

The Human Subject in the Image of a Body

Neither Instrument nor Idol

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The somewhat disturbing success of bioethics¹ as a discipline is probably due to the unique nature of its subject matter. Indeed what is it that happens when scientific interest, with its particular resources and language, turns toward the study of the human body? Can this body be instrumentalized like any other object, or do the sciences have to give way here before a taboo subject? Have the sciences not, without their knowing it, taken on an unprecedented signification? The truly prodigious growth of new fields of biological knowledge has thrust biology into the public arena. Extending more than ever beyond the status of narrowly scientific knowledge, these new fields have taken on a mythological and normative character in the social imagination.²

From the point of view of the subject, the representation of the body, even when narrowly biological, is always an image of the self: identity, genealogical resemblance, cultural norm and configuration, etc. Consciously or not, biology has therefore become a generator of body images that are simultaneously images of social and subjective reproduction, representations of identity and institution. In this sense, bioethics did not arise solely from outside the sciences in order to counterbalance and reveal the implications of the technical powers of biology: it arose from within them to assume an unprecedented moral and religious authority.

The initial goal of this study will be to outline in broad terms the Western representation of the body. This representation has oscillated between an instrumentalization of the body that is deeply rooted in an ancient religious and cultural tradition of the West, and a sacralization of the body in which tradition and hedo-

nism paradoxically merge. Beginning with an analysis of these contrasting images of an immemorial dualism and a more or less all-encompassing therapeutic concern, we will then turn to the mythical essence of our biotechnologies, of our procreative and neuro-sciences: the dream of the liberation of the body, in all the ambivalence of this expression.

Following that, we will then try to identify two or three lines of resistance that ethics can use to hold its own against the terrifying side of this dream of bio-power. The irreducible inalienability of the human body from all commerce; the acknowledgment by society that filiation can not be reduced to a solely genetic "patrimony"; the indefinability of the human subject who can not be reduced to the images he or she has of him or herself: these are some of the resources on which ethics can draw in order to resist manipulation and to underpin a mode of judgment and action that will make it possible for bioethics to be more than a rubber stamp for the given state of affairs.

The Dream of the Liberation of the Body

The new powers that have arisen in biology are at the same time vectors of ecstatic longings and objects of quasi-superstitious fears; longings and fears that reflect the Western imagination in which they have arisen and the manner in which these new techniques have echoed the evolution of social customs. However, this world of imagination and these customs embody both an objectification, an instrumentalization, a "disciplinarization" of the body at an unprecedented level, and a hedonism, a sort of therapeutic concern, that nothing seems able to thwart. The same motif is found everywhere: the freedom to do what one wants with his or her body, a freedom that requires this work and this discipline, which in return allows this pleasure to be realized, a pleasure initially understood to be content of this freedom.

It is this complex of ideas that will initially occupy our attention. The works of Michel Foucault have sensitized us to the fact that progress in bio-medical knowledge was also progress in the disciplining of the body and of the control of individuals by their bodies.³

A history of this instrumental representation of the parcelized body can be outlined: It is the history of modern knowledge in general, in which the body is first a seen object, a geometrically describable form; then a machine, an assemblage of organs (that is to say, of isolatable functions); and finally a language, a code, the execution of a genetic program.⁴ Yet each of these configurations leaves a residue (or engenders an increase) of subjectivity, which requires a body for this form, a totality for these parts, a meaning for this code.

The fear of having oneself laid out, examined, manipulated, dislodged, formulated and programmed without having anything to say about it, leads patients to turn toward alternative medicine. These forms of medical care promise a consolatory, holistic approach that reforms a symbolic body and gives meaning to suffering and to pleasure.⁵ It is within this context that the new biomedical powers – which some have called a “medicine of desire” – have arisen. Here the concept of therapy goes well beyond its strictly scientific signification, to become the latest embodiment of an eternal myth: that of the deliverance of the body. The aim of this therapy is finally to make humanity master of its own genetic makeup and even of its intelligence; to remake an artificial body, free and capable of going beyond the limits of our planet, itself abandoned to disaster.

