

# **On the (im)possibility of a middle phenomenological and political ground: From Merleau-Ponty's concept of corporality to Heidegger's concept of technique**

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**Abstract:** Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body is, now more than ever, vulnerable to the challenges brought about by the expanding capitalist hegemonic order, which is approached here phenomenologically, starting from Heidegger's concept of technique. Still, Merleau-Ponty's political vision is, despite lacking a proper ontology - which is a key ingredient of every concept of the political - far more reasonable and mature than that of Heidegger. How was that possible, and what are some of the phenomenological implications of the issue represents the main tenet of this essay.

**Keywords:** body, techno-capital, metaphysics, alienation, being

## **INTRODUCTION**

This essay sets out to explore an ambitious and complicated demarche that involves two distinct branches of phenomenology: Maurice Merleau-Ponty's version of phenomenology, centered around the body and its capacity of perception as the core element of approaching the sphere of the visible and also the invisible, nothing more than a movement which the visible needs to effectuate occasionally in order to return to itself (Merleau-Ponty 1968) - on one hand, and Martin Heidegger's ontological phenomenology that holds modernity responsible for the depletion of being under the guise of the ever advancing technique, on the other hand (Heidegger 1977).

It starts by taking into account the concepts of corporality and technique in the works of the two philosophers, respectively their possible interplay within the ontology of modernity. But is there such a thing as a common ontology capable of integrating both concepts? I

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will argue here that, in this respect, Hegel's dialectical solution is not particularly helpful, since, even if corporality may resemble, to a certain point, being-in-itself, technique is not being-for-itself, but merely being-outside-of-itself, alienated being forever lacking the prospect of reverberating towards interiority, of converting itself into a proper being. Moreover, corporality can only be extrapolated on the field of technique (what Marx called the organic composition of capital, powered by the division of labor) and technique extrapolated on the realm of the body, as biotechnology, for example; however, their parallel and deeply intermingled existences cannot be reduced to a dialectical process and can never amount even to a simple pair of speculatives.

Next, I will analyze the body's place in relation to what Heidegger's Marxist disciple Gerard Granel called techno-capital (Granel 1990), pointing out the existential asymmetry between the two parts: the body's stubbornness of interpreting effectiveness as a variety of waviness of its own making misses the profound stake of thinking, understanding and eventually containing techno-capital. This kind of somatic infatuation that resembles solipsism – although Merleau-Ponty strongly disagrees (Merleau-Ponty 2012) – is very easily absorbed by the deficient modernity that is capitalism with its more and more technological core. But, curiously enough, Merleau-Ponty convincingly criticizes capitalism from a non-communist, social-democratic position, while Heidegger's critique of capitalism is shallow, somehow mystical and definitely packed with elements of political romanticism that fuels reactionary and even fascist stances. In the first case, insufficiently developed phenomenology leads to a democratic political orientation, while in the second case, Heidegger's more mature ontological phenomenology fails to do so, after offering a compelling critique of capitalism as a sort of totalitarianism of calculability and pointing out capitalism's blatant failures in the Third World.

Before the conclusion section, I will tackle the problem of metaphysics with reference to techno-capitalism. This aspect is crucial because Heidegger insisted on the impossibility of technique to acquire its own being<sup>1</sup>, while neo-Heideggerians like Günther Anders argued

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Derrida stressed out that metaphysics pervaded Heideggerian ontological phenomenology way before the possibility was developed by neo-Heideggerians. Beingness in relation to being, beingness made possible by being, is, no matter how much words try to conceal it, a transcendent relation. Being works in the Heidegger

that nowadays, in what Jürgen Habermas called late-capitalism, this is precisely the case: technique is becoming metaphysics (Anders 2011a). The issue is relevant for our discussion. If technique remains outside the realm of metaphysics, the body is not totally subdued by it. If it does not, corporality may forever remain entangled with the status-quo, and even behave like a function of techno-capital.

