires that I open up my home...to the foreigner,...that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place that I offer them” (*Of Hospitality* 25). The home is the essential site of hospitality, enables the realization of the act of hospitality by providing a place in which hospitality can occur, can actually take place and be realized. The host necessarily invites the other into

his/her home, extends an invitation to the other to enter and make themselves at home, to treat the host's home as their own.

But Derrida, in order to question the power of the host who invites and is master of their home, begins to ask about the conditions that make the house as a place of hospitality possible and works to bring the conditions for the possibility of being *at home* to light. And what he comes to discover in the heart of the home, at the centre of that very place in which the subject posits itself as an 'I' and readies themselves to welcome the other, is that very outside and other that the subject is awaiting. As a result, he is led to conclude that the relationship between the subject of hospitality and its home, the place in which he/she receives the other and from which he/she gives himself/herself to the other, is always already fractured, that the very possibility of enacting hospitality towards an other is made possible by the fact that the other is always already inside the home. What makes the space of the home habitable for the subject and which engenders a space in which the subject can receive guests is the prior dispossessing (absent) presence of the other in the house, to its prior insertion in the home. In other words, being *at home*, making one's surroundings habitable and open to others, is a structure in which the inside is constituted by a folding of the outside over upon itself—through invagination. The possibility of being able to open one's home to others is a function of the always already fractured nature of the interior space of one's home.

Derrida's argument runs counter to Marcel's characterization of the experience of being *at home* as a relation of felt belonging—a felt inherence—between the subject and its surroundings, a relation that can be betrayed either by the weakness of the subject or by the indiscretions of the other. Marcel insists on the establishment of a secure interior

space by the subject—just as the subject of recollection must recollect itself before being able to adequately participate in the presence of the remembered other—a space of plenitude into which the subject can welcome the other and in which the subject and the other can participate in terms of co-presence. But the space must be constituted, for Marcel, in advance of the coming of the other; the subject of hospitality, before making him/herself available to the other, must apprehend him/herself in their surroundings by making it their own. And one must be constantly vigilant against the presence of intrusive others who might dispossess the subject of its being *at home*, against the unwanted and untimely other who does not know their place:

It can also occur that one of my relations or fellow-boarders, because of the fact that he is living with me, dispossesses me of that awareness of being at home which I should apparently have. Doubtless I could explain this fact by saying that the other person does not know his place. Here it is the indiscretion of the other which intervenes between me and my possessions and separates me from them, breaking the vital connections between me and them that I am trying to describe. The term ‘possession,’ however, is quite inadequate; here again the English term (belongings) seems clearly preferable. (*Creative Fidelity* 90)

The threat posed by the other as a type of parasite is quite explicitly stated in the above quotation. Instead of being the very possibility of the relation of being *at home*, the other is seen as a threat to the kind of harmony between the subject and its surroundings which renders the surroundings habitable as one’s own (*Creative Fidelity* 90). The threat of dispossession is not a constitutive condition of hospitality; it is simply one of unfortunate side effects. For Marcel, the possibility of the host being dispossessed of his/her home by the other does not signal the inaugurating fracture or difference at the heart of hospitality but is only depicted as an intrusion that must be resisted and for which one must be prepared.

But Derrida sees the possibility of intrusion as the founding possibility of hospitality and of the home. The home, according to Derrida, is always already invaded or open. The intrusion of the outside, of the other, is constitutive of the home as the site of welcoming; it is only on the basis of this inaugurating division and fracture that one is able to receive others in one's home. Derrida broaches the question as follows:

How can we distinguish between a guest and a parasite? In principle, the difference is straightforward, but for that you need a law; hospitality, reception, and welcome offered have to be submitted to a basic and limiting jurisdiction. Not all new arrivals are received as guests if they don't have the benefit of the right to hospitality or the right to asylum, etc. Without this right, a new arrival can only be introduced 'in my home,' in the host's 'at home,' as a parasite, a guest who is wrong illegitimate, clandestine, liable to expulsion or arrest. (*Of Hospitality* 59-61)

But the condition of being a parasite requires a prior determination of the space of one home as a controlled and secured inside or interior; one can only be a parasite if one occupies or dwells in a space that is not one's own, in a space that is closed off and that one does not have the right to occupy. But Derrida argues that such a determination of the home as an enclosure, as a hermetically sealed space runs counter to our modern experiences of how interior spaces are constituted through technology: "But current technological developments are restructuring space in such a way that what constitutes a space of controlled and circumscribed property is just what opens it to intrusion" (*Of Hospitality* 61). One just has to consider all the technological prosthetics or apparatuses that one has at home, all those belongings through which one constructs one's home that function as points of access for the other into the space of one's home. But Derrida does not argue that this is a new phenomenon and instead insists that this contradictory logic that technology manifests is nothing new: "That, once again, is not absolutely new: in order to constitute the space of a habitable house and a home, you also need an opening, a

door and windows, you have to give up a passage to the outside world. There is no house or interior without a door or windows” (*Of Hospitality* 61). Then the question becomes whether the space of hospitality belongs to either the host or the guest and how such a fractured and divided space can function to provide the stability, security, and sustenance necessary for the subject of hospitality to welcome the other, to posit themselves as an ‘I’ and welcome the other adequately and respectfully.

What Derrida is working to foreground is the contradictory logic that continually manifests itself in relation to the concept of hospitality, thereby leading one to begin to ask some disturbing questions of how we conceive of hospitality, such as what effect does it have on our conceptions about hospitality if the monadic space of the home must itself be hospitable in order to realize itself, in order to be a truly human space or dwelling, must always already from the very beginning or even prior to the beginning, be open to the other in order to realize itself as a secure interiority? How is hospitality to be enacted if “[t]he monad of home has to be hospitable in order to be *ipse*, itself at home, habitable at-home in the relation to itself” (*Of Hospitality* 61)? Seen from this perspective, the home is a machine (a machine for living according to Le Corbusier) that “renders impossible the hospitality, the right to hospitality, that it ought to make possible (always according to the contradiction or aporia that we have been formalizing since the start of this seminar)” (*Of Hospitality* 65).

And this placing of the home in question, as Anne Dufourmantelle states in her invitation to Derrida that accompanies the text of Derrida’s seminars collected in *Of Hospitality*, has a profound effect on the subject that tries to enact hospitality from their own home, through their feeling of being at home within themselves in their own home.

The question of where one enacts hospitality, of where one begins to address the other and to invite them as guests, “is not that of the subject as *ipse*, but more radically that of the very movement of the question out of which the subject happens. It translates the inability to have a land of one’s own, since the question is turned back to the very place from which one thought one was sure of being able to speak” (*Of Hospitality* 56-8). And this contestation or question of “Where?” begs another question that Derrida poses to his audience as follows: “To offer hospitality is it necessary to start from the certain existence of a dwelling, or is it rather only starting from the dislocation of the shelterless, the homeless, that the authenticity of hospitality can open up?” (*Of Hospitality* 56). And then he follows this question with a conditional statement that goes a long way towards making the aporatic structure of hospitality more understandable (if not necessarily more palatable): “Perhaps only the one who endures the experience of being deprived of a home can offer hospitality” (*Of Hospitality* 56)⁴¹...

7.2.4 *The Subject of Hospitality*

...all of which brings us to the question of the subject, the subject of hospitality as *hôte*, as both host and guest, as host and hostage.

The previous section ended with Derrida’s suggestion that only those who endure the experience of being deprived of a home can offer hospitality. Is Derrida participating, through this statement, in a rather simplified romanticization of homelessness? Is he seriously suggesting that only those who have lost their homes, who are homeless, can

⁴¹ From his autobiography, one gets the sense that Marcel presents himself as exactly just such a homeless person, as one who grew up without a true home.

offer hospitality? But we need to dwell for a moment on the tense of the verb 'to endure' before jumping to conclusions. Derrida states that hospitality can only be offered by those who endure, who learn to live, or who live their lives with the experience of being deprived of a home. Authentic hospitality is conditioned by, or rooted in, a continuous living through the experience of the impossibility of feeling at home in one's house. As I understand him, Derrida is not suggesting that one must endure the physical and material loss of one's home in order to offer hospitality; instead, I take Derrida to be saying that real hospitality can only be offered by a subject that understands or experiences the aporia at the heart of the home, an aporia that, while it makes the home possibility, also makes it impossible because its interior space is constituted through the prior inclusion of the outside within it. True hospitality can only be offered as a function of its impossibility, of the impossibility of feeling *at home*, of the impossibility that conditions the possibility of constructing a home but only through its de-realization, which places the subject in the position of trying to enact hospitality while simultaneously experiencing the taking away or draining away of the conditions that would enable such an act. As I have argued, both Marcel and Derrida argue for the necessity of enacting hospitality from or within the space of one's own home; the difference is that, while Marcel sees the house as a realizable machine for hospitality, Derrida argues that, because of the aporatic logic that structures the domicile, the house cannot function as a machine for living and, instead of supporting the act of hospitality, annihilates or undoes the possibility of enacting unconditional hospitality. While Marcel presents the house as that place from which the self can say 'I', from which the self can posit itself or be posited as an 'I', Derrida understands the logic of the house as radically disturbing the

subject's ability to say 'I', leaving the subject in a position of only being able to offer hospitality through the experience of the impossibility of being an 'I', without being able to say 'I'. But how is this possible?

