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## 3

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## THE BODY IN COMMUNICATION

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*In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He ["the true Light," the Christ] was in the world . . . born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . .*

The Gospel of John (King James Version)

### OF TWO BODIES AND TWO MINDS: VICIOUS OPPONENTS

The history of the Western world is one of being conflicted, and violently so. And this fundamental conflict is expressed in all modes of interaction, including politics, morality, metaphysics, pedagogy, art, and religion. The West, and increasingly also Westernized peoples, suffer from a cruel duality of illusionism. For millennia, reality for the West was typically magical and mythological. The universe was really pure spirit, or soul (later mind), and the body was at best an obstructionist shadow or illusion that tempted the weak from the truth. At worst, the body was seen as pure evil and as such worthy of the most egregious violence and denigration. Then a sea-change occurred that found expression as a powerful backlash. The body and its natural impulses were thrust into

the light of prominence. Nature became valorized. "Natural science," with its intimate preoccupation with bodies of all sorts, and materialism turned the tables and defined spirit, soul, and mind as mere illusion, "epiphenomena" at best, to be ridiculed. The body was purged of all Medieval qualities. Anything that lacked extension or could not be operationally spatialized as a measure, such as meaning, emotion, intent, motive, were cast out in an effort to liberate Europe from the "dark" fear of a demon-haunted world.

Thus, the West has suffered two great transformations identified by many as nothing other than global crises that came in the form of concurrent spiritual, political, moral, and metaphysical revolutions. First was the collapse of the Greco-Roman world, which plunged the West into sheer contempt for the material universe, including the human body. The effect on communication was the end of openly disputative exchange and with it the disappearance of democratic institutions, deliberative bodies, and the rise of ecclesiastical dictatorship, prayer, and homiletics. Everything was muted. Self-mutilation and vows of silence celebrated the conviction that this world; this view of the body is ruled by the devil and must be rebuked.

With nearly equal vigor, the second "crisis" or revolution in, ironically, values and beliefs across discourses has rejected anything and everything that cannot be controlled by Man as the true measure of all things. Hence, the sterility of a new kind of darkness followed the "twilight" of a world suddenly evacuated by the gods. One universe was full of spirit and souls, alive with intentional forces from Titans and angels to nymphs and leprechauns. The other is defined as infinite, empty, and dead. One is pure spirit, the other randomly vibrating bits in utter vacuum. Each defines the other as illusion; one "dark" with fear, the other shrouded in the gloom of an utterly disinterested "wasteland."

How one sees the body and the self, and how they relate to (communicate with) others and the universe, is thusly inflected. Hence, we have two "persuasions" that are mutually excluding and warring. In one world, the human is threatened with spiritual brutality, in the other existential angst and nihilism. In one the universe is saturated with the passion of divine intervention, in the other the universe is utterly disinterested in the human lot. It has been suggested that what is needed is a creative integration. But this chapter is less ambitious. In it I compare and contrast these two bodies and ways of communicating.

## FIDELITY

The conventional notion of communication presumed by the vast majority of "mainstream" communication teachers today is the "received orthodoxy" from Aristotle on down, which states that there are two atomic fragments; a sender and a receiver, connected by a channel along which a message is conveyed. Actually this notion of communication can be traced to the ancient Talmudic tradition, which concerns itself with the proper understanding of the Jewish god's will. Many traditions ascribe high status to those who can "channel," understand, and interpret spiritual messages from afar. But Aristotle's linear model is actually more simplistic than most models including the Talmudic model, for he does not take up the problem of interpretation until he tries to cope with the "action" of metaphor, which presents to him an irresolvable problem.<sup>1</sup> For Aristotle the fact that a single word, phrase, or entire text can have many meanings simultaneously defies logic.

### Channeled Conveyance

Many behaviorists take their cue from Aristotle and follow his model of communication. For instance, you can find a nice diagram, including stick figures and arrows, in the March 2001 edition of the *Journal of Communication* (one of the top two or three scholarly outlets for the field). But in their reductionism, modern-day behaviorists are not even as sophisticated as Aristotle. For they assume his notion of conveyance as a fundamental function of communication. But what is exchanged? Behavior obviously cannot be exchanged. One does not "send" physical behavior over to the other in some way like sending one's arm over in a box. Nor is good communication equal to accurate duplication of behavior, as if good communication occurs when I wave or say the same thing the same way that you do and at the same time. And given the materialistic metaphysical prejudice of empiricism, neither pure "information" nor "meaning" exists. Therefore, one cannot say that meaning is communicated or conveyed. So it becomes evident that the behavioral/empirical paradigm is completely inadequate to explain the phenomenon we call communication. After this became obvious in the mid-1950s to some behaviorists, the concept of *cognition* was introduced to solve the problem, effectively abandoning 16th century empiricism (at least for those few).

Cognitivism splits the mind into two, the emotional side and the rational or calculative function. The emotional aspect of life is then basically ignored, ironically, as irrational, unpredictable, and therefore meaningless. Cognition concerns how an organism processes stimuli

(Kant's logically unknowable noumena). One could logically conclude then that insofar as all human organisms are pretty much the same, they should all perceive the same stimuli in the same way. But this is demonstrably false. To solve this problem, the linear model was not abandoned but modified into what I call the "drip coffee model" of communication. In its modified form, subjective uniqueness creeps back in as "cognitive filters" that "distort," "absorb," and/or "abbreviate" the incoming packet of pure information. "Cognitive weighting" thus becomes the new and scientifically acceptable way to speak about subjective differences in receiving the (hypothetically) same information.<sup>2</sup> The mechanism remains, however, as mysterious as ever and adds nothing beyond what is given in C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards', *The Meaning of Meaning* or, for that matter, the 19th century perspectival hermeneutics of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, or Friedrich Nietzsche. In fact the introduction of the filter system itself, which maintains the subject-object dichotomy while attempting to abandon the old projectile effects notion of stimulus-response, expresses just one more perspective. Cognitivism originated with the epistemological philosophers that many self-identified "cognitive-empiricists" and "cognitive-behaviorists" (both absurd phrases, literally contradictions in terms) reject as nonsense!

Nothing heralds the refactoring of subjective "limitations" like the humble acceptance of probability, around the 1950s in the social sciences, over causal knowledge. Probability is a grudging retreat from pure idealism, since probabilities too make sense only when zero and one hundred percentages are implicitly assumed while practically denying their possibility.

In the mid-1600s, while looking out of the window of his study, René Descartes described the "automata" that passed by dressed in coats and hats.<sup>3</sup> The body for him was a machine, an obvious cultural prejudice drawn from his fascination with the mechanics of his day (especially the automation of the mechanical clock), a prejudice that would expand into the industrial world. Descartes' neo-Platonic dualism that allows for no knowledge or reason within sensual experience was merely one more manifestation of an ancient metaphysical prejudice that can be traced from Middle Eastern sources, principally the mysticism of Pythagoras, Manichaeism, and Gnosticism.

After the overall cultural shift toward brute mechanical epistemology during the nascent preindustrial culture and which reached new heights with World War I, concern for "inner states" and "subjective states" waned in popularity. Mechanical atomism became the dominant worldview. However, there were exceptions such as Otto Külpe and the Würzburg School, and also the rise of the Gestalt school (discussed later), both being inspired by the work of neo-Kantians like Franz

Brentano, Alexius Meinong, and Edmund Husserl (see endnote about kinaesthesia).<sup>4</sup>

### Same Old, Same Old and the Theory of Resonance

But despite Husserl's kinaesthetics and the already well-demonstrated absurdity of doctrines that define themselves as impossible to exist, which both behaviorism (which is not a behavior) and empiricism (which is not a thing) do, still most "mainstream" communication writers call themselves "behaviorists," "empiricists," and/or "cognitivists." The latter designation begs the question, what is cognition? Curiously, many self-identified cognitivists do not seem to understand that cognitivism is (a) A neo-Kantian epistemology that establishes itself as fundamentally opposed to materialism; (b) a doctrine that reduces consciousness to pure calculation; and (c) a doctrine that reduces perception to cogitation (continuous-function inverse Fourier transforms that "desmear" the chaotically diffused mass of stimuli constantly streaming "in" to the brain).<sup>5</sup>

Many practicing behavioral empiricists have never read any empiricism (i.e., John Locke, Bishop Berkeley, or David Hume). Therefore they do not understand that the inventors of empiricism had already, by 1739 with the publication of Hume's classic *A Treatise Concerning Human Understanding*, taken this philosophy to its (ironically) logical conclusion, and thence abandoned it for being absurd. Hume clearly demonstrates that "impressions" of color, shape, taste, sound, and so forth cannot account for the experience of continuity or relationships, including causal ones. Likewise, in his *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Berkeley struggles with phenomena such as depth perception and how it can be rendered on a two-dimensional retina where the image itself has no depth. Indeed, like depth perception and continuity, in so far as knowledge, logic, mathematics, and science are not physical things, they cannot exist for an empiricist. How much does science weigh? What color is an ANOVA or the law of noncontradiction? This of course set the stage for Immanuel Kant's master work *The Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, in which cognitivism as synthetic mental activity was invented. But although Kant explained the activity of synthetic cognition, he did not claim to understand the precognitive causes of cognition except in terms of the a priori categories, which do not cause cognition, as such, but rather bring about the structure of perception. The attempt to explain reductively the cause of cognition would come with 20th century neurophysiology.

