

Article

Degradation of the Body in Idealist–Dualist Philosophy

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Abstract: There is no corporal philosophy at the level of other philosophical subdisciplines. A research line has begun whose ultimate goal is to determine whether a somatic philosophy can be built. From a pragmatist and biopolitical approach, the present study investigated why it has not been possible to develop grounded somatic philosophy. As an answer, the “idealist–dualist episteme” is described, which encompasses invariants in the history of idealist philosophy at the ontological, gnoseological, ethical–political, and pedagogical levels. These constants reflect somatophobia, as well as an ontological and gnoseological disregard of the body, which has led to the irrelevance of the body and corporeality in philosophy until the arrival of the “bodily turn”. The critique of this prevailing idealism and dualism will enable a review of current approaches based on these positions, such as embodiment, enactivism, embodied cognition, or embodied artificial intelligence. It opens up a new philosophical line with a universalis scope that is open to the eclectic construction of a pragmatic corporal philosophy that takes into account Chinese, Japanese, or African philosophies.

Keywords: corporal philosophy; biopolitics; episteme; physicalism; monism; pragmatism; ontology; bodily turn



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1. The Nonexistence of a Philosophy of the Body

Man is a very recent invention, specifically from the 19th century, as pointed out by Foucault [1] at the end of *The Order of Things*. The body is arguably an even more recent invention from the 20th century [2]. However, it did not come with a philosophy of the body, but merely as beauty with no esthetic discipline until the 18th century. In Greek philosophy, knowledge, science, reality, goodness, justice, and the human being are thematized and become objects of study of great disciplines: gnoseology, epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, politics, and philosophical anthropology. It is surprising in this Greek philosophy that there has been a large quantity and wide variety of conceptions and analyses of the aforementioned elements, but not of the body and corporeality.

In the present study, which describes some of the foundations and approaches that have prevented us from philosophizing with/about the body, it is worth wondering whether it is really possible to do so, and whether the philosophical approaches of the 20th and 21st centuries have already succeeded in doing so. Is a hermeneutics of the body possible? Can there be a philosophy that is not based on reflection? Is the meaning that philosophy has always sought feasible in human language or in the body? Is the body the meaning? Why has a philosophy of the body not been developed despite being so close to human life?

One hypothesis could be that there has been no philosophy of the body throughout “Western” history because, as such, it is not possible given that philosophy is identified with reflection, and this is not considered a body quality. Another hypothesis could refer to the fact that the development of a somatic philosophy is more complex, or even less fruitful, which is why it was historically chosen to build other philosophical disciplines. Another hypothesis that falls in line with modern philosophy could be that the problem of the body is associated with the problem of the mind, which is a clearer and more distinct concept than

the body [3], probably because more time has been spent on, and more analytical attention paid to, this concept. However, current philosophers such as Manzotti [4] problematize the concept of body as well as that of mind, and even propose that one reason for having forgotten one's body is its always constant presence as a conventional causal frame of reference for one's world. However, the hypothesis of the present article, since the purpose is a historical–philosophical analysis of the body and not a physical–ontological one, is that which refers to the efficacy of domination, whether at the onto-epistemological level, as Nietzsche stated in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* [5], at the biopolitical level, as developed by Foucault in *History of Sexuality* [6], or at the social and pedagogical levels, as Vigarello exposed in *Correcting the Body. History of a Pedagogical Power* [7]. It is the hypothesis of mastery, as opposed to mere forgetfulness or incapacity, that best explains the lack of a well-founded and extensive philosophy of the body. This hypothesis has been accepted in recent studies on philosophy and the body [8], but focuses research on both the body and power. The present study will not develop a philosophy of power, but explores the reasons why there has been no philosophy of the body and, at the same time, why the body has been despised by Western philosophy.

Domination over human bodies has produced the most ties and determinations (physical, behavioral, and cultural). The approach of this hypothesis is situated in the perspective of the Nietzschean will to power, albeit by making it compatible with a pragmatic–realist vision. This complementarity is possible if both positions are not taken to the extreme; that is, not everything is a human construct based on its will to power, nor does all human knowledge fully coincide with reality on the basis of laws, but on the basis of consequences and guidelines for conduct [9]. The perspective may be ambiguous, but so is the object of study, because the distinction between “body” as a social construct and as an ontological pragmatic reality is not clear [10]. These classical approaches are taken as an analytical starting point in the absence of a philosophy of the body, which could precisely replace them if more appropriate. The approach of the study requires a general critique of a broad spectrum given that the level of analysis is macro. Hence, this study must be understood, in any case, not as a search for and access to an adaptationist descriptive truth, but as an act of handling concepts and ideas oriented to a specific pragmatic end. This study is an act.

2. From Irrelevance to 20th Century Bodily Turn

The lack of a clear discipline of philosophy of the body would partially contradict the total character that this discipline has always been conferred, not so much as total knowledge, but as that which can address everything, whether systematically, analytically, fragmentarily, or holistically. Thus, it is disturbing to know why, being so immediate and close to human life, the body has not been one of the major study lines of Western philosophy. It could be stated that the only widely developed approach to the body in relation to great philosophical thematizations is corporal gnoseology, and with several nuances given that it has occurred almost exclusively in the case of empiricist and critical idealism. However, the other possible thematic relations, such as an ontology of the body, an ethics of the body, a politics of the body, or an esthetics of the body, have always been treated as secondary (or tertiary) problematic issues, and if they exist, always as means for other study foci. It has been considered that the study of the body and corporeality can be carried out only with the understanding that it is not a continuous field, but an *archipelago* [11], and it may deal fragmentarily with isolated topics, authors, positions, and interpretations.