A subject doomed to offer hospitality while experiencing the withdrawal of the conditions that would make that act of hospitality possible. This, obviously, makes authentic hospitality impossible, places it beyond the capacity of an 'I', which, as Derrida notes, "is obviously the impossible itself: how can I do what I cannot do? How to do the impossible?" (*Acts of Religion* 386). Although all seems lost from the point of view of the subject, these questions are not Derrida's last words on the subject of hospitality. He does not leave them unanswered, and this is a tactic that repeats itself throughout his work. Just when it seems that all is hopeless, Derrida always provides the reader with a way out of the aporia, out of the contradiction, and out of the sphere of its inertia. Contradictions always open onto more writing for Derrida, always open his texts onto new possibilities that, as with all prior possibilities that he has analyzed in his career, are themselves aporatic. Derrida never leaves off with an impossibility; impossibilities and contradictions always open onto new possibilities. He always turns the argument around on itself one more time, extends the argument in some other direction and draws the reader out of one impossibility into a new possibility, endlessly. And the above quotation is a case in point where, in response to his question about how to do the impossible, Derrida states that "[o]nly the other in me can do it" (*Acts of Religion* 386). But even this does not solve the problem because this decision on the part of the other to act, to offer hospitality, this enactment of hospitality that would be done in the name of the other

“does not exonerate in any way my freedom or my responsibility, on the contrary” (*Acts of Religion* 386).

So, as with Derrida, the subject, faced with the impossibility of what must be done, must figure out a way to do, perform or enact the possible in spite of, or in accordance with, its impossibility, to realize the possibility that is made possible by the impossible conditions. Impossibility opens onto the possible, makes the possible possible, as an experience of impossibility, of the impossibility of its authentic realization. “It is a little as if ‘hospitality,’ the name *hospitality*, came to name, but also to give a kind of proper name to this opening of the possible onto the impossible, and reciprocally: when hospitality takes place, the impossible becomes possible but as *impossible*. The impossible, for me, for an ‘I,’ for what is ‘my own’ or is properly my own in general” (*Acts of Religion* 387).

What is extremely evident at this point is the huge difference between the subject and hospitality in Derrida and in Marcel, and I think the difference is instructive for thinking through the very real consequence of Derrida’s meditations. Notwithstanding the gracefulness of Marcel’s thoughts on hospitality and the openendedness of the act of hospitality understood as creative fidelity, as a poetic undertaking that is unending, hospitality can be realized in his mind. The subject, establishing itself within its own surroundings and positioning itself within its own home, can affirm himself or herself as an ‘I’ within Being and invite the other to participate as an ‘I’ along with the self in Being. Co-presence involves being at home in Being oneself before inviting the other to participate in Being as another ‘I’. Derrida is extremely suspicious of this model because he feels, in part anyway, that such a structuration of the act of hospitality does not respect

the alterity of the other, does nothing to maintain or entertain the otherness of the foreigner or the guest. In the model presented by Marcel, hospitality simply works to reduce the other to Being, to being an 'I' without respecting their otherness; hospitality appears as another tactic for overcoming difference, for taming contradictions and appropriating all otherness into the same. Seen in this light, creative fidelity could be understood to be a call for eternal vigilance against the other, against its otherness from which Being must be protected at all costs or against which Being can be used in order to assimilate the other. By arguing for the impossibility of hospitality, for the rootedness of acts of hospitality in the conditions of its impossibility—the very conditions that enable hospitality are those that make it impossible for the subject to fully realize hospitality—Derrida calls into question all attempts to move beyond or transcend difference through hospitality and radically opens up all immanent attempts at hospitality to renegotiation. His interest in part, as the structure of his essays demonstrate, is to continually put into question, to continually expose contradictions and to use these contradictions to shift the terms of the debate—with the end result of keeping the debate open and ongoing at all costs. We can do nothing else but work towards realizing authentic hospitality, but we must labour on while at same time experience being deprived of the conditions for its realization. In this logic, the unending work is what is at stake. One is never able to rest or relax because one must always do more, because one has not yet done enough:

For one is always failing, lacking hospitality: one never gives enough—[especially since one is never able to give oneself because of the impossibility of positing oneself]. Not only because welcoming is welcoming the infinite, and therefore...welcoming beyond my capacity of welcoming..., but also because hospitality...does not only consist in welcoming a guest, in welcoming according to the invitation, but rather, following the visitation, according to the surprise of the visitor, unforeseen, unforeseeable, unpredictable, unexpected and unpredictable, unawaited. Hospitality consists in welcoming the other that does

not warn me of his coming...I am always, if I can say so, always and structurally, lacking, at fault, and therefore condemned...to ask for forgiveness for my lack of preparation, for an irreducible and constitutive unpreparedness. (*Acts of Religion* 380-1)

The similarities between Derrida's and Marcel's account of hospitality are striking. At its most fundamental, hospitality for both is about awaiting the coming of the other and about giving oneself to the other. Their differences lie in its enactment; while Marcel contends that true hospitality as co-presence is possible, Derrida argues that the very conditions of hospitality always already undermine and undo any attempt at true hospitality but necessarily so because the (im)possibility keeps the future of hospitality open. While Marcel presents hospitality as being based in pre-ordination, preparedness, and an absolute giving of oneself to the other (an absolute placing of oneself at the disposal of the other), Derrida argues that hospitality is actually at its core an experience of its impossibility, of the impossibility of giving enough; hospitality for Derrida is an experience in which one is always lacking in relation to the other, is always unable to welcome the other properly and totally, and is always unprepared. And, in part, these differences can be traced back to how each thinker understands the home in which the act of hospitality is rooted.

Again, both philosophers argue that a certain experience of being *at home* is constitutive of hospitality in general; however, while Marcel roots hospitality in an experience of being *at home* understood as preparedness and pre-ordination, as the preparing of a space of plentitude and co-presence in which to greet the other and give oneself over to the other, Derrida states that hospitality is a function of a fundamental experience of *homelessness*—an experiencing of the impossibility of feeling at home or being at home in one's own home. And the radical nature of this experience of

homelessness is its undermining of the inhabiting subject's ability to say 'I', an affirmation that is an essential part of hospitality for Marcel because it is only on the basis of being able to say 'I' that the subject is able to give itself absolutely to the other, to place itself at the other's disposal. If the welcoming subject is unable to say 'I', as in 'I welcome you' or 'I give myself to you,' then who can speak for the subject? Who is the subject of hospitality if I am always already unprepared and unable to give enough? The only possibility, according to Derrida, is "the other in me" (*Acts of Religion* 386). If 'I' am unable to enact hospitality myself from a position of self-identity, if I am unable to support myself in the enactment of hospitality towards the other, then I am left to try to welcome the other by way of my constitutive difference.

At the most basic level, Derrida is trying to describe hospitality as a function of difference instead of as a function of self-identity and unity. In the case of the home from which one enacts hospitality, Derrida tries to work out how one would receive the other, not in the space of Being, presence and sameness in which the self-same 'I' awaits the other and in which the 'I' establishes itself in order to give itself absolutely to the other, but in a space of irreducible difference in which the other is always already present, a shared space in which 'I' am never able to achieve a state of preparedness because that space is never my own, because it is not my own home—instead, it is always the home of others. I am never able to welcome the other into the space of my home because my home is never my own. According to this logic, I am the hostage of the other in my home since my home is always already occupied by the other as its very (im)possibility.

But what is the basis for this experience of exappropriation, this experience of homelessness? Where does this experience originate? How is it that the homes that we

build bring into being such fractured spaces? What is the fantasy of the self-contained and self-sustaining home meant to cover over or repress? Marcel's own work serves to answer these questions but mostly because of what remains unsaid as a consequence of his turning his back on the body. Marcel's fantasies about the experience of being *at home* and the space of receptivity in which the subject can work to prepare themselves for the coming of the other are articulated after his re-working of incarnation as corporeity. In this respect, one can read the space of hospitality, in which the subject enacts ontological availability, as being a substitute home for our primary dwelling—one's own body. In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Luce Irigaray argues that "[i]n all his creations, all his works, man always seems to neglect thinking of himself as flesh, as one who has received his body as that primary home...which determines the possibility of his coming into the world" (Irigaray 127-8), an insight that is especially telling in relation to Marcel. In part, what I have worked to demonstrate in this thesis is how, when faced with the experience of the irreducible difference at the heart of corporeity, Marcel neglected to continue thinking about himself as flesh and instead worked to transcend his corporeity and institute true intersubjective relations within the space of Being and presence. In the case of the home in which the subject receives the other, the home that is the very possibility of ontological receptivity for Marcel, Marcel creates a space that neglects the difference of the flesh, the irreducible difference that resides at the heart of our most fundamental experiences of our own embodiment—the fact that I am my body and that I have a body. And it is exactly this experience of irreducible difference that inhabits our experience of our primary home, our bodies, that Derrida discloses as structuring the interior space of the home from which hospitality is enacted.