Today, we are told that cognition is really biochemical reactions that are mysteriously organized into algorithms. So, is it then these neu-

ronal reactions or calculations that are exchanged in communication? Decidedly not. Neither chemicals from the brain nor brute motions of the limbs and vocal cords are conveyed "over" to the other. Which brings us back to Aristotle and his work *Peri Hermeneias* (On Interpretation), that inaugurates hermeneutics, the oldest definition of communication that already confronts the complex relationship between interpretation and comprehension, a relationship every translator-interpreter understands implicitly.

In his frustration with metaphor and analogy (polyseme), and instead of attempting to solve the problem by ignoring it ("parsimonious economy"), Aristotle began to suggest an explanation that would not be explored more fully until the hermeneutics of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The explanation is that communication is a far more complex phenomenon than simple "exchange" or conveyance. Communication presumes learning, which is not free of context. In order for me to understand Chinese, for instance, I do not download a Chinese program. Instead, through a process of assimilation, not downloading, I acquire a language that then enables the symbols to mean something conventional to me. Acquiring a language is not a disembodied process, but rather a lengthy embodied process akin to primary socialization. Accents, dialects, and styles linguistically manifest the contingency of embodied situatedness. And language acquisition is never complete. Meanings are never entirely fixed. With language, the world takes on meaning.

Behavioral movements and sounds do not "input" information as much as elicit from the "receiver" associations and meanings already "in their heads" (an unfortunate spatialization of meaning) and unique to them. Perhaps the best explanation, which builds on the work of Ogden and Richards, is that given by Tony Schwartz.<sup>6</sup> Schwartz, a famous television commercial director, notes that in only 30 or 60 seconds he does not have time to teach the audience much, if anything. Instead he must use symbols that do not impart information, but instead, if they "resonant" (are *already* of personal and cultural relevance to an audience member), will trigger associations and thereby turn the audience into a "workforce" that completes the advertisement. We play each other like symbolic and emotional instruments, but not as passive instruments. Communication takes "two." Receiving stimuli and reacting like a dumb terminal yields only motion, not action. Motion is not even signalic or "codal," for this implies intent as well as a sort of correspondence of translating function that cannot be precisely controlled. But as hermeneuticians observed long ago, intent is not necessary for communication or meaning to occur, either from a sunset or an unconscious facial tick. Thus, communication as exchange, or downloading, is called into question already in the fifth century B.C.

## Correspondence and Referentiality

According to Aristotle's more primitive linear model, the one most popular with communication teachers today, the fidelity of a message is measured by how much agreement there is between the sender and the receiver. This is where the issue of communication becomes a problem of social engineering. For the correspondence sense of "good" communication is concerned with compliance gaining and control, and not just of the message but of its interpretation, for these two discrete atomic entities, the sender and the receiver must somehow understand each other if they are to coordinate behaviors efficiently. Here we have a highly dissociated sense of communication as utility or technology that exists as an "extension," a "system" independent of human bodies and all contingencies (i.e., *la lingua*). This central definition and presumed issue of communication and knowing continues through Descartes' contradictory metaphysics into the current literature. It is contradictory for the body is both the source of all sensory knowledge (for many the only real kind of knowledge there is) and the manifest cause of perspectival contingency, and therefore the body constitutes the impossibility of objectively true knowledge. All sensational sources of "input" (i.e., all direct empirical experience), is also personal experience, in a word "subjective." As is seen here, the reversibility of being a "subject matter" is confronted most honestly by phenomenology.

According to the received view, good communication means agreement. But this is a pre-reflective agreement, a mere duplication of the same. Agreement here does not mean that the two people agree about the truth-value of the message, but only that they understand the meaning of the claim first and foremost as the same, in the "same way." Thus, from earliest times on, the essence of communication is magical (in the most technical sense of the term) for it strives to achieve identity, one with the other, to share an identical meaning, which is to be "true," to have "fidelity," and be translatable.

So, according to conventional wisdom, agreement as good communication means duplication of intent and or meaning, to bridge the subject-object (Other) gap and think with one mind. And furthermore, because the linear model has a sender who first conceives of a meaning, which is then communicated to a receiver, communication becomes a problem of adequate enactment (rhetoric) and accurate re-presentation (exegesis).

Following this ideal of communication to its logical conclusion, the neo-Nietzschean, Jacques Derrida points out that we are confronted with an infinite regression of meta-communicués.<sup>7</sup> How do I know that you have the same meaning in your head that I have? I have to watch

your behavior for compliance or ask you if you understood me. Such efforts at verification may themselves be instances of miscommunication or misunderstandings. So I must ask about them too . . . *ad infinitum*. In short, we can never be certain whether we share the same meaning.<sup>8</sup>

It is assumed by Aristotelians that the only motive for communicating is the imparting or transferring of an idea from one physically discrete person to another. Intent is the driving force behind the effort to communicate. This model of communication is directional and aggressive. Getting one's "thrust" or "point" "across" is the primary, if not only, reason to communicate. Since the goal of communicating is presumed to be making one's intent known, any deviation therefrom is met with an emotional response, because a distorted message is not "what I meant to say." "I" have been misrepresented, meaning that control over my identity itself is at stake. Communication thus becomes a representational process of presenting the self.

### THE CRISIS OF COMMUNICATION

As with other social sciences, precisely when spiritual solutions began to stall, the logic of the Enlightenment was brought to bear. Like using leeches on a hemophiliac, in many ways, the cause was applied as the cure, which of course only made things worse. It should be no surprise that just when Western culture began to suffer from exploitation on an industrial scale, and an "existential crisis" marked by *anomie*, suicide, and mechanized war appeared, that a new discipline of "communication studies" would be invented to fix the problem. Initially, a revival of the medieval rhetoric, the field of communication quickly donned the new clothes of scientific virtue and credibility. Unfortunately, as a new technological fix with its avowed positive faith in objectification, communication studies has done less to reinvigorate Western culture than to reinforce the slide into the commercial nihilism that Nietzsche, Goethe, Shleiermacher, Schiller, and other "diversitarians" so astutely warned against. Market research, the survey of the masses, forms the basis of the new repetition of the same, of confirming the status quo from the lowest common denominator. Navel gazing, that is, talking about talk in countless self-help books and personal advise gurus practicing mass mediated therapy without personal examinations or consultations, is a symptom of just how deeply felt the sense of modern disconnection is even between people who live together. It is ironic that advise that is precisely about how to improve relationships is given to millions with total disregard for personal histories, states of mind, or other contextual factors. The popularity of such advice, despite its dubious value, as well as the

ground swell of spiritualism, underscores the widely felt sense of crisis in both community and identity.

As human culture strives to become more and more objective, a process of dimensional accrual or dissociation occurs.<sup>9</sup> The fruition of modernity, as extreme perspectivism that involves the irony of ego-hypertrophy (for all claims have a point of view, even "disinterested ones") manifested as extreme individualism proclaiming objective status for itself, was astutely observed by Ferdinand Tönnies<sup>10</sup> and later by Nietzsche<sup>11</sup> and Jean Gebser.<sup>12</sup> The crisis Tönnies recognized, and which Husserl<sup>13</sup> and many others have reiterated, called into being the reflective and critical effort of the "traditional" social sciences of psychology and sociology, and the spin-off discipline of positivistic communication studies.

In the modern world, both the body and communications are means to ulterior ends. When such utilitarian "tools" falter, they receive attention. When factories were invented, language became a mere medium for conveying information and efficiency experts proliferated, studying how to communicate with our machines and each other with the greatest brevity (facts à la Karl Popper's notion of language).<sup>14</sup> But for eons, the primary mode of verbal communication was "organic" in nature.<sup>15</sup> It was gossip. Humans communicated for communication's own sake, not just as a dissociated means of conveying information. "Information," as a discrete and transcendental (independent) phenomenon to be transmitted along a channel, did not exist as such. Organic talk (gossip) does not "serve" to maintain relationships but reveals them. Rather than revealing facts, gossip functions to bring people together.<sup>16</sup> And, unlike informatics, the content of gossip is highly relevant, filled with personal, indeed intimate issues.<sup>17</sup> Nothing is so personal as opinion, and nothing so impersonal as "objective fact." In the modern world, which is temporally stressed and goal-oriented, talk is valued most when it is instrumentally efficient. Gossip is seen as a "waste of time," or worse, as being precisely too relevant, too personal, too emotional, or too thick. Everywhere in the modern world, gossip is under attack, and so it seems ludicrous to wonder why the modern world is characterized by being lonely and alienating. In the modern world, talk, like sex, should be undertaken, as is seen here, in light of Augustine's wisdom, only for ulterior purposes. In fact, life itself has an ulterior purpose, which is to test whether a person can generate a secular legacy (the will of difference, making a discernable future) or go to heaven. From the displacement of purpose to the ever implied but absent ulterior realm, we have the new dispassionate demeanor or "communicator style" of disinterested competence. Here we have the robotic "organization man." All is for "the cause." Not just gratification but life itself is deferred. Hence the cool demeanor of the "organization man."