This somatic emergence at the socio-cultural and scientific levels in the last century has not been accompanied by the constitution of a new discipline within philosophy or, even more importantly, a new philosophy. This may have led to a corporeal theology, an ideology of the body, or even a corporeal nihilism, which could be the approaches floating beneath all current sensualist–hedonistic consumerism. An indication of this philosophical disregard for the body is that there have been no philosophical alternatives of the same magnitude as

there have been in other areas: positivism as an alternative to German idealism in ontology, empiricism to rationalism in gnoseology, or deontology to teleologism in ethics.

When speaking here of a philosophy of the body, it refers to a foundation or vision of philosophy from the body, and not so much as a thematization of the body from philosophy. In fact, the body has been thematized throughout history before the 20th century [10]: the tomb-body of Plato, the corpse-body of Epictetus, the temple-body of Paul of Tarsus, the enemy-body of Origen, the body-machine of Descartes, or the material-body of La Matrie. A relevant question would be whether understanding philosophy as reflection always implies relegating the body to a mere object of study, or even its degradation (because the body does not reflect), and therefore whether a philosophy compatible with the corporeal nature of the philosophizer is possible.

For all of these reasons, it was not until the 20th century that the body emerged as a fundamental theme in the West. Historians of the body such as Corbin et al. [12] argue that if there has been no potentially autonomous body before the 20th century, and if it has been theoretically invented in that century, then it is due to the dominance of Cartesianism in modernity. However, this analysis requires and deserves more thoroughness and depth at the philosophical level. The lack of a richly developed alternative must be underlined, that is, a somatic philosophy which, as a new *episteme*, allows the development of new approaches and different subthemes of analysis. There is not and has not been, therefore, a real dialectic, but a great episteme together with a set of contributions or sporadic somatic reflections by way of resistance. This resistance is natural because no power can be absolute if it intends to last, but must be based on overliving as a point of domination and superior control, as a constantly unbalanced dialectic.

One way to counteract this predominant tendency will be to constitute a philosophy of the body by paying attention to and investing time and analyses in it to increase the probability of finding other epistemes whose relation to the body is not negativist, harmful, or simply nonexistent. To achieve this constitution in the long term, and as per the aim of this study, it is first necessary to identify and criticize the main antecedent that has configured the somatic in Western philosophy, which is herein called the IDE (idealist-dualist episteme).

3. The Idealist–Dualist Episteme

The *episteme* concept is used as the great conceptual–gnoseological framework or knowledge associated with a truth imposed from the power of each era, as described by Foucault in *The Order of Things* [1]. The concepts of Lyotard's *grand narrative*, Dilthey's *worldview*, Kuhn's *paradigm*, or Brandom's *inferential network* could similarly serve for the present article, whenever one wishes to reflect the difficulty or impossibility of gnostic subjects to understand, or even come to conceive, realities outside that grand framework to, thus, guide correct thoughts¹ and correct actions², rather, the right ways of thinking and acting. As the last three concepts do not have that socio-political connotation based on domination, a hypothesis that is defended here using *episteme* has been devised, but without assuming totally relativistic or social constructivist consequences of knowledge.

As the present study has pragmatic presuppositions, the use of an *inferential network* might be more appropriate, but it proves more ineffective if one wishes to describe the relation between the body and philosophy in the “Western Philosophy”. The first reason is because inferential networks need not be organized in a hierarchical manner [13], whereas the episteme implies, as analyzed in this study, that there have been concepts of higher or lower hierarchical value (ontological, epistemological, etc.), and will be more accurate from the descriptive point of view of the history of philosophy. Second, an inferential network has a dynamic connotation that “episteme” resists, but there may also be, albeit more infrequently, the passage from one episteme to another. Thus, the latter proves more adequate to understand certain common invariants that have existed in philosophy in relation to the body.

There has been only one dominant episteme in relation to the body in Western philosophy and society, namely, the IDE. Idealism and dualism are described as characteristics of this episteme. Idealism, as a philosophical macro-theory, assumes the existence of a mind, understood in multiple ways according to the time and current of thought: soul, spirit, consciousness, self, subject, thought. It also assumes the existence of ideas, which it endows with greater ontological, epistemological, or social importance in the face of a different cosmos from ideas themselves and the mind itself. However, something in common among all idealisms, that is, of almost all of the history of Western philosophy, is a dual anthropological vision and the relegation of the body, which is considered the other (which is not I, which is not the mind, which is not the soul), but as that which mediates (or disturbs) the consciousness–concepts–universe scheme. Deleuze and Guattari [14] differentiated between objective idealism, where philosophy is based on contemplative reflection whose major representative would be Plato, and subjective idealism, whose philosophy is based on cogitating reflection, as in the case of Descartes and Kant. In none of these idealisms was a philosophy of the body developed, and when it was superficially thematized, it was categorized as something minor ontologically, gnoseologically or socio-politically, as is seen.

From the dualistic ontology, the body is only one dimension of the human being and not all of it, as the other dimension with which the human being is really identified or characterized is always prioritized, and named in different ways: spirit, soul, reason, I, thought, mind, psyche, subject, etc., according to the time and context, but always keeping the dual character in common. In this research piece, the term *mind* is used for the sake of economy, but to reflect what has been commonly associated with all of them: that they are not the body.

The Western IDE has degraded the body at various levels: ontological, gnoseological, and ethical–political. Below some of the invariants that characterize this episteme are detailed, which allows us to know in what sense the body has been deposed philosophically by preventing a somatic philosophy.

4. The Idealist–Dualist Ontology

In his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, Nietzsche wrote:

“With the popular, and entirely false, antithesis of soul and body nothing can be clarified, of course, in the difficult relation between music and drama, and everything can be muddled; but, who knows for what reasons, just among our aestheticians the aphoristical coarseness of that antithesis seems to have become an article of faith professed with pleasure, while they have learned nothing about the antithesis between appearance and thing in itself, or, for equally unknown reasons, they have wanted to learn nothing” [15].