7.3 The Architecture of John Hejduk

By way of this rather long digression, I finally feel myself to be in a position to address the work of John Hejduk and its relations to embodiment and corporeity in a meaningful and coherent way. In part, this sense of readiness comes from the fact that Hejduk's architectural speculations have often been described as provoking a sense of instability or homelessness in its viewers and readers; what comes through in his work, as we shall see in a moment, is his "refusal to settle" (Hays 13). The space of Hejduk's work is fractured and fissured and in many ways recalls the Derridean space of the domicile mentioned earlier, a space conditioned by or founded in difference. Hejduk's projects refer to a radically de-centred or de-stabilized space—in the case of *The Lancaster/Hanover Masque*, it is quite literally a space without a centre. While Marcel labours to cover over the fractured space of our primary home with a more hospitable space of Being in which the subject could receive the other, I will argue that Hejduk works from the experience of difference that constitutes the space of the domicile—at least as understood from a Derridean perspective.

But how does any of this relate to the problem of embodiment? What I would argue is that, in much the same way that Marcel argues that philosophy is in large measure determined by how it represents the body to itself, architecture's understanding of itself is largely a function of how it conceptualizes the body. In some respects, architectural history is driven by changes in the representation of the body and of the subject's relationship with that body. In the case of Irigaray, that body is the body of the

other, the maternal body from which we all originate. By way of an overly simplified but still instructive argument, Irigaray suggests, in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, that building, but especially housing, is a function of a certain homesickness for “the intrauterine nest” (Irigaray 127). The house that one builds, which functions to envelop the subject and its belongings and which is only one part of the human edifice that we build for ourselves and in which we come to dwell, is presented as a work of mourning for the loss of that other body that assisted in maintaining and sustaining one’s life: taking the reader back to the moment of birth, Irigaray calls to mind “the pain of a being who comes into the world and is abandoned, forced henceforth to live without the immediate assistance of another body. Unmitigated mourning for the intrauterine nest, elemental homesickness that man will seek to assuage through his work as builder of worlds” (Irigaray 127). According to Irigaray, the origin of all building is a sense of being at home in the other, not with oneself but with another body that sustained and nourished our existence in the womb, and this is exactly the experience of difference that the built home understood as self-contained and enclosed interior space elides, forgets, or represses. More generally, Irigaray then states, as I quoted above but which bears repeating, that, “[i]n all his creations, all his works, man always seems to neglect thinking of himself as flesh, as one who has received his body as that primary home... which determines the possibility of his coming into the world” (127-8). And by neglecting to think of himself as flesh, man fails to take account of his constitutive difference, of the irreducible difference that is at the heart of his experience of his own embodiment—namely, his *corporeity*.

But how could one conceive of a type of building or creating in which one did not neglect thinking about oneself as flesh, that would be nourished and sustained by the difference at the heart of *corporeity*, by the incessant and irreducible play or alternation between being and having that structures our experience of our own embodiment? In addition to Merleau-Ponty and Artaud, whose work I have presented as being, at their core, fueled by the irreducible difference between being and having a body, John Hejduk's architectural speculations appear to me to be a type of building that does not neglect thinking about ourselves as flesh. What is most striking about his work is his refusal to dissimulate or elide the troubling and disconcerting space of our *corporeity*. While architecture has traditionally equated itself with the unified space of the body—the space of functional part and well-proportioned whole—Hejduk's speculations open onto the fleshy space of irreducible difference, a space of irresolvable ambiguities and confusion that undermine any sense of stability and order. In this way, I understand Hejduk as re-working the relationship between architecture and the body; instead of using the body as a model of stability and coherence, Hejduk seems to draw on the fundamental experience of our bodies as *corporeity*, on the difference that is constitutive of our most intimate dealing with our bodies, and develop his projects with this irreducible difference at their heart.

7.3.1 John Hejduk and Being at Home

In Hejduk's *The Lancaster/Hanover Masque*, the buildings surrounding the Voided Centre do not provide any support for establishing a lasting sense of order for the

town since the two sets of institutions, the Church House and Death House and the Prison House and Court House, are representative of two completely different epochs in human history: the first pair is medieval and religious while the second is modern and secular. Presenting these different social institutions together, institutions that themselves were the organizing units for two completely different forms of urban planning, has the effect, along with the Voided Centre, of creating an ambiguous urbanism in which the ordering principles of different historical periods intermingle. In this way, as Detlef Mertins explains in "The Shells of Architectural Thought," Hejduk's projects "depict haunting scenes that are at one and the same time preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial, that evoke many times, but are out of place in all times and could be conceived only in this time" (Mertins 24)⁴². What makes the Lancaster/Hanover masque postindustrial is exactly this undecidability, this collapse of any secure sense of order. To add to the confusion and ambiguity of the urban space in the masque, the pairings also locate at the center of the town the two elements that functioned as the competing poles that organized medieval and modern towns. While the Church was the center of town, town planners realized that the dead, for sanitary reasons, had to be buried outside of the town; similarly, while the rule of law is exercised at the center of town, prisons are located outside of towns so as to protect the citizens. This bringing back of the periphery to the center, this folding of the periphery into the center works to further disrupt the already unstable center of this masque.

⁴² Masques were timeless in themselves, partly because no action took place in the masque in the sense of plot and partly because, as stylized, they were allegorical in nature. In addition, they are quite impersonal, in relation to contemporary theatre, in that the actors are themselves hidden behind masks.

In part, the instability of the center of the Lancaster/Hanover Masque is part and parcel of Hejduk's "refusal to settle (to posit a solution, to colonize a place, to arrive at an answer, to quiet our nerves)" (Hays 13). In "Hejduk's Chronotope," R. Michael Hays elaborates on Hejduk's refusal to settle, to put down roots and dwell, and comes to characterize it as being a double gesture. On the one hand, he argues that Hejduk refuses to engage architecture in light of "its divine mission of founding a promised land—a church on solid ground" (Hays 17); on the other hand, in response to Modern architecture that builds after the death of God, Hejduk refuses to simply continue in the legacy of the masters in covering over of the site of the loss of any security or ground with architecture itself (Hays 13). It is this double refusal that is also at the heart of Artaud's work; not only does he refuse the body of Christ and the stability and security of God, but he also refuses to cover over that loss of stability, that lack of fixity, with the human as such. For Hejduk, the Voided Centre represents just such a double refusal. It is impossible to build a church on solid ground at the center of town because that ground is voided, is radically non-foundational or un-supportive; also, Hejduk simply leaves the Voided Centre in full visibility instead of trying to cover up its disruptive presence—as absence, as the absence of presence—with architecture, with a structure that would dissimulate the site of the loss of ground within modern life.

Hejduk's refusal to settle, to work with architecture to colonize a place, to enable the subject to occupy or dwell in that place, runs counter to Marcel's attempt to realize, through his philosophical labours, a state of being *at home*. Earlier in this chapter, I outlined the relationship for Marcel between the act of receptivity or disposability towards the other that is at the heart of the I-Thou encounter and the state of being *at*

home. As I explained, Marcel highlights two essential characteristics of receptivity: the first is a certain readiness or pre-disposition towards the other that he terms *inherence* and the second is the experience of being *at home*. Inherence refers to the fact that the subject must be involved in the constitution of the space in which it is to receive the other; as Marcel explains, “a person receives others in a room in a house, if necessary, in a garden; not on unknown ground or in a forest” (*Creative Fidelity* 89). Being *at home* involves the realization of a relation between the subject and its surroundings that is more than simple legal possession; in this context, the subject must experience its surroundings as its own, as a having which is felt and through which the subject comes to apprehend itself. In this respect, the experience of being *at home* refers to the vital connection that comes to exist between the subject and its possessions, a connection that moves beyond relations of having towards relations of Being in the sense that I am able to apprehend myself in my surroundings. Because, through this experience of being *at home*, I become my surroundings, I am able to make a gift of myself to the other through the act of hospitality in which I receive the other in my house; the other that I receive comes to participate in a space through which they can come to understand or grasp me, and, in this way, “to provide hospitality is truly to communicate something of oneself to the other,” something of my being, of who I am, to the other (*Creative Fidelity* 91).

Thinking about the experience of being *at home* in this manner, as a unifying experience in which difference is overcome or transcended is to neglect thinking about ourselves as *corporeity*; what it speaks to is Marcel’s attempt to repress the experience of difference at the heart of one’s experience of one’s body as one’s primary home in the world and to replace it with an experience of being *at home* rooted in a sense of unity,

stability, and belonging. As I argued above, Marcel uses domestic architecture and the notion of dwelling to cover over the site of corporeity, the site of the loss of a stable and solid ground for his theory of the interpersonal encounter. The receptivity of the host that dwells within a domain that it experiences as its own, which is itself produced by the very threat of dissolution that corporeity poses to Marcel's enterprise, is put in place to help us forget about *corporeity*, about the loss of fixity or the fulcrum of existence that the unearthing of corporeity enacts.