With the mind-body split, talk becomes a medium for a content that should be restricted to goal attainment. Just as data transmission is becoming more and more accurate and accelerated, relationships are faltering. Relationships (conversations) are increasingly seen as tools to use, not as modes of life. Hence, increased stress is placed on "networking," whereas gossip is devalued. Modern relationships reflect the spatialized nature of mobility. As moderns, it has been argued that we constantly assess relationships in a kind of intuitive cost-benefit calculation.<sup>18</sup> What constitutes a "liability" or an "asset," just as what constitutes a "reward" and a "punishment," is a matter of perspective. Despite all the fundamental rhetoric, values are immanent. When we reckon that a relationship is more of a liability than an asset, we abandon it. But abandoning relationships is unthinkable among members of the Mesolithic and the Neolithic hamlet. Being cast out meant certain death. Today, we can afford to treat relationships in a disposable manner. In fact, this is the great liberation of the modern individualist.

The same is true of the modern body and its component parts. Part of communication, which is seen everywhere but neglected by the academic study of communications, is how we communicate with our own bodies. Is it any wonder that one third of all Americans, including college students, are on antidepressant drugs, and many more are self-medicating.<sup>19</sup> A new value of total command over one's own body as a separate thing, as an asset and contentious beast to be mastered, is evinced with eating disorders, endless and repetitive exercising, cosmetics of all sorts including surgery, and so forth. We rearrange our features and dress ourselves up as if we are plastic dolls. In the modern world, the body is just a tool that requires maintenance, and gossip is a waste of time or worse.

### HUMAN ECOLOGY AND THE DIALOGICAL FIELD

To culturists, culture is communication.<sup>20</sup> And just as culture shifted from organic *Gemeinschaft* to instrumental *Gesellschaft* attitudes, so too has the nature of communications and the body changed.<sup>21</sup> In the mechanical universe, parts are discrete. However, the linear model has faltered as an adequate explanation of experience. Following the cultural influence of nonlinear field theory, emergent among existentialists such as Søren Kierkegaard, Ralph Emerson, and Nietzsche, as well as the postmodern shift in physics with Michael Faraday, James Maxwell, and Henrich Hertz, some 20th century scholars such as Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and Kurt Koffka (and later Maurice Merleau-Ponty), began to introduce the concept of *field theory* into the human sciences.<sup>22</sup>

Communication specifically and experience generally, has come to be seen by more than just a few "continental" scholars as a complex gestalt.

Ironically, for even before Aristotle penned his linear model, a more complex model was already available, the Socratic model. For Socrates, thinking is a communal, dialectical process that belongs to neither interlocutor, but instead is fully communicative and mutually engaging. But for Aristotle, thinking is a very private process in each person's head. The nature of communication for Aristotle is to get my thoughts across to you. This heralds the highly perspectival, individualistic form of Western modernity manifested in Aristotelian thought. It stresses rhetorical compliance gaining and control of conversation in the interest of ulterior motives.

For Socrates, by contrast, thinking is not just in my head but in the process of discourse, and in order for it to lead to discovery no one can control it. This more transactional model will not be reinvigorated until the reemergence of democratic institutions. Following the introduction of field theory, the fusional theory of communication developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer<sup>23</sup> and the dialogical model of Mikhail Bakhtin have opened up communication studies to a much broader sense of articulation and made it possible to speak in terms of "social penetration" and "systems integration." This tendency has also been enhanced by Max Scheler,<sup>24</sup> Alfred Schutz,<sup>25</sup> and George Herbert Mead's<sup>26</sup> various explorations of the self as a complex and flexible ecological phenomena that anticipate, and in some instances inform, Emmanuel Levinas' notion of "substitution" and Merleau-Ponty's notion of "alterity" here. Increasingly, life is coming to be seen as an endless conversation, a conversation that is not a set of discrete and unalterable messages zipping back and forth between fixed monads, but instead as a continual process of world-making that includes everything and everyone.<sup>27</sup> Someone can say something to me that lingers for a lifetime. Perhaps I will "receive" it many times. Maybe I will finally "receive" it only years after it is "delivered," when I have matured enough to "get it." "Receiving" is more than sonorous hearing. It involves context, time, who I have become, and how my perspective has changed.

Returning to Aristotle's representational or correspondence model of communication, there is a hierarchy of truth implied in its structure. As early as Isocrates, and certainly with Aristotle, concern with communicator style, or the way something is said, becomes an issue that brings to the fore bodily comportment. Cicero discusses how the "body talks," and how "Nature has assigned to every emotion a particular look and tone of voice and bearing of its own."<sup>28</sup> He argues that our feelings are expressed through our body and modulations of our voice, and that the face and particularly the eyes are the most true reflectors of emotions, the most powerful medium of expression. Several

Enlightenment writers including Fenelon,<sup>29</sup> Lord Kames,<sup>30</sup> Hugh Blair,<sup>31</sup> and Herbert Spencer<sup>32</sup> echo Cicero's claim of a universal body "language." Although we now know that body language varies widely between cultures and subcultures, the idea that communication is an embodied phenomenon is assumed to be true, at least until the advent of recording devices that disembody image and voice.

Despite this early recognition of the body as a source of meaning, the ancient dualism has led to an epistemological quagmire, for although sensations are the only source of knowledge about the world, at the same time sensory experience is always personal or subjective. I cannot look through your eyes or taste through your tongue. This quagmire finds its way into communication studies as the notion that empirical, embodied language is as much an obstacle to communication as a necessary condition for it. Not until Thomas DeQuincey's<sup>33</sup> reflections on style do secular scholars begin to see spoken language as the "embodiment" of thought, and the only way to share ideas. DeQuincey's claim that language is the "incarnation" of thought is a reinvigoration of the classical doctrine set out by Isocrates. Following DeQuincey, several other modern theorists such as Richard Weaver, Kenneth Burke, Wittgenstein, J. L. Austin, Edward Sapir, Benjamin Whorf, and participants in the General Semantics movement begin to argue against the Medieval and Oriental dichotomy that has identified thought as struggling to escape the body intact in an immaculate state.

### THE GENIUS OF A SHALLOW SURFACE

Human reasoning may be mostly an effort to overcome friction and seek convenience. Instead of naming each car that goes by my house, in the interest of efficiency and the conservation of energy, I render them as a uniform category expressed by a single word "car," which is applicable to countless unique instances. If further precision is deemed important, I may refer to the year, color, and a common label (brand). "A car hit my cat" is simple. But in this economy of signification, the depth of the world is lost and relationships are vastly simplified and stupefied. This is exaggerated even more by the loss of the sonorous dimension of my voice and the quality of my handwriting, in the dissociative media of videotext such as electronic mail. Thus, the "genius of the species," to quote Nietzsche, is to erase the subtle complexity of experience through leveling standardization in the interest of efficiency.<sup>34</sup> This maneuver has given us dominion over the Earth.

In the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche claims language is a "rude fetishism." It is the seduction of the most lofty invention of the species,

the metaphysics of language which is to say "reason." And in *The Gay Science*, he explains that "consciousness has developed only under the pressure of the need for communication; that from the start it was needed and useful only between human beings (particularly those who commanded and those who obeyed . . . consciousness is really only a net of communication between human beings."<sup>35</sup> With language is born dissociation and hierarchy as an institution. And unlike Aristotle's private mind, which leads to the problem of solipsism (communication), Nietzsche offers us a breakthrough. We belong to a linguistic consciousness, not the other way around. "The subject," the "self," is after all a categorical, linguistic phenomenon.

With the advent of what I call *language consciousness* (human consciousness), the wealth of perspectivism, or individual "animal consciousness," is radically abbreviated. The self is a radical coalescence and implosion from collective awaring. When the world is translated into abstract language for the purposes of communication between individuals it becomes "shallow," "useful," and linguistic humans rise above it. Here we have the explanation for the traditional "positive" notion of dominion over creation and the magical power of naming. In the process consciousness emerges as a virtual condensation, but it is by comparison to actual experience a "thin" "slick" world of signs. In different terminology, cognitive economy enables me to assess (interpret) the salience of uncountable sensations and to do so in a pre-conceptual field of embodied experience, thus guiding my attention, my care, to that which "calls attention to itself" while disregarding other sensations that manifest prejudgmental perspectivism. But there is transcendental violence at work here too, for it is easy to overlook that which is not important to ME. When asked to describe even the most trivial event, not even pages of words can suffice. The world we share via spoken language is highly abbreviated.

