

# TOWARD A MAP OF THE BODY

By Vilém Flusser

*“The body structure which this paper is going to propose is a space-time continuum and therefore not easily executable in the traditional two-dimensional map form. [...] This is how it wants to be read: as a raw sketch to be translated into more adequate means of communication.”*

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### Editorial preface

“Practically all the models now at our disposal are space models”, wrote Vilém Flusser (1920–1991) in a posthumously published essay, “On the Crisis of our Models”.<sup>1</sup> It was supposed to be a guide to develop a universal model of the human body from a phenomenological perspective, a guide that the Czech philosopher had imagined for artists and other practitioners of the video or “technical image”. Silvia Wagnermaier, then research assistant at the Vilém Flusser Archive in Berlin, has described this aspect of Flusser’s work, which so far has received little attention in studies of his legacy, with the keywords “bodies and body maps, body and body models, skins and dermatologies”.<sup>2</sup> This thematic complex includes Flusser’s essays “Ist ein Modell meines Leibes möglich?”<sup>3</sup> [Is a Model of My Body Possible?] and “Toward a map of the body”<sup>4</sup>, both remained unpublished during Flusser’s lifetime.

The manuscripts are undated, but Wagnermaier concludes from the paper and the type of typewriter used that they were probably written during the same period. If we look at sources such as Flusser’s correspondence with Patrick Milburn, the editor in chief of *Main Currents in Modern*

*Thought*, a journal in which Flusser published one of his most important texts in the US,<sup>5</sup> we can not only date the essay relatively precisely to 1974. We also find traces of the genesis of “Toward a map of the body” and the references that sparked the idea to conduct a phenomenological thought experiment as an embodied self-observation. In a letter dated May 1974 Milburn wrote to Flusser about his current research interests. In particular, the problem of the phenomenology of the lived body strongly interested him at the time: “Most fundamental, of course, is a phenomenology of the lived, bodily experience, of the qualities of the body and its organically-intended regions – it would be interesting to compare such ‘inward’ maps of the ‘organs’ with Tibetan and Hindu anatomies.”<sup>6</sup> In his answer Flusser accepted Milburn’s challenge to conceive such a “map” of the human body and right away outlined a model that shall be conceived as a “pulsating ball”<sup>7</sup>. The human body as a phenomenological “time-space continuum”<sup>8</sup> was obviously already occupying Flusser at this point: “I am very much bewildered by the problem of the organism closest to me: my body. After all: since my body stands between myself and all other things, and since it mediates between myself and all other things, it models everything.”<sup>9</sup>

Flusser described such a model of the human body as a cognitive zero point conceived as sphere in his essay “On the Crisis of our Models”, which one may add to Wagnermaier’s list of texts

1 Vilém Flusser, *On the Crisis of our Models*. (Theoretical considerations and a practical proposal), manuscript Vilém Flusser Archive, ref. no. 2767 (undated, ca. 1974), p. 3.

2 Silvia Wagnermaier, *Zuführung zum Text Vilém Flussers*, in: *Lab: Jahrbuch 2000 für Künste und Apparate*, ed. Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln/Verein der Freunde der KHM (Cologne: Walther König 2000), pp. 113–114, here 113.

3 Manuscript Vilém Flusser Archive, ref. no. 2451 (undated, ca. 1974).

4 Manuscript Vilém Flusser Archive, ref. no. 2800 (undated, ca. 1974). German variant: *Von den Möglichkeiten einer Leibkarte*, manuscript Vilém Flusser Archive, ref. no. 2058 (undated, ca. 1974); published in: *Lab: Jahrbuch 2000 für Künste und Apparate*, pp. 115–124.