But, instead of inducing forgetfulness, Hejduk's architecture confronts its reader with the reality of that loss of fixity and groundedness that is the experience of one's *corporeity*. In no way does one get a sense of being *at home* from Hejduk's work; what the reader is confronted with in Hejduk's masques is "an architecture overtly anthropomorphic but not quite human. We see not so much a reflection of ourselves as a shadow or a distortion, an image that disturbs our narcissistic gaze through what might be called an 'inmixing of otherness,' presenting itself as *other* to our body and our subjectivity" (Hays 18). In this way, one cannot dwell within Hejduk's architectural projects because one is unable to apprehend or understand oneself in them. Instead of enabling the inhabitant to communicate something of itself to the other, something of the other always already dwells at the heart of his architecture. There is no sense in which this architecture can be felt to be my own, experienced as mine, since it is irreducibly other, irreducibly mixed; this architecture can in no way be experienced as a having which is felt to the extent that the surroundings come to belong to me and I come to belong to the surroundings. I cannot identify myself within these projects and inhere within their structures and relations since a certain alien-ness or otherness is always

already present to disrupt any attempt at settling down. In terms of the tension between being and having that has been the common thread throughout this thesis, my possessions and my surroundings never collapse to the point of identification where I come to experience them by way of a having that is felt, a felt relation through which my possessions become co-extensive with me; the subject, with respect to Hejduk's architecture, never achieves identification with its surroundings, never comes to feel it as co-extensive with itself, never transcends its relations of having towards Being because the subject is never made to feel at home.

In fact, what one experiences when engaging with Hejduk's speculations is a curious sense of being homeless, an experience that Marcel describes as follows:

It may well be the case that in living among the objects which belong to me, in a house I have bought or inherited, I do not have the feeling of 'being at home.' This means that the framework within which I live is alien to me; I do not apprehend myself in it, I seem to be placed there. It can also occur that one of my relations or fellow borders, because of the fact that he is living with me, dispossesses me of that awareness of being at home... Here it is the indiscretion of the other which intervenes between me and my possessions and separates me from them, breaking the vital connection between me and them that I am trying to describe. (*Creative Fidelity* 89-90)

It is exactly the *indiscretion* of the other within Hejduk's architecture that works to disrupt any felt identification between the self and its possessions; within the masques, the other simply does not know its place, does not know to keep to itself and not intervene or interfere in the relation between the subject and its surroundings. Consequently, one is never able to dwell in Hejduk's, is never able to settle down in his masques, because one never apprehends oneself in his work, never identifies with it in such a way that one feels oneself to be at home; as soon as one finds some solid ground,

the other again intervenes, whether as an other or as other possibilities. And it is these other possibilities that I would like to discuss in the following sections.

7.3.2 *Architecture and the Body*

My decision to include a chapter on architecture within a thesis that exclusively deals with various twentieth century attempts to re-configure dominant theories concerning the nature of bodily reality—Marcel’s attack on Descartes and the idealist tradition that posited the body as a mechanical complexus, Merleau-Ponty’s re-working of Marcel’s existentialist theory of incarnation in light of the concept of corporeity as being structured by the tension between being and having, and Artaud’s battle against the anatomical ordering of the body as a body of organs in an attempt to truly have a body—is motivated by what I understand to be a very intimate, although quite unstable, relationship between architecture and the body. In *New Wombs: Electronic Bodies and Architectural Disorders*, Maria Luisa Palumbo explains how the relationship between architecture and the body has changed throughout history as the notion of the body has changed. If one recalls Marcel’s contentions that the body itself is more equivocal than univocal and that the way in which the mind represents the body to itself is one of the modes through which the mind realizes or actualizes itself, than the fact that architecture itself, which is tied to the destiny of the body, keeps step with these changes makes complete sense. In speaking about the shift from the idealized body as a model of formal measurement and harmony that, through the commensurability established between the order of the body and the order of the cosmos, was at the center of Renaissance

architecture and towards the bio-mechanical body at the heart of the Bauhaus' aesthetic concerns, Palumbo explicitly explains the new architectural paradigm of the twentieth century in terms of the proliferation of equivocal corporeal models:

It is a contrast of bodies, or rather corporeal models. The athletic, sporting, muscular, healthy body shining under the sun of the *new spirit* is contrasted with a *new body*, a body that has lost the certainty of the ego, an unstable, restless, unbalanced and instinctive body...that expresses a new extensibility...The extensibility of the body, its total availability in the global village of communications, its extreme possibilities of dislocation in time and space result in the explosion of the box, the final disappearance of a concept of identity based on a single and univocal model of the body. (Palumbo 22)

The new extensibility of the body refers to attempt by Oskar Schlemmer to extend the body into space through the use of prosthetics, to merge the body and scenery together with the result that "anatomic and spatial geometric forms become a single form of nature and culture" (Palumbo 17-19); the total availability of the body through the technologies of communication is mirrored in the use of the glass partition as "a surface that joins rather than divides" by such architects as Walter Gropius (Palumbo 19); understanding the body according to its possibilities of dislocation and fragmentation opens the way for "a new trend in architecture towards the flexibility of organic forms. Therefore, the mechanical strategy announced its revolution through the biomechanical body of Bauhaus and its light space: it is possible to extend the body" (Palumbo 19).

Against this current in architecture, Palumbo argues that Le Corbusier's modular is a last ditch attempt to ward off the new body, to ensure the lasting permanence of the healthy body watched over by the new spirit (the name of Le Corbusier's journal was *Nouveau Esprit*):

In this sense, the *modular* represents the last attempt to stop this collapse, to reaffirm the principle of the Vitruvian figure: the human figure as an element of certainty, an objective and unchanging measurement on which to base a legitimate

and univocal criterion for relations between man and the world. As became evident during the course of the century, in the *era of infinite possibilities*, the body has become the measurement of a continuous drive to *overstep the limits*, a constant tension to *surpass* all measures. (Palumbo 23)

According to Palumbo, Le Corbusier, through his work on the modular (a series of proportional relations that are rooted in the body), stands as the last great defender of the upright body, of the upright body in service of the spirit, and what he is arguing against is an architecture that rests upon the radical unfettering of the body from the certainty of the ego. And Le Corbusier is exactly the bridge to Hejduk.

But I do not want to argue along with Palumbo that Hejduk approaches the possibilities of a body freed from the certainties of the ego, a body newly discovered in its organic flexibility and whose flexibility opens onto a new relation between the body and the world in which “the possibility of relation predominates over the possibility of measurement, where the capacity for connection and interaction predominates over formal definition” (Palumbo 31). Instead, I want to advance a more cautious argument and suggest that, in his work, Hejduk attacks the cohesion of the vertical body that is the physical agent that supports the ego and, by extension, the subject, that is the mainstay for the ability of the ego to hold sway in the world. It is not a question of unfettering the body from the certainty and stability of the ego but of attempting to slowly unhinge the cohesive and self-identical body that is the structural support for architecture. The issue for me is not how the body freed from the control of the mind becomes an instrument for relationality; instead, I want to investigate how architecture can think through the experience of difference that is at the heart of *corporeity*. Instead of an architecture that looks to the body as a model of unity, coherence, and cohesiveness, I read Hejduk’s

speculations as a thinking through of the constitutive difference, dissonance, and alternation that is constitutive of our nature as flesh.

It is exactly the tension between being and having that is at the heart of one's experience of one's own *corporeity* that is lacking in an architecture that attempts to harness the infinite possibilities of a body unfettered from the certainty of ego. Beyond its function as simple model, what remains to be thought is the connection between the body and the mind, between the existent and its own proper body in the context of architecture. In this respect, it is not very useful to engage with the fluidity of the body if it is not geared towards destabilizing the vertical body that underwrites human life understood from the point of view of maintaining the ascendancy of the mind; to argue for the conscious manipulation of the possibilities of the unstable body is an illusionary project if the practitioner is not self-reflective concerning the relationship between himself/herself and his/her own body because of the fact that any such project is being watched over by both a mind and a body that work to maintain the body as the support for cerebral activity. Such an unfettered body would seem to repeat the mind/body dualism that Descartes introduced centuries ago; the only difference would be that the body being articulated is more fluid than the extensive body proposed by Descartes. Instead, I would argue that, for Hejduk, "before any cultural practice or form (e.g., architecture or the city) could be rendered political, it first has to be purged of its liberal psychology and economy" as well as of the body that works to maintain and support that psychology and economy (Somol 110), and it is exactly against this body that Hejduk works.