Atomization makes "processing" easier. But the five "channels" of sensory information are not actually experienced as discrete "faculty." Biologists claim that smell is the oldest sense, and that it was so "successful" that our brains, our cerebral hemispheres, originated as buds that grew from the olfactory stalks. Before it can be reflectively analyzed and quantified, smell leads us to food and sex. Our brains grew from our sense of smell and smell continues to have practically no short-term memory but instead the most acuity of all the senses for long-term recall. Diane Ackerman puts it succinctly, "We think because we smelled."<sup>36</sup> Evolutionarily speaking, as hearing and vision became more important and the brain developed to process audial and visual sensations, the "earlier" forms of communication were not supplanted or eliminated. Rather touch, taste, and smell integrated with the newer, more dissociat-

ing spatial senses, forming complex synthetic sensory worlds. For instance, the way food looks affects how it smells and tastes to us.

As one sense is stimulated, so too are the others. In extreme cases people called "synesthetes" who experience synesthesia, from the Greek *syn* (together) and *aisthanesthai* (to perceive), do not experience sensation as a discrete and exclusive color or sound or odor. For instance, the composer Nikolai Rimski-Korsakov experienced music as both sound and color.<sup>37</sup> The neurologist Richard Cytowic calls synesthetes "cognitive fossils," who experience a more primitive sensorium characteristic of an earlier evolutionary period.<sup>38</sup>

Cytowic traces the phenomenon of hearing colors, seeing odors, and the like to the limbic system, which is the most primitive part of the brain. Sensory separation does not begin until the cortex evolves, and the cortex is the seat of "higher" cognitive activities including linguistic and spatial processing. Separation is a spatial phenomenon. Logic is a form of relationship that presumes a separation between discrete values. Logic abhors a vacuum called chaos. It is not surprising, therefore, that recent neurological findings suggest that the sensorium does not become fragmented until the evolution of the more spatial senses of hearing and especially seeing join the mix and are stressed. Cytowic suggests that synesthesia may be how early mammals experienced the world. It may very well be that synesthesia, on some level, is part of normal experience for everyone. The two newest and most spatial senses, sight and sound, are the ones most commonly reported as "mixing" by synesthetes.

The word "symbol" comes from the Greek *symbollein*, which means, "to throw together." Symbolic communication is am-bivalent for the literal and the figural are given together in symbols, which "stand in for" that which is communicated (symbolically) but which is absent. In metaphor, the literal is both present and absent (sometimes even enhanced) at the same time. As dissociation increases symbols become less motivated and more arbitrary, until the semantic polarity splits into signalic duality (completely arbitrary signs). Signalic communication is less motivated, and thus the signifier and signified are more discrete than is the case with symbols.<sup>39</sup>

Typically, the senses are not experienced as discrete channels, but instead as a synthetic experience whereby they are mutually implicating. Our senses are experienced as integral dimensions of experience, not as separate channels of information. The idea that they are discrete appears only with the analytic effort to dissect meaning in the interest of dissociated control. Otherwise, our sensory worlds are essentially multi-dimensional gestalts that are far more complex than simple two-dimensional inkblots, or parallel processed input. Ambient light, aroma, flavor, sound, heat, texture, mood, fatigue, expectations, thoughts and memories, and much more continually blend and churn to form the flow of liv-

ing experience. Just as a pile of automobile parts does not equal a car, the whole of awareness is more than the sum of its hypothetical parts. As a simple example, sight and taste can reinforce each other or challenge each other. The meat looks fine but it smells rotten. When such a contradiction occurs, we tend to favor or believe the more "primitive" information more than the newer evolutionary source. Similarly, we trust nonverbal cues more than verbal ones when they contradict each other.<sup>40</sup> You say everything is "okay," but your grip is tight, your voice has a high pitch and is trembling, and you look very worried. Therefore, I conclude that what you say is not true: When nonverbal messages contradict verbal ones, we trust the nonverbals more.

Although Nietzsche's charge that language is a fetish is not incorrect, recent research indicates that the cognition of language may be much less arbitrary and much more grounded in our sensual bodies than previously thought. Nietzsche is not so much concerned with the failure of representational epistemology, for "we do not 'know' nearly enough to be entitled to any such" [concern].<sup>41</sup> Rather he warns that growth in language consciousness means increasing dissociation, a withdrawal into a virtual sign-world in the interest of utility and control. This reduction is necessary for herding, and it inevitably diminishes the body, our animal natures, and our infinite individualism to the status of a problem of over complexity best ignored in favor of simplified generalities. And yet there is evidence that language is not so Biblically biblical, so utterly accidental and unmotivated after all, which suggests that even logic may have a preconceptual root in the seamless body extending as the "flesh of the world."

Symbolic language may be related to the synthetic process of multi-sensory awareness. Gestalt psychologists have demonstrated that when widely dispersed groups of people are asked to relate a list of nonsense "words" to shapes and colors, they identify certain sounds with certain shapes repeatedly and consistently. This sort of free association forms clear patterns.<sup>42</sup> This phenomenon is consistent no matter who the researcher questions, be they from the United States, the Mahali peninsula, the Amazon basin, or the sub-Arctic. For example, regardless of cultural origin or linguistic tradition, people tend to associate dark colors with low frequency sounds and bright colors with high frequency sounds.

### **Below the Surface: The Lived Body**

Linguistic consciousness is a "utility," a product and facilitator of emergent group awareness that is required for cooperative efforts to survive. Thus, Nietzsche anticipates the dialogism of Bakhtin, the lingualism of

the Heideggerians, and also of the famed Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, while also insisting that language is not all. Nietzsche affirms the priority of the body and its impulse to life. The simplification of our infinitely unique experiences (conformity) may seem to contradict the claim of the emergence of the modern ego. But as Gebser explains, the modern ego, which rejects the humility of our situatedness by expressing a hypertrophic self-centrism, that is analogous to stupidly admiring ignorance, embraces a disembodied ideology that accompanies the massification of the human lifeworld.<sup>43</sup> Gebser and Nietzsche agree that mass society and the ego-individual are two sides of the same modern coin, a coin struck by the invention of transcendental law.

Under supreme law, all are equally individuated, rights for all are affirmed as a universal statement. This individuation is not the same thing as embodied uniqueness. Just as each dollar is identical in exchange with each other dollar, so too the modern (general issue "GI") individual exists as a numeric value, equivocal in its democratic sameness such that real differences are ignored in the interest of utility (one human, one vote regardless who is informed or uninformed). Quality of thinking is disregarded. All are equal in the eyes of a distant, transcendent god, in the grasp of indifferent logic. The modern ego is an institution canonized in philosophy and law. Transcendental law begins as grammar rules that all must abide by or fail to be human, civilized, or worthy of salvation.

Much of modern communication studies seeks to articulate generalizations about how, why, and when people communicate. But in the methodical process researchers render a mean score, and (hypothetical person) then according to the *gravitus* of the mean and its centralizing tendencies, all differences ("outliers") are ignored. In fact, the more extreme the difference, the more compelled are researchers by the transcendental rules of the *mathesis universalis* to ignore this diversity. And when differences are acknowledged, categorical generalization takes command so that we are taught how women "in general" communicate as opposed to men "in general," and how "collectivistic high-context" people communicate in general as compared to "individualistic low-context people." The interest in massifying social engineering, from the first applications of statistical method to human beings with Alfred Binet's IQ measures, guides such research.<sup>44</sup> Parsimony and standardization (one size fits all) does not allow for the generosity of careful analysis. Urgency rules the so-called social "scientific" community. Thus, we have a fetish of the average human and its average behavioral movements correlated with other movements. How the average is "arrived at" is not natural or objective, for this measure belies the presumed criteria of who gets counted in the first place, which conceals an agenda and motive. The average body is a product of method. It is fetish; what I call scientific Thomism. It is not the lived body that we inhabit.

The infinite complexity of actual experience is solved in the interest of feedback and control through minimalism. When one applies the abstracting technique of sampling and averaging to a mountain range, one loses all the peaks and valleys; indeed the mountain range disappears and life becomes a redundant, uninformative straight line.

## ALTERITY

Following Nietzsche, and challenging Husserl's constitutive claims, Levinas argues that authenticity is immediate, primordial, preconceptual, perhaps even preconstitutive.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the interlocutor, the physical Other comes on us as a surprise and as true alterity. How I constitute the Other, what the Other means to me, is not entirely my prerogative. To be inauthentic is an accomplishment. To be inauthentic is a willful denial of the Other, who initially comes upon us as a surprise and beyond our control. Unless I am a statistician rendering mean persons, my consciousness does not "make" the other, and we meet as physical beings prior to concept and ideology.

To be inauthentic, Levinas says, is to be one who violates the Other through the totalizing control of the very way they are allowed to show themselves; they are made to be, simply put, "for me."<sup>46</sup> Thus, such and such person is useful, counts, but only for this sample and its preconceived uses. The researcher is interested only in certain "populations" relative to certain interests. According to the needs of the study, subjects are defined as either relevant or irrelevant. Those who believe that they have total control over how the world shows itself are suffering from solipsism. They do not listen. They do not communicate. Instead, they control. They comport themselves as if they create the world either as a plenum of emotional symbolism or as an object grasped from individual perspective. As Heidegger argues, listening, observing, and so forth may not be an activity at all, but rather a passivity, a sort of opening that allows the Other to show itself in its own way, prior to categorization or critique.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the world, including Others, is not "mine."