On the basis of his interpretation of the progress in the procreative and neuro-sciences, as well as in communicational prostheses and self-diagnostic instruments, the philosopher Jean Francois Lyotard⁶ has conjured up the terrifying image of a system of artificial intelligence that has become “inhuman” because it is freed of our corporeal condition. Indeed, this fiction of a “cyberbody” has become part of the contemporary imagination (in comic books, video games, and the like) and is at the center of the culture of “cyberpunk.” As E. Soulier has written:

The heart of this perspective lies in the (re)construction of a new environment – cyberspace – and of a new man. The Australian Spalec, who champions the possibility of a perfect symbiosis between the human and technological spheres, is an illustration of this new perspective. Basing his ideas on a reading of Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch*, Spalec preaches the expansion of the capacities of the body, mind, and environment through technology and the idea of human body design [...] As he has said, [...] “Today our space is no longer limited to our biosphere, we are heading for

extra-terrestrial space, [...] technology sticks to our skin, it is in the process of becoming part of our body.' [...] Roy Ascott is another defender of the cyberculture [...] 'We want,' he has said, 'the totality of interface systems to be located inside our brains. We want to see the borders between the natural and artificial worlds effaced [...] What we are talking about here is the post-biological body as interface.'⁷

In what way can it then be said that this ultra-modern myth is an immemorial one as well? In brief, it is so because this new myth summons the entire genealogy of dualism. This is not to say that dualism is an exclusively Western concept: there are of course important Eastern sources of dualism as well. Indeed dualism can grow out of almost any context, if for no other reason than that the subject must present him or herself in a temporal and mortal body, that is to say separated from an initial and permanent identity. Nor do we mean to say that dualism is a mythology or a single discourse: the Platonic duality between idea and matter has as its aim to preserve the multiple, not to efface it in the One-Being; the purpose of the dualism between mind and body that grounds neo-Platonic or Manichaean Gnosticism is to prevent the One-God from being implicated in the origin of evil; with Descartes, the purpose of the separation between mind and matter is to desacralize our world in order to make a measurable space out of it, and to justify the scientific enterprise. Responding to different questions, these various dualisms generate differing and indeed contradictory meanings that can not be reduced to a single formula. However, in the Western imagination they have been superimposed on each other to create an image of a body-prison, or at least the image of a body that must be dominated and from which one must be liberated.⁸

It is in this sense that the bio-medical instrumentalization of the body is part of an ancient religious and cultural tradition in the West. The Roman world was strongly influenced by Stoicism, a doctrine that was opposed to Gnosticism. However, Gnosticism too depreciated the value of the body, reducing it to an "almost-cadaver" that consciousness, as anesthetized as possible, tried to escape. These kinds of ideas can be found in various authors who date from the beginning of the French neo-Classical Age; in the neo-Stoicism of the end of the Renaissance (in Charron, du Vair, and Montaigne); in a strain of Calvinism that emphasized the conscious subject, mature, consenting, and contractual; and in the

insensate Cartesian consciousness, the pure act of the "cogito". All of this sets up a mind-body relationship that could be called abstentionism, a cultivation of indifference, as foreign to lust as it is to superstition, to use the words of Calvin.⁹

However, this lapidary review must now give way to a more complex picture. This is because the Western tradition can not be reduced to the instrumentalization of the body: it also includes its colossal exaltation. In line with several others, Michel de Certeau has shown the ambiguity of Christianity vis-à-vis the body: simultaneously the inheritor of dualist traditions (Gnostic and Stoic), vector for the depreciation of the body and the exaltation of the ascetic ideal, it also carries the Cynic (Diogenes!) and Hebrew traditions,¹⁰ which prize the body. Finally there is the theology of "incarnation," which makes the body an icon of God, a veritable temple.¹¹

