

Nietzsche on Embodiment: A Proto-Somaesthetics?¹

Catherine F. Botha, Department of Philosophy, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

cbotha@uj.ac.za

Abstract: This chapter considers Richard Shusterman's claim in his *The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy*² that Friedrich Nietzsche's work constitutes a mere inversion of the mind-body hierarchy, by providing an interpretation of selections from the Nietzschean corpus. The aim of the chapter is to show that Nietzsche's position on the self is able to avoid falling into the "logic of reversal" that Shusterman diagnoses in his thinking. The chapter's arguments then provide support for the conclusion that Nietzsche's writings on the singing, dancing body could be seen as an example of a (proto-) phenomenology, and indeed, a (proto-) somaesthetics.

Keywords: Nietzsche, Shusterman, Merleau-Ponty, mind-body problem, phenomenology, somaesthetics

In his essay, "The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy",³ Richard Shusterman claims that Friedrich Nietzsche's "hyperbolic somaticism"⁴ not only serves to reinforce the "old rigid dualism" of mind and body, but also that Nietzsche's work constitutes a mere inversion of the mind-body hierarchy that

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference "Aesthetic Experience and Somaesthetics" held in Budapest in 2014. I extend my thanks to the conference participants, as well as the anonymous reviewers of the paper, for their insightful comments and suggestions.

² Richard Shusterman, "The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, Eds. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 151-180.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 155.

seems like “wishful thinking”.⁵ Shusterman reads Nietzsche’s thinking on the self in this way to allow him to contrast it with his more appreciative reading of the work of French phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty. For Shusterman, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological approach to arguing for the body’s philosophical centrality is more “shrewdly cautious” than that of Nietzsche.⁶

The current chapter proposes to critically consider Shusterman’s claims by providing an interpretation of selections from the Nietzschean corpus. The aim of the chapter is to show that Nietzsche’s position on the self is able to avoid falling into the “logic of reversal” that Shusterman diagnoses in his thinking in order to posit, in a provisional manner, that Nietzsche’s writings on the singing, dancing body can be seen as an example of a (proto-) phenomenology, as well as a (proto-) somaesthetics, at work.

That “old, rigid dualism”: Mind and Body

As is well known, modern Western philosophy of mind⁷ was initiated with the work of the seventeenth century French philosopher, René Descartes. Descartes argued that human beings consist of two different substances – a material, mechanical body and an immaterial mind. The problem with Descartes’ substance dualism, of course, was to explain how something non-physical (the mind) could have a causal effect on something physical – a problem that remains an unresolved puzzle even today.⁸

There have been various efforts to overcome this puzzle, including the two familiar options that eliminate one side of the dualism: eliminative materialist theorists like Patricia Smith Churchland argue on the one hand, for example, that there are no minds or mental properties,⁹ whilst, on the

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. This should not be taken to imply that Shusterman’s reading of Nietzsche is wholly negative. In his *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art.*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), for example, Shusterman provides a number of sympathetic references to Nietzsche’s thinking. Shusterman specifically identifies the rejection of the idea of a “foundational, mind-independent and permanently fixed reality” as a significant point of convergence between the pragmatist approach and that of Nietzsche (Ibid., 116), and also draws upon Nietzsche’s conception of style in his extended discussion thereof (Ibid., 208-16).

⁷ It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a full discussion of the history of dualism in the philosophy of mind. Since Cartesian substance dualism provides the classic expression of the mind-body problem, it is this position I briefly outline.

⁸ Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998).

⁹ Patricia Smith Churchland, *Brain-Wise: Studies in Neurophilosophy*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

other hand, idealists such as John Foster have posited that it is material bodies and properties that do not exist.¹⁰ These two options have, however, met with much resistance. Colin McGinn, for example, argues that it may be that the human mind is constituted in a way that necessitates our inability to understand ourselves,¹¹ and so, in the words of Thomas Nagel, that the mind-body problem will remain “intractable.”¹²