Although the ontological dualism for conceiving the human being can be reasonable³, from the hierarchical–axiological approach of dualism, domination does emerge because the lesser degree of the value of the body in relation to the mind has been an almost constant in the history of philosophy. As Foucault argued, power is not an object, but a relation; when a dualism is postulated, the relation can be asymmetrical or symmetrical; in the former, there is power from one pole to another (and also, therefore, resistance); in the latter, dualism becomes more irrelevant and complicated because a monism allows the plurality of the world to be explained more simply and with less aporia, and it also seems better suited to nature (not natures) or the cosmos (not cosmoses). The greater virtues of monism over dualism in describing and explaining the world go beyond the scope of this study and deserve future research.

In the extended dualistic vision of the human being based on the soul–body (or even the spirit–soul–body triad, if one wishes to make further disquisitions in the classical Greek culture), the body is considered unimportant, it has less value (than the soul, than the self, than the conscience, etc.), it is a burden or a contingent obligation, it is secondary, it is a

means (in the mind–ideas–world scheme) and not an end, a tool in possession. This means that this episteme has evolved *preaching underworlds* in favor of the soul, in the words of Nietzsche [5].

Idealist dualism understands that the body is ontologically of a lesser degree or category given that it has a mortal, ephemeral, and limited essence compared to the immortality and nobility of the soul. Plato already established in *Laws*:

“because it is a reasoning that says that the body deserves more esteem than the soul, but this reasoning is false, since there is nothing born of the earth that is worth more than what comes from Olympus” [16].

Anthropological dualism and the postulation of the immortal soul (and its transmigration) already came from the Orphic tradition that, through Pythagoreanism, reached Plato by influencing all subsequent philosophy. The ontological reality and origin of the body and soul are totally heterogeneous. Although Homer already reflected in his works that the vital soul (*thymós*) migrates and is personal, it cannot be defined, but can only be referred to with a non-conceptual rhetorical language. It was with Plato’s idealistic philosophy, and despite being realistic with regard to the Ideas, when he began to rationalize and conceptualize discourses that were, until then, as mythological and religious as the doctrine of the soul because the immortality of the soul and the mortality of the body were foreign considerations to classical Greek thought [17].

The IDE can no longer also understand that the body is of a lesser degree, but, ontologically, it may have no degree; that is, the body has no reality or existence because we can doubt it for having no direct access to it. This would be the case of Descartes’ subjective idealism. Following the EDI, this thinker considered that the human being was composed of two substances: one thinking (soul, consciousness) and the other extensive (body): “I myself as a whole, insofar as I am composed of body and soul” [18], which were ontologically distinguished “in the fact that the body is always divisible by nature and the soul indivisible” [18]. That is to say, Descartes associated with the body a certain *res*, substance, but a qualitatively different one from the substance that cannot be doubted; the *res cogitans*. The Cartesian body is a passive body and never a cause of movement, a body–machine whose very existence is only an onto-epistemological possibility if compared to consciousness: “I conjecture with probability that the body exists; but only with probability” (p. 36). The greatest certainty, the greatest truth and existence, is that of a thinking self. Yet this separation clashed with both Platonic considerations, where the soul is imprisoned in the body, and Aristotelian and scholastic ones, where the soul was the substantial form of the body (or the body was informed by the soul); that is, Descartes distanced himself from tradition and adopted a new model, that of the body–machine:

“it will by no means seem strange to those [. . .] who regard this body as a machine which, because it is made by the hands of God, is incomparably better ordered and possesses more admirable movements than any other that men can invent” [19].

He associated identity only with the thinking self by manifesting a long distance between the two substances: “whereas as I am only a thinking thing, and unintegrated, and on the other hand a precise idea of body, whereas as it is only an extensive and unthinking thing, it is manifest that I am distinct in reality from my body, and that I can exist without it” [19]. Here, we can see a continuation of the ontological disregard of the body by distancing it from one of the main categories in ontology: identity (*the body is not me*). It is the same episteme as Plato’s, but with a new model (and a new language): instead of the organism, the machine. They use different metaphors, but they belong to the same episteme.

This first somatic degradation, the ontological one, has determined an identification: *the body is not oneself, but the soul that governs it*. Moreover, the soul is eternal, incorruptible, it does not change. The body is what changes, and the more it changes, the less we identify with it; it is the frequent case of thinking that a malignant tumor is not me, but that it is an

alien thing that is in me or near me; that is, the identification with some parts of the body, but not with others.

Kant provided a simple definition of the body: “That which is the object of the external senses” [20]. The idealistic character of his philosophy is reflected in this definition, which is relative to the form and possibility of knowing. Dualism is also the postulation of the existence of the soul. His powerful philosophy did not develop a *critique of the pure body*, but he mentioned the body when he considered it necessary for his epistemology or his ethics. This does not mean that Kant did not have a conception of the body, because it has already been ascertained that the body is conceived as relational and not as positive, active–reactive, and not passive, and as a means to access the ends of free will [21]. However, the body did not take on a central role in his system, nor did reason or duty, so he continued the foundations of the IDE at the ontological level.

This episteme has postulated the body with a negative degree, something not only limited, but also limiting, axiologically sinful, and hindering (for liberation, for knowledge, for happiness). It would be the case of conceiving the body as a prison for the soul according to Plato (with his play on words *soma* and *sema*) given that the soul longs to free itself from the body, which is what binds it to the sensible world (of less value than the ideal). However, Aristotle, in a more biological and physiological way than his master, studied the body by conceiving it as a microcosm, where the “active intellect” is what brings the divine to the human (its origin being eternal and external), and the “passive intellect” is what brings the somatic. This point of view fixed more on the body the divine character of the human being (from the active intellect to the passive-corporal), which later produced, from Christian reinterpretations, the sacralization of the body. This sacralization may have had advantages, such as the protection and respect for the body-object, but it also limited its study and knowledge from natural philosophy, which would not be de-sacralized in the Western philosophy until the advent of the Renaissance [17].