5 Vilém Flusser, *Line and Surface*. *Main Currents in Modern Thought* 29/3 (1973): 100–106.

6 Milburn to Flusser, May 10, 1974, letter Vilém Flusser Archiv, ref. no. Cor. 144, document 8.

7 Flusser to Milburn, May 21, 1974, letter Vilém Flusser Archiv, ref. no. Cor. 144, document 9.

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*

on body maps and dermatologies. Apparently, the essay was written still under the impression of the correspondence with Milburn. If one compares it with “Ist ein Modell meines Leibes möglich?” cited by Wagnermaier, it becomes apparent that the texts correspond in large parts or that the German essay probably originated from the translation and revision of the English one. Also “Toward a map of the body”, which invokes similar themes, was apparently written during the same period, probably at a point in time after the other two essays. In them Flusser explicitly articulated his interest in the “new” research on a phenomenology of the body. As usual, he does not disclose sources. The terminology used, however, shows the omnipresent influence of Martin Heidegger in Flusser’s work, who himself did not develop a phenomenology of the body, but nevertheless worked out the subjective significance of, according to Flusser, the “standpoint of being-in-the-world”<sup>10</sup>. An engagement with the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty also seems to become apparent when Flusser refers to the human body as “the way in which we are in the world” (cf. Merleau-Ponty’s *corps vécu*). If not in the three essays mentioned here, Merleau-Ponty does appear in other writings by Flusser, among the best known is his book *Vampyrotheuthis infernalis* (1987).

The essay, and this is why it is published here, does not only touch topoi of phenomenology, but also of diagrammatics, wider theories of embodiment, and interface studies. We do not want to imply or dictate a particular reading of the essay in such contexts. But we would nevertheless like to point out that Flusser’s thought experiment combines questions of embodiment with diagrammatics – the body map model is described by Flusser as a genuine diagrammatic system

– while framing one’s own body as an interface system of input and outputs, as a threshold where the world perceived is bestowed with sense. Also, the text is written with at the time new media technologies such as video in mind, which would allow, according to Flusser, to represent the model – which is necessarily a “space-time model”<sup>11</sup>, since one’s living body is situated and acts in the world – as moving images or animated graphics. In other words, the diagrammatic “moving images of thought” (Charles Sanders Peirce) could be materialized as concrete experimental systems: “We need no longer merely ‘reflect’ or ‘speculate’ concerning space-time models, we can put them to technical and practical experimental utilization.”<sup>12</sup>

The diagrammatically conceived map of the body demands a diagrammatic depiction. Flusser did not, to our knowledge, provide illustrations or sketches for this essay. However, there is a sketch by Flusser from the same year, among notes he took while visiting the influential conference “Open Circuits: The Future of Television” at MoMA, New York, January 23–25, 1974 (fig. 1). It depicts a comparison between a traditional “Western” temporal model of history conceived linearly (labeled in the diagram as “Dynamic in Historical Progress”) and Flusser’s “post-historical” model, in which future possibilities are centered on the subject in the present (“within Present”), ready to be selected and realized. Both models are well known in Flusser’s work and part of his anthropology.<sup>13</sup> Similar to his body model or map of the body the post-historical model depicted here conceives the subject as a circle, or sphere, while arrows coming from the future, or the outside

11 Flusser, *Toward a map of the body*, p. 6.

12 Ibid.

13 Cf. e.g., Vilém Flusser, *Into the Universe of Technical Images* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

10 Flusser, *Ist ein Modell meines Leibes möglich?*, p. 1; transl. D.I.

world, enter its field of perception and living environment.

These are only some examples how Flusser's phenomenological approach can be discussed in context of diagrammatology.<sup>14</sup> For this publication the essay has been transcribed from a typewriter manuscript and was carefully edited: Only grammar and spelling inconsistencies, along with typos such as punctuation errors, were corrected. With these cautious adjustments we hope to have preserved the characteristic style of Flusser's writing. We are indebted to the Vilém Flusser Archive and its current research supervisor, Anita Jóri, for the permission to publish the essay.

Berlin, September 2022

Daniel Irrgang

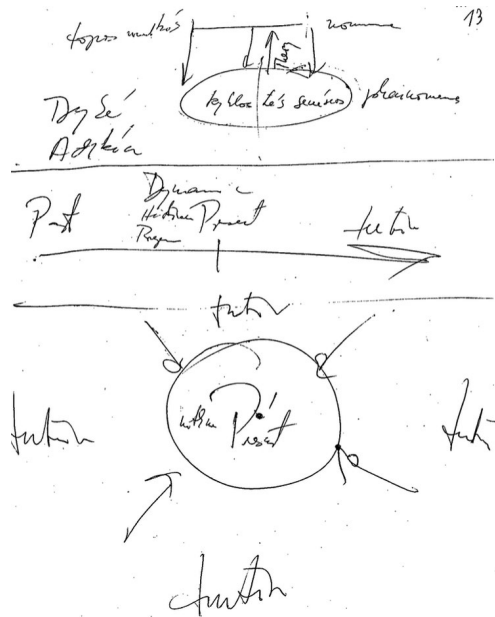


Fig. 1: Sketch by Vilém Flusser's on temporal models, scribbled on the back of the "Open Circuits" conference program (1974). Source: Vilém Flusser Archive, ref. no. Cor 55, 6, R, document 13.