The alterity of the Other, involves, ironically, the essential quality of resistance, and this extends to other things as well as other people in that, no matter how much I want to, I cannot see both sides of a table at once. This resistance is an essential part of physical proximity, a concept Levinas discussed in great detail before Edward T. Hall became famous in the English-speaking world for his "proxemic" research, which focuses literally on physical spacing and arrangement, and the felt senses of privacy and crowding.<sup>48</sup> By contrast, proximity for Levinas

means more than simple physical closeness or even more abstract notions of crowding; it means moral obligation due to the existence of the Other. And for Levinas, this moral obligation that requires a certain type of comportment is not morality "from principle" but obligation rooted in physical presence. The resistance of the Other is the essence not only of interpersonal friction, but also of "culture shock" in intercultural communication contexts. No method or other communicative instrument for transducing experience into "knowledge" can alter the primordial fact that the appearance of the Other brings with him or her an inescapable moral dimension. Morality is not an aspect of solitude. And solitude here does not mean being physically alone. One can be in the presence of gods, angels, spirits, deceased ancestors, imaginary companions, totemic beast-brothers, and so forth.

Morality is essentially sociocommunicative in nature. Morality has to do with how one relates to Others, which can include nature in general, other animals and even physical objects that are revered like icons and relics. In this sense, the charge of fetish betrays in itself a metaphysical prejudice. Similarly, Levinas' stress on the physically present face of the Other proves to be more metaphysically truncated than Benedictus de Spinoza, for even nature, let alone the silhouette of an anonymous posture like a hunched human figure or the lame gate of a horse, manifests immanent moral obligation. However, although it is also the case that the moral dimension can be willfully ignored, the very effort of ignoring moral obligation presupposes this need. Morality can be ignored in the interest of efficiency and the utilitarian pragmatism of standardizing and synchronizing the individual to the herd, but not in the interest of truth.

But despite such efforts to erase one's own physical, cultural, or economic limitations, perspectivism is not merely my limitation. It is the world's limitation. However such limitations are not "bad," except when evaluated by positivistic ideologues. As Gadamer observes, such limitations, or inherent prejudices, also enable the world to show itself.<sup>49</sup> Limitations, miscommunication and "distortion" is necessary for communication to exist. But the immanence of lived experience opens one to the possibility of transcendence. The fact that awareness opens beyond the explicit content of perception exposes what Merleau-Ponty calls the "thingness of things."<sup>50</sup> But in this expansion to essentialism and categorical expression (which is also a reduction to expressive economy), there is an unavoidable dissociation and abbreviation of experience.

Languages are abstractions. But all experience is perspectival, and besides if one could eliminate all limitations, one would be left with nothing meaningful. As Nietzsche notes, the "genius of the species" leads us beyond the depth of personal, "infinitely individual" and unique experiences to a common "reduction to superficialities."

Language works by dissociative generalization, by means of sampling the world and reducing it to a "surface-, and sign-world" easily communicated within the herd.<sup>51</sup> A research sample, for instance, betrays the valuation of salience and convenience. Language and method, which is a strict form of discourse, are above all things conventional. And if Isocrates, Sapir, Whorf, Merleau-Ponty and others are correct, language enables us to think, but at the same time it structures our thoughts and limits our horizon.

Thinking, grammar, and logic are organizing processes that hierarchically structure experience in terms of salience. All experience is always already interpretive and valuative. The importance of communication with the Other is that the alterity of the Other disrupts our structure, thinking, and limitations. Resistance opens us up to alternatives we could not experience alone. Thus, what is commonly called *objective truth*, or a dominant paradigm, is not eternal and is instead communicatively structured as intersubjective agreement. There has to be consensus even to support the referential claim of truth before it can be called *knowledge*.<sup>52</sup> Truth may exist for an individual, but knowledge is a shared fetish that is constantly under threat of revision and therefore partakes of faith and "trust."<sup>53</sup> The motivation for such commitment probably originates in the survival drive of the embodied being. We need to be able to take much for granted, and communicate using habituated "scripted behavior," such as conventional greetings and leave taking, in order to conserve precious energy.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, the body constitutes the preconceptual agreement that enables linguistic conventionalism. Embodied awareness constitutes a prelinguistic field of communication: a field of shared sense, shared desires, fears, drives, and anticipations that emerge out of the structure of our bodies and the way our senses open the world to us. Half a century before Kurt Lewin,<sup>55</sup> Irving Janis,<sup>56</sup> and Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann<sup>57</sup> Nietzsche had already identified concerns about "groupthink" and the stupidity or "mental deterioration" characteristic of highly cohesive groups, and the pressures they exert on their members to conform. Nietzsche argued that the origin of mass identity and psychological bonding is to be found in the linguisticity of humans, in language itself. This is born out by the increasing awareness around the globe of the integral relationship between community, language, tradition, and identity. Language is politics. But Nietzsche is already too late in the history of the species. What makes language ("sign-systems") possible is a more fundamental mode of communication and a primordial motivation that is universally shared.

Society is a form of synchronization that is prelinguistic. For instance, zoologist Patricia Backwell and her colleagues have studied how fiddler crabs select mates.<sup>58</sup> A half dozen males surround a female,

each waving its one enormous claw at her in unison. She selects one and descends into his burrow to mate. After doing a frame-by-frame analysis of this "dance," Backwell found that the victorious suitor began his first wave about one fifth of a second before the others, and that competition to be first to signal results in "synchrony," a phenomenon observed in many other species such as the chorusing of katydids. Society or synchrony, is prelinguistic. And in *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche is correct—initiative action wins over reaction.<sup>59</sup> Both are rooted in chemical communication and senses that have been with us since we lived in the seas. In this sense, Nietzsche is much too late to blame the "herd" on dissociative sign-systems. Such "systems" are rooted in the primordial soup that we now carry in our very bodily makeup. Although they are not the "cause" of cognition, the foundational prerequisite of cognitive activity can be identified.<sup>60</sup> To be sure, the abstraction of linguistic communication enables dissociative reflection, human consciousness (he is right about that), and fragmenting deviation. But cohesive behavior, which enables linguisticity itself, is manifested in prelinguistic bodily structure, interaction, and attunement.

### REVERSIBILITY

Reversibility implicates moral obligation. Interaction brings with it not merely ontological but also ethical concerns. The genealogy of morals, of good and evil as such, is rooted in the guilt that accompanies the appearance of the Other. We are not comfortable with silence, and so we talk due to primordial guilt that is expressed in many origin myths including the myth of original sin, that occasions the first conversation between Man and Woman, and Man and god in the Bible. Primordial guilt in the face of the Other may actually arise with the need to kill in order to survive.<sup>61</sup> The first ritualized performance of symbolic and emotional intensity (ritualized communication) is motivated by the anxiety of death and killing. But heartless (let alone mindless) abuse, without reciprocal concern, arises later as the metaphysics of objectivity with its bizarre ideal of careless disinterest in the Other as a mere object. Reversibility means that if I can hold you in my gaze as a mere object, then so too can you return the attitude and reduce me to an abject surface and, at best, a potential resource for exploitation. Here we have the essence of all against all, the stark conclusion to pure individuation of which Thomas Hobbes wrote, and which then can lead to the sinister rationale for the simplicity of totalitarian dictatorship—hierarchy as legitimized suppression and repression in the interest of "law and order." In the modern world of randomly vibrating objects and intensely

egocentric interests, order must be imposed from elsewhere. Law descends from the heavens to assure the commonweal.<sup>62</sup> But this only exacerbates the situation, for without such an order efficient exploitation cannot continue.

The metaphysical separation that legitimizes the dialectic of the Enlightenment is purely ideological (i.e., hypothetical).<sup>63</sup> So too is disinterested reflection. Rather this ideology leads to systematic distortions in communications.<sup>64</sup> As Merleau-Ponty says, "the body interposed is not itself a thing, an interstitial matter, a connective tissue, but a sensible for itself, which means not that absurdity: color that sees itself, surface that touches itself—but this paradox: a set of colors and surfaces inhabited by a touch, a vision."<sup>65</sup>

At the same time that reversibility exposes perspectivism it also presents a "lay explanation," in the form of sense (as the thesis of the natural attitude), of the possibility of sensational knowledge. Reversibility betrays the limits of the sensible as my limited ability to sense, and thus my limited ability to interrogate the Other. Furthermore, the way the "intentional object" shows itself limits my ability to do "transcendental violence" in the very act of communicating. As an old Buddhist saying goes, everything in the world is soft because my hands are soft. But how do I know this if my hands have always been soft? I know this because this limitation also gives me access to a knowledge beyond itself, just as the visible implies the invisible. And the dark has an allure for us that is much more interesting, and perhaps uncanny, than the mundane and well lit places of experience. As Nietzsche argues, knowledge is nothing more than reducing the strange to something familiar, superficial, common, and unthreatening.<sup>66</sup> And this is done through humanizing communication/domestication. Magic is naming, gaining control. To express is to manifest will. All communication has an effortful, power dimension.