Nietzsche provides a clear sociocultural explanation for the ontological degradation of the body in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* [5]. They were those who, not content with creating and imposing their own sociocultural values, wished to impose a natural reality on the human being and at an ontological level that would give them immortality and power over the cosmos: thus, they created the soul. According to Nietzsche, starting from the thesis of the will to power, those creators of new values, to whom he somehow recognizes such capacity, like Jesus Christ, did not accept death. That is to say, *their themselves* had the desire to continue creating, gaining power, and even creating above themselves. Yet faced with the factual impossibility of continuing to do so, faced with the vision of the end, they constructed the transcendent self, the soul, the immortal part, by distinguishing it from another immanent and earthly human part: the body. It is those whom Nietzsche [5] calls *despisers of the body*:

“But to them [metaphysicians] it is a sickly thing, and gladly would they jump out of their skin. Hence they listen to the preachers of death, and they preach of hinterworlds. Hear my brothers, hear the voice of the healthy body: [. . .], and it speaks of the meaning of the earth” [5].

Plato could be one of those despisers of the body and preachers of underworlds of which Nietzsche spoke. The IDE has been unconcerned with the body insofar as, ontologically, it belongs to becoming, to change, to degeneration. On the contrary, it has distanced the body from being because being is conceived as immutable, and is, therefore, conceived as identity (mathematical, physical, and psychological); that is, one cannot identify with the body because it changes; however, the self (mind, soul, consciousness, etc.) is that which endures in the face of change. This episteme has prevented a philosophy of process and is, therefore, a non-corporeal or anti-corporeal episteme (depending on the manifestation).

5. The Idealist–Dualist Gnoseology

The second level of degradation of the body is gnoseological: the body, not having its own essence, was associated with a function, that of being a means of knowledge of the empirical world through senses; but these fail, they are confused. Thus, the body is fallible and clumsy, the foundation of nothing. That is to say, the body was not only associated with gnoseology and not with ontology, but also in such a gnoseological—and epistemological—association, the body is not adequate to found anything, but its perception is born and dies at the same time as becoming. Thus, it has a relative value.

It could be stated that the IDE was born when the first physicists of Ionia, those who Aristotle called *hoi physikoi*, but also considered *reasoners of nature*, who left behind the mythical world and embraced the world of *logos*, were relieved by the first *thinkers*. These were no longer physicists, but meta-physicists [22], reflectors, that is, those who turned to the self by turning the questioning of *physis* into a questioning of the being that knows *physis*. In this turn toward the self, it was considered that the important thing about the self was thought, wisdom, and no longer so much the self as microcosm or *physis*. Philosophy understood as reflection was born, where the philosopher is a reflecting being, not a bodily being.

Philosophy, as reflection, has produced, since Plato, an ontotheology that has atemporalized–immortalized *logos*—language, concepts, ideas—; that is, when it went from simply pointing and naming in a provisional way to conceptualizing in an eternal way was when reflection and cogitating processes were considered hierarchically superior to the changeable, namely, the body and the cosmos in general.

The well-known poem of the Eleata differentiates three ways of knowledge: that which leads to epistemic being, that which leads to *doxic* being, and that of non being, which is unfeasible. This poem already predisposed the assignment of the body to the way of opinion, or even in the case of many later philosophers, to non being. At the same time, it associated being with thinking and with reflection and the handling of concepts, which meant a rejection of the particular, the changeable, the mutable.

Idealistic–dualistic gnoseology was built from this identification of being with epistemic thinking. Its first manifestation would be objective idealism, especially with Plato, by distinguishing a gnoseological subject and a gnoseological object, and leaving the body as a gnostic and ontic reality of the second order. That is to say, it was in this “bending toward the self” of the metaphysicians in relation to the physicists that the body lost out as an entity given that this “self” was no longer a physical–cosmological substance, but a reflective one.

Later in modernity, this episteme manifested itself as subjective idealism by being equally dualistic in the rationalist option of Descartes, the empiricist of Locke, or the critical–transcendental of Kant.

For Descartes, in terms of access to knowledge, there was no doubt he categorized the thinking soul as certainty, while everything coming from the body was more than doubtful. He wrote in *Meditations on First Philosophy*: “I know now with certainty that I exist, and that it can happen at the same time that [. . .] all that refers to the nature of the body are nothing but dreams” [18], by adding that “there are so many things in the mind itself by which its nature [in reference to an external thing] can be more clearly perceived, that all that emanates from the body scarcely seems worthy of mention. [. . .] Nothing absolutely can be known with greater facility and evidence than my mind” [18].

The body is not evident. Actually, Descartes’ anthropological proposal does not differ much, in essence, from Plato’s, although the mechanistic vision and the metaphor (in this case, the machine) change, but the body maintains its axiological status; that is why the same episteme is maintained. In both cases, the body belongs to a lesser ontology, and even cosmology, to either the sensible world in the case of Plato or the *res extensa* of Descartes, with all attention to the corporeal serving as a way to access what is ontologically primordial: the Ideas or Reason, respectively. However, the novelty in which the IDE manifests itself in

modernity is that the body can be known scientifically, seeing it as an object and submitting to the laws of mechanics.

In his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke [23] established that, psychologically, reflection has sensation as its stimulus and antecedent and, although they can be psychologically equated, epistemologically reflection is superior. These theses gave rise to important posterior psychological research by opening up the ways of sensualism and the lived body; but in this thinker, despite the body acquiring notorious importance as a facilitator of experiences for consciousness, it continued to enclose this episteme of the body as a means for knowledge, as a tool of the soul, which was the important thing. Although Locke was certainly concerned about the physical care of the body and hygienic practices, at the philosophical level, he continued to develop the IDE.

A simple definition of body in Kant was “That which is the object of the external senses” [20]. The gnoseological approach of his philosophy is reflected in this definition, which is relative to the form and possibility of knowing. He also defined the body from a more physical perspective, as matter with figure, but it is not so relevant insofar as this philosopher did not reduce the consideration of the human body to merely *res extensa*, but as that which allows us to know the world and to develop the ends (of the self).

