

*A conference was held in Prague, Czech Republic, in November 2002 that was entitled “Issues Confronting the Post-European World” and that was dedicated to Jan Patočka (1907-1977). The Organization of Phenomenological Organizations was founded on that occasion. The following essay is published in celebration of that event.*

## Essay 5

# Embodiment Work for the Victims of Violation: In Solidarity with the Community of the Shaken<sup>1</sup>

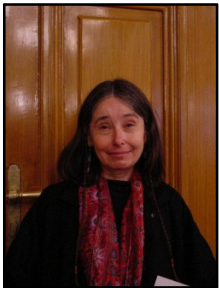
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## Abstract

Existential phenomenology of the body emphasizes what Sartre calls the body passed over in silence, which Shaun Gallagher has termed the “absently available” body; in Patočka’s words, “it is something that we do not experience in our experiencing, what we overlook in most cases.” However, as Anna Luise Kirkengen’s research into the lived bodily experience of abuse and humiliation shows, such an account does not do justice to the dissociative style of embodiment often found in victims of trauma, where the inability to feel one’s own body mutely testifies to a violation of embodiment rather than to a prereflective harmony of lived body and lived world. This essay offers an alternative account of embodiment as an anchored aliveness that we can indeed experience in our experiencing, and suggests that retrieving the lived experience of such anchored aliveness is an important task for an embodied ethics committed to respecting the core experience of embodied personhood. Finally, the present paper can also serve as an introduction to the work of the Study Project in Phenomenology of the Body, which is a research and networking organization devoted to studying the lived body and bodily experience—in their invariant styles



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<sup>1</sup> This text was read 9 November 2002 in Prague. There is also a longer version where the themes of Section V are presented in more detail. Both versions rely on phenomenological investigations in a larger work in progress on the problem of localization (cf. Section IV below). My approach is Husserlian; references to Husserl’s works will be to *Husserliana* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff; Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1950ff.), abbreviated *Hua* and cited by volume number and page number.

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and structures and their historical and cultural variations—through phenomenological methods in a multidisciplinary context. Anyone interested in the SPPB working group is invited to communicate with the author.

In memory of the ones who  
did not survive this shaking

## I. Crisis as a Point of Entry to Embodiment Work

The main title of this paper—“Embodiment Work for the Victims of Violation”—is based on a memory. I was trained as a violinist, and in August 1968, I was in Hanover, New Hampshire, at the Dartmouth Summer Congregation of the Arts. Suddenly, in the middle of an orchestra rehearsal, we learned of the Soviet occupation nearly half a world away, so we dedicated the concert to the victims of the invasion. The performance included Penderecki’s “Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima”—but we played it that night for Prague. And it is this memory that has shaped the cadence of my title. Today, however, I am not offering a threnody, a song of mourning, for the victims of violation, but a theoretical prelude for the practice of what I am calling “embodiment work”—work that I believe not only helps to heal violation in its many guises, but also “teaches the skills of peace.”<sup>2</sup>

This brings me to my subtitle, “In Solidarity with the Community of the Shaken”—a phrase that stands in the shadow of Patočka’s *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, where the theme of shaking appears in two ways: on the one hand, the lived experience of being shaken by profoundly unsettling events, such as the “front-line experience” in war;<sup>3</sup> and on the other hand, the “shaking of the naive, directly accepted meaning of life” that is accomplished by radical philosophical questioning.<sup>4</sup> Here in my paper, both sorts of shaking will come into play: I will not only speak of people who have been shaken by lifeworldly events and situations, but will draw upon the power of phenomenology itself to suspend the automatic acceptance of received validities, to endure the “evident urgency” of open questions, and to participate in a “transformation of meaning.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Erazim Kohák, “Jan Patočka: A Philosophical Biography,” in his *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 134 (henceforth: JP).

<sup>3</sup> Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), 125ff. (henceforth: HE).

<sup>4</sup> HE, 143; cf. 60–61, 63.

<sup>5</sup> HE, 141; 64.