Thus, far from presuming that the Gods do not suffer (since they are not incarnated in a mortal body), early Christianity identified the body as the very center of the agony and crucifixion of its God, and the site of the resurrection: according to Paul, the resurrection is of the flesh, and of a flesh not separated from the soul; this is the way in which he interprets the words of Jesus as reported by Matthew (Mt. 10:30): "Even the hairs of your head have all been counted." This tradition of passion for the enigma of the body, this authentic mysticism about the body's singularity, can be seen throughout the history of Western art. One might even speculate on whether the pursuit of the body in all its forms – as artistic image, in photography and advertising – is not part of an ecstatic and desperate theological quest whose foundation is the question: What is the true form of the image of God if the human being is made "in his image"? Is this form a mystery or rather an unrealizable, even a forbidden, image?

This is why the traditional sacralization of the body¹² – evidence of which can be seen in the profound reticence that the idea of organ donation meets with – is paradoxically not unlike the attitude of contemporary hedonism.¹³ This would appear to be especially so when hedonism's fundamentally therapeutic orientation is kept in mind, an orientation that probably resulted from the secularization, dating back to ancient times,¹⁴ of an obsession

with Salvation. It is a matter above all of saving our bodies. This is because the body, in its entirety, is seen as the vessel of salvation. The physical body is the vessel of salvation because of its capacity to reintegrate a vast symbolic body, of a mystical or cosmic nature; but it is also a vessel of salvation in its very form, in its well-being, its actions and branches of learning; in its unconscious and transcendent powers, over which scientific knowledge has no jurisdiction.

Only this dreamed body, as both object and subject of a comprehensive therapy, can save us from the misery of the world. It is this body that the new bio-medical authorities exalt, cultivate, and shape to perfection. Bioethics has been able almost entirely to replace ethics when it comes to dealing with questions of birth, sexuality, and death because it is the least removed from the hygienic concerns that make up the only morality that these bodies and their entirely medical happiness acknowledge: these are the avatars of the same idea of a very private Salvation. In this sense, the growth of pharmaceutical laboratories, the use of "soft" drugs and exercise programs, the explosion of alternative therapies and even neo-Gnostic sects, are all derived from the same phenomenon.

The rhythm of the Western imagination is thus marked by a polarity between the instrumentalization and adoration of the body. This almost constant opposition between a "mechanistic" and "vitalistic"¹⁵ view of the body, which can be observed in the alternating images of an immemorial dualism and a more or less all-encompassing therapeutic concern, suggests the possibility of complicity between the two. It is as if the scientific knowledge of the body found its counterweight and fulfillment in what the body knows without our knowledge. The disillusionment with the world and the sacralization of the Body or of Life seem to belong to the same problematic, just as do the desire to be freed from the body and its mortal weight, and the desire to liberate the body from its shackles and limits. In this polarity between technical transgression and the natural order,¹⁶ between the euphoric appetite of a new power and the terrified superstition it provokes, we can discern the desire for immortality, the desire to reach or abide within a reality where our tragic finitude would be abolished.

Three Grounds of Ethical Resistance

This is the intellectual-imaginative context within which contemporary ethical questions are framed. For example, bioethics assumes that the genetic and cerebral are the “biological” basis for identifying the human subject. In particular, heredity is taken to be an inalienable inheritance, the kernel of identity, and one trembles to think what a new Hitler might be able to do with the genie of genetics. At the same time, the threat presented by these biopowers goes virtually unchallenged as they advance under the banner of the inalienable rights of the Individual and of the sacralization of Life. While some people are terrified by the progress of neurochemistry,¹⁷ which may soon do away with neurasthenia and a host of other psychic difficulties, each month French men and women consume more than a million bottles of sleeping pills and as many stimulants. This reliance on self-medication with “soft” drugs, in which medicine becomes the servant of our desires, is perhaps the greatest danger of all, since it presents happiness as a matter of narrowly therapeutic concern and assumes that health costs can be increased without limit.