Finally, I will assess in the conclusions section this whole intellectual endeavor, stressing that, as reductionist phenomenology, corporality cannot extract itself from the becoming of techno-capital. Its inductive sufficiency guarantees a certain form of alienation that capitalism will certainly use for its own purposes, articulating it in its hegemonic discourse as personal comfort possible through commodification (see Anders 2011b). This process actually enhances alienation and reifies the body towards an outcome Michel Foucault named ‘the technologies of the self’ (Martin, Gutman, Hutton 1988). Still, why, with all its shortcomings, did Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of corporality produce a more mature political theory than Heidegger’s phenomenology of technique? Taking into account the fact that political philosophy presupposes forms of solidarity and teleological-ontological approaches that leave the mere body way behind, it should follow that Heidegger’s phenomenological project was more appropriate for an adequate political engagement, despite Heidegger’s pretention to do away with the entire Western humanist tradition. Could it be that, in this infatuated and utterly impossible task of his own making Heidegger did away with democracy as well, since democracy can be considered nothing more than political humanism?

#### CORPORALITY AND TECHNIQUE: TWO HYPOSTASES OF PHENOMENOLOGY

It is clear that Merleau-Ponty’s distinction between visible and invisible and his carefulness to alleviate corporality’s inherent propensions towards metaphysics, even under the form of ontology – draws massively from Heidegger’s own critique of Western metaphysics and his distinction between beingness and being (Toadvine, Lawlor 2007, 85-86; Merleau-Ponty 1968; Heidegger 1985; Heidegger 1998; Heidegger 2008). Furthermore, Heidegger’s notion of being-in-the-world, as acquisitive scholars have observed, bears

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from *Being and Time* as a substitute for metaphysics, this being one of the reasons the second part of *Being and Time* was never finished: the absence of a proper, metaphysical-free language (see Derrida 1985).

important similarities with Merleau-Ponty's idea of the body as a sensual and perceptive vessel circulating between the ontic and the ontological dimensions of existence, but remaining anchored, in the last instance, in the ontic one (Aho 2005). But the fact that Heidegger aims to reach subjectivity in a world of its own making/grasping (Dasein), presumably awoken from its prolonged metaphysical slumber, strictly from an ontological angle, while Merleau-Ponty only concedes some residual ontological elements (the invisible) that influence the dynamics of corporality, always proceeding from the ontic perspective – these very different phenomenological methods possess far greater implications, in terms of (not only) political philosophy, and should be approached with greater interpretative accuracy, as Low argues (Low 2009).

By now, the reader is probably wondering why the author did not choose to compare Merleau-Ponty's corporality with Heidegger's Dasein, instead of technique, the Dasein being somehow on the same level of existence with corporality, while Heidegger's technique goes way beyond ontic presence but, in the same time, can never become a proper ontology. The main reason would be that even if both corporality and Dasein, although the latter is definitely more ontological, share important resemblances, rooted in their phenomenological contexts (for details, see Low 2009), the stake of my effort is to underline the irreversible dichotomy between these two branches of phenomenology; an initiative like this should struggle to capture the main, the unifying principles of each of these phenomenologies, along with their potential developments. From this point of view, technique strikes me as being more representative for Heidegger's overall philosophy than the Dasein which, as Heidegger himself concedes, is merely a 'bubble' on the surface of being, and the chaotic and contorted absent being of modernity originates from the fact that it has been infused beyond a point of no return by the reifying calculability of technology. Modernity is for Heidegger tantamount to technique and a culmination of the historical process of forgetting and camouflaging at best the (Western) being by countless strata of science, of positivism, one hand, and metaphysics, on the other hand (Heidegger 2008). In this position lies a paradox – and this contributes to a great extent to the intellectual stake announced above – namely that, in comparison to Merleau-Ponty's diluted corporality, it historically enlightens Heidegger's technicized Dasein while simultaneously obfuscating its political commitments.

Coming back to the topic of this section, Merleau-Ponty refers to corporality as an intimate totality between the organic body, ‘soul’, sensation and perception:

The body proper and its organs remain the bases or vehicles of my intentions and are not yet grasped as “physiological realities”. The body is present to the soul as external things are present; in neither case is it a question of a causal relation between the two terms. The unity of the human has not yet been broken; the body has not been stripped of human predicates; it has not yet become a machine; and the soul has not yet been defined as existence-for-itself (Toadvine, Lawlor 2007, 7-8).

