

CHAPTER SIX

TRANSPARENT BODIES:
REVEALING THE MYTH OF INTERIORITY

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Introduction

Since the invention of x-rays in 1895 by Wilhelm Roentgen, the interior body has become accessible and visible without dissection. At the turn of the previous century, Roentgen's invention marks a new area, which I would call the Enlightenment of the body. The body can be entirely screened and elucidated by shining light through it. Especially since the 1960s, the development of all kinds of imaging technologies, such as endoscopy, ultrasound, MRI, PET and CT scans, has expanded enormously. It is characteristic for these technologies that they can fairly easy enter the body by letting its surface intact and undamaged.¹ Although current practices of illuminating the body can be seen as a logical continuation of the will to knowledge, having its origins in the eighteenth century of Enlightenment, it is a crucial difference that we can now make visible the interior body while it is still alive. Moreover, we can even view the interior of our *own* living body.

Of course, these technologies are primarily developed to increase medical possibilities of examination and treatment. But they also change the way in which we perceive and think about the body. It is a widespread conviction—in Western culture—that this kind of imaging renders the body totally comprehensible, or at least, it triggers the belief of a transparent body (Van Dijck 2005). It would be silly to deny that contemporary imaging unveils numerous anatomical 'secrets', which were formerly hidden. I would like to show here, however, that it is

¹ Needless to say, this does not mean that these interventions are always painless. Some of them can be rather exhausting and agonizing. It is not very pleasant to get an endoscopic camera in the intestine or urethra. Moreover, some forms of imaging leave cicatrices, as is the case by some applications of endoscopy, when a (small) incision in the skin is required.

inevitable that these illuminating practices face a specific kind of opacity in their search for transparency. My claim is that although these imaging technologies might travel within living bodies—our own living bodies—they cannot truly represent a living body. They do represent the body's interior space, but as I will make clear, this unveiled inside is not the hiding place of something like the living body. Since medical imaging always encounters some opacity, the idea of a complete transparent body is just an illusion. I will add to this that it is because of this opacity that we even have to give up our current idea of interiority. We are so used to speak of our 'interior', and it might seem that modern imaging technologies make this easier, but, in the end, they only affirm that such an idea is nothing but a myth.²

At first glance, we might be inclined to say that interiority is the space beneath the skin. The skin is the demarcation between the inside and the outside. Naturally, we can speak of the part of our body that is beneath the skin as something interior. That the body is a kind of container with an interior is clear by the very fact of the existence of the orifices such as the mouth and the anus: we can put something in our body and we can excrete things. In the same way, the endoscopic camera literally enters the body: it literally enters the space beneath the skin. The possibility of entering the body with a camera has triggered our imagination; our own body can be thought of as a place that can be entered and in which one can travel.³ And yet, I do not think that if we speak of the body's interiority we only allude to a space that is demarcated by the skin. The body's interior is not just the same as the interior of a house demarcated by walls. Somewhere deep 'in' my body—perhaps in my brain, or perhaps not really localisable, or perhaps

² The term 'myth' is borrowed from Gilbert Ryle (1949), who argues that Descartes' idea of the existence of the mind as an independent substance, opposed to the physical substance, is nothing but a myth. Ryle's disclosure of Descartes' myth implies a 'demystification of the mind': the mind should not be understood as an enigmatic inner substance independent of the body; the mind is not a 'ghost in the machine' (p. 17). In this paper, I would like to contribute to this 'demystification', although my approach cannot directly be compared with Ryle's. His demystification of the mind proceeds from a conceptual analysis of our ordinary mental vocabulary. According to him, the myth is based on a category mistake. I will disclose the myth by means of a phenomenological analysis of touch and vision.

³ The movie *Fantastic Voyage* (1966) is a very nice example of this imagination. Nowadays, the use of pictures and animations of the inner's bodies (travelling) space is an approved method in commercials that recommend all kind of self-help medication or healthy nutrition.

only symbolized by my heart—there is something that we usually call our inner self. This inner self refers to an interiority that is not spatial. I would say that it is psychological. In my opinion, if we want to explore the meaning of the *living* body we cannot limit our selves to the spatial meaning of interiority, but should as well take into consideration its psychological meaning.