The “rigid, old dualism”¹³ of Cartesianism has also been vigorously criticised by theorists in the phenomenological tradition, including Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Heidegger, for example, contrasts his description of the “way of being” of human being with that of Descartes,¹⁴ rejecting Descartes’ portrayal of human being as a mind located in a material body, and as a subject standing apart from objects that can be known in the world. Heidegger subverts these Cartesian oppositions, arguing that “... subject and object are not the same as Dasein and the world”¹⁵ since “...in grasping something, Da-sein does not first go outside of the inner sphere in which it is initially encapsulated, but rather, in its primary kind of being, it is always already ‘outside’ together with some being encountered in the world already discovered.”¹⁶ In addition, as Shusterman explains, Merleau-Ponty similarly rejects the Cartesian split between mind and body, arguing instead that the body *is* the “silent cogito” – the “...consciousness that conditions our language.”¹⁷ For Merleau-Ponty, the body takes a determinative place in our human experience, and so Shusterman can rightly, I think, call Merleau-Ponty “...something like the patron saint of the body.”¹⁸

¹⁰ John Foster, *The Case for Idealism*, (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).

¹¹ Colin McGinn, “Can we solve the Mind-Body Problem?,” *Mind* 98, no 391 (1989): 349-366.

¹² Thomas Nagel, “What is it like to be a bat?,” *Philosophical Review*, 83 (1974): 453-450.

¹³ Shusterman, “The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy,” 155.

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 17th edition, (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993), 89; translation from Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy. Trans. Joan Stambaugh, (New York: SUNY, 1996), 83.

¹⁵ Heidegger, “Sein und Zeit,” 60; Heidegger, “Being and Time,” 56.

¹⁶ Heidegger, “Sein und Zeit,” 62; Heidegger, “Being and Time,” 58.

¹⁷ Shusterman, “The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy,” 151.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

A precedent for Merleau-Ponty's rejection of the dualism of Cartesianism, and celebration of the body can in my view, however, be found in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche. As was previously mentioned, my aim in this paper is to show that Nietzsche's view of the self does not, as Shusterman¹⁹ claims, reinforce dualism by constituting a mere inversion of the mind-body hierarchy, and it is to this task I now turn.

Nietzsche's view of the "self": Hyperbolic Somaticism?

For Shusterman, Nietzsche's work constitutes a mere *inversion* of the "conventional valuations of mind and body" and not an overcoming thereof.²⁰ This is because he posits that Nietzsche's position is such that we firstly "...can know our bodies better than our minds;" secondly, "...that the body can be more powerful than the mind;" and thirdly, that "...toughening the body can make the mind stronger."²¹ Most crucially, however, it is because Nietzsche "...insisted that the mind is essentially the instrument of the body"²² that Nietzsche's thinking falls into a mere "logic of reversal" in Shusterman's²³ view. Although Shusterman does not provide specific examples of where Nietzsche takes up the positions mentioned above, there are certainly a number of claims in Nietzsche's terse and enigmatic writings that could lend support to such a conclusion. The question is, however, whether such claims, especially when read in the light of Nietzsche's other pronouncements on the body, can rightfully be said to constitute a mere reversal of the priority granted to the *cogito* inaugurated by Descartes.

It is my contention that if we look closely at Nietzsche's claims about the body, such a conclusion is mistaken. Coming to such a conclusion is perhaps understandable because, in his attempts to expose the erroneous elevation of the intellect over the (silent, limping) body that he diagnoses in the history

¹⁹ Shusterman, "The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy," 155.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 154.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

of philosophy, there are a number of places where Nietzsche does seem to elevate his (singing, dancing) body over the intellect.²⁴ He claims, for example, that it is essential “...to start from the body and employ it as guide. It is the much richer phenomenon.”²⁵ In addition, for Nietzsche, “[b]elief in the body is more fundamental than belief in the soul: the latter arose from unscientific reflection on the body”.²⁶ Claims that elevate the body over the intellect are not limited to the unpublished notes. In *Der fröhliche Wissenschaft*, for example, Nietzsche contends that “[c]onsciousness is the last and latest development of the organic and hence also what is most unfurnished and unstrong”.²⁷ And the body that Nietzsche describes is oftentimes a singing and dancing body – a body of lightness and playfulness that stands in contradistinction to the descriptions of the silent, sluggish body that he finds in traditional philosophical approaches that prioritise the mind.²⁸

In Nietzsche’s reading of traditional philosophical approaches, the body is relegated to the realm of the silent and the sluggish – the proverbial (and Platonic) prison in which the playful, vibrant, creative and active mind resides. Nietzsche elevates playfulness to one of his foremost virtues, a concept closely linked to his advocacy of style.²⁹ There are, I think, two important aspects of his understanding

²⁴ It must be noted that a number of theorists have criticized Nietzsche’s valorisation of the body from a feminist point of view, something that I cannot address in any detail within the bounds of the current paper. Kelly Oliver, in her *Womanizing Nietzsche: Philosophy’s Relation to the Feminine*, (New York: Routledge, 1995) and Elizabeth Grosz, in her *Space, Time and Perversion*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), provide illuminating discussions.