It is clear, from the foregoing examples, that the heart of the problem lies less with the techniques themselves than in their use; and their use, in the final analysis, means the way in which they reflect the evolution of social life itself. If we fear that individual identity is threatened and may disappear as a result of genetic manipulations, then it is because we are in the midst of a vast crisis of family and individual identity for which bioethics offers no answers; if we fear the spread of euthanasia, it is because we live in a society that refuses to accept death, and that still wants to master it; if we fear the totalitarian potential of a society or army of clones at the service of a City of Masters, it is because we already live in a society in which the illegal traffic in organs has spread over the entire globe. It is these questions, these truly ethical questions, that we will now address.

In order to treat these ethical questions soberly, we must begin by calling into question the dreams of those who already see humanity as an artificial and free body, transgressing the limits of our devastated planet. What is especially disturbing about this

naive faith in these vertiginous possibilities is the rather substantial amount of avarice that is fostered and nurtured by it. However, at the same time, we must call into question the fear experienced by those for whom these dreams are but a nightmare. Neither a clone-based society nor one with widespread use of test-tube babies is around the corner. As we have seen, what is troubling about these fears is that they stir up superstitious terrors that often mask the real problems. How are we to go beyond the alternating extremes of an avarice that knows no bounds and a superstitiousness and panic that takes fright at anything and everything? This is the challenge we must face.

What makes this problem more difficult to solve is that there is a real basis to the hopes that scientific advance has aroused: the malediction of sterility has been arrested, the most grave genetic diseases can be predicted and prevented, and we are doing a better and better job at treating "mental diseases". Those who suggest that we should forgo these measures because nature alone knows what we need underestimate the tormenting toll of these diverse ailments. What we must do instead is authorize a reasonable use of these techniques while increasing our ability to abstain from their use when there is uncertainty about their effect (here I am referring in particular to the effects on future generations) or some suspicion about the motive behind a treatment (I refer here to the gigantic financial windfall that some treatments might generate).

There is also a real basis to the fears that scientific advances have aroused: for one, it is generally accepted that our moral intelligence is not equal to our technological intelligence, and that each new solution to a problem brings with it other, unforeseeable problems. The procreative and genetic sciences, for example, affect our ability to symbolize filiation. As P. Legendre has written:

The collapse of this symbolic capital, in the life and reproduction of the speaking animal, is equivalent to the collapse of an immunological barrier. The resulting loss of foundation for the subject, brought about by the disintegration of the system of images, is equivalent to a putting to death.¹⁸

This is why I will now propose, as an exploratory and much more personal measure, three principles that might be used to neutralize both this avarice and this panic.

The first of these principles regards the inalienability and non-patrimony of the human body. This idea can be expressed and advanced in various ways. For one, it can be argued that the human body is made neither in the image of Caesar nor a coin: the human body is made in the image of God and belongs only to God. In this sense the body is radically unavailable for our exchanges. It can also be argued that the human body, as the origin and source of all forms of appropriation, is itself an inextinguishable and inalienable property of the subject.¹⁹ The ethical implication is the same here, and bears on a variety of domains. What we are talking about in this case is not only protecting the donation of sperm, oocytes, and embryos from the logic of the marketplace, but also products synthesized in the lab from these biological materials. Another concern is the leasing out of the female uterus, both because of the potential for emotional distress on all sides and because of the potential for exploitation of poor women. Renewable products of the human body should not be the object of profit, even with the agreement of the donor (the same should go for proteins produced by recombinant genetics). The case is even stronger for non-renewable organs.

These issues constitute one of the most crucial areas of ethical concern, in comparison with which the debate over homologous or heterologous *in vitro* fertilization seems akin to the debate over the sex of angels. This principle of non-availability is morally important, especially as we are living in a period that believes too strongly in a person's complete right to do with one's self as he or she wills; and it is even more important when we bear in mind the situation of that stratum of the world's population whose only means of survival is to place itself at the service of the very rich. This respect for human dignity becomes a radical proposition in a world where there is massive traffic in the products and organs of the body, with all the concomitant violence, deception, and horror that is associated with this trade. When considering these questions we must keep in mind the potential consequences for the most disadvantaged populations, and the decision as to what advantages to accord to those who will benefit from our decisions should be made in relation to those who will suffer most from them. International law must therefore be brought rapidly into

line with these developments, especially if the abandonments of national sovereignty we currently see taking place result in simple deregulation, without the opportunity for the development of a true policy.