14 For a more comprehensive approach see Daniel Irrgang, *Erweiterte Kognition. Zum diagrammatischen Zeichen als verkörpertem Denken* (Berlin 2022); parts of the preface are taken from this book and have, for this purpose, been translated and extensively reworked.

We are about to enter a new period in more than one sense of the term. For instance: We must remake all the maps of our world. We do not trust the existing maps any longer. Because they are, all of them, projections from a specific point of view, the so-called “objective” one. We can no longer assume that point of view in good faith. We must assume a different one: the point of view of our being-in-the-world. Now to look at the world from within implies seeing it in a way different from the view offered by world maps of our tradition. For instance: We can no longer see our bodies as things among other things in the world. We now see our bodies as mediations between ourselves and all the other things in the world. In fact, because all things are experienced by us through our body one way or another, we ought to make a map of our body before we can try to make maps of the things in the world. Of course, we need not throw away all the existing maps of the body (like the maps of anatomy, of physiology, and so forth). They may come in handy at a later stage of our effort to orient ourselves in the world. But as points of departure such maps are no longer useful. The question this paper poses itself is this: How could maps of the body projected from the point of view of our being-in-the-world (the phenomenological one) look like?

It is, first of all, a question of strategy. One possible strategy is this: One can make a catalogue of our experiences of our body. One can then try to find some structure which orders these experiences and call it “the body structure”. This

will be a sort of rudimentary map of the body. And with the help of such a map one can start cataloguing the things of the world as they are being experienced through the mediation of the body. To give an example for the possible results of such a strategy in the long run: I experience “sight”. I then find a structure within which “sight” can be located, for instance called “my eyes”. And then I try to make a catalogue of the things experienced through “my eyes” within the structure of my body, like “this typewriter” or “this text concerning Julius Caesar”. In the long run this will result in maps of the world. But this strategy has its drawbacks. It is theoretically problematic. The problems are very ancient (empiricism versus formalism and so forth) and cannot be easily “suspended”. And, most of all, it is practically unsatisfactory because it will bring results only in the very long run. And we are, understandably, impatient. We feel we must be able to orient ourselves in the world here and now, not in some far away future. There must be a better strategy. For instance, this one:

One can propose a provisional structure of the body. One can then try to locate the various body experiences within it. And correct the structure as one goes on. Such a map of the body could be used immediately as a provisional tool for mapping the world, as it is being experienced through body mediation. The proposal of one such possible body structure as a possible projection for a map of the body (and through it, of the world) is the purpose of this paper.

The body structure which this paper is going to propose is a space-time continuum and therefore not easily executable in the traditional two-dimensional map form. It is best to imagine it as a videotaped hologram in motion. This is how it wants to be read: as a raw sketch to be translated into more adequate means of communication.

Imagine a sphere with very thick walls and a small hole in its center. The sphere pulsates. It is within a context. In some places the context penetrates the sphere and is absorbed by it. In other places the sphere expels secretions which become parts of the context. The context is composed of elements which cluster around the sphere and become rarer as one advances toward an empty horizon. Let us now try to introduce labels into this proposed model: Let us label the wall of the sphere "my body", the hole in the sphere "myself", the context "my world", and the horizon "my death", and let us see how we can use such a model.