In general, psychological interiority stands for our inner feelings, thoughts or states of mind. Interiority in this sense refers to that part of us that is considered to be our most private part and even the part that constitutes our very unique being. Whereas my outer appearance, my overt behaviour is visible and observable for every one, the access to my interiority seems to be restricted to myself. If I have certain thoughts, no one knows what I am thinking. If I have pain, no one knows exactly how my pain feels. If I enjoy my coffee, no one knows exactly how I enjoy it. Or at least, this is how we normally conceive of our inner states of mind. I do not think that contemporary imaging technologies, however invasive they are, really penetrate the interiority of inner feelings and states of mind. Even if inner states of mind can be reduced to brain activity, as some neuroscientists and philosophers claim,⁴ and brain activity is registered by a scan, it does not follow logically from this that inner states of mind are made visible. Undoubtedly, inner states of mind are related to brain activity, but still, if one registers my brain activity, I do not think that this will make visible how my pain feels or how much I enjoy my coffee.⁵ Medical imaging is thus not applied for the exploration of a psychological interiority. Rather, it is used for the examination of spatial interiority. A physician might be interested in, for example, whether there is a polyp in the intestine, whether a foetus is growing sufficiently in the mother's womb, or whether sudden speech failure is due to a vascular accident in the brains.

It is thus clear that the psychological meaning of interiority does not match immediately with its physical, spatial meaning. And yet, in

⁴ See for instance Churchland (1986).

⁵ According to the vocabulary of contemporary *Philosophy of Mind*, one would say that it is not possible to approach *qualia* from a scientific, third person's perspective. *Qualia* refer to the quality of experience; they refer to what it is like to have mental states. Theorists claiming that inner states of mind should be reduced to brain activity, normally tend to deny the existence of *qualia*. Although it is not my intention to get entangled in the *qualia*-debate here, implicitly I will argue that we cannot deny something like the quality of our experience, but this quality is not something subjective or private, not something that stems from some kind of interiority.

this paper, I will show that psychological interiority must be related to some kind of spatiality. We can have no feelings, no experience at all without a spatial body. Psychological and spatial interiority converge in the so-called phenomenon of bodily subjectivity. It is only on the basis of this phenomenon that we can understand what constitutes a living body. I will explain it as the bodily experience or sensing of one-self. Although I consider the body in terms of experience my approach is not psychological but rather philosophical. While drawing on some ideas of Descartes, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Nancy, I will provide a twofold argument. Firstly, I will make clear that 'psychological' interiority, i.e. our subjective feelings and thoughts, is not just a mental thing, but something that is inherently corporal. Secondly, if interiority or subjectivity can be considered as something corporal, it can no longer be understood as something that is just my private 'place' or something that I own. Something strange and exterior persists, even in our inmost inner feelings.

On the basis of this idea of embodiment and interiority, I will explain that there always escapes something from the picture in contemporary imaging technologies. However transparent these pictures can make our inner body, and however lively these pictures might look to us, they cannot grasp the living body. A picture is made of our inner body while we are alive, and yet, it cannot show anything else than our thinghood, which in essence is the inanimate aspect of our being. It is the inanimate that resists complete transparency. Picturing living bodies or 'dissecting' living bodies by means of an invasive (harmless) gaze remains a science or a practice of dead bodies, or at least, of the dead, inanimate side of the living body.

Interiority and Subjectivity

It is not surprising that interiority has not only a spatial meaning. Taking into consideration the etymology of the term, we see that it is related to intimacy. In Latin, *intimus* is the superlative degree of *interior*. Intimacy is profound interiority. Someone's intimacy lies in someone's inmost interiority. As said before, it is not a public but rather a private side of me. Or to phrase it differently, something intimate is supposed to be private and not public. Whenever something intimate is made public, its intimacy is violated. The intimate belongs to me, to my personal sphere. It is therefore that we can say that it is our inmost interiority,

our intimacy that constitutes my personal and proper being. Interiority in this sense indicates my self, my most genuine me-ness. It is not by accident that the very idea of a self or a person has always been related to the assumption of interiority. In western philosophy, the very idea of personhood was only developed after Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, in which he scrutinizes his inner self by descending in his memory.