I will begin by considering the lived experience of those of us shaken in our very embodiment by war, genocide, slavery, torture, or abuse and humiliation of any sort. Thus my focus will not be on the unbroken certainties of the everyday body, but on a certain type of crisis embodiment whereby violations are inscribed into the ongoing texture of bodily life itself. This will lead me to question a certain aspect of the received tradition of phenomenological philosophy of the body. But I will also go on to indicate how an alternative phenomenology of embodiment can provide a more authentic response to the crisis of embodiment that is inscribed in the victims of violation. In this way I hope at least to begin the task of demonstrating how phenomenology can contribute to a “critique of corporeal experience”<sup>6</sup> in a post-European world. And for me, such a critique is not a merely theoretical matter; it exercises a practical imperative that emerges most keenly when we, “the survivors, the community of the shaken, are no longer bound by all the preoccupations and prejudices of mundane striving,” but are shaken into “assuming the responsibility of our freedom”<sup>7</sup> and thereby liberated, as Patočka says, for “a leap into new meaning.”<sup>8</sup>

## II. The Embodiment of Violation and the Violation of Embodiment

To offer embodiment work for the victims of violation requires coming to some clarity about the experiential structure of their predicament. I will therefore turn to an important study by Anna Luise Kirkengen entitled *Inscribed Bodies: Health Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse*.<sup>9</sup> Dr. Kirkengen—who is a family physician in Norway—used phenomenologically- and hermeneutically-informed research methods to interview survivors of childhood sexual abuse and to identify shared themes and patterns emerging across the individual variations in the survivors’ stories. In this work, however, phenomenology not only serves as a mode of access to shaken embodiment, but already stands in solidarity with the shaken: the survivors’ lived experiences were taken seriously—they were heard

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<sup>6</sup> Enzo Paci, *The Function of the Sciences and the Meaning of Man*, trans. Paul Piccone and James E. Hansen (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 44, 467.

<sup>7</sup> JP, 127; 131. Cf. Jan Patočka, *An Introduction to Husserl’s Phenomenology*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), 167 (henceforth: IHP).

<sup>8</sup> HE, 141.

<sup>9</sup> Although this work focuses on sexual boundary violations, it has important implications for all violations of human dignity; see Anna Luise Kirkengen, *Inscribed Bodies: Health Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 390ff. (henceforth: IB).

and believed, and a theoretical space that could do justice to this experience was opened up, perhaps for the very first time in the literature of that field. Here I cannot report on her research findings in detail, but will simply mention four important points.

One way in which violation is ongoingly embodied in the lives of survivors is in the lived experience of pain and bodily dysfunction. Typically, however, mainstream medicine fails to heal or even to help the victim: the body is objectified, but the person is often re-traumatized, and eventually marginalized. By using survivors' lived experience of the medical establishment as a leading clue, Kirkengen is able to show that the embodiment of violation in the painful, problematic body places the guiding assumptions of mainstream medicine into question, and she therefore calls for radical changes in the theory and practice of medicine itself.<sup>10</sup>

A second way in which violation is ongoingly embodied can be described in terms of the phenomenological notion of the reactivation of sedimentation. For example, one survivor tells how her abuser initially put a knife to the side of her neck; subsequently, all he had to do to make her feel trapped and powerless once again was to put a finger on the side of her neck at the same place, and even as an adult, she had to avoid wearing scarves, jewelry, or any kind of clothing that could touch her there, for any touch in the same place continued to reactivate the sedimented embodied meaning of a knife at her throat.<sup>11</sup> Other cases display vastly different details, but reveal the same pattern, in which sedimented bodily experiences are reactivated when similar bodily sensations are experienced, and past coping strategies are often reactivated as well (even if these strategies are no longer appropriate or necessary in the present context). Thus what "reactivating the sediment" means here is not a conscious project of retrieving founding origins,<sup>12</sup> but a process of passive syntheses of association in which what is conjured up is not merely a similar sensory moment, but an entire situation, along with its own dark horizon of anticipation—which in this case is not an "obscure" horizon of determinable indeterminacy, but one that is already all too familiar, and is enveloped in the painful darkness of the intolerable.