Let us first disregard the wall of the sphere (which is, of course, the purpose of the model). We can label the incoming influences from the context toward the sphere "my future" or "my problems". We can label the outgoing secretions "my past" or "my products". We can label the places of feedback between sphere and context "my presence in the world" or, more compactly, "my present". Let us now see how this will work as a map of my concrete being-in-the-world. For instance: A specific problem presents itself on a specific place of my body, coming out of my future. I shall call this specific

problem "a pain in my liver". Now before that pain presented itself (when it was still in my future), I had no experience of my liver (either as a problem or as part of my body). "The liver" is therefore an element which is experienced only as part of the problem "pain in my liver". Strictly speaking, it has no place within my body structure. But neither has it any place within the context of my body because when it is being experienced, it is being experienced as part of my body. The model has therefore failed us here, and we must improve it. A region must be introduced in it which lies between "my body" and "my world" (between the sphere and its context), a sort of no-man's-land which is both my body and my world and neither. We might label that region "the theoretical part of my body". (The painless liver is a theoretical, but not a concretely experimental, part of my body.) In this region things like proteins and genetic information may be located. And it may be organized this way: "Liver" is less theoretical than "genetic information" (nearer to the sphere wall) because I can experience it in pain, but "genetic information" I can experience only through more complex mediation. And this is only one example for the need to constantly refine the model.

Let us now try what can be done with the model on the inside of the sphere walls, the side opposing "myself" (the hole in the middle). It is obvious that we must allow for two aspects of it: one that brings in, and one that brings out information of the context. One can label the first aspect "experience" or "passion" and

the second one “commitment” or “action”. This may be imagined as a bundle of arrows. Some point from the wall into the hole coming from the context, others from the hole into the wall and through it at the context, and some point from the wall into the hole without coming from the context and from the hole into the wall without going into the context. Some of these arrows are fixed, others can be turned around. Now let us try to see how this will work as a map for our concrete body experience. “Myself” experience a specific arrow which brings in information from “my world”, and I shall call that arrow “my finger”. And “myself” experience the same arrow as turnable because “my finger” may also inform “my world” about “myself”. But this is not the whole matter. “Myself” can also finger “my finger” (there are ten fingers in my body structure and one can finger the other). Therefore, “my finger” is experienced by “myself” as being part of “my body” (a mediation between “myself” and “my world”). Not so with other arrows. “Myself” experience another arrow which brings in information from “my world” as “my eye”. “Myself” cannot turn it around. But what is more, “myself” cannot see “my eye” directly. (Although I have two eyes in my body structure, one cannot see the other.) Therefore, “myself” cannot experience “my eye” as being part of “my body”. In other words: “my finger” can be seen through “my eye” and fingered through “my other finger”, but “my eye” cannot be seen by “my other eye”, only fingered by “my finger”. I experience “my eye” as being part of “my body” only

through the mediation of other parts of “my body”. Now surely this important distinction must be shown in the map of the body. Possibly by introducing another intermediate region. A region which is neither “my body” nor “myself”, and both at the same time. “My eye” cannot be clearly distinguished from “myself”, but “my finger” can. (My finger is experienced as a tool, but not my eye). This new intermediate region may be labelled “the existential part of my body”. The eye is nearer to myself than is the finger, because it is existentially more myself than is the finger. My finger is more outside myself (more “world-like”) than is my eye (which is more “hole-like”). And this is another example for the need to constantly refining the model.

Now it is easier to try and see how one can use the wall of the sphere itself (the purpose of the model): as a system of elements which tend to become problem-like (theoretical) as one advances toward its context, and to become hole-like (existential) as one advances toward the hole in its center, but which are tool-like (body-like) within the core of the wall itself. Now this tool-like character of the core of the body (as exemplified by “my finger”) must not be allowed to veil the specificity of its organisation. The model must show that the body is not organized like a complex tool (for instance, like a public administration), but more like the Greek Pantheon (like an “organism” in which each part may take control over the whole system). It must show how the whole body can, at moments, become subjected to the eye, the finger,

the mouth, or the phallus, for example. So that in such moments the whole body may be conceived of as a complex eye or any other "organ". Just like the Greek Pantheon may be conceived of, at moments, as "appolonian", or "hermetic", or "aphrodisiac", and so forth. And at the same time the model must show that there is a constant interplay between the various "organs" of the body, a sort of hierarchy of organs in which each "organ" has its own function but may substitute other "organs" in part of the function. This double aspect of the body may be shown, in the model, to be the result of the two intermediary regions within which it is located. Thus: Seen from the "theoretical" side (the one between "my body" and "my world") the body appears as an organisation of organs. Seen from the "existential" side (the one between "my body" and "myself") it appears as a single, complex, but ever changing, organ. Which means that seen "theoretically" the body appears to be a thing of "my world" within which "myself" is hidden, and seen "existentially" it appears to be an extension of "myself" through the mediation of which "I am in the world". In other words: The map must show that "my body" is a region of overlap between "theoretical" and "existential" vision, that it is an overlap between two intermediate regions.