The second principle addresses questions of procreation (from artificial insemination to *in vitro* fertilization), judicial responsibility and jurisdiction, the identity of children to be born, the use of diagnostic tools that might lead to a decision to abort a pregnancy, the way in which “supernumerary” embryos are treated, etc. In all such cases the question must be addressed within a family and affective context, not one reduced to isolated technical questions nor deemed to be an aspect of “natural realities” whose meaning goes without saying.²⁰ If, for example, we are to resist the excessive biologization of identity and filiation we must make it a principle to proscribe the “denial of paternity” by a conjoint who, after having made a solemn vow to do so, refuses to acknowledge a child born from the sperm of a third person.

The evolution of customs in this area must be understood as developing against the grain: in an ultra-mobile society, where the old structures of kinship have been atomized by the multiplication of single-parent families or other variously decomposed and recomposed structures, genetic filiation has become a form of secure identity. Moreover, all the social trends within society only strengthen this development: for instance, the very persons who deny the existence of any stable national or ethnic identity continue to dream of a “biological” melting-pot; and those who dream of a so-called “natural” morality or law to underpin the traditional family, do so by biologizing this family and exclude from it any grouping based on artificial insemination or *in vitro* fertilization from a heterologue. All in all, everything tends to reinforce this “biologization,” this sacralization of Life understood as a reality simultaneously biological and divine, without loss or rupture.

However, to be a parent means accepting that any birth is also in a sense an adoption: the child is not only someone who will prolong my personal identity or that of our identity as a couple; the child is also an other, someone to welcome; nothing can replace simple family affection. The child’s identity is forged as he or she tells his or her story, not through some kind of genetic pass-

port: no biological inheritance can take the place of the felt word and the family history into which the child is welcomed and invited; and no technological skill can suppress it. The truth we owe to our children in regard to their origin is not merely genetic: it is a story that makes available to them a genealogy they will reconstitute in the course of their own lived history.²¹

The third principle asserts that the definition of the human (what it is or what it should be) is always open to discussion. This third principle takes on special importance in several domains, particularly in the field of eugenics. It should first be pointed out that the claim to know what defines the human element, and even more so what constitutes its best or ideal state, is a fundamental feature of totalitarian societies: indeed it is at the heart of totalitarianism. One need only think of Nazism, with its systematic use of eugenics not only in order to control various populations but as a form of social and political legitimacy. The grotesque paradox of eugenics is that its first step is to propose a definition of human being, health, or dignity that excludes a part of the general human population from its very definition of the human population. This excluded segment is then denied or "sacrificed" to the other. This type of argumentation is used more often than is generally realized, especially when an attempt is made to define human being, health or dignity.

The paradox of eugenics becomes even more absurd when its proponents propose a particular selection that will produce a better or more perfect humanity: since this selection is made by humans who are themselves less good, limited, or fallible, how can they possibly know what is better than themselves?²² Moreover, as their judgement of good and bad is based on their own limitations, might they not very well propose an erroneous selection? This is why eugenics is not only dangerous but ridiculous and absurd. However, we need not limit ourselves in this discussion solely to fascist eugenics: in the Roman Catholic way of conceiving of "natural law" and "natural morality" we can observe a very human, historical – and of course debatable – way of viewing things presented as an atemporal ideal. In our democracies too there is a marked tendency to think that our idea of humanity is the best possible one. We must therefore be willing to critique the