A third way in which violation is ongoingly embodied involves heightened bodily tension, as when one is constantly tensing oneself in advance

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<sup>10</sup> Kirkengen not only addresses issues of power relations and of epistemological assumptions informing mainstream medical theory and practice, but analyzes the medical making of patients. See especially IB, 1–8, 87–101, 133–38, 319–96.

<sup>11</sup> IB, 122–23.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Hua 6, 371–72, 375ff.

against violation.<sup>13</sup> The experiential correlate of such bodily comportment is an unsafe world, and such victims carry this world with them without respite wherever they go. In certain cases, however, specific chronic bodily tensions also reveal a pattern of simultaneous force and counter-force, as when the survivor's style of embodiment ongoingly reinstates both a past moment of violation—for example, being held down—and a past moment of attempted resistance—for example, struggling against the restraining hands with all one's strength. In this way what is ongoingly reenacted is the feel of the traumatic situation as a whole.<sup>14</sup> Embodiment thereby becomes a constant mobilization against forces that are no longer literally given here and now, yet refuse to flow away into a past that is over and done with, for they continue to haunt the survivor's body from within, even when there is no specific current experience functioning as a "trigger" to reactivate a sedimented past.

A fourth way in which violation is ongoingly embodied may be termed "dissociative embodiment." Here I am not concerned with severe, pathological "dissociation" in the clinical sense of the term,<sup>15</sup> but with a more common type of experience: a "spacing out" or "switching off" in which one is physically present in a situation, but experientially absent, to a greater or lesser degree, in the sense that one is going through the motions, carrying on with the task or encounter, but without actually feeling one's own body.<sup>16</sup> However, the theme of being disconnected from one's own bodily experience in this way is accompanied, at least in some survivors' stories, by references to making one's body one's own again.<sup>17</sup> Thus we cannot truly do justice to dissociative embodiment without also addressing what it means to inhabit—or to re-inhabit—one's own body from within.<sup>18</sup> For with dissociative embodiment, it is not only a matter of the embodiment of violation, but of the violation of embodiment itself, insofar as something normally native to the very structure of bodily life has become deeply disturbed. This needs to be more fully understood. How can the

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<sup>13</sup> Cf., e.g., IB, 227, 253ff., 301, 430 n.225; see also Elizabeth A. Behnke, "Ghost Gestures: Phenomenological Investigations of Bodily Micromovements and Their Intercorporeal Implications," *Human Studies* 20 (1997), 192–93, 195–96 (henceforth: GG).

<sup>14</sup> IB, 166–67, 423 n.182; cf. 128–30, 172–73, 423 n.185, 425 n.192.

<sup>15</sup> See IB, 113–14; cf. 335–37, 435 n.269.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., IB, 54, 106–107 and 417 n.126, 120–21, 128–29, 146–47, 286, 309, and—for an extreme example—77–79, 400–402.

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., IB, 239, 242, 420 n.149.

<sup>18</sup> Here the notion of "inhabiting" one's own body need not entail a Cartesian ontological dualism, but refers to a continuum of experientially realizable possibilities; cf. Patočka's remark in "Cartesianism and Phenomenology" (1976): "Can we, on the basis of the conception of an understanding body and its corporeal functioning, do entirely without ... the concept of dwelling in the body ...?" (JP, 320; cf. 308–309), and see also n. 39 below.

received tradition of phenomenology of the body help in this regard, and where does it fall short?