7.3.3 The Masques of John Hejduk

7.3.3.1 Introduction

In general, Hejduk's work represents a quite cautious attempt to work towards dissolving the cohesive, objective and univocal organ-ic body whose presence underwrites, or is literally embodied in, the work of the so-called masters of twentieth century architecture. As Mertins explains, architecture represents for Hejduk a technique for embodying thoughts in things, as a way of thinking that uses tangible things rather than abstract terms. For Hejduk, architecture, as well as all other art forms, "is the remaining shell of thought. Actual thought is of no substance. We cannot actually see thought, we can only see its remains. Thought manifests itself by its shucking or shedding of itself; it is beyond its confinement" (quoted in Mertins 25). This metaphor of the way in which thought objectifies itself is in line with Marcel's contention concerning the fact that the mind realizes itself through its representation of its body to itself. According to the metaphor of shucking or shedding, the mind actualizes itself, its thoughts, materially in the world through a natural by product that is involuntarily produced by the body and in the body's image. In this way, architectural productions, as embodied thoughts, are intimately related to the body that underwrites them, to the body that supports the mind and functions to secrete and materialize its thoughts. Thus, there is no better way to work to dissolve the body that supports the mind and that labours to actualize its thoughts in the world than to inhabit those remains, those shells, and work at them from the inside, like a traveler in a hotel understood as a house that she does not

inhabit as her own. And this is exactly the way in which Hejduk depicts his relation to the work of the masters of twentieth century architecture:

I am like a fly that comes in and says, 'OK, here is one aspect that has been left out, yet which has great potentiality, it should be wrapped up'...All my work has been completing pieces...In other words, the panoramic views of the great architects, which are panoramic, they didn't conclude. And I come like a fly and fill in the pieces, the logical pieces, then they are cleaned up" (quoted in Somol 111).

In relation to Artaud, one could read Hejduk's attempt at wrapping or cleaning up as a way to have done with, as a way to rid oneself of the corporeal legacy that the masters embodied within their work. In fact, this is the way in which R.E. Somol approaches Hejduk's architectural projects. By occupying the panoramic views of the masters as a fly and labouring to complete various overlooked aspects of their work, he argues that the cohesive body that underwrites these views, that is the material support for their work, begins to dissolve, "exposing potential anthro- and zoomorphic viscera" (Somol 102). As the solidity of the column dissolves and becomes a hollow space, what Hejduk uncovers within the space of such aspects as the column, an element of architecture that shares in the verticality of the cohesive body of thought, is a series of potentialities and forces that lie beneath the cohesive body of architecture. Thus what lies at the heart of architecture according to Hejduk are "multiple forms of domestication and occupation (in the *colonizing* sense of the imposition of order) as the center, the innards, of the most familiar architectural elements" (Somol 102). What is most essential about architecture is its power of domestication, is its ability to impose order upon the body through which the mind can then realize itself in the world; as such, architecture can be understood as a means of warfare against the body, as a technique for the occupation and domestication of the body by the mind. And the question becomes for Hejduk how

to intervene against the multiple forms of domestication that is the program of architectural production, how to dissolve the imposed order through which the spirit ensures the cohesion of the body that provides it with its necessary support and stability.

7.3.3.2 Hejduk and Urbanism

In Hejduk's work, the city is one of the privileged sites of this battle over the body. As I have argued above, urbanization, in order to realize its rational plan, must be rooted in a logically coherent and organized body. In fact, during the Renaissance, the organization of a city, the correct relationship and distribution of its parts is modeled on the cohesive organization of body parts in relation to one another. So, in part, the body, in urban planning, functions as a model for the efficacious arrangement of part in relation to whole. In the case of the urban type that Hejduk refers to as the American courthouse town, one realizes that the town, which places the courthouse, the seat of rationally articulated laws, at the center of the town, is laid out according to the vertical body that services, and works to maintain the ascendancy of, the mind. In the case of the courthouse town, "the courthouse is both visual focus and social guarantee; and in each square the reality of government made explicit provides the continuing assurance of order" (Somol 107). Just as the face is the visual focus of the vertical body—what Somol refers to as the "organized faciality of liberal, individualist politics" (Somol 110)—the courthouse is the visual focus of the town; similarly, just as the mind is the guarantor of order in the body, as the rational seat of organized thought, the courthouse is the guarantor of social order through rational legality.

And it is against this orderly, reasonable, and judicious urbanism that is secreted by an equally orderly, reasonable, and judicious vertical body, Hejduk develops his various architectural masques. In part, these performances, in which the characters wear stylized masks that de-individualize and de-personalize the actors, work against the faciality of the vertical body and labour to dissolve the organized faciality of individualistic and personalized liberal politics. As well, as in the case of *The Lancaster/Hanover Masque*, the central square is curiously divided between the legal institutions of the secular state that act as the guarantors of order and the religious institutions of order that were prevalent in the medieval period. Considering Catherine Ingraham's claim that the Lancaster/Hanover masque has its roots in American colonialism—more specifically, in the seventeenth century errand into the wilderness (Ingraham 130)—I would argue that it stands as a critique of the American courthouse town and the bodily order that it embodies.

What one finds at the center of this urban plan is not, however, a square, but a void that is bounded on one side by the Church House and the Death House and on the other by the Court House and the Prison House. In some respects, this is a town doubly without a head; the verticality of the body implied in the placement of the law or the church at the center of the city has been undone. Instead of the architectural elements of the town revolving around the courthouse as the secular image of the law around which life in the town itself revolves or around the church as the religious center of medieval life, the central square of this urban arrangement is a voided center bordered on two opposing sides by the abovementioned structures and on the two remaining sides by two long wooden walls on which are suspended 26 chairs (13 on each side) that overlook the

Voided Centre. A passageway on the side of the wall that faces away from the voided center leads to the 13 doors that open onto planks that provide the observers access to the chairs, which are suspended to the right of the door. Far from providing any continuing assurance of order, all that this center of town provides is a sense of passing away into dust:

The Observers (all of the Citizens) can enter the passageway on one side of the wall. The Observer can open any door to see if the suspended chair is occupied; if it is not, the Observer (Citizen) can go out onto the cantilevered plank. It is almost like being on a diving board. The Observer then eases himself/herself onto the suspended chair and sits looking at the Voided Centre, the Court House, the Prison House, the Church House and the Death House. He/she also sees the opposite wall of suspended chairs, cantilevered planks, and doors sometimes shut, sometimes opened, sometimes in movement. The old cloth of the spinning wheel is placed in the Voided Centre and through age and the normal elements become dust. (*The Lancaster/Hanover Masque* 73)

The Lancaster/Hanover Masque therefore exists between two urban plans, as a confrontation and ultimate going beyond of the Medieval City that was centred on the church and the Modern Town that is centred on the courthouse; Lancaster/Hanover is a product of the bringing together of these two ordering principles, two different species of ordering, but it also undoes both in placing the structures around a voided center. This pairing has the function of deterritorializing both terms in the pair through its monstrous combination, a combination that, by enabling the escape from these two sets of jurisdictions, suggests “a politics of continuous movement, perpetual performance, which will never dream of ultimate liberation via the structure of the law or [the order of God]” (Somol 112).

The effects of this intertwining of the Medieval with the Modern State are multiple and work to disrupt the legal relations that liberalism constructs between the individual and the State. Into a world in which relations between the individual and the

State are mediated by the “neutral instrumentality of the law,” pre-liberal Medieval visions of community introduce the possibility of different associations between the elements within the city (Somol 111-2). Through the Lancaster/Hanover Masque, as we shall see, Hedjuk uses both textual and pictorial methods to bring elements in the community into different relations and associations. In this respect, Hejudk is quite close to Artaud, and I do not believe that it is an accident that Hejudk uses a theatrical term—masque—to characterize his project of enacting different possible urban organizations. In some respects, the masques enact the theatre of cruelty as envisioned by Artaud and become the experimental space of what Somol refers to as “promiscuous affiliation” (Somol 113) that runs counter to, as a line of escape from, the legality or rationality that governs functional ordering. Just as Artaud worked to free the body from the rule of its organization into discrete functionalized organs, Hejudk works to free the urban fabric from the same anatomical order in which each element is situated by way of its functional relation to other organs; in this respect, I understand Hejudk as trying to teach architecture how to dance again.

7.3.3.2.1 Urbanism and the Body

Hejudk attacks the centralized town plan by voiding its visual and social center, but he does not simply leave it devoid of possibility. Instead, by staging the town around the confrontation of the Medieval with the Modern across the Voided Centre, he forces two distinct urban practices to improperly occupy and circulate in the same space of the Masque, causing a complex spatiality to emerge. In this way, what has been a long standing distinction between the Medieval and the Modern, between governance by

religious law and secular law, comes to be “dissolved into new matrices of association,” and similarly the social units or elements that make up the urban fabric are able, in this resulting spatiality, to enter into free unions and establish associations that may appear monstrous from the point of view of more traditional pairings or orderings (Hays 10-1). In this way, the Voided Centre is not a void in the sense of emptiness or nothingness but one of possibility. Thus, the center of the Lancaster/Hanover Masque is not a site of permanence, of reassuring stability and order as guaranteed by the head that rules over the verticality of the body but of contingency and uncertainty (consider the fact that some doors might be open, closed or in movement), change and impermanence (what one observes is the passing away into dust of the old cloth from the spinning wheel⁴³), but also future possibility since Hejduk remarks in another text, *Vladivostok*, that a diving board is “an anticipated function” (*Vladivostok* 90).