²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, Ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999), Volume 11: 635. Translation from Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufman and R.J. Hollingdale, (New York: Vintage, 1968), (note 532), 289.

²⁶ Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 12: 112; Nietzsche, “The Will to Power,” (note 491), 271.

²⁷ Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 3: 382; Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage, 1974), 84.

²⁸ Space does not permit me to discuss this in full detail. See my “Dance and/as Art: Considering Nietzsche and Badiou,” in *Thinking through Dance: Philosophy of Dance Performance and Practices*. Eds. Jenny Bunker, Anna Pakes, and Bonnie Rowell, (London: Dance Books, 2013) for a more extended discussion.

²⁹ I cannot here develop a full exposition of Nietzsche’s conception of style. In brief, however, his conception is developed in the context of his view that most human beings consider our affects to be evil and so aim to eliminate them. However, Nietzsche claims that there are rare human beings in whom our many contrary drives and affects are organized into a rich and powerful unity (Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 5: 367-372; Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. Carol Diethe. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 89-92). It is such human beings who “give style” to their characters. (Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 3: 530-531; Nietzsche, “The Gay Science,” 232-233). As was previously mentioned, it is notable that in his *Performing*

of playfulness that require noting. Firstly, playfulness, for Nietzsche, is not to be understood as a self-indulgent hedonism. Rather it is to be understood as the rich, cheerful, and open enthusiasm of a child. He depicts the exuberant, playful child as the culmination of “The Three Metamorphoses” in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.³⁰ There, Zarathustra tells a story about the spirit³¹ of human being, claiming that it has morphed from an unspecified beginning into a camel, then into a lion, and proposes that in the future, perhaps it can be transformed into a child. What do these metaphorical images conjured by Zarathustra represent?

As a beast of burden, the camel metaphorically carries the burden of traditional morality – the traditional Platonic and Judeo-Christian values. In Nietzsche’s view, the camel, overladen with the heavy weight of traditional morality, sees no need to create new values. Yet, eventually, as Nietzsche’s Zarathustra relates, the camel enters its “loneliest desert,” where the spirit of man vanquishes the “last gods”.³² This is because a second metamorphosis takes place - the camel is transformed into a lion. The lion’s “I will” stands in opposition to the “Thou shalt” of the dragon battled by the lion – a dragon with scales that glitter with the “values of a thousand years”.³³ The lion is needed to say a “sacred no” to duty and “...create itself freedom for new creation”.³⁴ The implication is that to create new values, one must first create freedom for oneself to create values and this requires the overthrow of traditional morality. As a destroyer of values, the lion is able to create the conditions necessary for

Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art., (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), for example, Shusterman draws upon the Nietzschean conception of style in the development of his own conception of the body.

³⁰ Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 4: 29-31; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy), Ed. Robert Pippin, Trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16-19.

³¹ I reiterate this point later in the paper, but it should be noted here already that Nietzsche’s use of the word “spirit” should not, I think, be misinterpreted as implying that a human being is a duality of body and spirit. I concur with Herman W. Siemens and Vasti Roodt, who argue in *Nietzsche, Power and Politics: Rethinking Nietzsche’s Legacy for Political Thought*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 746-7, that the word should rather be understood in the sense intended by the fifth century Attic Greek use of the word *psyche*.

³² Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 4: 30; Nietzsche, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” 16.

³³ *Ibid.*, 30, *Ibid.*, 17 (translation modified).

³⁴ *Ibid.* (translation modified).

the creation of new values, but the lion cannot, however, create values itself. It is, as Zarathustra admits, incapable of saying a “sacred yes”.³⁵ As such, the lion is reflective of Nietzsche’s own task of sounding out the idols of tradition with his hammer and showing them for what they are - simply hollow.