Or, more precisely:

The subject does not live in a world of states of consciousness or representations from which he would believe himself able to act on and know external things by a sort of miracle. He lives in a universe of experience, in a milieu which is neutral with regard to the substantial distinctions between the organism, thought, and extension; he lives in a direct commerce with beings, things, and his own body. The ego as a center from which his intentions radiate, the body which carries them, and the beings and things to which they are addressed are not confused: but they are only three sectors of a unique field. We could not accept any of the materialistic models to represent the relations of the soul and body—but neither could we accept the mentalistic models, for example, the Cartesian metaphor of the artisan and his tool. An organ cannot be compared to an instrument, as if it existed and could be conceived apart from integral functioning, nor the mind to an artisan who uses it: this would be to return to a wholly external relation like that of the pilot and his ship which was rightly rejected by Descartes. The mind does not use the body, but realizes itself through it while at the same time transferring the body outside of the physical space. When we were describing the structures of behavior, it was indeed to show that they are irreducible to the dialectic of physical stimulus and muscular contraction and that in this sense behavior, far from being a thing which exists in-itself, is a whole significative for a consciousness which considers it, but it was at the same time and reciprocally to make manifest in “expressive conduct” the *view of a consciousness* under our eyes, to show a mind which *comes into the world* (Toadvine, Lawlor 2007, 25-26; emphasis in original).

The old Cartesian, metaphysical distinction as Heidegger calls it, between body and soul, body and consciousness or, in Kant and Hegel’s terms, intellect and reason – was never a valid one, Merleau-Ponty claims. On the contrary, it hindered the proper access to being, nothing more than the sum of different strata of corporality, from empirical to cognitive experiences of all sorts.

After acquiring what Merleau-Ponty has to say about corporality, let us turn our attention to Heidegger's understanding of technique as the impossible being of modernity, and what kind of place can it ascribe to the Dasein in this complicated and inauthentic situation. Technique is nowadays not a simple means to an end, as it was in premodern times, but a form of 'revealing' and 'enframing' nature at first, and then the whole lived experience of the world. Modern sciences do not decipher new truths for the beholder; on the contrary, their epistemology, their ways of asking question is already a manifestation of the gaze of technique, a confirmation of its unprecedented ontological ascendancy. Furthermore, technique is now an inextricable part of our daily lives, much more so than during Heidegger's life time. Our possibility of accessing any 'truths' and 'essences' outside modern technique is dangerously low. But not impossible, not a fatality, as Heidegger warns, because danger is a constant companion of the Dasein's radical contingency, of its arbitrary 'thrownness' in the world. Danger should mean not only annihilation, but also the possibility of re-grounding the Dasein in a more authentic phenomenology, one in which technique is only an appearance among other, not the main principle of the indivisibility of the world (Heidegger 1977).

The word *stellen* [to set upon] in the name *Ge-stell* [Enframing] not only means challenging. At the same time it should preserve the suggestion of another *Stellen* from which it stems, namely, that producing and presenting [Her- und Dar-stellen] which, in the sense of *poiesis*, lets what presences come forth into unconcealment. This producing that brings forth-e.g., the erecting of a statue in the temple precinct-and the challenging ordering now under consideration are indeed fundamentally different, and yet they remain related in their essence. Both are ways of revealing, of *aletheia*. In Enframing, that unconcealment comes to pass in conformity with which the work of modern technology reveals the real as standing-reserve. This work is therefore neither only a human activity nor a mere means within such activity. The merely instrumental, merely anthropological definition of technology is therefore in principle untenable. And it cannot be rounded out by being referred back to some metaphysical or religious explanation that undergirds it. It remains true, nonetheless, that man in the technological age is, in a particularly striking way, challenged forth into revealing. That revealing concerns nature, above all, as the chief storehouse of the standing energy reserve. Accordingly, man's ordering attitude and behavior display themselves first in the rise of modern physics as an exact science. Modern science's way of representing pursues and entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces. Modern physics is not experimental physics because it applies apparatus to the questioning of nature. Rather the reverse is true. Because physics, indeed already as pure theory, sets nature up to exhibit itself as a coherence of forces calculable in advance, it

therefore orders its experiments precisely for the purpose of asking whether and how nature reports itself when set up in this way (Heidegger 1977, 21; emphasis in original).

It follows that

Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it. But we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral; for this conception of it, to which today we particularly like to do homage, makes us utterly blind to the essence of technology (Heidegger 1977, 4).