In modern terms, interiority stands for subjectivity. Although various contemporary philosophers underline that subjectivity should be distinguished from what is called 'substance', the term subject is derived from the Latin *substantia*, a translation of the Greek *hupokeimenon*, which means 'that what sustains, what remains the same'.⁶ Subjectivity, therefore, refers not only to the personal or the individual, but also to something—be it a substance or not—that remains stable and the same. If my interiority stands for my subjectivity, it stands for the part of my existence that remains constant—in contrast with my ever-changing looks (at the outside).

Probably Descartes provides the clearest example of the coincidence of subjectivity and interiority. It is often said that he is the 'father' of modern (western) thought, since he 'invented' the idea of a subject. We must note here immediately that Descartes has never used the term 'subject' himself—he sticks to the then prevailing term 'substance' (*res, chose*), which he applies to both physical (and mortal) beings and the being of the immortal mind (as well as to the specific being of God). However, what he called the mind (*esprit*) or the thinking substance (*res cogitans*) is exactly what later came to be known as the subject. The 'birth' of this subject in the seventeenth century does not only mark a crucial shift in philosophy. It was equally important for developments in psychology. It is not exaggerated to state that our modern and contemporary idea of mind or *psyche* can be related immediately to Descartes' conception of the *res cogitans* (Fancher). Also methodological quarrels between behaviouristic approaches and approaches based on introspection have their origin in Descartes' philosophy. The very idea that my mind is something private stems from the Cartesian idea that the true sense of the mind can only be discovered by means of meditation, that is by means of a look 'inwards'.

⁶ In my discussion of Nancy's conception of the body, here below, I will return to the distinction between subject and substance.

In his *Meditations*, Descartes invites us to get ahead of our usual way of thinking. To find an indubitable basis for all sciences, we must put into brackets everything that allows the smallest doubt. Since perception and imagination can provide doubtful information, we should not trust these faculties. Even rational knowledge of which we are pretty sure, such as the fact that $2+5=7$, can be put into question, since we never know whether there is an evil genius that misleads us all the time and that makes us believe that $2+5=7$. Indeed, everything that we consider to be true in our daily life can be doubted. Everything can be doubted, except for one thing; the very fact that I am thinking: *cogito*. Doubting is a form of thinking, and therefore, if I doubt, I am thinking.⁷ At the very moment one puts into doubt everything, one cannot have any doubt about the existence of one's *ego* that performs the act of thinking. Even if everything can be doubted, there must be someone who doubts. Consequently, Descartes argues that it is the 'I' (*ego*) that thinks that constitutes an indubitable base. I will leave aside his arguments about further foundation of knowledge and only concentrate on the way in which Descartes describes this indubitable *ego*. According to him, this *ego* has no physical properties, since everything physical can be doubted. For the same reason, it cannot even be imagined (for, everything that can be imagined can be doubted). The only 'property' that can be ascribed to this *ego* is the actual pursuit of thinking. Only the act of thinking itself—and not the object of thought—is indubitable. As I see it, there are two things that are significant in Descartes' way of reasoning. Firstly, he proposes an absolute freedom of thinking. Thinking has no constraints: everything can be doubted. Secondly, this unrestricted way of thinking implies a withdrawal from everything exterior to me (since everything outside me can be doubted); a renunciation of the world. Indeed, to meditate means to close one's eyes for the exterior world and to turn one's mind to one's inner self. My indubitable *res cogitans* can only be experienced by myself by means of introspection and cannot be observed from the outside. This leads to the conclusion that my *cogito* is something interior that is enclosed upon itself.

Descartes' quest for something indubitable has led him into man's interior, which goes together with a complete abandonment from the body; for, anything physical can be doubted. As we know, this kind of reasoning has resulted in a strict dualism between body and mind,

⁷ "But what is a thinking thing? It is a thing that doubts, understands, [conceives], affirms, denies, wills, refuses, that imagines also, and perceives" (Descartes 1988, 34).