As a metaphorical lion, it is Nietzsche’s task to bring nihilism to its completion by exposing its origins in the highest values of European culture, and so doing, make possible a new “party of life.” As he says:

Werfen wir einen Blick ein Jahrhundert voraus, setzen wir den Fall, dass mein Attentat auf zwei Jahrtausende Widernatur und Menschenschändung gelingt. Jene neue Partei des Lebens, welche die grösste aller Aufgaben, die Höherzüchtung der Menschheit in die Hände nimmt, eingerechnet die schonungslose Vernichtung alles Entartenden und Parasitischen, wird jenes Zuviel von Leben auf Erden wieder möglich machen, aus dem auch der dionysische Zustand wieder erwachsen muss. Ich verspreche ein tragisches Zeitalter [...]

Let us look ahead a century; let us suppose that my attempt to assassinate two millennia of anti-nature and desecration of human being were to succeed. That new party of life which would tackle the greatest of all tasks, the attempt to raise humankind higher, including the relentless destruction of everything that was degenerating and parasitical, would again make possible that excess of life on earth from which the Dionysian state, too, would have to awaken again. I promise a tragic age.³⁶

The work of Nietzsche as lion – his attempt to expose and then “...assassinate two millennia of anti-nature and the desecration of human being” may lead to a different state that is achieved once everything that is “degenerating and parasitical” has been destroyed - complete nihilism. Complete nihilism is for Nietzsche “...the necessary consequence of the ideals entertained hitherto”.³⁷ When all traditional values are destroyed, and a state of complete nihilism is reached, nihilism, Nietzsche’s enduring concern, can then be left behind because room has been made for the positing of new

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 6: 313; translation from Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, Ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 110 (translation modified).

³⁷ “In wiefern der vollkommene Nihilismus die nothwendige Folge der bisherigen Ideale ist.” Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 12: 476; Nietzsche, “The Will to Power,” (note 28), 19.

values. As such, the lion is preparatory for a third metamorphosis – into the child. The child represents for Nietzsche “...innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred ‘yes’.”³⁸

Yet even if we agree that playfulness, for Nietzsche, is not to be understood as a self-indulgent hedonism, but rather the cheerful and open enthusiasm of a child, at this point it remains unclear as to whether this description is not still a mere inversion of dualism, especially given the above-mentioned descriptions of the body. This then is the second point that emerges from his understanding of playfulness: in my view, if we consider these statements in the context of Nietzsche’s other writings on the body, it becomes clear that such a mere inversion is not what Nietzsche intends. Although Nietzsche valorises the body, and proclaims his desire to “translate man back into nature”,³⁹ Nietzsche is not positing the body as a “ground” for the mind. As Blondel explains, the Nietzsche of *Morgenröte*, for example, uses the notion of “underworld” as metaphor for the body, and so doing, rejects the conclusion that he sees the body as a hidden “ground” for the mind.⁴⁰ Rather, the body is a “...philological labyrinth of plurality”.⁴¹ How does Nietzsche understand the body as plurality? John Richardson’s view is instructive in this regard:

... Nietzsche rejects both sides of the Cartesian duality: there’s no ‘merely material’ body, any more than there’s an incorporeal mind. If he absorbs mind into body, it is into a body with very different properties than Descartes’ matter. Indeed Nietzsche argues that Cartesian extension is something we interpret into the world: it’s not ‘real’, much less essential. Instead he thinks of body as essentially a capacity (a *dynamis*), or rather as a system of capacities. Moreover he crucially thinks of all these capacities as intentional, in the sense that they mean and aim at things. So body, the one kind of substance there is, has as its most important properties not

³⁸ “Unschuld ist das Kind und vergessen, ein Neubeginnen, ein Spiel, ein aus sich rollendes Rad, eine erste Bewegung, ein heiliges Ja-sagen.” Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 4: 31; Nietzsche, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” 17.

³⁹ Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 5: 19; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Vintage, 1966), 161.

⁴⁰ Eric Blondel, *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture*, Trans. Seán Hand. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991), 205.

⁴¹ Ibid.

extension (or weight or shape) but intendings (willings) that Descartes would have restricted to mind.⁴²

Most crucially, Nietzsche's use of the word "spirit" in his writings should not, I think, be misinterpreted as implying that a human being is a duality of body and spirit. Rather, the word should be understood here in the sense intended by the fifth century Attic Greek use of the word *psyche*.⁴³ In addition, as has been pointed out by a number of theorists including André van der Braak, it is important to remember that the English word "body" does not correspond to the two words that Nietzsche uses: *Leib* and *Körper*.⁴⁴ As Van der Braak explains, the German *Körper* is close to the English "body", but there is no English equivalent for *Leib*.⁴⁵ Further, as Van der Braak points out, when Nietzsche uses the word *Körper*, he is usually referring to what he calls the "false opposition" between mind and body that he explicitly rejects, while his use of the word *Leib* is reserved for his characterisation of the "whole human being."⁴⁶