Heidegger's critique of technique can be understood also from a Hegelian angle, although not as incisive in its conclusions. Hegel argued that mathematics and especially mechanics, left solely in the grasp of deregulated capitalism, is creating a world void of dialectic, thus a world in which progress develops only technological, not social content. Quantities should produce qualities, not the other way around; but markets, and especially contemporary markets act exactly in this way, reifying social and political progress into technological and consumerist frivolous fun (Copilaş 2017). Still, Hegel eventually considered technique a means to a perfectible manifold of ends, not an ontological catastrophe, like Heidegger does and therefore, in this case, Hegel's contribution to the matter, although nevertheless enlightening and interesting, can be safely left aside.

#### BODY AND TECHNO-CAPITAL: OUTSIDE, BETWEEN, WITHIN?

Heidegger's unflinching quest for authenticity and his blunt refusal of modernity in every aspect leads him towards a meaningless idealization of rural life and also to a certain nihilism that makes a perfect companion for a hypocrite pragmatism – writes Theodor Adorno (2003). Still, the powerful, elaborated and fertile question raised by him regarding technique (or *techne*, which is much more than the sum of quantitative technological processes, amounting to their essence, which Heidegger is sometimes too eager to overlap on the entire modernity), remains. Here, it is helpful in order to place Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the body into perspective, even if against the express intention of Merleau-Ponty himself.

How does corporality relate to techno-capital? Let us start with Merleau-Ponty's acknowledgement that a proper philosophy is a philosophy that enters the political arena, not avoids it, a philosophy

that also knows its history, but does not consider it to have any ontological implications as well.

Like every philosophy, the one to seek is the one that will inspire a politics. First, negatively, it would have to reveal the illusions of classical politics. Nothing authorizes us to believe that the human world is a cluster of rational wills, that it could, like a learned society, be governed by an immutable rule based on a law derived from timeless principles, or make its decisions through academic debates in which the most rational end up convincing all the others (Toadvine, Lawlor 2007, 389).

There is no universal clock, but local histories take form beneath our eyes, and begin to regulate themselves, and haltingly are linked to one another and demand to live, and confirm the powerful in the wisdom which the immensity of the risks and the consciousness of their own disorder had given them. The world is more present to itself in all its parts than it ever was. In world capitalism and in world Communism and between the two, more truth circulates today than twenty years ago (the text was written in 1960, m.n.). History never confesses, not even its lost illusions, but it does not begin them again (Toadvine, Lawlor 2007, 349).

Consequently, the body can never be situated outside a certain effect producing and absorbing context. How about the possibility of being between the sheer organicity of its physical appearance and techno-capital? I would argue that, despite all Merleau-Ponty's insistence that corporality contains its own profound rationality, not to be confounded with the reductionist, cognitive-epistemical approach to reason, the present-day sources needed by the body to create its own lived identity are imbued with exteriority to a far greater extent than in the past epochs. Foucault's biopolitics, psychiatric power and rampant consumerism, Debord and Kracauer's society of spectacle that creates permanent and commodified emulation, along with the impression of a 'good' life, accessible to the ones who earn it by working hard, Marcuse, Fromm, Deleuze and Guattari's analyses of the interplay between capitalism and desire (psychoanalysis), to mention just a few – all these arguments prove that our philosophical and political ideas, sexuality and feeding habits belong to us mainly as consumers than as producers. If these tremendously important structural processes are to be understood properly, they need to be addressed through deductive, preferable critical methodologies; Merleau-Ponty's radical, although persuasive inductive phenomenological method only complicates the matter further.



Hegel was right about the fact that, in our modern age, the particularity can understand itself only from outside itself; this asymmetry existed before the deficient modernity brought about by techno-capital, but was deeply amplified and accelerated by the latter. And the apparent exteriority that is techno-capital with reference to the body – in the last instance, corporality being nothing more than a micro-embodiment of techno-capitalism, a split within its protean profit-seeking and global inequality creating unity – can only amount to recognition of alienation by the body. Bodies alienated by a medium that is alienating itself as well, eroding the very essence of humanity while not being able to replace with a being of its own, only a reified, simulated being, according to Heidegger – are bodies that are totally engulfed by techno-capital.