between the exterior and the interior, which, of course, has raised many questions about how the two can be related to each other. This problem, albeit rather fundamental in modern philosophy and psychology, is not of my interest here. What interests me here is that Descartes' description of subjectivity in terms of an indubitable *res cogitans* implies an interiority that is opposed to anything physical. Interiority in its psychological sense, so it seems, has nothing to do with the body, with a corporal space. This Cartesian way of thinking—which is still predominant in our culture and science—is based on a very limited and simple idea of the body, that is to say the body as a pure thing, extended in space (*res extensa*). Since this body is no more than a thing or an object, it is the opposite of the subject. Contrary to this (predominant) view, I will show that the body can be understood in a more complex way. If we concentrate on the experience of our *own* body, we not only experience it as a thing, that can be replaced by any other thing, but also as something that is very intimate and personal. For instance, when I feel pain, this does not mean that my body causes pain (in the mind), but it means that *my* body hurts. Descartes already pinpointed at this close-fitting relation between the body and the experience of ourselves when he stated, with a reference to Aristotle, that the relation between the mind (that experiences) and the body should not be thought of in terms of a pilot that lodges in his vessel.⁸ Still, Descartes has never explained this bodily experience of our selves in a convincing way. The reason for this is that he remained attached to the idea of the body as a thing. Various 20th century philosophers have criticized this idea of the body. In the next section, I will explain in which way the body can be thought of in terms of subjectivity instead of in terms of thinghood or objectivity.

Bodily Subjectivity

To my knowledge, the first philosopher who speaks of a bodily subject is Merleau-Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). However, for his description of the *corps sujet*, he cites, among other things, the

⁸ “Nature likewise teaches me by these sensations of pain, hunger, thirst, etc., that I am not only lodged in my body as a pilot in a vessel, but that I am besides so intimately conjoined, and as it were intermixed with it, that my mind and body compose a certain unity” (Descartes 1988, 94) See also Aristotle's *On the Soul* (413A).

analysis of touch provided by the German philosopher Husserl. To understand what can be meant by bodily subjectivity I will therefore first explore this analysis of touch. An additional reason for starting with a reading of this German text is that the German vocabulary provides a very adequate distinction with respect to the body—the distinction between *Leib* and *Körper*—which is lacking in French (and English).

In a passage of *Ideas II*, Husserl describes what happens when two hands of the same body are touching each other.⁹ When my right hand touches my left hand, the right hand can be considered the active touching hand. The left hand, by contrast, is the passive touched hand. On the level of experience we can distinguish here two aspects; let us say a subject and an object side. The experience provided by the active hand forms a subject. This is not yet what I would call a bodily subject since the information that stems from this touch experience, such as information on physical qualities, could also be considered as mental, cognitive experience. So far, nothing new. The touched hand is experienced as an object. This also does not break with traditional views. The innovation of Husserl's analysis lies in the fact that he recognizes that the touched hand is not just the same as any other touched object. There is a crucial difference between my right hand touching, for example, a keyboard and my right hand touching my left hand. My touched hand can feel that it is touched; it can feel its own touchability. The touched hand feels its touchability as localized in this touched hand. The feeling of one's own touchability marks the shift from the body as a *Körper* to the body as a *Leib*. A *Körper* is a thing with physical qualities. A *Leib*, on the contrary, is not a thing extended in space with physical qualities. Although the *Leib* has a certain spatiality, since it is the localization of touch-sensations, these localized sensations—which are named 'sensings' (*Empfindnisse*)—do not constitute physical features such as smoothness or roughness and they thus do not constitute the physical thing 'left hand'. The 'sensing' does not provide the state (*Zustand*) of the material thing hand; it is thus not the perception of my hand as a cold, smooth or rough object. Rather it provides the hand *itself*, the hand as *my* hand, which "for us is more than a material thing" (Husserl 1989, 157).

The body as *Leib* is constituted by auto-affection; the experience of sensing oneself as being sensed. Sensing oneself as being sensed

⁹ See especially § 36 of the *Ideas II*.

refers to another dimension than sensing oneself as a certain object. One might be inclined to state that this feeling of oneself is nothing other than a mental feeling of oneself and in that sense nothing else than Descartes' *res cogitans* feeling, for instance, pain. Then, the *Leib* is perhaps nothing other than the mind. In a sense this is true, but there is a crucial difference. If the *Leib* were a pure *Leib*, it would be nothing other than a mind or a *res cogitans*. However, it is essential to the *Leib*, being the experience of one's own body, that it is inextricably linked up with the *Körper*. Since *Leib* stands for the sensing of one's own being sensed or touched, it cannot exist without the very possibility of touchability which is provided by the *Körper*. In that sense, the *Leib* simultaneously presupposes and affirms our *körperlich* being. Without a *Körper* there is nothing to be touched and thus nothing that can be sensed as being touched. In Cartesian terminology this means that the *Leib* might be compared with a mental experience of sensing, but only to the extent that this experience cannot be stripped off its physical *res extensa*. In the experience of my own body, provided by the experience of touch, something like the *Körper* cannot be eliminated, even though it seems to be doubtful. We should perhaps argue against Descartes that although we can doubt about nearly every outer appearance of our body, we cannot doubt about the fact that this very body that is touched is *my* body, and to have such an experience of me-ness, of subjectivity, we need to have a touchable body. The body can thus be seen as a subject (in the sense of *Leib*) but a subject that is never pure. This idea of impure subjectivity has important consequences for our further analysis of the interior body.