### POWER AND THE RESISTANT FACE

Beyond mere epistemology, there is a more profound problem. If Descartes is correct and all of "creation," including other animals and humans, are merely mechanical automata, then there is no need to treat anything ethically or even "reasonably." If materialistic atomism is accepted, then no one could evaluate behaviors and philosophies.

I can talk in contradictions all day to my television set. I can embrace my dog and then promptly kick it. Nothing matters unless, in my egocentric singularity, I am bothered by the fact that I broke my TV and killed my dog, which may preclude my ability to interact with them

in the future. But as soon as I confront the other as an authentic Other that demands respect, I am then subjected to being a "hostage" to that Other.<sup>67</sup> We become mutually "bound:" obliged. Under such conditions, the appearance of the Other is not under my constitutive control. Neo-Kantian (solipsistic) constructivism is thus avoided. Rather, the Other comes into proximity to me which demands that I respond and be responsible in ways that I do not portend. I become subject to the Other. I become a subject. Being so imposed on I become a primordial, prerational projection toward the Other, as a move to responsibility vis-à-vis the Other.

To be a subject means "*sub-jectum*," or to be put under the weight of the proximity of the Other.<sup>68</sup> In fact, according to Spinoza, when the Other cannot reciprocate (has no "voice"), I become responsible for the entire tenor of the relationship. And according to Burke, guilt (the tension, fear of not being accepted and anxiety that practically all interaction involves) is the primary motive behind symbol using. Thus, we cannot blame the animals in the forest, the children in our economy, or the retarded in our prisons for the state of the world, which is a thick weave of interactions.

Substitution is the ability to recognize myself in the place of the Other, not through conceptual abstraction, but instead in the sense of finding myself in the place of the Other as a hostage for the Other. Being thus apprehended, I am not an object for the other but an ethical obligation. This is how I can "get out of myself," a problem Michael Foucault (and others like Karl Marx) did not even initially recognize, but instead exacerbated with totalizing doctrines like the highly abstract Neo-Hegelian notions of the "episteme" and class consciousness. Substitution for Levinas is complex, and consists of an embodied conversion that takes place immediately upon confronting the Other, prior to conceptual distancing. This process involves both the conversion of being merely "another" to being "Me," and at the same time a sacrifice of anonymity as a subjection by the other into a subjection for the Other. In the instant of contact, each is co-constituted by the Other as a subject.<sup>69</sup> And before the Other can be converted into being "an enemy" or an asocial amoral object, this person is given as a demand and obligation.

The fusion of horizons with the Other is an integral process that gives me access to another perspective, thereby exposing my own experience as limited and enabling me to change. The Other does not appear strictly on my terms, but as a challenge to my sense of the world, my horizontal limitations.

Heidegger<sup>70</sup> and Gadamer<sup>71</sup> argue that the Other, be it a book, a person, or animal in the crosshairs, presents a challenge to my prejudices, beliefs, motives, truths, and values: my identity. The Other is a confrontation, a personal challenge. Meeting an authentic Other

demands care. I may attempt to categorize the Other as a type of object, but such an interpretive move is always after the encounter.

But this means that I lose control. Thus, for those obsessed with politics, either epistemic (science and philosophy), ecological (industrial ordination), or moral (religion), their own subjective status must be renounced. But a contradiction emerges here. To maintain control means to refuse to become a subject. But this power requires a veneer of rhetoric for the purposes of legitimation. Therefore, those in power claim to be governed by "natural law," "divine cause," or "principle." The "invisible hand" of economic or biological laws, or moral imperative makes them a tool, an extension of divine purpose. In this way, they legitimize their deeds, including the way in which they communicate and interact with others as disembodied objects. The one in control claims to be the most subject, or loyal servant to the cause, even "the people" he rules. He is but an instrument of higher purpose. This rhetoric allows the powerful to abdicate their responsibility. Consequently, decisions are not taken because that would constitute action. Rather blind objectivity means being reactionary, as one object bouncing off of another. Disembodiment is thus expressed as blind obedience. The ruler becomes the "upholder of the faith and the law," such that contingent decisions are "out of his hands." Dictators, popes, or kings can wield absolute power and issue edicts and commandments but do not take responsibility for them, for, as humble servants, even channels of divine intent, they merely convey a higher truth or will.

Hence, the virtue of the "amoral," objective, and "dutiful" organization man: the blindfold on lady justice. "Don't blame the messenger" becomes the mantra of objective servitude that refuses to be subject to the contingencies of the embodied world. And yet this rhetoric cannot conceal the fact that such disinterested judges and rulers are also enforcers, who articulate the right to control and exercise dominion. Those who refuse to be merely equal, and therefore consubstantially subject, legitimize their ironically underprivileged power over their subjects as the duty of natural rank, status, or position. They claim to be "duty-bound." Long before the pseudo-scientific apologists, the social Darwinists made their claims that rank was justified not on the basis of merit but transcendental imperative.

Taking this to its logical conclusion the leader is no longer human and capable of subjectivity, but instead objectively divine. This means that one cannot have a moral relationship with the divine, for morality requires the ability to substitute for the Other, as each holds the other hostage. Substitution and consubstantiality cannot be conceived of with a god or "absolute objective truth." The ultimate leader cannot be changed or communicated with in any normal sense of the term. In many religions, this becomes something of a crisis of communication.

For instance, in the Christian tradition Docetism (Greek *dokein* "to seem") is expressed in several movements including the Albigenses, Bogomils, and Ophites. What is noteworthy is that the Cathari, the movement that spawned all of the others, took its name from the Greek term *katharos*, which means "pure." The followers of all of these movements tended to be severe ascetics, who denounced the doctrine of the human Christ and despised images and women. Christology is replete with attempts to explain the incorruptibility of Christ's body, while also claiming that his body was available to mere mortals and was an instrument (like the church later in Paul's gospel) for accomplishing the reunification of the world. According to most of these doctrines, God created the spirit world while Satan created the material world. Thus Christ could not have a material, Satanic body like normal humans. Instead, he had a "phantom body" that only seemed material. The Apollinarians claimed that the body of Christ was a "spiritualized" form of humanity. The Nestorians then clarified the spiritual status of gender. Christ's good and divine nature came from his father, while the evil material nature was from his mother. And so woman, from Eve through Mary, flirts with the dark, embodied side of the universe. Thus, in highly religious/conservative societies, Women are subject to transcending men. As discussed next, the consequent purgation of women is not only logical (given these premises) but also inevitable. Communication, or the lack thereof, between the sexes becomes metonymic for the state of the universe.

## "VENUS:" THE INSPIRATION TO COMMUNICATE

### The State of Our Knowledge

The origins of idolic and symbolic communication and interest in the body are utterly identical. The origins of imaginative expression may also be essential to the definition of what is a human, even for premodern *Homo Sapiens*. For the sake of historical context, keep in mind that anatomically modern *Homo Sapiens* appeared about 130,000 years ago. The first permanent dwellings appeared around 28,000 years ago. Thus, for more than 100,000 years the species did not dissociate itself from the rest of the world enough to bother with artificial shelter. The first hieroglyphs in Egypt do not appear until "yesterday," around 3,300 B.C., and the first efforts to economize signs with the invention of logo-syllabic writing systems arose in Sumeria around 3,000 B.C. Urbanization depends on writing, and the earliest urban center of Ur dates from only

5,000 years ago. The human species is thus currently in a relatively new trend toward urbanization, which greatly accelerated in just the last 200 years.<sup>72</sup>

Given this foreshortened synopsis, the depth of time that accompanies the oldest known object that was not a tool, but of symbolic (and probably idolic) value, can be appreciated. The artifact is a carving in volcanic rock found at Berekhat Ram, Israel. No one should be surprised that it is of a human figure, probably female, that dates from about 250,000 years ago, more than twice as long as modern humans have existed and nine times longer than humans have constructed permanent shelter. There is some evidence that as long as 400,000 years ago red and black pigment may have been used to adorn the body, thus testifying to an emergent self-awareness of the body. More reliably, people in what is today the Ngwenya Hills of Swaziland mined iron ore to use as an oxide dye to paint the body. Apparently, countless generations passed until abstraction reached beyond the body to depict something independent of corporeality.

Forty-six thousand years ago, Neandertals buried their dead with pollen in a cave in present-day Iraq (the Shânîdâr Cave), thus strongly suggesting a disturbing ambivalence arising from the lack of reciprocity and therefore a change in status of the Other into an object, a corpse, that is both present yet absent. Respect for the corpse mirrors respect for the living. Perhaps the inability to communicate with a corpse, and the anxiety of proximity yet "distance," as in "passing on" wherein the deceased has "left us," may have motivated the first elaborate ritualistic forms of communications (magic).