#### TECHNIQUE AS METAPHYSICS?

Still, not all hope is lost. And this conclusion is endorsed not only by Heidegger, but also by one of the most peculiar and pessimistic disciples of his, Günther Anders. In flagrant contradiction with Heidegger's assumption that modern technique can never be capable of becoming an authentic being, like the being(s) it has replaced along with its arrival-at-presence, to use a famous Heideggerian syntagma, Anders is convinced that the refinement and hugely difficult complexities of several machines existing today (like the ones sending rockets and satellites into cosmic space, for example) is tantamount to a metaphysical becoming of techno-capital.

Formulated in the language of philosophy: such apparatuses are no longer phenomena, if we define the latter with Heidegger as something that "shows itself". To the contrary, their contribution consists in the fact that they do not show what they are, that is, in the fact that *they conceal themselves*. Although I am aware of the fact that I am beating this term to death, I do not consider it illegitimate or blasphemous to claim that *the "mystery" of our time resides in its colossal machines and complexes of machines, since they are visible only apparently, but are actually invisible. The attempt to perceive their meaning by means of our senses would be a completely meaningless enterprise.* And this is true not only today, but has been true for more than a century. Even the machines of our great-grandfathers did not betray what they were to perception (Anders 2011a, 20-21).

#### More concretely:

Someone who makes use of a tool, pliers for example, does not serve the pliers. To the contrary, he dominates them, since he uses them for the purpose of his work, for the (...) which he has before him in his mind. He dominates them in

almost the same sense that he rules over his own “instruments”, his organs, since he uses the pliers as his extensions of, or refinements or supports for his organs. I am not saying that he cannot also “make use” of machines in this way. To the contrary: the producer does this, since he uses them as instruments, with whose help he carries out his (...) the production of his commodities. However (even if he is the owner of a totally automated factory), he cannot make use of machines that operate on their own, but must at the same time make use of workers. And he makes use of them in order to be able to effectively serve his machines. He does not place the machines at the disposal of the workers, but rather *places the workers at the disposal of the machines, so that the machines can make use of them*. Furthermore, it would make no sense to say that these workers make use of the machines; instead, the workers are at the service of the effective operation that the machines perform. The workers serve the machines. What the workers have in view is not the product, but the perfect operation of the machine. For their part, in order to see to it that this process proceeds smoothly, they can “make use” of a tool, but this is another question (Anders 2011a, 46-47).

Techno-capitalism is here to stay, and the naïve Marxist belief in progress only erodes the real possibilities of critically engaging it. The fetishization of the universal, as it takes place in metaphysical philosophies, also contributes to this pernicious denouement. Arts and media are also vehicles of techno-capital (Anders 2011b). As Derrida pertinently observed, the events happening around the world and broadcasted simultaneously in all parts of the world can no longer be understood in the absence of the technique that allows them to multiply: they become themselves technique (Derrida 2011).

Returning to Anders, he systematically demolishes the sufficiency of critical theories that show contempt for the work of Heidegger, and tries to bring them to a common ground. Work can no longer create a revolutionary consciousness because it has been captured by machines and became meaningless and repetitive (Marx’s division of labor hyperbolized); the social revolution is lost: it was quietly and insidiously replaced by the revolution of machines, a revolution that abolished modernity itself since technique, not man, is now the real subject of history. These ubiquitous apparatuses are creating a new form of totalitarianism, much more profound and dangerous than political totalitarianism because it coerces thinking and language to become a relation between machines rather than humans. A monologue simulating semantic diversity in a world belonging less and less to itself as history unfolds and simultaneously collapses within the age of technique (Anders 2011a).

However, the existence of what Anders calls the ‘promethean shame’, the shame of men being created by spontaneous processes of life rather than artificially produced by machines as commodities (although this distinction itself is blurred by the advancing industry of in vitro fertilization, and this is just one example) – allows us to hope that not everything is lost. A world beyond techno-capital is still possible, even if it is ridiculously remote (Anders 2011b).