The fact that the subject or the *cogito* can never be purified completely from its physicality has, at least, two important consequences. Firstly, this subject does not coincide with itself, since the experience of being touched can only occur if there remains a difference between *Leib* and *Körper*. If the two could coincide there would be no body or no experience at all. In short, impure subjectivity is a form of subjectivity that is not based on identity, rather on difference. As I will explain in the last part of this essay, it is because of this persistent difference that imaging technology of the inner body will never succeed in representing the *living* body. Secondly, bodily subjectivity means that consciousness cannot be something enclosed upon itself; it is embodied and embedded. Hence, it is not such a secret and intimate place as we thought at first. It is true that someone else might not feel the same joy as I do when I drink my coffee, but it does not result from this that these so-called

subjective and inner feelings originate from a private and enclosed inner self. The very possibility of having these kind of feelings presupposes that one must have been touched, in one way or another, from the outside.¹⁰ In what follows, I will explain these two lines of reasoning—the subject as difference and the subject without privacy—on the basis of Jean-Luc Nancy’s reflections on the body. One of the central themes in his work is the debunking of the idea that something like subjectivity or interiority, i.e. something like the ‘inner’ feeling or experience of oneself, is separated from anything outside. According to him, interiority or subjectivity is always related to the tangibility of the ‘outsideness’, hence his idea of *exteriority*.

Exteriority: Sensing Oneself from Outside

Subjectivity or interiority, in the psychological sense of the word, implies identity. Indeed, as I explained earlier, the subject is the being that remains the same, identical; it is the underlying substrate that remains the same whereas other features may change. It is a prevailing conviction that one’s inner self forms one’s identity. Identity in its strict sense—numerical identity—implies also unicity: I am I and not another. Identity is thus based on the idea of an internal *adequatio* between I and I ($I = I$). Yet, if the experience of one self is based on the difference between *Leib* and *Körper*, the very idea of an *adequatio* is put into question. The difference between *Leib* and *Körper* is, in fact, the difference between sensing and being sensed, or touching and being touched. Although he never mentions the distinction between *Leib* and *Körper*, I would say that the difference between touching and being touched—*la touche*—forms the central theme in Nancy’s idea of the body. To name the body’s ‘ambiguity’, its inherent difference, he rather provocatively conjures up the notion of the soul. He claims that the soul is the body which is related to itself. It is the body that feels itself (*se sentir*), and as such it is the body that does not coincide with itself,

¹⁰ The demystification of interiority I am aiming at here bears some resemblance with Wittgenstein’s analysis of (inner) feelings. According to him, a so-called private feeling such as pain is not private at all; for, it already presupposes a language in which this feeling is expressed, and language is never private but rather a social practice. (Wittgenstein 1953).

the body that is *outside* itself.¹¹ The term soul is used to make clear that the body is not a thing, a something, but rather a *relation*. What is thus at stake in Nancy's work is the attempt to explain the relation, or difference that constitutes (bodily) experience. This relation is prior to the sides or the aspects which are related. It is for this reason that Nancy does not talk about the different 'aspects' of the body such as *Leib* and *Körper*. The body should not be considered from the angle of its double-sided character, but from within its difference, its relation. This paper is not the place to discuss the complexity of such a philosophical approach. For our purpose, it suffices to underline that according to this line of reasoning, the body is not from the order of the thing or the substance. It is from another order—an order that can do justice to the being of the relation—which can be named the order of the *subject* (Nancy 2006a, 109).