The Kantian lived body was a reactive and active body in relation to exteriority, necessary for the constitution of both. The self-body is transcendently necessary for the objective knowledge of nature. The self identifies itself with the body itself, and not with any other object, or with a body-machine, because through it, it can develop its ends given that it has a free character. Kantian criticism maintains the IDE for distinguishing a transcendental self from one's own body, as well as posing a philosophy with essentially gnoseological-idealistic concerns [21]. Although, in Kantian idealism, the body gains a certain degree of gnoseological recognition already acquired in Lockean empiricism, the notion of the instrumental body continues to survive, whose care or identification is only justified if it is for the benefit of reason.

The IDE seems to reach its peak when philosophy is conceived entirely as reflection by uniting or studying the relation of thinking with being, and no longer the body with the world (although this would be another dualism) and not the body as cosmos. Hegel's absolute idealism does not formally conform to this episteme because he defended a monism, but with a spiritual basis; however, this defense did not seem to reach its ultimate consequences because he essentially maintained a human dualism (soul-body). With a Fichtean influence, and perhaps also with resonances of Duns Scotus or Spinoza, he opted for the original unity of both: “his existence and his universal nature (his body and his soul) are united, and that if it were not so, things would be nothing” [24]. This unity, however, was not original in either time or culture because it was already present in Confucianism [25]. A priori, body and soul for Hegel are One, and only through reflection can they be appreciated as separate. The Hegelian monism of dual manifestation can be likened to the Catholic monotheism of trinitarian personal manifestation. This monism refers to the fact that everything is a manifestation of the Absolute Spirit, but having said this, the human being remains dual:

“[. . .] that which refers to the union of soul and body. This union was accepted as a factum but it was only a question of how it was to be conceived. [. . .] he [God] is rather grasped as the only true identity of body and soul” [24].

Hegelian gnoseology remains hierarchical and dual, although with obvious dialectical originality. Sensibility remains the first source of knowledge and the least valuable, given that it is transient, limited, and immediate: “The content of feeling is certainly limited and transient because it belongs to natural and immediate being, to qualitative being therefore, and finite” [24]. Hegel not only remained in a philosophy associated with reflection, but fully identified them. Thus, the body can only aspire to be an accessible re-presentation by setting Reason in motion: “The concept is realized as soul in a body, of whose exteriority the soul is the immediate universality that refers to itself, it is also the particularization of the body” [24].

The scientific revolution of the 17th century inherited the IDE as epistemology, and prolonged it in the following centuries. Even the positivism of the 19th century does not break with its foundations: a knowing subject, different from a known object, from ideas, now much more operationalized and called scientific concepts, and from a body whose experience is irrelevant. Thus, one could glimpse a gnoseology as a theory of knowledge compatible with the bodily way of knowing (gnoseology of sight, hearing, touch, etc.), and epistemology (scientific gnoseology) as a discourse that opts for prediction and the procedural, but renounces all ontology.

In the 19th century, the IDE produced two types of disciplines that kept this episteme implicit in their foundation: biomedicines (physical body–object) and socio-psychologies (mind). Dualism mutated into more sophisticated forms, such as the *emic–etic* perspectival difference in anthropology, Dilthey’s classification of sciences of nature and sciences of the spirit, or the distinction between biology and biography, *bios* and *anthropos* [26], objective body (*körper*) and lived body (*leib*), and which continue to underpin current analyses of the body, as in the study of Recio [8]. The role of epistemology was inherited by psychology at the end of the 19th century by fully assuming all of the principles of the IDE. Almost all psychological currents assume the above-described idealism–dualism: associationism, psychoanalysis, behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, or, more recently, connectionism. All of these currents update with neologisms the same fundamentals by changing, for example, the notion of soul or psyche to that of consciousness, mind, self, or brain. Braincentrism has already begun to be questioned [27]: corporal cognition (embodiment) and situated or extended cognition. The advantage of these new approaches is that they seek to go beyond the standard cognition and information processing paradigm to include somatic variables. However, the central focus remains cognition (the way we know), and not the body itself.

Tirado et al. [28] posit that embodiment has two variants: the “weak” approach understands that cognition requires sensorimotor activation and is representationist; the “strong” approach states that cognition cannot occur without sensorimotor activation and rejects representations. In both cases, there is a perceived gnoseocentrism (where the body is merely one more explanatory variable), and also a reductionism of the body to psychomotor skills (as is often the case in much of physical education, sport, and even health professionals, today). Likewise, it seems that the embodiment approach does not escape from the IDE because, one might ask, in this new jargon, what is being incorporated? What is embodied is cognition, that of a cognizing subject. Cognition is substantivized, and the body is adjectivized. Embodiment is a more philosophical approach than traditional psychology insofar as it flees from braincentrism (or even neurocentrism), but does not escape info-gnoseocentrism. These new currents assume a theoretical commitment to the IDE tradition, and even permeate the applications of psychology to technology by considering the creation of artificial intelligence conceived only as software (cognition, computer processing) because it is assumed that ontology and gnoseology can be developed automatically (without wetware), and even without hardware.

Manzotti’s current approach [4,29], although it can be considered philosophical (in the sense of not despising the body, even as an object of study), is not, however, corporeal. On the one hand, the body is necessary as a condition or requirement of experience, and when one’s body is destroyed, his world is also destroyed. On the other hand, the body is not the experience itself, but the experience is around the body. This philosopher proposes, from physicalism, that the body cannot be an a priori principle. Corporeism can imply mentalism, given that all the current aspects of enactivism, incarnation, or vitalism are based on presuppositions or notions that are circular in argument (who “acts”? What is embodied? What configures a closed living organism?). Possible IDE residues could be glimpsed in current currents, which have been defined as covert dualisms or Cartesian materialisms [29], reviving soul–world dualisms, but updated to head–body, mind–brain, or interior–exterior. Given that it transcends the objectives of this study, it would only

be possible to consider the possibility of other non-mentalist forms of corporeality (for example, from cybernetics, or even from monistic physicalism itself).