eugenic way of thinking not only in its most extreme forms but in our everyday discourse. This question concerning the defining feature of the human being comes up again in regard to the embryo when we try to determine, or claim to know, at what moment the status of human being is reached. While on the one hand we are dealing, from the moment of conception, with a living and human being who must be respected, it can be said on the other hand that until the moment of birth we are not dealing with an actual person. The discourse that we would like to see remain open in this regard is not only a metaphysical debate over what constitutes human being; it is an inner dialogue that should impact the individual each time that this kind of decision must be made.²³ We cannot separate the embryo from our way of treating it, thinking and dreaming about it, and of how we prepare for its arrival and make a place for it. As the experience of living beings continuously shows, not all lives are equally possible, not all are compatible, not all the promises of life can be kept, and we continually find ourselves in this tragic condition whether we wish it or not.

The difficulty of defining the exact status of the embryo is sometimes expressed by pointing to the difficulty we have in distinguishing the egg from the embryo, and the embryo from the fetus: they are all part of a continuous process of individuation that begins with insemination and ends only in death. This is of course true, yet life continually squanders itself as well. Moreover, birth remains a radical discontinuity, in spite of the techniques that tend to blur this fact. For example, medical imaging now allows parents early on to have a picture of their child that includes its sex and therefore a first name; in the past, the impossibility of having an image, until birth, of a being who was nevertheless so close at hand, who was so known and yet so totally unknown, was in a sense not unlike the prohibition against creating an image of God in monotheistic religions. Thanks to this limitation, which made it impossible to have a too early identification of this being, parents had time to realize that they did not completely "know" this child and to understand that he or she was not merely the culmination of their plan but was also something else, individual and apart. It is this restraint and this discontinuity that we must somehow rediscover.

The Body as Metaphor of the Subject

By way of conclusion we will take up, from a slightly different angle, a question first raised at the beginning of this paper in hopes of now being able to resolve it. To do so we will abandon the emphasis on ethical affirmation while still preserving the main thrust of our inquiry into the image of the body. Our question is: How can we both not reduce the human subject to a form of consciousness too exterior to its instrumentalized body, and how are we not to reduce it to a body considered biologically sacred and immutable?

Consciousness, even when informed, consenting, articulate, and decisive, can not alone bear the entire weight of the ethical subject. Yet Protestant – and, more broadly, all “modern” – anthropology, which in a sense is a legacy of the (Cartesian) dualism between body and mind, the genetic and the relational, the “bios” and the “logos,” can be charged with doing precisely that. Indeed this question is raised throughout the bio-medical field whenever we talk about the need for responsible and fully informed consent from the subject or patient. For in such cases we are dealing with a right that concerns the overall dignity and integrity of the human person. However, we must not isolate this right from other rights and responsibilities, and we must above all not forget that in many of the contexts in which it must be applied we are confronted with the “irresponsibility” of the subject: sometimes it is a patient who is incapable of integrating all the parameters of a complex choice; sometimes it is a situation where there is not enough time to set forth all the choices or it is just not “the right moment”; in other cases we are talking about an embryo, an infant, or someone who is dying (in this last case one must have recourse to some form of anterior or ulterior consent, provided in the latter case by the family or someone close to the patient). Moreover, with the growth of the sciences, the heart of the problem often lies in the concomitant growth of consciousness itself, the human anguish of having to make a choice at every turn. In these limiting situations of “irresponsibility” the doctor or loved ones have to step forward. However, the word that can inform this consent is also one that must often respect the irreducible ignorance of knowledge itself: because in the face of death, as in the face of certain kinds of suffering, there is no form of knowledge that holds.

Another question must now be asked: Can not the principle of consent be manipulated in the very name of the “inalienable rights of the individual,” that is of the individual human being considered as the subject of universal law? Certainly, it is absolutely necessary to anchor bioethics in the principle of human rights; yet one can question whether we have not gone too far, overvaluing the individual in the image of *homo sapiens*, the individual who is responsible and master of him or herself. I write these lines with a profound hesitancy and also as a self-criticism of Protestant morality, which has so strongly emphasized individual responsibility. The question is whether this insistence on individual responsibility does not lead to a repudiation of all irresponsibility, to a denial of dignity where consciousness is lacking, that is, where the subject is simply a body, a dumb and brute body.