Substance and subject must not be confused.¹² Substance refers to everything—be it material or spiritual—that is enclosed in itself and that coincides with itself. Substance is mass. It is mass without extension, without exposition. If a body is considered to be a substance, instead of a subject, it is reduced to a mass, or as Nancy argues with a reference to the cruelties of the Bosnian war in 1994, it is reduced to the mere materiality of a mass grave. As such, it is no longer a body that can be genuinely touched. The body as mass or as part of a mass is in fact nothing else than the denial of its 'being body' (Nancy 2006a, 107). By contrast, the body as subject can be touched, by itself and by

¹¹ "The soul is the difference between the body and itself. It is the relation from the outside which constitutes the body's being for itself"—"L'âme est la différence du corps à lui-même, le rapport du dehors qu'un corps est pour lui-même" (Nancy 2006a, 119).

¹² The distinction between subject and substance is a recurrent theme in Nancy's work. Especially in his reading of Descartes, he proposes to redefine the *ego* in terms of subject (Nancy 1979, 2006b). Subjectivity stands for openness, comparable with the Heideggerian idea of *Dasein*. If subjectivity is not based on substance, we need to revise the common opinion of identity. Normally, identity refers to the sameness of an underlying substrate, be it spiritual, mental or physical. If such a substrate is not the basis of a subject, the identity that forms the subject cannot be thought of in terms of simple *idem*-identity. It is therefore that Paul Ricoeur, also inspired by Heidegger's description of the *Dasein*, claims that identity of human existence—its endurance in time—is not carried by a substance but rather by a subject and this can be called *ipse*-identity (Ricoeur 1991). This is a form of identity that allows change and difference. According to Nancy, subjectivity or identity can only be understood on the basis of difference, as he makes very clear in the analysis of his own heart transplantation (Nancy 2000).

others, and in that way it is the body that belongs to a crowd (*foule*).¹³ It is something open, not closed. When Nancy chooses to use the term ‘soul’ to indicate this opening or openness, one might get the impression that experience of the body—the fact of being touched—is now defined in terms of (psychological) interiority. This, however, is not the right conclusion. Nancy makes it very explicit that the soul should not be understood in a Platonian or Christian way. It is not the ‘ineffaceable interiority’ (Nancy 2006a, 113); it is not some spiritual body, since any spiritual body is nothing but a substance and therefore not of the order of a body that can be touched. In fact, something like a spirit is from the same order as shit. “Shit and spirit are the excretions of the body, that what the body rejects” (Nancy 2006a, 114). Even if I touch myself, this touch does neither presuppose nor constitute a self-coinciding interiority. Touch always comes from the outside and the touched always remains outside. The body’s openness, its non-coinciding relation with itself, must therefore be understood in terms of *exteriority*.

One might be inclined to see exteriority as the opposite of interiority. However, according to Nancy, interiority is nothing other than exteriority. As explained earlier, we normally describe our ‘inner’ feelings, the (bodily) experience of our selves as (psychological) interiority. By using the term exteriority, Nancy claims that this current description is wrong. Our most ‘private’ feelings are not somewhere inside; they are at the outside.¹⁴ Pain and joy are normally seen as the most private and intimate feeling. And yet, if I say that ‘I suffer’ or ‘I enjoy’ (*je jouis*), this ‘I’ is not a self-coinciding intimacy. In fact, these experiences already imply two ‘I’s’; in the case of suffering, one I rejects the other, and in the case of joy, one I exceeds the other (Nancy 2000, 39). Nancy does not explain any further what he exactly means with these two ‘I’s’ which do not coincide, although “they are as like as two peas in a pod” (*deux gouttes d’eau*) (Nancy 2000, 39). I would say that this

¹³ Central in Nancy’s work is the theme of community, i.e. what it means to life with others, being part of a crowd. According to him, community should be understood on the basis of an ontology of ‘being with’ (*être avec*), and such an ontology must be an ontology of bodies: ‘L’ontologie de l’être-avec est une ontologie des corps, de tous les corps, inanimés, animés, sentants, parlants, pensants, pesants’ (Nancy 1996, 107).