Let us now try to imagine the model, here proposed as a raw sketch, in the working (for instance, as a hologram moving transparently on a TV screen) and let us ask (a) what it would look like and (b) how it could serve as a tool for the mapping of our world.

(a) Obviously, it would look like a primitive organism in motion. Like a model of a gastrocoelum, for instance. It would show schematically its anatomy and its metabolism. Now this does not appear to be a happy result of an attempt to "suspend objective vision". It would seem, on the contrary, to be the result of traditional biology applied in a superficial way to existential thinking, itself superficialized in the process. But this would be a mistaken reading of the model. The similarity between the model proposed and a primitive living organism is not, if one looks closer, the result of an application of biological models, but is, on the contrary, a hint for the understanding of biological models. Thus, it shows that all biological models have "our body" as a model. It is not a fact, as biological models would lead us to believe, that we "understand" our body as one among the organisms which we find in our world. The fact is that we "understand" some of the things in our world to be organisms if we discover some similarities with our body structure within them. Not, therefore, is "my body" a member of the class "organism", but "organism" is a class of things which have my body for a model. The model proposed for my body is similar to primitive organisms because it is the underlying model for biology, not because it was taken from biology.

The proposed model is therefore not zomorphic but shows, on the contrary, that all biological models are anthropomorphic (if my body may be called anthropomorphic). This is how the model would look like under more careful reading.



(b) Now this suggests how the model may be used as a tool for the mapping of our world. In the case considered above it was used as a tool for the mapping of that region of our world for which biology is competent, the region of living organisms. This region may now be classed and “understood” as one composed of phenomena more or less similar to “my body”, and such a similarity would become the criterium for classification. But of course, such a use of the model proposed may be extended to all other regions of our world. For instance: That region of our world for which mechanics are competent may be classed and “understood” as one composed of phenomena in a motion more or less similar to the motion of my body, and such a similarity may become the criterium for classification. And it is easy to multiply such examples for the possible use of the proposed model as a tool for mapping our world. But what is so fascinating about it is the suspicion that the possible uses of the model exceed our imagination. In fact, one suspects that in the use of the model our world would, step by step, assume a new structure: the structure of our being-bodily-in-the-world. Now the word “new structure” may be a wrong term. Possibly the world had this structure for the Greeks (Aristotle is a good example) and this structure may have been covered up as objective maps of the world (objective science and so forth) were developed. In that case the model here proposed may serve as a tool for the removal (“suspension”) of more recent structures in order to rediscover, on a new level, a deeper

world structure. In sum: It may serve as a tool for phenomenological vision.

Now grave objections may be raised against both the premises and the feasibility of the proposed model. This paper cannot hope (nor even intend) to defeat them. But it must try to face at least some of them if it is to appeal to future research as it wants to. For this purpose, let us class some of the possible objections under three headings.

*A) Technical and practical difficulties:* What appears to be most problematic about the model from this point of view is the fact that it must be restructured at every step of its use. Consider this problem. It is not the problem of “objective” maps which get ever more complete as information is inserted into them (for instance, geographical maps or anatomical models). It is a problem which geographical maps would have if each new information would demand a reformulation of their structure (for instance, the Mercator projection). It may be asked whether a model is at all useful (and readable) if it must be changed at every step of its utilization.

One way to meet this objection is to say that at every step the model may be used as an admittedly provisional tool for mapping, and that this is after all the purpose of every model. But there is another, and far more interesting, way to meet that objection. It is this: We have now, and for the first time, means at our disposal to make space-time models. We are no longer condemned to imagine such models, we can now materially build them and work with them. We have

videotapes and holograms, for instance. We are no longer restricted to two-dimensional maps and three-dimensional structural models. And this means that we can now “think” in space-time in a way we previously could not. We need no longer merely “reflect” or “speculate” concerning space-time models, we can put them to technical and practical experimental utilization. So why should, we not try to do so? In fact, what this argument amounts to is this: Let us put our new means of communication into practice and see how far the objections are valid. The proof of the cake is in the eating. Now this does not, of course, defeat the objection. It merely postpones it. But to postpone an objection is a way to remove it.