In short, these moralities based on discussion and conscious consent can be faulted for assuming that intersubjectivity alone is a sufficient foundation for subjectivity. As if subjectivity were possible without corporeality. This assumption is equivalent to postulating an intersubjectivity without subjectivity or perspective, without the concrete point of view on the world guaranteed by the spatial and temporal finitude of the body: one body, like any other thing, is as physically unsubstitutable as another; a body has memory, habitat and territory; like any other living being it has expectations; a body that is itself molded and transfigured by words and speech, by culture and lifestyle, the stuff of society. It is through this corporeality that the subject gradually discovers itself, and discovers for itself that he or she does not have the transparency of pure consciousness but rather bears the opacity, the natural weight, the immemorial wounds and individual changes of a body.

However, with this discovery it is no longer possible to proclaim the human body – in its “immutable” biology, as “nature” produced it or God intended it – as a universal and sufficient moral norm.²⁴ This is a criticism that can be leveled at a certain trend in anthropology, one that finds the Catholic and “scientific” approach in paradoxical agreement. In truth the body is only the subject because it has been named, and summoned to speech and image; and that it reveals itself as alternatively speaking, imagin-

ing, and projecting potential patterns, all of which are so many forms of self-interpretation. The biological body alone does not possess this density of individuality which is characteristic of a subject whose corporeality allows it to speak and act, and to singularize itself in its works. The search for a body that is "in shape" is analogous to the ideal of a law or natural "norm" that appears in a society dominated by assembly-line production, the mercantile standardization of objects, and the televised mimeticism of the figures of desire.

The body is only a subject because we have inherited it as part of the long history of the human person, our cultures and customs, and of one's own personal genealogy that connects individual memory to an immemorial past. Machines do not have this immemorial past. The body is also a subject only because we make and remake it, constantly recreating the body in our works, our images, our words and acts. Our bodies are subjective because they are poetic through and through. To the extent that any human body is a poetic body, a metaphorical body, we can understand how this body deviates from the biological form, function, and code we try to force on it.

These last reflections are what distinguishes our conception of the body from that sacralizing notion which posits a body that is "by nature," from the start, endowed with a fixed stock of norms, possibilities, and cognitive and moral abilities, which can be realized to a greater or lesser degree. The body is in fact only a subject to the extent that it can bear witness to its ability to incorporate the figures, words, and acts that it projects and meets. Through this work of incorporation the subject increases its schematism and native abilities through a schematism that is essentially poetic;²⁵ it increases its possibilities and singularities. What would our bodies be if speech could not be made part of them? It is in this sense that the body is always an "artificial" body, a cultural body. The entire history of customs and ideas testifies to this human ability to assimilate inventions and discoveries (from fire and "primitive" drawings to the piano and telecommunications) and to recreate them inside ourselves. This ability also gives us the minimum amount of necessary confidence, without which we could not even begin to judge or criticize the new powers we have acquired.