In my reading, Nietzsche characterises the human being *as* a body, with that body conceived of as being a multiplicity of changing desires, instincts and sensations. His conception of the human being - as a body, and as a multiplicity - is expressed in a number of instances. In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, for example, Nietzsche writes: "Our body is but a social structure composed of many souls,"⁴⁷ and again, in an unpublished note, he asserts that "...the ego is a plurality of person-like forces [...] The subject leaps around."⁴⁸ In 1885, he makes his hypothesis explicit:

⁴² John Richardson, "Nietzsche's Value Monism: Saying Yes to Everything" (Unpublished conference paper, 2009), 1.

⁴³ Siemens and Roodt, "Nietzsche, Power and Politics," 746-47.

⁴⁴ André van der Braak, *Nietzsche and Zen: Self-Overcoming Without a Self*, (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011), 60

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Nietzsche, "Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe," Volume 5: 33; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Vintage, 1966), 26.

⁴⁸ Nietzsche, "Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe," Volume 9: 211-212.

Die Annahme des Einen Subjekts ist vielleicht nicht notwendig; vielleicht ist es ebensogut erlaubt, eine Vielheit von Subjekten anzunehmen, deren Zusammenspiel und Kampf unserem Denken und überhaupt unserem Bewußtsein zu Grunde liegt? [...]

Meine Hypothesen: das Subjekt als Vielheit

The assumption of one single subject is perhaps unnecessary; perhaps it is just as permissible to assume a multiplicity of subjects, whose interaction and struggle is the basis of our thought and consciousness in general? [...]

My hypothesis: The subject as multiplicity.⁴⁹

This view of the human being is in contradistinction to “the philosophers”’ misunderstanding of human being as “...an aeterna veritas, as a thing that remains constant in the midst of all turbulence, as a sure standard of things”.⁵⁰ For Nietzsche, our lives consist of our physical sensations, our instincts, needs and emotions. There is no “essential self,” no independent rational mind or soul that can be freed from our bodily existence. We are simply a plurality of moods and instincts held together by a will.⁵¹ So, Nietzsche is attacking the conception of the self as a duality of mind and body, but also attacking the ‘I’ – the idea of a single, unified subject, that claims a collection of representations or bodily actions as ‘mine’.

The most eloquent expression of Nietzsche’s view is, I think, to be found in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, in one of Zarathustra’s discourses named “Of the Despisers of the Body.” In this discourse, Zarathustra addresses those whom he names the despisers of the body, explaining that, contrary to those who take on a “childish” perspective of distinguishing between body and soul, the enlightened human being is one who says: “I am body entirely, and nothing else; and soul is only a word for something about the body”.⁵² As such, it is already clear that Nietzsche, through the voice of Zarathustra, rejects the substance dualism of Cartesianism in its entirety. The word “soul” (or mind, or consciousness, to

⁴⁹ Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 11: 650; Nietzsche, “The Will to Power,” (note 490), 270-1.

⁵⁰ Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 2: 24; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. Trans. Richard J. Hollingdale. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 12.

⁵¹ Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 11: 638-639.

⁵² “Leib bin ich ganz und gar, und Nichts ausserdem; und Seele ist nu rein Wort für ein Etwas am Leibe.” Nietzsche, “Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe,” Volume 4: 39; Nietzsche, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” 23 (translation modified).

use more contemporary terminology) is, for Nietzsche merely a word we use to describe our bodies, and nothing more. Reading this line in isolation may lead one to conclude that Nietzsche is propounding a simple reductionism. Yet, Nietzsche continues through the voice of Zarathustra to explain that, for him, "...the body is a great sagacity, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, a flock and a shepherd".⁵³ So it is the playful body that for Nietzsche constitutes our intelligence, and, as such, our reason is not something separate from that body. The intelligent body, as Nietzsche remarks, has in fact "...created spirit for itself..."⁵⁴ As a creation, the idea of spirit or soul may have been useful in certain periods of our human history, but for Nietzsche, it must be acknowledged for what it is – a creation, a word, and nothing more. However, just as Nietzsche does not reserve an elevated position for spiritual explanations, he denies the same for mechanistic explanations:

Neither of the two explanations of organic life has yet succeeded: neither the one that proceeds from mechanics *nor the one* that proceeds from the spirit. I stress *this last point*. The split is more superficial than we think. The organism is governed in such a way that the mechanical world, *as well as* the spiritual world, can provide only a symbolical explanation.⁵⁵

This contention is repeated in a number of places, for example when Nietzsche says that we have "...incorporated opinions about certain causes and effects, about mechanism, about our 'I' and so on. It's all false however."⁵⁶ This is because, for Nietzsche, we can never access absolute truth about a matter:

[D]ecken sich die Bezeichnungen und die Dinge? Ist die Sprache der adequate Ausdruck aller Realitäten? Nur durch Vergesslichkeit kann der Mensch je dazu kommen zu wähnen: er besitze eine Wahrheit in dem bezeichneten Grade

[D]o designations and things coincide? Is language the adequate expression of all realities? Only through forgetfulness can human being ever achieve the illusion of possessing a truth in the sense just designated.⁵⁷

⁵³ "Der Leib ist eine grosse Vernunft, eine Vielheit mit Einem Sinne, ein Krieg und ein Frieden, eine Heerde und ein Hirt." (Ibid. , translation modified)

⁵⁴ "Der schaffende Leib schuf sich den Geist..." (Ibid.)

⁵⁵ Nietzsche as quoted in Kirsten Brown, *Nietzsche and Embodiment: Discerning Bodies and Non-dualism*. SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy. (New York: SUNY Press, 2006), 106.

⁵⁶ Nietzsche, "Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe," Volume 9: 567.

⁵⁷ Nietzsche, "Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe," Volume 1: 878.

This means that our so-called scientific statements about the activity of areas in the brain would be, in the end, as metaphorical for Nietzsche as the claim that one feels a pain. As he says: "...to infer from the nerve stimulus to a cause outside us, that is already the result of a false and unjustified application of the principle of causation."⁵⁸

Nietzsche's challenge to dualism is also evident in his use of the metaphors of physiology for describing the intellect and the metaphors of cognition for describing the body.⁵⁹ To mention one example of where he characterises a bodily drive as conscious, one can consider where Nietzsche explains that "Movement is symbolism for the eye; it indicates that something has been felt, willed, thought."⁶⁰ Nietzsche also characterises conscious activity in corporeal terms: "Learning changes us; it does what all nourishment does which also does not merely preserve – as physiologists know."⁶¹ By characterizing mind with physiological terms and physiology with terms associated with mind, Nietzsche is able to blur the line between the mental and the physical, and so further challenge the contention that his work constitutes a mere inversion of the elevation of the mind that characterises dualism.⁶² For Nietzsche, the mind is not a particular "place" and nor is it "inside" of anything.⁶³ Rather, his position can be characterised as a non-reductionist physiologism:

A physiologist stance can be ascribed to Nietzsche, because he maintains that it is not possible to prescind from the body, that is the physic and physiological basis whence everything else

⁵⁸ "Von dem Nervenreiz aber weiterzuschliessen auf eine Ursache ausser uns, ist bereits das Resultat einer falschen und unberechtigten Anwendung des Satzes vom Grunde." (Ibid.)

⁵⁹ This is also argued by Eric Blondel in his "Nietzsche: The Body and Culture" as well as Kristen Brown in her *Nietzsche and Embodiment: Discerning Bodies and Non-dualism*. SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy. (New York: SUNY Press, 2006).

⁶⁰ "Bewegung ist eine Symbolik für das Auge; sie deutet hin, daß etwas gefühlt, gewollt, gedacht worden ist." Nietzsche, "Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe," Volume 11: 639; Nietzsche, "The Will to Power," (note 492), 270-1.

⁶¹ "Das Lernen verwandelt uns, es thut Das, was alle Ernährung thut, die auch nicht bloss "erhält" – wie der Physiologe weiss." Nietzsche, "Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe," Volume 5: 170; Nietzsche, "Beyond Good and Evil," 162.

⁶² See Blondel, "Nietzsche: The Body and Culture" and Brown, "Nietzsche and Embodiment".