For our discussion, however, the spectacular conveyance of technique into metaphysics may very well mean that almost everything is lost: the chances of Merleau-Ponty’s corporality of challenging the metaphysical techno-capital are dramatically reduced, since the body can be way easier incorporated, signified and produced both in ‘material’ and ‘intelligible’, supra-sensible ways by the existing hegemonic *status-quo*. They were minimal even within Heidegger’s phenomenology of technique, in which they were not entirely managed metaphysically, since Heideggerian technique could never acquire its own being. Now, they are quasi non-existent.

#### CONCLUSION: THE PITFALLS OF CORPORALITY, THE EXPANDING LIMITS OF TECHNO-CAPITAL

The basic tenet of the present paper resides in the ontological incompatibility between Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of the body and Heidegger’s phenomenology of techno-capital. This incompatibility cannot amount to a supersedeable dialectical contradiction. The methodologies of these phenomenologies are radically different: inductive and deductive or, in Heideggerian terms, ontic with a mere residual ontology (Merleau-Ponty’s invisible), in contrast to the attempt of arriving at beingness exclusively through ontological means. Merleau-Ponty’s voluntary minimalization of being could entail, for Heidegger, a proof of the inauthenticity of his philosophy, almost certainly condemned to relapse into what was referred to as small-talk in *Being and Time*.

But how can we make sense than of Merleau-Ponty’s political acumen, translated into his relentless defense of a social-democracy which he theorizes as ‘a-communism’ (Toadvine, Lawlor 2007, 310-311) – an acumen supposedly obtained especially through ontological, teleological efforts, as Heidegger and the entire idealist and materialist tradition argue in favor of? How can obstinate corporality prove to be so resourceful in the field of political theory and practical politics, since it compels itself to see only itself wherever it looks, while the

concept of the political and politics as an effective management of social resources cannot be conceived in the absence of purpose, of perspective, of teleology and, ultimately, of ontology?

And, in reverse, how can Heidegger's historical acumen, his tremendous ontological engagement, fail so roaringly in his thinking of the political and especially in his political choices? After all, politics is not only an ontic-existential activity, like the commentators who try to expiate his active collaboration with the German national-socialist regime as a regretful accident argue (Sheehan 2015). It has nevertheless ontological implications.

My answer, short and possible reductionist, lies in Merleau-Ponty's involvement with critical theory, on one hand, and Heidegger's strong rejection of it, on the other hand. This choice entails a conscience of solidarity, even if not of how to place that solidarity within meaningful political purposes - that infuses Merleau-Ponty's concept of corporality and compels it to venture outside itself, into a world of

embodied beings who are primarily an openness upon a public world. We each have a personal perspective because we are individuated in our bodies, since no other human being has exactly our own individual history or our own collection of individual experiences. Yet this personal life and personalized body rest upon the anonymous structures of the human body, on structures that are shared by others. My personal life therefore opens upon, crosses with, and individuates from a public world. As we witnessed above, this means that, politically speaking, Merleau-Ponty attempts to hold the individual and community in balance. On the one hand, he seeks to uphold knowledge and values based on democracy and open democratic debate, and he stresses the individual rights of freedom of conscience and speech. On the other hand, since he fully realizes that these values have been more fully developed in certain societies, and within certain historical traditions more than others, he stresses the need to support the social and political institutions that support and help maintain these values (Low 2009, 289-290).

Heidegger, however, always disavowed critical theory, Marxism and every critical, progressive political project as a part of the greater Western humanist-metaphysical tradition, even if this did not stop him from understanding, up to a point - and tackling the global issues brought about by techno-capitalism.

Now that modern technology has arranged its expansion and rule over the whole earth, it is not just the sputniks and their by-products that are circling around our planet; it is rather Being as presencing in the sense of calculable material that claims all the inhabitants of the earth in a uniform manner without the inhabitants of the non-European continents explicitly knowing this or even

being able or wanting to know of the origin of this determination of Being. (Evidently those who desire such a knowledge least of all are those busy developers who today are urging the so-called underdeveloped countries into the realm of hearing of that claim of Being which speaks from the innermost core of modern technology.) (Heidegger 2002, 7).