So, once the head is removed or its central position voided, Hejduk has the elements in the town that used to circulate around the head and under the watchful eye of its laws begin to free associate by way of disjointed connections, much as Artaud envisioned the human body dancing once its anatomical organization was overcome. But such affiliations are not simply enacted between subjects and objects within the Masque; Hejduk also allows the objects to intermingle in multiple ways in the text. Although I will look at these associations and affiliations in a moment, I want to also look at how such monstrous couplings impact upon the body, specifically how Hejduk’s

⁴³ Curiously, the spinning wheel that produced this cloth is nowhere to be found in the masque. However, one discovers that the cloth covers the Wheel of Chance and is removed from the wheel and placed in the Voided Centre whenever the Prison House becomes vacant and a new Accused is required. Once the wheel has been used, a new cloth is placed on the Wheel until it is needed again.

practices work to dissolve the universal grammar and order of the human body as ideal figure. The figure of the angel, as a symbol of the Medieval, is present throughout Hejduk's work and is often the catalyst for experimentation by subjects within his masques concerning winged creatures. The trapper is one such figure in the Lancaster/Hanover Masque. The Trapper is fascinated by peacocks, and, instead of modeling chairs on a human form, uses the peacock as his model; in addition, he is intrigued by that moment in birds where the flesh turns into feathers: "He is intrigued by winged people. He wants to understand the exact point where the skin becomes feathers"⁴⁴ (*Lancaster* 56). The Voided Centre of the town re-appears in the context of bodily form as that point, that impossible juncture or hinge between flesh and feathers; this point is the point at which the Medieval body of the angel and the human body of flesh converge and separate; it is the moment of undecidability and convergence or affiliation, the moment where two distinct bodily organizations or conceptions of the body conjoin.

Similarly, as I argued in the case of Artaud, Hejduk also takes advantage of the body's ability to produce fragments, of the de-individualizing impulses that threaten the body with dissolution, and he sends fragments spinning throughout his work. In one story related in *Vladivostok*, the reader comes to discover in the Riga section that the Director of Medical Services, an angelologist, was intending to surgically stitch the wings of a hawk to a severed human head, a flying figure that appears throughout the paintings

⁴⁴ A task that is about as difficult as understanding, in the context of the Masque, the point at which, in the curious and promiscuous object-subject couplings that Hejduk has produced, the object becomes the subject or the subject becomes the object. What becomes more and more difficult as one reads further into the Masque is to articulate that point at which the object stops and the subject begins, a difficulty that Marcel encountered when trying to develop his phenomenology of the relation of having.

collected in the section entitled “Lake Baikal.” The Director, it turns out, is obsessed with images of angel heads with wings and collects the images of these couplings by cutting them out of paintings, leaving behind “a voided space where the head-wings used to be” (*Vladivostok* 46). Again, we come across the obsessive interest in the moment when flesh becomes feathers, when two distinct species form a rhizome with one another. In the context of *Vladivostok*, Hejduk directs the reader, by way of the painting that accompanies the text, towards other related scenes of monstrous affiliations; in this respect, the space of the Masques is more directional, emphasizing virtual connections and possible couplings, than dimensional, a space of fixed, stable, and immovable relations (Somol 116). Along the side of the text, Hejduk placed the forms of six structures: the ‘structure’ that houses the Director, the House of the Keeper of the Records of Rilke, The Genetist, the Sea Captain’s House, the Collapse of Time, and the Angel Watch Tower. In addition, the painting on the facing page shows the arrangement of these structures in relation to one another within the city of Riga.

The theme of voice and speech, both the person silenced through decapitation and the speechlessness that the police officer who looked in the bag containing the head was reduced to concerning the incident, links the Director to the House of the Keeper of Records of Rilke, which is accompanied by the following text: “As she entered the room and approached the bed he rushed to her and covered her lips with the sounds of his poems and softly blew his breath into her. She felt the air fill her; she closed her eyes in Prague” (*Vladivostok* 56). Artaud himself ascribed to just such a theory of reading, in which, in order to read his poetry properly—much of which is glossonalia and sounds instead of words—one has to breathe along with Artaud and feel his body or feel with his

body, and such a method of reading would require dissolving one's own body and adopting a foreign breathe or respiration. The entry concerning the House of the Keeper of Records of Rilke is linked to other forms that run down the side of the page and to the crematorium, that site of complete bodily dissolution (the turning to dust that the Observers watch as they stare into the Voided Centre) for which Hejduk provides a dictionary definition. The vector Director-Keeper of Records can be further followed to the Genetist whose entry appears in the "Lake Baikal" section of the Masque⁴⁵, wherein one reads that the Genetist is in love with twins—a man and a woman—who he comes upon one day riding naked upon a white bull that has been stained by the purple grapes intertwined in the woman's hair. In this scene, each of the twins is having an affair with the Genetist who is himself obsessed with the double helix (the twin strands of our genetic code); the twins, as with DNA, unravel their pairing in order to pair with the Genetist, as DNA unravels when it communicates with RNA or replicates itself. But their relation with the genetist is further complicated as the threesome becomes a rhizome or aggregate with the bull, an animal to which the Genetist is associated because of the perverse pleasure that he derives from the electrifying of bulls. In the above sequence (just one of many programs, itineraries or masques that are performed in *Vladivostok*), the reader encounters perverse unions, obscene circulating fragments, and pairings that are undone and recombined in complex affiliations or aggregates—dare I say assemblages—that are charged with desire.

⁴⁵ Each different city functions as a new scene in the theatrical sense for the action of the Masque.

7.3.3.2.2 Urbanism and the Subject-Object Relation

The instability in Hejduk's work, especially the idea of an anticipated function as articulated in the case of the diving board, works against the supposed stability that is generated from the way in which Hejduk equates or identifies each 'subject' in his masques with its function or job in the masque and with the 'object' in which it dwells. In *Lancaster/Hanouver*, each individual subject is only identified by way of its function or job, such as the Summer Visitor, the Sower, and the Widow. In some cases, the objects in which these subjects dwell (I am reluctant to refer to them as houses, but I will return to that in a moment) are fabricated with the function of the subject in mind, so that the object becomes the perfect machine for living for those subject. For instance, the Church House is a machine equipped with earphones that allow the priest to listen to confessions—but he considers all speech as confessional—and with speakers for amplifying and disseminating the voice and message of the priest, the Widow's House is constructed with pipes in its roof so that, when the Widow wails, the house generates a sound just as an organ does when it is being played, and the Cross-Over House is the physical embodiment of the problem of undecidability that haunts the convert that occupies the object. In this respect, Hejduk is creating architecture that can best be characterized as machines for living as conceived by Le Corbusier; by taking the logic to its extreme, Hejduk creates an architecture that functions as a prosthetic and enables the subject to fulfill its function within society. But the Voided Centre of the town square keeps these functions open, opens them up to anticipated functions that have yet to be, and demonstrates to the citizens that these functional determinations are not stable—a principle that Hejduk himself ascribes to and puts in play when, in the context of different

masques, the same form comes to have a different function, i.e., the Old Farmer's House in the Lancaster/Hanover masque becomes the House of the Painter in the Vladivostok masque.

In other words, the functionality of these forms, of the houses that the subjects occupy, is constantly in question. Although they would seem to have been built for a specific purpose and use, the descriptions that Hejduk wrote do not necessarily work to maintain that identification. As R. Michael Kays explains, "his subjects-objects represent the right to be more than their assigned roles, 'the right to be *other* in this world, the right not to make common cause with any single one of the existing categories that life makes available.' They hold out the promise that they can change their vocation, put on a different mask" (Hays 19). The possibility of anticipated functions, of other uses, keeps the masques open and cause them to "present itself as *other* to our body and subjectivity" (Hays 18). The drawings in the Lancaster/Hanover Masque are accompanied, in the following order, by a text that is composed of a listing of the 68 objects and their occupants, referred to as the subjects, a listing that briefly describes the appearance of the 68 object and the actions of the subjects from 6:30 am until 6:30 pm, and a catalogue of the 68 objects and subjects in which Hejduk spends time elaborating on the structure of the objects and the actions of the subject. What the reader experiences as they move from one listing, or catalogue, to the next is an increasing discrepancy between the object-form and the occupying subject, or, more precisely, the dissolution of the boundary between object and subject, of the relation between object and subject, that is the legacy of the Cartesian representation of the body as a machine or extended object. As Somol reads Hejduk's work, it in part enacts "the dissolution of subject-object

relations...[and] at least sustains *the possibility* for an escape from the legality of conjugality of the pair and toward the promiscuity of the double” (Somol 113).