After that, given the current state of knowledge, another 18,000 years passed before additional symbolic artifacts appear. Both the oldest pottery and a carved Mammoth tusk from about 30,000 years ago have been found at Dolni Větonice, in the Czech Republic. The earliest known cave paintings at Chauvet, France date from about 31,000 years ago, thereby manifesting a sudden eruption of the psyche projecting beyond the body in a fantastic display and power. After this one must wait for another 13,000 years before similar images appear again at Lascaux.

From 200,000 to 30,000 years ago, there are very few idolic or symbolic artifacts that may articulate "higher orders of thinking," or abstraction. Most artifacts prior to 30,000 years ago are straightforward tools and simple extensions of the hand or tooth. The great and mysterious opening of the human psyche to exert symbolic and idolic expressive effort does not blossom until about 30,000 years ago some 18,000 years before the agricultural revolution. From 30,000 to 25,000 B.C., nearly all idolic and symbolic artifacts are sculptures of the human body and appear to be fertility amulets, so-called "Venuses." Most interesting is

that in 1989, Tim Berners-Lee, a British computer scientist, developed a network of servers on the Internet. The essential feature that distinguishes the World Wide Web from other Internet applications is its ability to display graphics, which in this context we might call virtual Venuses. No wonder that any adequate explanations of interpersonal communication cannot be divorced from the body, especially the sexed body, for much of comportment for males is comprised of posturing for mates and the intimidation of rivals.<sup>73</sup> Everything is about being impressive and leaving impressions to gain compliance and excite one another. And attempts to reject this reality tend to be manifested as the brutal suppression of women (the principle audience and target for male aggression displays).

### HOW THE BODY LOST ITS STATUS OR THE FLIGHT OF THE SACRED

Politics begins in the loins. Once we stop worshiping this world, this body, then the desire to gain transcendental power "over" the body is expressed by the ability to eliminate or define it out of existence. Metaphysical doctrine is also politics, and thus Nietzsche observes that piety in both the East and the West very often is manifested as a contempt for the physical world and one's own body expressed through ascetic self-torture and the torture of other bodies.<sup>74</sup> Cleansing means to purge, and that which is purged is the temporal body. Thus is revealed the grand contradiction of denying life for the sake of salvation, an obsession that yet feeds the dream of reducing all human behavior to a set of mathematical equations: the purgatory of idealism.

Accordingly we have the most abominable doctrine, *contemptus mundi*, which defines reality, including the bodily self, as disease. In the higher interest of truth, the subjective, contingent body must be eliminated. Clearly, the doctrine of virginal birth is an expression of this need to cleanse even birth of bodily aspects.

The appropriately named Puritan movement that spawned the witch hunts in Salem, Massachusetts is another expression of this contempt for the body. The purging of woman from the realm of sacred truths is the same as the purging of the body in the interest of spiritual purification. And the current state of dissociative communication studies cannot be understood without understanding how, when, why, and where this self-cleansing process occurred. The extension of fetish, or the disembodiment of want, is motivated by both utility and a spiritual quest.

As power is centralized into a singular source it becomes disembodied. We see this in the monotheism and attendant iconoclasm proclaimed at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt (2040–1640 B.C.) by pharaoh Amenhotep III. Here, too, we find the origin of the popular doctrine of the virgin birth of gods, for they cannot be touched by time or contingent corporeality. By Amenhotep's decree, all references or images of gods, other than Aton, were struck from monuments. The disembodiment, which makes power absolute and worthy of worship, is found in nearly all rising urban powers. In Imperial China, looking at the face of the Emperor or wearing the imperial colors became a crime. During the eighth and ninth centuries A.D. the Byzantine prohibition of "graven images" signals a rejection of the possibility of a substantive embodied god. This orthodox shift is an absolutely logical extension of the dissociative domestication and power that particularly marked the Muslim reinvigoration of the Old Testament prohibition of worshipping idols (of magical idolic communication whereby the thing is literally identical with what it "symbolizes").<sup>75</sup> The godless are ignorant pagans. They are uncivilized. They lack universal law, which is an eternal and infinite unifying explanation for all.

The prejudice of absolute power that works within a contingent world lives on in the metaphysical dualism inherent in the various bifurcations of the world, knowledge, and communication such as the figural vs. the literal, syntax versus semantics, the synchronic versus the diachronic, *la parole* vs. *la lingua*, and popular structural/functional and cognitive theories of communication. The dualism boils down to contingent time versus absolute eternity, chaotic accident and predictable law. Such incompatible ideas form a long heritage of dualisms including Monothelitism, which is the doctrine that Christ had two natures, one human, incarnate and mutable (one that shows aging for instance) and the other divine and "incorruptibly" constant. One such formulation has god the father being a "projection back into eternity," with the son being the incarnate god.

All convoluted explanations of how the transcendent can also be immanent have been explored. Doctrinal differences have formed the foundation of sectarian conflict, including that between church and state, church and science, and the final split between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Church of Rome, whereby the Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople ended up excommunicating each other. The Church of Rome reaffirmed the doctrine that Christ had voluntarily assumed all the characteristics of created nature including describability. Thus icons are said to provide direct personal contact with the holy. Images and objects such as statues and relics (literally parts of bodies) are allowed to be "venerated" (*proskynesis*), whereas "worship" (*latreia*) should be addressed to god alone. After imperial rather than ecclesiasti-

cal decisions were taken, the Eastern Church also re-embraced iconography. The issue of the single versus the dual nature of Christ became so contentious that in 648 the Byzantine Emperor Constans II forbade all discussion of the subject. At the third Council of Constantinople Christ was declared to have two natures and two wills, one human and one divine. Moreover, the human aspect is subordinate to the divine, which is a Platonic stance still witnessed today in scientific rationalism and current models of artificial intelligence.

Descartes' dualism, which marks the primary metaphysical assumption of the modern Western world, grew out of the doctrine of the Cathari. By 1200 A.D., the Cathari movement found its way into Albigensian dualism. The Albigenses advanced the idea that the material body was a prison devised by the devil to entrap the soul, a doctrine that would become central to the Protestant attack on the corporeal corruptions of Roman Catholic leaders.

From Platonic and Manichaean origins, the material body was seen as dark, evil, and false, while the soul or mind was light and good. With the Gnostics, Oriental asceticism and monastic self-imprisonment became the prescription for purging the divine soul of its Satanic material body. It is no mere coincidence that the Gnostics would find a secure home in the land of the Pharaohs. Within European Christianity, this attitude will be embraced, in the form of a confession. Saint Augustine waged war against his own bodily impulses, especially his sexual appetites (but only after having lived with a woman for ten years who also bore him a son). Hence, from the initial Cathari influence on Augustine, Christianity will find itself in a hypocritical state, a quagmire Nietzsche described as generations of Christians reproducing in pure guilt: Augustine dramatically changed the tone of Christian doctrine concerning the body. With him, corporeality becomes the weak and evil flesh of the Old Testament's Sodom and Gomorrah. Even within the bounds of matrimony, according to Augustine, sex should be engaged in only for the sake of procreation. Subsequently, the prerequisite "excitation of the loins" will present a particularly slippery problem.

In the Old Testament's apocryphal book of *Tobit*, one finds an account of angelic instruction on how to expel evil spirits from the bridal chamber by the odor of a smoldering fish heart and liver (*Tobit* 6: 14-18). Purity, like fidelity, has become a central value in communication studies. And in the book of *Tobit*, we have the emergence of the idea of pure evil. With the radical dualism of good and evil promoted by the Cathari and Albigenses, one has the emergence of the most extreme ascetics, the "Perfects" of the Albigensian movement, many of whom starved themselves to death. And with the emergence of extreme dualism comes the possibility of diabolism, as some ally themselves with Satan and invoke devils.<sup>76</sup>

In response to the Albigensian movement, in 1231, Pope Gregory IX issued the constitution *Excommunicamus* that established severe penalties for heresy and formed the office of the Inquisitor. This new office was entrusted almost exclusively to Dominicans because of their supposed denial of worldly pursuits, which was as much a rhetorical as a spiritual choice. After all, the Pope was reacting to the Albigensian charge that the Church of Rome had become too worldly and therefore decadent.

In 1252, Pope Innocent IV officially sanctioned physical torture along with spiritual threats to extract confessions from those suspected of heresy (hearsay). The offender could be sentenced with penance, such as public scourging, or become the object of what has been described as the most impressive ceremony of the Roman Catholic Church, the *Auto-Da-Fe* (Portuguese for "act of faith"). *Auto-Da-Fe* was public execution, usually by burning at the stake, celebrated with great pomp including a processional. The last *Auto-Da-Fe* was in Mexico in 1815.

But perhaps the most notorious example of aggression against the sensual body, and women particularly, happened under the male hysteria of the Spanish Inquisition. The impetus for the witch craze was the Papal Bull *Summis Desiderantes* issued by Pope Innocent VIII in 1484. This work was included in the preface of *Malleus Maleficarum*, *The Hammer of Witches*, which was the official manual published by two Dominican inquisitors that describes how to detect and deal with temptresses. This book was translated into many languages and outsold all other books but the Bible, and eventually became the definitive source for all professional witch hunters who were typically paid for each conviction. No doubt some of its allure was based on the pornographic nature of its descriptions of the alleged sexual abominations of witches.