*B) Epistemological objections:* The proposed model pretends to be one for an understanding (“episteme”) of the body and, through it, of the world. But if one looks at it one can see that it is itself the result of an underlying epistemology, and of one well known to our tradition. The fact that “myself” appear in the model as a hole and that the horizon of our context is left empty and called “my death” is revealing. In fact: The model here proposed is not a model for our bodily-being-in-the-world (as it pretends to be) but a model for a specific epistemology, and not a very good one. And this is not a very happy result for an effort to provide new means of orientation in the world.

There can be no doubt that the objection is valid. It must be admitted that the “knowing subject” is in fact being objec-

tified in the model (even if negatively as a hole) and that the “knowable object” is in fact included in the model (even if as a fluid region between the “nothing” of the knower on one side and the “nothing” of the horizon on the other). The hole model is an objectivation of the process of knowledge and therefore poses the question of the subject of such an objectivation (the “transcendence” of the manufacturer and user of the model). Seen thus, the model is in fact no help for the overcoming of existing epistemological models. It is one among them and cannot escape their problems, which are at the root of our present crisis.

But this is not a good way to read the model. The model is not meant to solve traditional epistemological problems, but to suspend them. And, more concretely, one very specific problem which has proved to be especially barren in the past: the “body-spirit” problem.<sup>15</sup> Now of course this problem is just an aspect of the wider one which may be called “subject-object”, and there is no need to stress the antiquity, ramifications, and ever renewed effort for a “superation” of it. But the model does not pretend to contribute to it one way or another. It wants to be used in spite of it. The phenomenological vision shows that the dichotomy “body-spirit” is not one to be found in actual body experience, it is an “explanation” of it. In other terms: The fact that the body is being experienced is explained by the

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15 Editorial note: Flusser here seems to refer to the “mind-body problem” and its long critical debate following the Cartesian dualism; cf. particularly Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London 2000 [1949]).

theoretical concept “spirit”, and the experience itself is being objectified by the theoretical concept “body”. But the actual concrete fact is neither “spirit” nor “body”, but “my experience of the body”. However, the theoretical concepts are very ancient and deeply rooted and they cover up the actual experience, which makes it difficult to “map” it. The purpose of the proposed model is to put this dichotomy in brackets and thus allow a better “mapping” of the concrete experience of my body. This can be achieved not by doing away with the dichotomy but by pushing it one step further. In the case under consideration: The “body-spirit” dichotomy does not present a problem on the level of the model and its utilization itself, but on the level on which the projector and user of the model stands, a level that “transcends” the model. In other words: The model can be a tool for orientation without constantly invoking the “body-spirit” dichotomy, but that dichotomy must be invoked if the tool itself is in question. In this sense the epistemological objection is, indeed, valid (the model is, indeed, epistemologically doubtful), but in this sense the objection can be accepted: It does not interfere in the elaboration of the model but seems, on the contrary, to support it.

C) *Religious objections*: There is no sense in trying to deny or minimize the fact that the question of orientation within the body and, through it, in the world is a “religious” problem (whatever our point of view on “religion” might be). How I find myself in my body and, through it, in the world is at bottom how I find myself to-

ward my death, against which myself, my body, and my world are silhouetted like against a horizon. And how I find myself toward my death (how I face it or do not face it) is what might be best called a “religious question”. Now if one looks at the proposed model from this point of view, it can be read as follows: It shows my body and my world floating, so to speak, within “nothingness”, which itself appears in the model twice: in the center and enveloping it. Which means two things: (a) There is a specific religious tradition hiding behind the model (the Occidental tradition for which the “soul” is within the body and is of the same ontological dignity as “God” who transcends the world), and this specific tradition appears in the model as an emptiness after removal of “soul” and “God”. And (b) the empty places occupied in tradition by “soul” and “God” appear within the model, so to speak, as “negative objects” and therefore as profanations of the tradition, in the strict sense of the term “profanation”. This is the religious objection to the model, and it may be resumed as follows: The model first assumes the “death of God” (and of the “soul”), then it identifies the “death of God” with “my death”, and then it objectifies “my death” and thus covers up its essence (which its not being an “object”). The objection affirms, in other words, that the proposed model is one of a profanized and unduly objectified Western religious tradition, not, as it professes to be, one of my bodily being-in-the-world.