¹⁴ One might want to object here that we can have an experience of a certain interiority in our body, for instance, in the case of complete health. As claims Bichat, the definition of health is the genuine intimacy of a silent body (Nancy 2006a, 118). Nancy does not disagree with this idea of health, but for him this intimacy is from the order of mass or substance. It is not felt and as such it is not an experience of the body. In the case of complete health, there is no body.

non-coinciding relation can be understood as the relation between *Leib* and *Körper*. To be able to enjoy or to suffer one needs to have both a *Körper* that can be touched and a *Leib* that can sense its being touched. As I see it, it is precisely the ineradicable persistence of the *Körper* that disrupts the possibility of an interiority. Indeed, it is the *Körper* that can never be internalized, that always remains outside. Exteriority then stands for the seemingly paradoxical fact that I can only experience my own body on the basis of something that is and remains strange; the strangeness of the body's thinghood, its *körperlichkeit*. If we summarize this philosophical account on interiority we can reach the following argumentation: (a) interiority has not only a spatial but also a psychological meaning; (b) psychological interiority stands primarily for the inner, private feeling or experience of one self; (c) this so-called interiority is, in reality, always based on something *exterior*, something with *extension*, something that cannot be internalized or appropriated; (d) things with extension (*Körper*) are spatial. So-called psychological interiority, that we now have reformulated as exteriority, is thus related to spatiality. And in principle, everything spatial can be represented by any kind of imaging.

The inner space of the living body is unveiled by contemporary imaging technologies. In the introduction, I made already clear that these kind of images will never unveil our so-called 'inner feelings'. But since we have reconsidered this interiority in terms of exteriority—which always remains related to some kind of extension and thus spatiality—we need to explore in which way these images touch upon the body's exteriority.

What is on the Screen?

Various imaging machines can make images of my interior body, which I can look at myself—and sometimes, even in real time (ultrasound, endoscopy). This means, in fact, that my body is looking at my own body: the body is simultaneously seeing and been seen. While describing the phenomenon of bodily subjectivity, based on the difference between *Leib* and *Körper*, I used Husserl's analysis of touch. The touched hand is not merely touched or sensed, rather it senses its very own touchability. There is a reversibility between sensing and being sensed, which at first sight might look typical for the sense of touch. Merleau-Ponty, however, claims that this model of touch equally counts

for vision. As he writes, vision is a ‘remarkable variant’ of tactile palpation (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 133). Consequently, seeing implies always being seen. Here, I will not elaborate on this explanation of vision that is modelled after the reversibility and proximity between touching and being touched.¹⁵ If we pursue Merleau-Ponty’s account, we may say that it is also by means of vision that we can experience our body both as *Leib* and *Körper*. The *Körper* is the body that is seen, and the *Leib* is the body that is seeing. My body is not only a thing that can be seen but it is also seeing. It is a *Leib* because this ‘seeing’, while entangled with movement and space, is not a (Cartesian) mental way of seeing, but rather an embodied seeing.

The experience provided by medical images of our own body seems to affirm this double-layered experience of our own body; seeing our own body with our own body. However, there is also an important difference to mention. It is the machine that constitutes the difference between the two layers of my bodily existence. There is no intrinsic and immediate relation between the body that sees and the body that is seen. Moreover, the relation between seeing and being seen is complicated by the fact that we as laypeople in general do not immediately recognize what we see.¹⁶ The machine thus creates the difference between *Leib* and *Körper*. Or to phrase it more precisely, it creates a distinction between, on the one hand, a pure *Körper* and, on the other, a *Leib* that is also *Körper*. The image of the body always represents the body as *Körper*, as a thing, an object. Indeed we cannot make a physical image of something that is not extended. How does this image of the body as *Körper* relate to the notions of interiority and exteriority?

As I already suggested, the body as *Körper* is that dimension or aspect of the body that remains strange and exterior to the body as subject. The bodily subject cannot appropriate or assimilate its own *Körperlichkeit*. According to phenomenological vocabulary, the *Körper* is an intentional object, it is an object that can be perceived, an object with physical qualities. A *Körper* can be perceived as warm, smooth, hairy, slimy, smelly etc. In that sense, also qualities that are normally

¹⁵ In another paper, I have provided a detailed analysis of touch and vision in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty (Slatman 2005b).