Thus, by the time we get to Descartes, dualism is already an ancient and widespread belief, and the body will be deemed the more lowly of the two poles. Modern science will struggle on one hand to negate the subjective perspective that manifests the physical situatedness that results from being entrapped in a body, while also reducing the universe to pure matter.

## CONCLUSION

There is no sociality apart from ethics, and there is no ethics apart from sociality. There is no sociality without being subjected to the Other's demand for response. As Levinas put it, "the very node of the subjective is knotted in ethics understood as responsibility."<sup>77</sup> The meaning of the

otherness of the Other is given in responsibility. When subjectivity is denied existence, as in the case of materialistic behaviorism, then the social cannot be understood and ethics do not exist. Behavioral social science, which reduces human interaction to laws of motion and people to "neuronal chemistry," defines its own subject of investigation out of existence rendering itself useless. According to reductionism, all social science departments should be disbanded and human motion in space (behavior) should be relegated to engineering and chemistry departments. But what then is lost? The very subject matter one presumes to explain and inform: the ethical being.

The body is preconceptual. But prior to linguistic conceptualization, the body "talks." Touch is enabled by the skin organ, which weighs about 6 to 10 pounds. However, the modern prejudice toward vision, which Kramer calls "visiocentrism," is so strong that other sentiments have been rendered marginal.<sup>78</sup> Levinas expresses this prejudice. And although those entangled in the metaphysics of lingualism may believe themselves, and the rest of us, to be "phonocentric," since the invention of the modern novel even reading has become a predominantly visual process. The modern penchant for physical exploration and high-speed mobility requires visual acuity. Visiocentrism is also manifested in the screen world we now embrace, with each of us spending more and more time peering at virtual images that offer no scent, texture, or flavor. Even the tactile impression of typesetting has been displaced by screen images.

However, despite the modern emphasis on the eye, from empirical observation to geometrically correct perspective in Renaissance art, the "older senses" persist. They still hold the pre-rational balance of power, for although we could see and map the moon, the greatest triumph of human exploration remains physical contact with it. Touch, taste, and smell remain fundamental and "salient." Language itself is full of metaphors of touch, as when we refer to our emotions as "feelings," or when we care deeply about something and we say we are "touched" by it. It has been demonstrated that massaged babies gain weight as much as 50% faster than unmassaged babies.<sup>79</sup> They are also more active, alert, and better able to tolerate noise. Research with orphans of World War II has demonstrated that infants deprived of touch exhibit "psychological and physical stunting" despite being otherwise fed and cared for.<sup>80</sup>

As society modernizes, we spend less and less time in direct physical contact, a fact that challenges our ethnocentric notions of "development" and "progress." The consequences are difficult to nail down. However it may be that all of the so-called spiritual deficits that hyper-moderns decry are actually linked not to some dislocation with an ephemeral level of reality, but more simply with touch. In more "primi-

tive" societies, infants have far more physical contact with others in their community than infants in more "advanced" societies. For instance, among the Pygmies of Zaire, infants are in physical contact with others about 50% of the time, while Kung! infants are in touch with others about 90% of the time.<sup>81</sup> Perhaps not incidentally, depression is practically unknown in such "backward" societies, whereas suicide rates are highest among the most materially wealthy populations on the Earth. Perhaps sanitizing our world of the slimy residue of life flies in the face of our ancient need for social interaction.

## ENDNOTES

1. Aristotle, like Alfred Whitehead and Bertrand Russell, and Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, in the 20th century cannot tolerate figural polyseme, meaning that he was confounded by the fact that one word, phrase, or act can have many meanings all at once or shift as the context changes.
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3. Descartes, R. *Meditations on First Philosophy* (L. LaFleur, Trans.). Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960.
4. In response to Descartes, Husserl, in his *Cartesian Meditations*, especially the fifth meditation, attempts to respond to Descartes' notion of people as automata and change the sense of the Other that is "there, present to me" from mere automata to a being that is meaningful in other ways. However, he ends up arguing that the Other is present to me only in the sense that the Other has for me. Levinas (1969) rejected this notion as a sort of totalitarian metaphysic, which determines *a priori* how the Other may be for me. But unfortunately, Levinas merely switches the master slave dualism to say that I must submit to the demands of the Other. By the this time Theodore Adorno (1973) had already come to regard Husserl's phenomenology as the most advanced form of the "decay" of bourgeois idealism, for he read Husserl's efforts at bracketing history and social reality, and seeking for universal truth as merely one more instance of the crisis of the European middle class. For Adorno, Husserl's only saving grace was that unlike his student Heidegger, who sought the "restoration" of Man's opening to Being, Husserl resisted turning his epistemological quest into a full-fledged ontology. And yet, Husserl's insistence that the immanent and transcendent are given together, may indi-

cate where Adorno and Levinas misunderstood his final effort. Adorno and Levinas must assume the essentially transcendental nature of language even as they attempt to refute it. In 1891, in the preface to *Philosophie der Arithmetik*, Husserl wrote of another volume in which he planned to elucidate in greater depth the notion of space. This volume never appeared. However, from 1886 to 1901 he prepared several manuscripts later published as *Studien zur Arithmetik und Geometrie*. In these essays he distinguishes four senses of "space." One of them he would return to again and again for it had been discarded by science as irrelevant to physical knowledge but yet all projects could proceed only by blindly presuming it. This form of space was that of everyday embodied living. In a lecture course in 1907, he introduced what he called "kinaesthesia" (later published under the title *Ding und Raum*). What he meant to indicate by this word was the capacity of a person to move their sense organs and body relative to objects. He explored how variable bodily attitudes effect perception. His analyses included studies of the oculomotoric field involving eye movement and the cephalomotoric field, which is a combination of head and eye movement. As Jean-Paul Sartre (1957) would later write, Husserl had "plunged philosophy back into the world" of mundane life. Many, recognizing the importance of Husserl's "radical empiricism" which rejects of the mind/body dualism and the imposition of mathematical abstraction in favor of the priority of direct experience (prehypothetical intentionality), took up his call to "the things themselves." Husserl argued that the mind and body are one, which he discussed in terms of "incarnate consciousness." One who followed Husserl's liberating move was Ulrich Claesges (1973) who edited Husserl's work *Ding und Raum* (Thing and Space). Claesges elaborated on what he called the levels of kinaesthetic systems such as body, head, eye and other types of movement. He demonstrated the intentional dimension of such levels of embodied consciousness and their effects on the phenomenon of vision. Husserl also explored the essential differences between kinaesthetic activities and the different perceptions they yield. For instance, he noted that tactile space, constituted by activities like pressing and rubbing do not present a continuous third dimension like vision without the synthetic process of protension and retention. Three-dimensional perception presupposes movement, which in turn presupposes embodied perspective and its mobility. Husserl also argued that the formalization of geometry leads to a break or dissociation between idealized geometries, and directly experienced bodies in the world.

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  60. For instance, Gebser (1949/1985) notes that first there was light that called into being the eye to see it. When the light disappears, the eye atrophies as in the case of cave fish. What called into being and valued the "accident" of conceptual thinking was not merely survival. For many species, including prelinguistic hominids survived for millennia without highly dissociated and dissociating language. It may well be as Nietzsche and Gebser suggest, the will to power including to exercise dominion (to domesticate) over others. The environment that nurtured the new ability was one of aggression. The first grunts that became "words" may very well have been commands.
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76. As a quick aside, it is no wonder that the extreme dualism expressed in the wildly popular Star Wars movies and the dramatics of "big time wrestling" on television (passion plays on steroids) find such a hugely accepting audience in the most religious of the modern industrial states, the United States.
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## BEING, TIME, AND THE ETHICAL BODY

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In the name of ethics Levinas will challenge the apparently inescapable notion—dominant for millennia in the West—that the body must be understood in terms of *being*. The challenge seems not only untenable at first and second glance, but fundamentally outrageous, irrational, and nonsensical. What can escape being? It is an all-embracing category, indeed, the most universal of all determinations. Whatever is has being, is being, is—being is, such is the tautology at the root of all Western thought. For Levinas, however, the deepest meaning of human embodiment is determined as *otherwise than being* (*autrement q'etre*). Not the human spirit alone, the "psyche" or "soul" independent of the body, but the embodied human, the human as embodied, would be the otherwise than being—not by being *beyond being*, however that might make sense, but by rising to a height, a moral height, *better than being*. Morality exceeds being. And the truly human body is the moral body inspired by the better than being. It is a radical thought, indeed, and opens a radical new direction for Western self-interpretation, for science, philosophy, culture and religion, but does it make any sense?

Levinas is sufficiently and rigorously phenomenological to acknowledge the *being* of the body. In its deepest origins, the body is a locus of enjoyments and needs, of strengths and weaknesses, a vulnerability, aging, suffering and mortal. The body requires nourishment, air,

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