No doubt, the objection is valid. But it may be turned around and made to support the model, instead of attacking it,

this way: The fact that the model mirrors Western religious tradition proves that it is a model of our being-in-the-world, because we are, in fact, in the world in a way molded by Western tradition. The fact that it is a profanation of that tradition proves that it has succeeded in "suspending" that tradition (although, of course, not in abolishing that tradition). And the fact that it is an objectivation of that tradition proves that it is a model (namely an objectivation, even materialization, of a problem). Now if we turn the objection around this way, we may discover aspects of the model quite unprecedented during its elaboration (which is a way of saying that it is a useful model). For example:

The central myth of Western tradition is "God become a human body". We may consciously accept or refuse that myth, but the "Christian tradition" informs our being-in-the-world on deeper than conscious levels. We experience our body under the shadow of the "Incarnation". And the model brings this shadow to the surface. It shows that I am, in nature, *through* my body (it is through my body that I communicate with my world), and that I am in history *through* my body (it is through my body that I have past and future). Thus, the model becomes one of "Incarnation", a sort of experimental "Imitatio Christi". If the model is read this way, it may be seen as a last link in a chain of models (like the Byzantine "Pantocrator" and the Gothic "Crucifix", which now may be read as models of various experiences of being-in-the-body). The

two traditional models mentioned were methods for orientation in the world

in specific critical situations, and so is the proposed one. And similar examples for a possible "religious reading" of the model may be multiplied.

The point here argued is this: The model is not meant to contribute to the problem "soul and God", to its reformulation or, even less, to its "solution". It is not meant to be a "map for the salvation of the soul", or a "map for the abolishing of the myth of the soul". But it cannot help to have religious dimensions, because it is meant to be a "map for the mapping of our world". Therefore, the religious objection is valid in the sense that the model is useless (and therefore bad) as a religious (or anti-religious) model. But it is invalid (it supports the model) in the sense that the presence of a religious dimension in the model proves that it is phenomenologically a useful map for our bodily being-in-the-world

The three objections discussed above do not, of course, exhaust possible objections against this proposal. They merely suggest how very problematic the proposed endeavor is. But also, it is hoped, how fascinating it is. Let us now try to argue in favor of the endeavor. For at least two thousand years, ever since the origins of our civilization, we have specific difficulties to experience our body. These difficulties have been analyzed over and over again, but they persist, and are approaching a critical stage. On the one hand, we objectify our body ever more, which means that we understand it "theoretically" ever better and are ever better

able to manipulate it as an object. On the other hand, we are losing ever more the concrete experience of our bodily being-in-the-world, which means that on an existential level we submit ever

more passively to it. This is an important aspect of the present division of so-called “culture and anti-culture”. On the one hand, the “objective sciences” manipulate our bodies in many forms to become ever more refined, and thus tend to transform us into robot-like tools. On the other hand, we tend to abandon ourselves ever more to an alienated body-experience (through drugs and so forth). And there is a curious feedback between these two forms of our body alienation. One sustains the other. The barbarous glorification of body experience and the submission to it is the counterpart of the theoretical understanding and manipulation of the body. And the result is, of course, not only an alienated attitude toward our bodily being-in-the-world but also toward our world. This is an aspect of our crisis.

Now this aspect of the crisis is being met from two directions. On the one side, phenomenological studies of our body are being elaborated in order to de-objectify our attitude toward our bodily being-in-the-world, and the literature in this direction increases as the crisis becomes sharper. On the other side, new media are being put at our disposal which permit us to collect new types of information and to structure them in a new way, and they may be applied to the body problem. In other words: the question of whether we can orient ourselves within our body and

through it within our world may now be stated from a new point of view and it may be answered with new methods. Of course, this does not guarantee that new answers to the question may be found. But it does mean that we are here (as in so many respects) on the threshold of adventure. To transmit this sensation of adventure, and to infect some to participate in it, is the purpose of this paper.

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