Any reflection outside the corporeal is pure abstraction that can engender all kinds of philosophical chimeras. With the vitalisms and positions closer to the mundane or experiential, perhaps what is abstracted and chimerized is Life, which need not have been developed philosophically, as is possibly the case of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, also called *egology* by himself, where the central thing is not the body, but the transcendental and intentional consciousness. While it must be recognized that this philosophy endowed the body with a centrality in philosophy seldom seen before, and that Husserl's *transcendental self* is not a fleshless being, it is a being that is not a being of the body [30]. Thus, perhaps one should follow the premise for doing philosophy of "not straying further than necessary from the corporeal", as Quine said in relation to sensory evidence.

6. The Idealist–Dualist Ethical–Politics

The approaches of the episteme analyzed at the ontological and gnoseological levels were coupled during the emergence of Western philosophy to an ethical and political theory, also based on a contempt and degradation of the body in the face of Reason. The body was conceived as individual, particular and private; but reason was rather understood in Greek Antiquity as spirit, namely, the reflexivity of communal self-conscious perception [31]. The spirit is a reason of public character, shared, and is, therefore, manageable and disciplinable. It could be argued that it was the biopolitical treatments of the body that were able to generate the ontology and gnoseology of the aforementioned episteme. In the 20th century, Agamben, Foucault, and Domenech developed this biopolitical approach [32]. According to Agamben [33], Western politics is "at the same time and from its origin, biopolitics" (p. 102), and that is why recent studies on the body and power propose the need to "place the body at the center of politics" [8].

Habermasian post-Marxism provided a glimpse of *Knowledge and Human Interests* [34] of the Greek passage from myth to *logos* not as a purely theoretical change, but as a practical one, that is, as an emancipation of an ethical–political nature, where Greek people sought to free themselves from the capricious discourses based on gods, oracles, soothsayers, etc., in favor of a more controllable discourse by the human of the *polis* (that is, the new citizen) by means of (public) reason. This acquisition of power by the new citizenry over the old myth-based hierarchies of power began to construct normativized and rationalizing discourses about the body. The body went from being influenced and controlled by mythical discourses to being controlled by rational discourses; but in both cases, the body was neither the foundation of nor had legitimacy in any of the discourses, but continued to be subjugated.

Habermas' proposal [35] to leave behind the focus on consciousness and cognitive–theoretical rationality for a theory of communication had the good sense to make a pragmatic change, but once again, he started from rational beings whose ideal goal is communication, as an act, of course, and intersubjective understanding. Deleuze and Guattari [14] conceived Habermas' approach as a new idealism, but no longer objective like Plato's or subjective like Descartes', but intersubjective. Habermas, thus, formulated a Theory of Communicative Action, which does not treat the human being as a strictly corporeal being, and presupposes that pragmatics must be, in any case, of the ideal communication of rational beings. Despite the lack of somatic interest in Habermasian philosophy, and even in post-Marxist materialism in which it may be situated, it is doubtful that it can be adjusted to the IDE, but nor can it fit in with a philosophy concerned with the human corporeal.

The somatic degradation from ethico-politics considered that bodies are expendable and a means for religion, war or the economy of each epoch. Even this *ethos* brought with it a certain an-esthetic, with the prescription to not feel, but to reason; not to suffer, but to control oneself; not to celebrate, but to contain oneself. The IDE, therefore, could have been generated by such ethico-politics, appeasing human bodies, disempowering and

disavowing them. Attention to the body began to be questioned as soon as philosophy was instituted as reflection, as seen in the two most influential philosophers.

Plato [36] repudiated athletes inasmuch as excessive body care was considered to produce a neglect of the public affairs of the polis. That is, he understood that cultivating the body made one politically ignorant [32]. Nevertheless, Plato was an athlete, and even the pseudonym “Plato” itself was given by his gymnastics teacher when referring to his body width. Although he defended gymnastics as an education of the body, it was subordinated to the education of the soul; that is, music. Thus, by educating and controlling the soul (or reason, at the public level), the body, and in that order and direction, will be controlled. In reference to the preparation of the guardians of the State, he said in *Republic*:

“I do not believe that, because it is well constituted, a body is capable of infusing goodness into the soul with its excellences, but on the contrary, that it is the good soul that can endow the body with all possible perfections by means of its virtues” (403d).

Furthermore, he compared the development and performance of virtue (which is not associated with the somatic) to excessive care of the body: “And it is even possible that there is nothing that is so much opposed to it [the development of virtue] as excessive care of the body that goes beyond simple gymnastics” (407a). Plato’s ontological and anthropological dualism posed, by determining all posterity, a duality of an ethical, political, and pedagogical nature. Ethically, all care of the body, and not only for health, but also for beauty and perfection, should be subordinated to the goal of caring for the soul. Likewise, the bodies of people (citizens and non-citizens) should be oriented to the care of the polis and of reason (public, shared). Finally, human education should be twofold, but in any case, the ultimate goal is the rational exercise of philosophy conceived as intellection.

Likewise, in his *Politics*, Aristotle [37] criticized certain habits (ethics, *hexis*) of the Lacedaemonians:

“we must not strive at the same time intelligence and the body, because each one of these efforts leads to opposite results: that the body is an obstacle for intelligence, that of intelligence, for the body” (1138b).

Habits can be conceived as an in-built rationality, a disposition that guides decisions and actions [32] and, therefore, an in-corporate ethics that, in the case of the IDE, is an anti-corporate in-corporate ethics at the same time.