⁶³ Robert C. Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche : what the great "immoralist" has to teach us*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 73.

stems. At the same time, a non-reductionist stance can be ascribed to Nietzsche, because he allows such concepts as the I, the Ego, the Self, the subjective unity, and finally mental states to maintain a meaning by being however thoroughly changed into new concepts according to a definition that depends on a distinctly anti-Cartesian interpretation.⁶⁴

From what I have presented so far, it seems clear that Nietzsche's work does not constitute a "hyperbolic somaticism." Specifically, Nietzsche's position on the self is able to avoid falling into the "logic of reversal" that Shusterman diagnoses in his thinking. And it is this that, in my view, constitutes at least one aspect of an argument that shows that Nietzsche's writings on the singing, dancing body are in fact, an example of a (proto-) phenomenology, and perhaps even a (proto)-somaesthetics at work.

A (proto-) Phenomenology? A (proto-)Somaesthetics?

Even though one could argue that there are significant differences that emerge between traditional phenomenologists and a thinker such as Nietzsche, there are a number of places in which his thought could be seen as anticipatory of, or comparable to, their work. In addition, Nietzsche's work could be argued to be a kind of (proto)-somaesthetic position, because of its affinities to Shusterman's work. In this final section of the paper, I explore, in a tentative⁶⁵ fashion, some of these affinities, as well as selected points of difference.

Nietzsche is, of course, not a phenomenologist in a strict sense. He does not use a descriptive method, and nor does he perform reductions in the sense that Husserl advocated. However, in line with work by theorists such as Christine Daigle,⁶⁶ Peter Poellner⁶⁷ as well as that of Lars Petter and Storm

⁶⁴ Claudia Rosciglione, "A Non-Reductionist Physiologism: Nietzsche on Body, Mind and Consciousness," *Prolegomena*, 12, no 1 (2013): 43–60, citation from pages 46-7.

⁶⁵ I reserve a fuller discussion of these affinities and differences for another occasion. My aim here is merely to show that, in rejecting the mind-body distinction in its entirety, Nietzsche's work could be seen as anticipatory of phenomenological approaches, as well as Shusterman's somaesthetics.

⁶⁶ Christine Daigle, "Nietzsche's Notion of Embodied Self: Proto-Phenomenology at Work?" *Nietzsche-Studien* 40 (2011): 226-43.

⁶⁷ Peter Poellner, "Phenomenology and Science in Nietzsche," in *A Companion to Nietzsche*. Ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006).

Torjussen,⁶⁸ it is my view that Nietzsche's concern with embodiment, as well as his efforts to overcome dualism in the way in which I have described in the current paper can be read as indications that he ought to be considered a philosopher whose inquiry anticipates traditional phenomenology. Earlier in this paper, I described the efforts by phenomenological thinkers such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty to overcome the mind-body dualism associated most especially with Cartesianism, and Nietzsche's work can, I think, certainly be read as a pre-cursor to that kind of thinking in its rejection of traditional mind-body dualism. In fact, as Brown claims, "...Nietzsche's view of the body as primary and as interpretation, [is] a view that prefigures aspects of the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty."⁶⁹ Brown⁷⁰ and a number of others, including Daigle,⁷¹ provide extended discussions of the similarities and differences between the two thinkers. Of these, the most significant difference in their approaches to the body is, in my view, pointed out by Brown:

Merleau-Ponty's view of embodiment as opaque situates the opacity within a more systematic theory of perception. It decisively locates the opacity of the body according to a certain conditioning mode of embodiment and distinguishes this from other modes that are, if not properly graspable, at least perceptible. For Merleau-Ponty, there is not as for Nietzsche, the consideration that the notion of embodiment as both visible and invisible is itself also a deception. Hence, for Merleau-Ponty, corporeality appears to be a foundation of experience and not as for Nietzsche a (non)-foundational foundation.⁷²

This is a significant difference, and one which perhaps further explains Shusterman's preference for Merleau-Ponty's particular approach. Consider Shusterman's extended explanation of somaesthetics and his understanding of the mind-body relation:

Somaesthetics, roughly defined, concerns the body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*) and creative self-fashioning. As an ameliorative discipline of both theory and practice, it aims to enrich not only our abstract, discursive knowledge of the body but also our lived

⁶⁸ Lars Petter and Storm Torjussen, "Is Nietzsche a Phenomenologist?—Towards a Nietzschean Phenomenology of the Body," *Phenomenology and Existentialism in the Twentieth Century, Analecta Husserliana* 103 (2009): 179-189.

⁶⁹ Brown, "Nietzsche and Embodiment," 120.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 147-149.

⁷¹ Daigle, "Nietzsche's Notion of Embodied Self."