Somol suggestion that Hejduk diverts the subject-object pairing towards a doubling is instructive in that it presents a way for understanding the shift away from functionalized pairing of the subject and object in the Lancaster/Hanover Masque as the advancement of a mode of promiscuous affiliation that seems to be a prevalent technique in Hejduk’s critique of urbanism. What one discovers in the course of the text is that any functional identification between the object and subject has dissolved and that, in its place, the object comes to exist as an eerie double of the subject and visa-versa, but, like the Object/Subject structure in *Vladivostok*, the two moments or poles never merge. The Object/Subject structure is composed of two interlocking constructions, with each unit resting on four wheels, which appear throughout the masque together but not necessarily joined. In Riga, the structures appear together, confronting each other within a space that resembles the Voided Centre in *The Lancaster/Hanover Masque* in that the space is bounded on two sides by walls with doors and diving board planks. The structures have no apparent function, and the painting in the text is simply accompanied by the dictionary definition of both the words ‘object’ and ‘subject.’ However, the Object/Subject form(s)—it is difficult to talk about them as either one whole unit, since they are separate self-contained structures that are each mobile and moveable, or two separate units, since they fit into one another like puzzle pieces and always appear together, although in different degrees of intimacy—is included within various scenes within the Masque, such as the scene with the Crematorium and the House of the Keeper of Records of Rilke that I discussed earlier. In this scene, the pairing may function as a reference to the possession

of the keeper by the breathe of the poet—a strange convergence or affiliation that certainly resists the easy distinction between subject and object that characterizes functional relations: in the case of a keeper of records, the subject is simply meant to look after the records, to organize them and catalogue them, but certainly not to develop any sort of affiliation with them beyond their function as sites of knowledge. However, as Marcel himself discovered, relations of having—his term for objectified and functionalized relations between a subject and an object—break down, and it becomes difficult to maintain the distinction between subject and object of possession, as the example of the subject that comes to be devoured by its possessions demonstrates. But the unstable relation of functional having between the subject and the object never breaks down into one of simply identity in Hejduk; it never becomes a relation of Being. Instead, the relation opens onto anticipated functions, onto a relational space in which monstrous affiliations and connections become possible. As the Object/Subject structure depicts, although the duality may be dissolved, the elements in the relation do not collapse into identity but instead find themselves in a complex spatiality of connection and intertwining.

So, in part, Hejduk's work is animated by the tension between being and having. It is interesting that Hejduk's work is rooted in the functionalization of architecture, in Le Corbusier's call to create 'machines for living,' in that it calls for the complete functionalization of dwelling, for creating a dwelling that fulfills, in its entirety, the function of living or becomes for the dweller an instrument for living. In this respect, his work shares the instrumentalist and functional concerns of the Modernist movement in architecture; however, instead of simply reducing architecture to a functional role, even if

its function is to realize human dwelling in the world, Hejduk does dissolve the rigid subject-object duality that structures functional relations of having and suggest a more promiscuous relation between the poles of the relation. But the relation never collapses to that of identity; the terms never coincide in such a way that the subject, or the reader, ever gets a sense of being *at home*. This is not an architecture of dwelling, but it is one that oscillates between the relations of being and having, that partakes of the porous nature of the line that divided the subject from the object and which Marcel himself discovers in his investigations into the phenomenon of having.

Initially, the listing of the object with its corresponding subject in *Kancaster/Hanouver* suggests that this plan for a rural community will be based on functionality: each citizen will occupy a house that is suited to their particular function or place in the community. But even this list has some odd entries that suggest that all is not as it seems, such as the object Masque linked to the subject All, the Useless House that is occupied by The Useless, The Cross-Over House that is occupied by the Convert, and the Suicide's House that is occupied by The Suicide. The sense of uncertainty or instability concerning these pairings increases as one reads through the next listing that describes, in short phrases, the objects and subjects as they exist between 6:30 am and 6:30 pm, the time during which rural communities are most active and during which the citizens in the community are supposed to be performing their functions; in fact, one of the reasons why I hesitate to refer to the objects as dwellings is because the masque only runs during the twelve hour period while people are working. Already slippage is beginning to occur between the object and subject pairings, such as in the case of the Druggist: while the

entry under object explains “Pipes flushed,” the line under subject reads “the Druggist hides the evidence” (*The Lancaster/Hanover Masque* 20).

These discrepancies or gaps between object and subject become explicit as one reads through the next section of text in which Hejduk spends more time outlining the actual construction or providing details of the objects and explaining the actions of the subjects that occupy the objects. Two things begin to happen in this part of the masque in which drawings are placed alongside the descriptive text: the identity between the object and the subject collapses and the various elements in the masques, both the objects and subjects, begin to refer outside of themselves—both by way of the written text and the composition of the drawings—and to exist in relation to the other elements in the town. For example, in the case of the Retired General’s Place, the object is a command post; it is a cube, raised on stilts, from which four telescopes (one on each side of the cube) and a periscope (extending from the top of the cube as in a submarine) all extend outward and that is equipped with ear phones, sonar technology, telephone, field binoculars, and opera glasses (*The Lancaster/Hanover Masque* 24-5); it would seem as if, depending on the subject under investigation, different technologies would be used for reconnaissance. From the text explaining the Retired General, one learns about his past as a map-maker stationed in West Berlin, that he believes that Berlin was the first Medieval city⁴⁶, that he is writing a book on empty lots in Berlin, and that he likes to visit Berlin in the winter and drive through the city from midnight to dawn in a black Mercedes with leather seats because he enjoys the feeling. In the accompanying drawing, the Retired General Place is drawn along with Tower Hill, and, upon reading the entry for Tower Hill, one

⁴⁶ So, as a subject, he does embody the Medieval-Modern split that I have argued fractures this masque.

discovers that “the towers are to be put under the jurisdiction and protection of the Retired General” (*The Lancaster/Hanover Masque* 25). Although that explains the anticipated function of the General, it gives no idea as to his present function in the town; although it is clear from the previous listing, which states that the telescope is being focused and that the Retired General is adjusting his field glasses, one never finds out what exactly he is doing, what his exact purpose or function is in the community. The object is a machine for seeing and reconnaissance, for collecting information at a distance and detecting the location of approaching objects/subjects, but the reason behind his observation is never revealed. Instead, the relation between the object and subject, at this point in the Masque, has become more of a case of doubling than of functionalized pairing: the Retired General, when he travels to Berlin, can only experience the city in the same manner in which his place affords him an experience of the farm community—in the enclosed space of the car and what gives him pause are “the deep perspectives of the avenues” (*The Lancaster/Hanover Masque* 25)—and the place that has been built for him seems to curiously repeat the way in which, as a naval officer, he would have experienced the world, whether in a submarine by way of a periscope, or on a boat by way of binoculars and field glasses. In other words, as a machine for living, the Retired General Place is more about his existence as observer; his detached participation in warfare is repeated in the masque in which he is a removed detached observer.

As a war machine, the cube has both a defensive (for detecting approaching threats) and offensive (for reconnaissance and the collection of data to be used for planning attacks) function; but, it seems curiously out of place in this farming community. In the context of the military machines that populate Hejduk’s work, Somol

argues that Hejduk is drawing on the ancient understanding of the practice of architecture: “Of course, since Vitruvius, the ‘education of the architect’ has always included a knowledge of the construction of military machines for siege and assault (machinery being one of the three departments of architecture for the classical theorist, along with the art of ‘building’ and ‘the making of time pieces’...)” (Somol 115). He argues that Hejduk draws on this classical conception of the profession of architecture and puts war machines into service in his urban constructions, but the question remains as to why. What purpose do they serve? Why populate an urban space with machines of war?

Somol develops an interesting argument to try to answer these questions. He argues that, for Hejduk, by way of his realization that domestication and occupation—in the sense of colonization—were at the heart of the architectural project, urbanism was a continuation of that occupation by other means and on a bigger scale. Urbanism, in this respect, is a continuation of the war against the body, against any forces that would work to disrupt the upright, unified and cohesive body; for Hejduk, urbanism is co-extensive with “the logic of the body, proportion, and analogy that avoids an engagement with the borderline and the anomalous” (Somol 114). It is upon this logic of the body, the logic of proportion and functional relation that arranges the body in such a way that all impulses flows to the head so that they can be interpreted in a way that ensures their compliance with the effort of the brain to maintain the body in its fortuitous stability and verticality, that the logic of urbanism is founded and articulated. When understood as a continuation of the war against the flesh, against *corporeity* and its constitutive difference, it is not

surprising that war machines play a crucial role in Hejduk's urban project, which he presents as a "continued dismantling of any discrete notion of subjectivity" (Somol 114).

Chapter 8: Prospectus

Instead of trying to provide some overarching concluding remarks in an attempt to summarize my argument or to tie up loose ends, I have chosen to try to survey what lies ahead for the line of thinking laid out in the thesis. My intention with these concluding remarks is to anticipate the future direction of my thought, to look forward and try to articulate the future work onto which I believe this thesis opens instead of to draw this line of thinking to a close through the solemn finality of a conclusion that looks back over the course of the project. As I have discovered throughout my academic career, endings seem to offer the writer a chance to unearth what is really at stake in a finished work, a discovery that opens up the vista of that which has not yet been (but remains to be) written. In the case of this thesis, what remains to be written is a work that investigates and articulates the phenomenon of having and then establishes the connection between relations of having and the primordial relation of having that is part of one's own relation with one's own body, that is part of one's *corporeity*—more precisely, what remains to be written is a *Phenomenology of Having*, one that originates in Marcel's "Outline for a Phenomenology of Having" but that works to resist its ontological imperative.