### III. How Violated Embodiment Makes the Received Tradition Problematic

What I mean by the “received tradition” in phenomenology of the body is usually associated with the work of Merleau-Ponty, but one of its key motifs can most readily be indicated by referring to Sartre’s notion of the body “passed over in silence,” transcended in favor of the task we are engaged in.<sup>19</sup> However, this body breaks the silence and announces itself to us when something goes wrong and our own body presents itself to us as an object. In contrast, the well-functioning body is “absently available,”<sup>20</sup> unthematically at our disposal, absently “lived” rather than explicitly known, while its mode of being in or at the world is characterized as a “prereflective unity” between situated sensibility and affective milieu, between a primordial bodily dynamism and its immediately physiognomic surroundings.<sup>21</sup> But such a body must always necessarily remain a preobjective body, since whenever objectification of any sort does occur, what is thereby given is precisely no longer a body being lived in the mode of absent availability. For the received existential-phenomenological tradition, then, the lived body “cannot be objectified” because, as Patočka puts it, it is “so near that it is not thematized—it is something that we do not experience in our experiencing.”<sup>22</sup> How well does such a theory of embodiment serve the victims of violation?

As Kirkengen’s work shows, the theme of the objectification of the body in breakdown fits only too well: as a painful, dysfunctional body, the violated body repeatedly and insistently demands our attention, jerking us out of the taken-for-granted realm of lived, lifeworldly meaning and action, thrusting us into the domain of medical objectification, where any remnant of lived meaning is liable to be eroded still further. Moreover, the link between the affective body and the physiognomic world is all too clearly expressed in the tensions inscribed

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<sup>19</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’être et le néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), Part Three, Chapter 2, section I.

<sup>20</sup> Shaun Gallagher, “Lived Body and Environment,” *Research in Phenomenology* 16 (1986), 153ff.; cf. Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., Erwin Straus, *The Primary World of Senses*, trans. Jacob Needleman (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 231–36; cf. Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago: Open Court, 1998), e.g., 40–42, 133, 138–41 (henceforth: BCLW). However, Patočka’s account of the primordial dynamism that is not “present” to us, i.e., does not appear before us in the same way as the things we are occupied with (40), differs from the account that privileges the “absent body” in two important respects: for Patočka, we are nevertheless “dynamically aware” of our own body and of “our existence as a moving, active being” (40; cf. 27); and although we retain the stratum of “instinctive-affective harmony with the world” (148) that characterizes the primordial dynamism, it is “transcended,” i.e., “preserved yet modified” (139) in the further “movements of human life.”

<sup>22</sup> BCLW, 26; 27.

in the bodies of survivors for whom the world is never a safe place. Yet the received theory offers no obvious ways for either of these predicaments to be transformed. And the thesis that what is signified by the absently available body is the prereflective unity, the unbroken preobjective harmony of body and world becomes highly problematic when we take dissociative embodiment seriously. There is something missing when we cannot feel our own lived body from within—something that essentially belongs to embodied experience, something that dissociative embodiment renders prominent by its very absence.<sup>23</sup> How can we retrieve this missing possibility and give it a voice? In what follows, I will address this question by turning to what Husserl has to say about the body as the nearest, “absolute” nearness<sup>24</sup>—and about the manner in which it can indeed be experienced in our experiencing. In this way, I hope not only to shed some light on the phenomenon of dissociative embodiment, but also to provide some theoretical support for an embodied ethical response to the community of the shaken.

#### IV. From an Alternative Theory of Embodiment

My specific concern in this section will be the localization of kinaesthetic processes in somaesthetic sensations. But I am following Husserl in using the term “kinaesthetic” in a specific way: I am not referring to the physiological notion of kinaesthesia as the sensation of movement in the joints, but to the sheer capability for movement expressed in such phrases as “being able to move” (sich

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<sup>23</sup> For Patočka, our experience of our own primordial bodily dynamism—which, as mentioned, is typically “something we do not experience in our experiencing, what we overlook in most cases” (BCLW, 27)—is nevertheless an example of a number of “demi-phenomena which seem to want to but cannot become fully actual, to make themselves manifest; phenomena which announce themselves, press forward but which we seem to be shouting down, ignoring, not taking into account” (BCLW, 40). It is thus our task as phenomenologists to learn to hear the silent sounds of the body passed over in silence, to listen instead of shouting it down—particularly when this body is “mutely testifying” to unspeakable violations that have been “socially silenced” (IB, 5).