⁷² Brown, "Nietzsche and Embodiment," 148.

somatic experience and performance; it seeks to enhance the meaning, understanding, efficacy, and beauty of our movements and of the environments to which our movements contribute and from which they also draw their energies and significance. Somaesthetics, therefore, involves a wide range of knowledge forms and disciplines that structure such somatic care or can improve it. Recognizing that body, mind, and culture are deeply codependent, Somaesthetics comprises an interdisciplinary research program to integrate their study. Mental life relies on somatic experience and cannot be wholly separated from bodily processes, even if it cannot be wholly reduced to them. We think and feel with our bodies, especially with the body parts that constitute the brain and nervous system. Our bodies are likewise affected by mental life, as when certain thoughts bring a blush to the cheek and change our heart rate and breathing rhythms. The body-mind connection is so pervasively intimate that it seems misleading to speak of body and mind as two different, independent entities. The term body-mind would more aptly express their essential union, which still leaves room for pragmatically distinguishing between mental and physical aspects of behavior and also for the project of increasing their experiential unity.⁷³

As I demonstrated earlier in this paper, Nietzsche aims to “de-substantialise” the mind, but not at the expense of privileging the body, and not by means of a crude reductionism. Rather, even though he acknowledges differences between their activities and characteristics, he posits instead the “...continuous interaction between different manifold activities, be they characterized as physiologic or psychical, bodily or mental, which takes place in one and the same body.”⁷⁴ On this basis, in addition to providing support for seeing Nietzsche’s work as a progenitor for phenomenological approaches, it seems that his views on the mind-body could certainly be seen as showing an affinity to Shusterman’s characterisation of somaesthetics. Indeed, a second important aspect highlighted by Shusterman in the above quotation could also be used as support for seeing Nietzsche’s work as having an affinity with somaesthetics – the body as the “locus of creative self-fashioning”. This motif, one which, as Shusterman admits on a number of occasions, runs from Nietzsche through Michel Foucault, is the idea that the self can, in certain instances, become an aesthetic object - a work of art, the embodiment of style.

The points of affinity and of difference I have pointed out may be of significance for somaesthetics in pointing the way towards a consideration of whether the underpinning of somaesthetics in the work

⁷³ Richard Shusterman, “Thinking Through the Body, Educating for the Humanities: A Plea for Somaesthetics,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 40 no 1 (2006): 1-21, citation from page 2.

⁷⁴ Rosciglione, “A Non-Reductionist Physiologism,” 46.

of Merleau-Ponty, where corporeality is presented as the foundation of experience, could perhaps not be better rooted in Nietzsche's presentation of corporeality as a (non)-foundational foundation. If Nietzsche's work is not a mere inversion of mind-body dualism, it could perhaps be harnessed in a more significant and philosophically satisfying way in the development of a somaesthetic position.⁷⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has considered Shusterman's claim that Nietzsche's "hyperbolic somaticism"⁷⁶ not only serves to reinforce the "old rigid dualism" of mind and body, but also that his work constitutes a mere inversion of the mind-body hierarchy that seems like "wishful thinking"⁷⁷ by means of an interpretation of selections from Nietzsche's work. I have argued firstly, that Nietzsche's position on the self is able to avoid falling into the "logic of reversal" that Shusterman diagnoses in his thinking; and that on this basis, Nietzsche's writings on the singing, dancing body can be seen as an example of a (proto-) phenomenology at work. I have shown that the impression that Nietzsche's emphasis on the body looks "suspiciously like the old emphasis on the mind" is "misleading"⁷⁸ and that his thinking of the body can be acknowledged as much closer to the preferred phenomenological approach of Merleau-Ponty than Shusterman allows. I have also suggested that Nietzsche's thinking could, in at least two respects, be considered a (proto)-somaesthetics. Although, as was previously mentioned, Shusterman does acknowledge the proximity of his thought to that of Nietzsche in a number of respects, the current paper has demonstrated in a sustained and focused fashion that Nietzsche's position specifically on the mind-body can indeed be seen as anticipatory of the somaesthetic approach in the context of the question of embodiment.

⁷⁵ Admittedly, this remains at the level of a suggestion in this paper, and requires significant further development.

⁷⁶ Shusterman, "The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy," 155.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Edgar E. Sleinis, *Nietzsche's Revaluation of Values: A Study in Strategies*. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 207.