What I think is necessary at this juncture is a re-thinking of relations of having apart from those of Being, apart from their conceptualization as relations that, in order to be truly respectful of the other, must be transcended into relations of Being. What is required now is an attempt to think having apart from a tradition that has always sought to determine it as a function of Being and the genitive, to think having otherwise. As a result of having studied Marcel, I feel that I now have a much deeper understanding of Derrida's suspicions concerning Being and of his contention in *Monolingualism of the*

Other that he has a language, but that it is not his own. As I read Derrida, instead of trying to rethink Being apart from relations of having, he is working towards understanding relations of having apart from the imposition of Being. In the sentence “I have a language, but it is not mine,” Derrida is working to free the relation of having from the genitive, from the imposed genitive that the copular insinuates into the relation of having. It is only now, in the twilight of this thesis, that I see Derrida as trying to re-articulate the distinction between being and having and trying to situate his work within the movement between the terms, within the border zone that Merleau-Ponty claims “defines the human condition” (*Texts and Dialogues* 106).

In addition to allowing me to approach Derrida’s thought from a perspective that I feel would be quite productive, this thesis puts me in a position to engage with two texts that I came across while I was in the process of writing the thesis but with which I found it impossible, at the time, to seriously engage. The first, entitled *Of Minimal Things: Studies on the Notion of Relation*, is by Rodolphe Gasche and was published in 1999; the second is *The Gift of Property: Having the Good* by Stephen David Ross and was published in 2001. It is only now, after having written the thesis, that I feel myself to be in a position to take up their work and to deal with their ideas and arguments in a meaningful manner. And it is partly in response to these works, as well as to the writings of Marcel, Merleau-Ponty, Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida, and Irigaray, that I am proposing to expand upon Marcel’s outline and write a more complete *Phenomenology of Having*.

In the first instance, Gasche’s work on the notion of relation—he describes the essays collected in this text as attempts to “rethink the notion of relation” (Gasche 9)—will provide invaluable insights into how to relate *corporeity*, the relation that one has

with one's body and that I would argue is "anterior to relation" (Gasche 9) while making all relations with others possible, to the larger issue of relations in general, whether with things or with others. What I would like to articulate more fully in my own *Phenomenology of Having* is (1) the way in which the difference at the heart of one's relation to one's body—the fact that one both has a body and is one's own body—is a founding non-relational relation and (2) how that relation, rooted in difference, is "the opening for a subject to turn toward the other" (Gasche 9). Taking my lead from Merleau-Ponty, I would like to explore the possibility of developing a philosophy based on the irreducible difference that one experiences between being and having that is at the heart of our experience of corporeity, a difference that I feel has profound consequences for Ross' argument against relations of having in *The Gift of Property*.

While Gasche's text looks at the relational in general, *The Gift of Property* investigates the relation of possession and having in particular and provides an excellent account of what is at stake in the distinction between being and having in relation to the larger philosophical tradition; however, in many respects, I will articulate my project in opposition to Ross' text. In the text, Ross argues that, in the Western philosophical tradition, "having, owning, and possessing have occupied a place of honor in the thought of being" (Ross 7), that Western thoughts on being have proceeded by equating being with having, owning, possessing instead of with generosity and giving, with a giving beyond having. The text is an exhaustive catalogue of philosophical accounts of the relation between being and having and provides the reader with an invaluable bibliography for any research into the philosophical relation between the terms.

However, and this I find extremely telling about Ross' argument, Marcel—nor Sartre, but

I will leave that for another time—is never mentioned in the work. What is significant about this exclusion is that, as I have shown in the thesis, Marcel specifically addresses the relation between being and having in his existential philosophy but from a perspective that seriously questions Ross' claims concerning the hijacking of Western philosophical thoughts on being by relations of having and possessing.

Marcel, especially his work on the nature of bodily reality, provides another perspective on the relation between being and having that questions Ross' historical reading of the Western philosophical tradition. As I have argued in this thesis, I believe that one of Marcel's greatest legacies is his work on the true nature of the reality of human embodiment, on the relation that one has with their own body, especially in terms of the light it sheds on the relationship between being and having, on the nature of these relations and on the distinction between them. What Marcel demonstrates in his work—and this is something that Ross fails to take up—is that any attempt to think through the relation between being and having must necessarily be rooted in how those terms are experienced by the embodied subject when it reflects on its own embodiment. Any philosophical investigation into the nature of relations of being or having must dig for answers in the primordial difference that one experiences between the body that one *has* and that one *is* and must be rooted in this felt difference. And the central feature of this felt difference, which runs counter to Ross' claims, is that the genitive is intimately related to being, to the body that I am, and not to having, to the body that I have. The genitive is part and parcel of Being; I would argue, along with Marcel, that the genitive is absolutely central to relations of Being, as in the relation that one has with one's own body—I *am my body*. The genitive is not a structural feature of relations of having since

the two things in relation are not collapsed into one another by the relation, as in the case of the body that one has as a possession—*I have a body*. The possessive is only introduced by way of Being, through the copular, as in the statement ‘It is mine’—*I have a body, and it is mine*.

Against Ross, I would argue that the problem is not that being has been thought as a function of the genitive but that relations of having have continually been appropriated, subsumed or held hostage by a vocabulary of Being. As I stated above, the possessive index comes into relations of having only by way of the copular, once the relation is brought under the sign of Being. In this respect, one could argue that, in the Western tradition, having has always been subordinated or placed under the dominion of Being and has been understood in terms of the proper, of propriety, and of presence. But what is interesting about Marcel’s work on having is the fact that he equates relations of having with absence and impropriety. Having is an improper relation, one in which, for example, the possessor can easily become the possessed, a reversal that is unthinkable and impossible in relations of being in which the subject places itself absolutely at the other’s disposal, makes itself absolutely available to the other by renouncing all power of possession and simply becoming the possessed since this is the only way in which the subject can be faithful to the presence of the other. In this way, Marcel presents having as an impediment to generosity, giving, and hospitality, all of which can only be achieved by way of true ontological relations, such as co-presence achieved through the adoption of a stance of ontological availability, based in Being.

As I argued in the thesis, Marcel was ever hopeful that he could find a way to base his theory of intersubjectivity on the felt relation between the self and its own body,

the body that it felt to be its own; however, Marcel had to give up on his dream once he realized that one's body is irreducibly both something that one has and something that one is. But what difference does this difference make? For Marcel, it made a world of difference because it meant that one could never absolutely claim to be in complete possession of one's body, that one's body would never completely be one's own, and that one would never absolutely be one's own body—in other words, there is always already a remainder, an irreducible portion of one's body that is not one's own, that is outside of one's possession—and it is this initial reality of dispossession and expropriation (initial in the sense that it is not derived from nor does it follow upon some previous full possession, appropriation, or self-identity) at the heart of embodiment that I have called, following Marcel, *corporeity*. In other words (or, in the words of an other—specifically Derrida), in relations of having, the self is thrown outside of itself, experiences a movement of expropriation that is a constitutive feature of all relations of having—relations of having are always already *of the other*.

What Marcel unearthed by way of the subterranean path of his thinking was that one could not place one's self as an embodied self at the disposal of the other, make oneself absolutely available to the other, since one is never completely self-identical with one's body, since one's body is never completely present to oneself. And it was at this point that Marcel introduced the category of *my life* and upon which he came to base his entire ontological project as its very possibility—since I am in complete possession of my life, since *I am my life* or can be my life, since I can also renounce all identification with my life, I can give my life to the other absolutely, make it absolutely available to the other, and place it absolutely at the other's disposal.

What is intriguing about Marcel's thoughts on having is his effort to understand the structure of relations of having, to come to some understanding of having as a phenomenon. According to Marcel's investigations, relations of having are unstable, threatening (our possessions may eat us up), and unpredictable. While they are structured according to the duality of possessor and possessed, the exact relation between the terms is one of uncertainty and tension in which, although the terms seem separate and distinct, it is "as though there were a connecting corridor between them and me; they reach me, one might say, underground" (*Being and Having* 164). This difference and the resulting tension, which is inseparable from *corporeity*, from the fact of the body being an absolute possession (simultaneously something that I am and something that I have), is what threatens Marcel and forces him to turn towards an ontology based in *my life*. In the case of one's body, the subject will never be in a position where, through a personal creative act, they will be able to transcend or sublimate the relation of having that they have with their body and change it into a relation of being; however, in the case of their life, the subject is in a position, through what Marcel refers to as pure creation, to effect the transformation of the duality of possessor and possessed into a living reality (*Being and Having* 165-6).

Marcel is extremely clear about the distinction between being and having. As long as one is content to remain on the level of having, then one will remain centred on oneself or on another treated as an other. For Marcel, having is at the same time "auto-centric and hetero-centric" (*Being and Having* 167). Having is a relation that is somehow always already of the other. It is this facet of having that I want to articulate more fully in my future writing, and it is exactly this irreducible remainder of alterity in having that

led Marcel to argue that “it is possible to transcend the level of the self and the other *qua* other [towards being and co-presence in which the self finds itself in the presence of the other as Thou]” (*Being and Having* 167). What Marcel’s work and thought open onto is the possibility of thinking through relations of having as relations in which the other is respected or approached *as* other, which is in marked contrast to relations of Being in which the alterity of the other is overcome, sublimated, transcended or etherialized and through which one encounters the other in terms of co-presence. And Marcel also uncovers the relationship between having and corporeity, between relations of having and the true nature of the reality of the human body as an absolute possession, which opens a way for arguing, against Levinas, that respectful relations with an other *as* other are necessarily bodily in nature since one’s body is always already irreducibly *of the other*.

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