Later, Platonism and Aristotelianism were subsequently taken to their ultimate (anti-corporeal) consequences. Remarkable cases include Manichaeism in the third century, where the soul was associated with good and the body with evil, or sects of similar approaches in Italy and France in the 12th century: the Cathars and the Albigenses. The body was evil and had to be dominated by asceticism, and was so associated with evil and the devil that they even rejected marriage and reproduction of human species [38]. The tabuistic bias against the body at the philosophical level during medieval times gave way to a certain naturalistic interest during the Renaissance, continued with the scientific vision of the body, but fell under the control of the state-social, and the school in modernity. From taboo to control, the body can be conceived as a pedagogical *dispositive* [11] and a means of ethico-political control achievable through correction and disciplining [7]. From control, in the 20th century, we move on to quasi-religious consumer permissiveness.

The existence of the IDE can be explained by, or simply correlated with, the somatic disfigurement of modernity, where the *social body* (biopolitics in Foucault’s terms) exerts direct or indirect directions and coercion on the human body (anatomopolitics). This disfigurement is made possible by what Agamben [39] describes as the fundamental biopolitical turn in the West: the domination of natural bodies in a socio-political and external way, and nullifying the intrinsic power of all the natural bodies separately—that is to say, depriving the “people” of a political body, understood in its semantic connotation as part of the population excluded from politics. Agamben [39] even suggests that the distinction between *zoè* (pure biological–animal existence of the human) and *bios* (the

biographical–vital) is a dichotomy that should be rethought as a social construct; this allows us to doubt a supposed wild body nature that should be controlled and domesticated individually (understanding) and socially (reason).

Caution is required with certain analyses of the body from biopolitics because the ultimate conclusion may be an *essence* (as opposed to the body, which would be phenomenal–factual) which, on this occasion, could be a structure, or a power, whose status is prior to, or greater than, the body itself. This would imply that it would not be a philosophy of the body, but a *structuralist philosophy about the body*. Based on dominion and power, discourses and analyses run the risk of leaving, once again, the body relegated to all levels because what is essential would be the power that really configures bodies. It is one thing that the body contains or is traversed by forces that can enlarge or attenuate its capacity for action, and yet another that these forces are the basic ontological constituent. That bodies, whether understood as objects or subjects, have been instruments of intrinsic or extrinsic domination does not imply that the body should be identified with power. Thus, it could be affirmed that Foucault saw the episteme, the structure that precedes it, before the body. To affirm that, through bodies, there have been strategies of the subjectivation and individuation of discourses, or of the objectification and collectivization of military–labor masses, has a limit to develop a bodily ontology, gnoseology, or esthetic, although it is very fruitful in the ethics and politics field. It is precisely the analyses of discipline and its social effects on modernity that have partially attracted interest in the body.

An ethics–politics that vanishes bodies could not produce any other pedagogy than one where the body is tacit. Learning, conceived first as *animal*, and then intellectual, psychic, and, more recently, cognitive or neurocognitive, is what happens when the body is not present. That is why, if the first thing taught is to walk and talk, the second thing taught by the school in its modern advent is to sit down, not to move and to be quiet. The body is considered to be what impedes true learning, and for this reason it continues to be conceived as an obstacle, something harmful that goes against intellection, as Plato and Aristotle had already stated.

Moreover, this pedagogy is purely biopolitical insofar as, and manifested in modernity through the institution of the school, it becomes a space–time where norms must be incorporated before being skipped as opposed to other institutions, where norms are incorporated after having skipped the norms (the prison) while fulfilling norms (the company), or before the impossibility of fulfilling norms (hospitals and psychiatric hospitals). Hence, the body has been the epicenter of the educational institution by becoming a control dispositive.

The IDE has produced a current ethic in the sense of habits and customs, whose concern for the bodily comes only when pleasure (hypertrophied in consumerism) or pain emerges, a memory almost always not sought after of bodily existence. Thus, it is conceived that the body is not *to be*, but *to be suffered*. I am not a body, but I *suffer* or *enjoy* the body. The (clinical) signs are always here or there in the body, but symptoms pass through the IDE; it is not clear whether the analyses on self-care [31] refer to symptoms (discourses) or to bodily signs. Otherwise, the ethical–political–educational existence remains in *another world*, where the body is not present. It is the *escaped* body that Alba-Rico [40] describes, where the *usual* thing is to escape from the body in three different ways because it gets in the way: intracorporal escape, which refers to an escape toward the interior; intercorporal escape, which refers to an escape of the body between bodies, through language (the conceptual, the eternalized); and extracorporeal escape, which refers to the escape of the body through its prolongation to the exterior, through technology: “technology [. . .] virtually leaves the body behind as a slower and sloppier ancestor and as a residue of its de facto superiority” [40]. The current bioethical–political axiology, based on technocracy [41], prefers to invest in technology that overcomes the body, rather than in habits and ways of living that are compatible with the rhythms of the body. Recent transhumanism does not attempt to improve the body, but to avoid it, to evade it, to deny it. This is because it is considered an *inadequate body*.

7. Hermeneutical Note

The description of this episteme has not purported to have an intention of closure, but of direction. In fact, surely if any philosopher of the mind were asked if he belonged to that episteme, he would reject it. This is due to the great disparity of treated onto-gnoseological approaches. Therefore, it is reiterated that the only intention was to see a continuity or community in these dualistic idealisms, in the light of the criterion of reference of the body, by understanding that, from other criteria, these philosophies cannot be joined. The authors also mentioned having contributions, albeit very scarcely, that could be considered to focus on the body. Plato ended up recognizing the need for a certain balance between the intellectual and the corporal [17]. Aristotle continued to conceive the body as a microcosm, like presocratic and Hippocratic philosophy, and of the same physical category as the rest of the hylomorphic world. Descartes recognized a certain union and totality in the human; *"Nature also teaches me, through the senses of pain, hunger, thirst, etc., that I am not only present in my body as the navigator on the ship, but that I am attached to it very closely and as mixed, so that I form a whole with it"* [18]. However, the IDE as a concept allows us to point out the debt of the philosophical tradition of Greek origin to the body, as well as some deficiencies, traditions, or consequences that derive from idealism, dualism, and anti-somatism.