Notes

1. See the noteworthy remarks on this subject in A. Badiou's *L'Éthique, essai sur la conscience du mal*, Paris, 1993.
2. P. Legendre, *Dieu au miroir. Etude sur l'institution des images*, Paris, 1994, pp. 13ff., 261ff.
3. See M. Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. I, Paris, 1984, p. 185.
4. I may be forgiven for this quick generalization which one could back up by reference to the history of science museums (in Paris: the Jardin des Plantes, the Palais de la Découverte, and the Cité des Sciences) or to medical handbooks.
5. D. Cerqui, "L'homme mis en pièces," in: *Cahiers médico-sociaux*, No. 39/1 (1995), pp. 33-37.
6. *L'Inhumain*, Paris, 1988, pp. 20, 64, 74-76.
7. In: *Chroniques de l'Hypermonde*, No. 20 (June 1995).
8. In a study on H. Jonas in which he establishes the links between Jonas's three great works (*Gnostic Religion, The Phenomenon of Life, The Imperative of Responsibility*), P. Ricoeur (*Lectures 2*, Paris, 1992, pp. 306ff.) insists upon this relationship between the gnosis of antiquity and scientific instrumentalization of our own time.
9. Writing in *Cahiers médico-sociaux* (No. 39/1 [1995], p. 7), a Calvinist author, moral philosopher D. Müller, has thus quite sensibly raised the objection that the juridical tendency to turn the body into a legal subject by overpersonalizing the subject matter, paradoxically runs the risk of instrumentalizing humans.
10. We must always resist the tendency to simplify the "genealogy" of cultures and mentalities by pointing out that the dualism is of purely Greek origin and that these kinds of categories were alien to the Hebraic world. All cultures originally are "blended."
11. When A. Rimbaud wrote that "les corps seront jugés," he fitted neatly into this tradition.
12. Particularly perhaps in Catholic culture. Protestant culture eulogizes the body more as a creature, as something God is to be thanked for that it exists and that it exists "to please" God. Pleasure in this sense is not subject to the penal or commercial logic of a payment for a sin or an effort. It is the experience of something that is given for nothing, something quietly absurd like divine grace. This eulogizing does not imply submission to "natural" suffering, but on the contrary is meant to reduce it.
13. Our "hedonism" does not amount to much if compared with that of Antiquity which sought pleasure in the resting or the movement of the senses – in the words of Aristip, "a sweet movement accompanied by sensation." We seek it, it seems to me, in the consolation and excitement of our imagination.
14. Antiquity ended in an explosion of therapeutic concerns: the quest for immortality in the gnosés, the search for "pleasures" and the concerns about the body that would soon be codified in the new moral norms of Stoicism, medicine as an outgrowth of skeptical philosophies (Timon, Aenesimedes of Alexandria, Menodotus of Nicomede, Sextus Empiricus, Favorinus of Arles were all to become physicians.)
15. As it happens, all advances in the sciences and all ages of technological representations of the world and of life were paralleled by the simultaneous devel-

- opment of a certain magic, vitalist or finalist romanticism. See, e.g., H. Bergson's *L'Evolution créatrice*.
16. R. Callois, *L'Homme et le Sacré*, Paris, 1963.
 17. Or one fantasized about the transplantation of the brain into another body, as if the brain were the "subject" and its individuality were not related to a body in which it is embedded.
 18. P. Legendre (note 2), p. 16.
 19. This is the perspective adopted by the legal scholar J.-P. Baud in *Cahiers médico-sociaux* (No. 39/1 [1995], pp. 62f.) who invoked Locke to criticize the entire trade in human organs and to see this ownership as a defense of the weak.
 20. This is one of the main reasons why it is necessary to impose very strict time limitations on the freezing of embryos.
 21. P. Ricoeur (*Temps et Récit*, vol. 3, Paris, 1985, pp. 150ff., 160ff.) has shown that human history is a time of narrative and that in this narration that is transmitted and continued from generation to generation the genealogical discourse serves to establish a bridge between life time and cosmic time, to "cosmologize" life time and to humanize cosmic time and to see to it that, through the narration and between individual memory and historical time, the memories of the generations overlap.
 22. All interventions with the embryo or fetus that clearly have a medical purpose move, if they are to be accepted, in this zone of uncertainty as far as gene therapies during the seventh month are concerned: they run the risk of causing an irreversible damage to the genotype, and without anyone knowing the consequences; and thus, as far as these subjects are concerned, this would be a true deliverance.
 23. Contraception, contragestion, and abortion are not of equal seriousness, even if Catholic moral teaching condemns them in the same breath.
 24. I do not agree with the man who replied to his daughter when she asked him whether she could go to have her ears pierced that he had procreated his daughters with all the holes they need.
 25. See for this interplay, P. Ricoeur, *La Métaphore vive*, Paris, 1975, p. 253; idem, *Temps et Récit*, vol. 1, Paris, 1983, pp. 106, 108.