¹⁶ If patients are frequently submitted to imaginary examinations they do learn how to read the pictures after a while. See for this Radstake (2007). Elsewhere, I have explained that although these imaging technologies do not provide pictures that resemble, it is still possible to recognize something. (Slatman 2007).

attributed to a living body are in fact nothing other than qualities of a thing. The *Leib*—which is the living body from a phenomenological perspective—, by contrast, has no physical qualities. Its only quality is its ‘capacity to be stimulated’ *Reizbarkeit* (Husserl 1989, 164), which is nothing else than the ‘sensing’ (*Empfindnis*) of its being sensed. Because of this radical difference, *Leib* and *Körper* cannot be reduced to each other. And this also means that the *Körper* always remains the *Leib*’s stranger. However, it is important to emphasize here that *Körper* and *Leib* do not refer to certain parts of a body. It is more adequate to say that they refer to the double-sided experience of the body.¹⁷ In the example of the two touching hands, the same hand can be experienced as *Körper* as well as *Leib*. Moreover, in touch, and according to Merleau-Ponty, also in vision, the relation itself is reversible: the touching can be touched, the touched can be touching, and the seeing can be seen, the seen can be seeing. Obviously, this reversibility also reverses the relation between *Leib* and *Körper*. But again, this does not mean that the *Körper* can be reduced to the *Leib* or *vice versa*. As Merleau-Ponty made it very clear, there always remains a difference, an *écart* between the two. In the example of the two touching hands this *écart* consists in the fact that one and the same hand can never be touched and touching at the same time.¹⁸ Although *Leib* and *Körper* are exchangeable, the difference, the *écart*, between them is persistent. And it is true, we could not even think of a bodily subject without this difference: if it were a pure *Körper* it would be just an object without an experience of itself, and if it were a pure *Leib* it would be something disembodied that could not be touched or seen. If our living body is the *Leib* that is always related to the *Körper*, and if images of the body can only exhibit qualities that belong to the body in the sense of being *Körper* what do these pictures tell us about our own body?

If the invasive camera or the scan enters the body, travels beneath the skin, it will exposure something that was first hidden and inaccessible.

¹⁷ If *Körper* and *Leib* would denote some specific body parts, it would be incomprehensible that strange elements, for instance, prostheses or grafts could be appropriated. A *Körper*, or even better, a *Fremdkörper* can become part of my own living body and thus become *Leib*, but only to the extent that it ceases being *Körper*.

¹⁸ “My left hand is always on the verge of touching my right hand touching the things, but I never reach coincidence; the coincidence eclipses at the moment of realization, and one of two things always occur: either my right hand really passes over to the rank of the touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted, or it retains its hold on the world, but then I do not really touch it” (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 147–8).

Certainly, imaging technologies are capable of laying open a certain strangeness of the body. Or even stronger, they can even neutralize (or colonize) this strangeness. However, this is not the kind of strangeness that forms exteriority. As Nancy claims, exteriority is constituted by a stranger (*l'étranger*) who is not given a welcome, who in that sense always remains strange (Nancy 2000, 11). I would therefore say that the strangeness that is encountered by imaging technologies can have two faces. On the one hand, it refers to a strangeness that can be welcomed and thus neutralized. But on the other hand, they also face a strangeness that cannot be discounted. This strangeness is nothing other than the fact that the body in the picture is reduced to a *Körper*. A picture of the living body thus exhibits life's stranger. Instead of neutralizing strangeness, the invasive gaze only intensifies it. The machine increases the distance between *Leib* and *Körper* and externalizes their relation. The experience of one's own body as subject is always mediated by the facticity of the *Körper*, and the machine reinforces this mediation. In conclusion then, instead of unveiling the inner body's interiority, contemporary imaging technologies make visible the myth or illusion of interiority, by blowing up one's own living body's stranger—the *Körper*. It might be true that modern imaging technologies are so fascinating since they seem to make us transparent, since they appear so appropriate for understanding our genuine selves. I think however that the fascination for this kind of technology is first of all a fascination for what is not understandable at all. It is the fascination for our own death which apparently is so inextricably bound up with our life. Thomas Mann describes this fascination very aptly in his *Magic Mountain* (1924). Seeing his own chest X-ray, Hans Castrop has the impression of glimpsing in his own grave; a glimpse which is not at all appropriate for a human being.¹⁹ A picture of the *Körper* which in fact belongs to a living body—one's own living body—separated from the *Leib*, is a picture of the living body's death.

¹⁹ “Und Hans Castrop sah, was zu sehen er hatte erwarten müssen, was aber eigentlich dem Menschen zu sehen nicht bestimmt ist und wovan auch er niemals gedacht hatte, daß ihm bestimmt sein könne, es zu sehen: er sah in sein eigenes Grab” (Mann 1924, 232).