Consequently, beside the fact that he never publicly repudiated his ideological ties with national-socialism, only the institutional ones, and even those somehow reluctantly, during his 1934 rectorate of the Freiburg University, Heidegger explicitly condemned 'ideas' and argued that 'the Führer' was the only German reality students needed to take into account. In the same period, he drastically limited academic freedom and made pressures upon colleagues and students who were of Jewish origins. Moreover, the individual citizen amounted to nothing with reference to the state he was a member of, and strong individual leadership was placed high above collective leadership. Strong nationalism, combined with the latest technological capacities, while maintaining traditional, 'agrarian values' – represented his favorite brand of political ideology. Almost half a century later, in 1974, he complained in a letter that Europe was undermined by 'democracy' and, once again, he tried to elude personal decisions and personal responsibility by mystically retorting to fate, Being and the unpredictability of the Dasein (Low 2009, 285-286; Marcuse 2005, 169-172).

These facts, regarding Heidegger's embrace of Nazism (...) are now beyond dispute. Yet we must certainly ask (...) to what extent does Heidegger's politics reflect his philosophy and vice versa? The answers to this question vary, with some claiming a direct connection and some claiming none at all. The present essay sides with the former, and for the following reasons: Heidegger's discussion of "the historical process of the Volk" (...), that we may now interpret as the notion of Being revealing itself to the German people, is certainly consistent with German nationalism. Heidegger's disdain for scientific knowledge and technology and his penchant for a more mystical revelation of Being lend themselves to the belittling of the scientific process, a de-valuing of technology, and even their suppression and (we now know) their authoritarian control from the point of view of the revelation of Being to a select few. Moreover, Heidegger's focus on the ontological and his neglect of the ontic lend themselves to a neglect of the individual who is concretely involved in specific situations. His devout focus on and attention to an abstract Being, and his devout focus on future possibilities and ultimately on death, reveal an alienation from specific work and socio-economic environments and from the embodied individual's concrete sensuous, erotic, vital involvement in life and in the present (Low 2009, 286-287).

Marcuse's attempt, among others, to offer Heidegger's Dasein an anchorage into Marxist political economy was, after a brief period (1927-1933), abandoned by the author himself. Marcuse insisted that the Dasein should be theorized as (potential) revolutionary praxis consisting in a twofold approach to labor, both as necessity and as liberty. Influenced of course by Hegel, and also by Sartre's existential Marxism which distinguished between series and groups, their interaction defining social totality through a dialectic where groups acquired political consciousness and imposed a certain agency into the historical context, while series lacked political consciousness and were objectified by the capitalist order (Sartre 2004) – Marcuse also conveyed Heidegger's concept of authenticity from an individual assertiveness that ultimately opened the way for the being-for-death, giving Dasein the possibility to break free from the chains of the 'impersonal it' and the small talk overwhelming it and to pose itself for a proper encounter of its historical being – to a concrete philosophy that superseded contemplation in favor of social militancy. Furthermore, bringing the Dasein into the field of political economy convinced Marcuse that it would act like a prophylactic measure against the reification of Marxism, an ideology vulnerable to the charge of economical determinism (Marcuse 2005, 36, 143-149). Many decades later, Marcuse admitted that Heidegger's notion authenticity, far from infusing Marxism with a new dose of emancipation, was actually a renouncement from the part of the Dasein of the social dimension encapsulating it (Marcuse 2005, 171-172). Overall, Marcuse genuinely hoped, in his younger days, that 'there could be some combination between existentialism and Marxism, precisely because of their insistence on concrete analysis of actual human existence, human beings, and their world'. However, his intellectual illusion was short lived. 'I soon realized that Heidegger's concreteness was to a great extent a phony, a false concreteness, and that in fact his philosophy was just as abstract and just as removed from reality, even avoiding reality (...)' (Marcuse 2005, 166).

After the publication of Heidegger's so called 'black notebooks', an editorial project that started in 2014, many years after the death of Marcuse (1979), Marcuse's assessment of Heidegger's existential philosophy is once again confirmed and strengthened to a great extent. Coming back to Merleau-Ponty, the body may lack a proper ontological perspective, but it does not fail as the Dasein does, despite Heidegger's pretensions to offer a concrete phenomenological

evaluation of effectiveness. One does not arrive at the ontic from the prism of ontology, because the ontic risks of being lost in the process of searching for the authentic being – but the other way around: the ontic produces, out of its dialectic immanency, an ontology. Merleau-Ponty was keenly aware of this approach and, as a phenomenological Marxist, turned it into the cornerstone of his entire philosophy.

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