8. Research Prospects

From the present study, where some of the foundations and approaches that have prevented philosophizing the body are described, it is worth wondering whether it is really possible to do so, and whether the philosophical approaches of the 20th century have already achieved it. Is a hermeneutic of the body possible? Is a philosophy not based on reflection possible? Is the meaning that philosophy has always sought really in human language or in the body (the being that feels)? Is the body the *meaning*?

The main relevant lines for further research would be to: (1) determine whether the constitution of a non-anti-corporeal, fruitful, and non-IDE-based somatic philosophy is possible; (2) identify a line of resistance to the IDE in the history of precontemporary "Western" philosophy by being able to follow the steps of Hobbes, Spinoza, La Matrie, Holbach, Rousseau, Marx, and Nietzsche, which could explain the bodily turn made by Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Deleuze, Nancy, or Butler; (3) determine whether paths really exist that are neither monistic nor dualistic in relation to the body, as could be the case of ancient stoicism, Aristotle, Spinoza, David de Dinat, or Merleau-Ponty; (4) explore whether traditional Chinese philosophy is already in itself a philosophy of the body, based on the body–gender–kinship scheme instead of the consciousness–concepts–universe scheme associated with the IDE [25]; (5) discover whether the hybridizations of Nishida Kitarō's Japanese philosophy between Eastern contributions and Western phenomenological influences serve as a reference for a philosophy of the body [3]; (6) assess whether part of African philosophy, such as sub-Saharan philosophy, can be or can help to constitute a philosophy of the body by not relying on a reflection expressed in writing, but on an oral form not mediated by technology (and, therefore, more somatic), following the vision of philosophical sagacity in the studies of Henry Odera Oruka [42]; (7) describe socio-historical periods where, despite the domination of the IDE, a certain philosophical openness was experienced, specifically in Classical Greece (with Olympianism, bodily-heroic time, or Hippocratic natural philosophy), the European Renaissance (with naturalism and the resurgence of bodily interest at the artistic, medical, and scientific levels), and in the 1970s in the West when a bodily turn occurred at the sociocultural level [43]; (8) analyze, in particular, the quasi-religious attention, treatment, and care of the body in the 20th and 21st centuries by identifying its origin and looking for which philosophical presuppositions allow the compatibility of such treatments with the underpinning of the IDE following recent hermeneutic studies, such as Oñate et al. [44]; (9) assess whether epigenetic approaches to understand the body could be an alternative to psychologistic cerebrocentrism as a more complete and philosophical gnoseology by following studies such as those of Amorós and Salinas [45]; and (10) delimit the body within a naturalistic physicalism and

explore whether it can be displaced by other concepts such as experience or physical objects (understood from objectivist relativism and the paradigm of mind-object identity) [4].

9. Conclusions

The problem that motivated this study was to determine the reasons why a philosophy of the body has not been developed, and why it has been despised and discredited in philosophy. Starting from the biopolitical hypothesis of the domain, and the pragmatist approach (in the absence of a somatic approach), an episteme was analyzed, which has sustained a large part of philosophy at the ontological, gnoseological, ethical, political, and pedagogical levels. This is called the idealist–dualist episteme (IDE), and has generated invariants in the main currents of thought and in the great philosophers by preventing a real creative escape to the approach of the domain and the construction and maintenance of a philosophical philosophy.

The dualistic–idealistic ontology states that the body is only one dimension of the human being; this dimension is of a lesser degree, or even has almost no ontological degree in comparison with the mental–ideal–spiritual dimension. Likewise, this ontology annuls the identification with the body, and endows it with a different beneficial and useful character (for reason, for knowledge, for biological sustenance) or, on the contrary, with a hindering character (as a prison, an obstacle). This ontology has brought with it a gnoseology that is also dualistic–idealistic: the body has no essence, but it does have a function, that of allowing us (an “I”) to know a world. From the first Platonic gnoseology to the recent approaches of embodiment or artificial intelligence, dualism and idealism continue to exist by presupposing a functional–utilitarian body, which is also clumsy, confused, and changing, to know the world.

The ontology and epistemology of this IDE arose from the ethical–political context of the ancient civilization of the Greek poleis, and coincides with the emergence of Greek philosophy. Philosophy, as reflection, entailed an ever-increasing disregard and degradation of the body (individual) in the face of Reason (communal). The IDE is, therefore, a biopolitical consequence, but at the same time, the IDE also generates biopolitics. This bidirection has created a second-order philosophy that has “forgotten” the original first order: the body. One of the first consequences of the IDE at the ethical–political level is the prescription of an intellectualist and anti-corporal education based on domination, that is, an asymmetrical power relationship where “reason” prevails over the “body”. Learning is considered to take place when the body is out of the way. The IDE has facilitated a society in which people seek to escape from the body through introspection, language, or technology.

For so many centuries, the somatophobia of this philosophy has allowed us to raise the possibility of new discoveries, and not only constructions or reconstructions, at the ontological, gnoseological, and ethical–political levels, given that it would not often mean reanalyzing an object of study from a new approach, but taking that same purpose as a new reality to be accessed. Perhaps it could be argued that we are facing something new.

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Notes

- ¹ Foucault described: “In a given culture and at a given time, there is always only one episteme, which defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether it manifests itself in a theory or remains silently invested in a practice” (1968, p. 166).
- ² Lyotard stated in *The Postmodern Condition*: “Consequently, these narratives make it possible, on the one hand, to define the criteria of competence that are those of the society in which they are told, and on the other hand, to evaluate, thanks to these criteria, the actions that are carried out or can be carried out with them. [. . .] Their narration very often obeys rules set by pragmatics” (1987, p. 19).
- ³ Although it should overcome, in the face of monism, all kinds of difficulties of explanation about the relation between both ontic-ontological realities. Monism allows us to construct and conceive, from a single type of ontological element, ontological plurality of different dimensions.

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