<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., Hua 15, 496, 507. This absolute nearness, however, is not that of some sort of nearest thing (cf. Hua 15, 309), but of the “null” from which any “there’s” are experienced—and from which not only “far,” but “near” gains its sense. Moreover, another sense of “absolute nearness” is also relevant; see Hua 33, 39–40, where—in context of a discussion of the “leibhaftige Gegenwart”—the temporal null is characterized as a limit: as “absolute nearness,” it is not only the maximum of temporal nearness and the minimum of temporal farness, but is the moment of the most saturated fulfillment, in the sense of the originary consciousness of the immediately “itself there.” Thus although one’s own lived body as a “null-body” is an absolute nearness in the sense of a center of orientation, it is not necessarily a “zero” of experienceability, but—as an absolute nearness of originarity—anchors the very sense of the term “leibhaft.”



bewegen können) or “I can.”<sup>25</sup> And making this distinction is precisely what allows me to investigate the essential relationships between motility per se and the bodily sensations (Empfindnisse) that concretely accompany the actualization of particular movement possibilities, thereby “localizing” kinaesthetic capability in somaesthetic sensibility. For as Patočka emphasizes, such localization not only provides the very basis for experiencing our body as our own,<sup>26</sup> but allows us to experience our own “lived effectiveness” in the world.<sup>27</sup> What is at stake here, then, is the direct experience of the felt potency of our own embodied effort, which anchors our aliveness in the nearest nearness of our own lived body.

To understand this anchored aliveness more fully, let us turn to a research manuscript that Husserl wrote seventy-one years ago, on 9 November 1931.<sup>28</sup> Here he points out that no matter what else I may be experiencing, I myself am always continually, necessarily, perceptually there too, co-present in unbroken certainty. But he also insists that this certainty is not a matter of the apodictic being of a Cartesian ego. Instead, he explicitly refers to a completely different form of unbreakable ontic validity—namely, my own abiding presence as an embodied person. Thus the world I experience has, as he puts it, “a continual center and an unbreakable core component in my Bodily-personal being.”<sup>29</sup> Yet what Husserl terms “unbreakable” is nevertheless not unshakable—and indeed, it is precisely what is profoundly shaken in dissociative embodiment, when I have lost contact with the sensuously felt texture of my own embodied personhood. How can this be addressed phenomenologically?

The main principle governing the sensuous localization of kinaesthetic processes is the motivational if-then. One obvious example is that of touch, here considered not in terms of the tactile qualities of objects, but in terms of my own sensitivity to contact: if I move in thus-and-such a way, I will have certain sorts of sensations, and if I move in a different way, I break the contact and no longer have the sensations concerned. But the somaesthetic field is not confined to the sensitive surface of the moving body; think, for example, of how it feels to stretch. And in fact, any particular style of movement (or of holding still) will have its own distinctive somaesthetic quality. For example, loosely and lazily

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<sup>25</sup> See Elizabeth A. Behnke, “The immediacy of primal motility,” presented at the Husserl Circle, Bloomington, IN (2001).

<sup>26</sup> IHP, 141–43; cf. 146ff.

<sup>27</sup> BCLW, 45; cf. 25.

<sup>28</sup> Hua 15, Text Nr. 23, especially 400–401, under Husserl’s own subsection title, “Die ungebrochene Ständigkeit meines Ich in der vorgegebenen Welt als leibliche Person.” Husserl deliberately chooses the locution “leibliche Person” rather than “psychophysisches Wesen” in order to avoid any connotations pertaining to naturalistic psychology, and also uses it in other texts of the period—see, e.g., 462, 492.

<sup>29</sup> Hua 15, 401.

rotating one hand in the air (and letting the movement gently percolate through the entire arm into the shoulder) feels very different from making a fist and holding on as hard as possible (and here too, this movement is felt far beyond the hand). Moreover, this if-then relation not only governs local and transitory gestures such as “making a fist” (or “making a face”), but also holds good for what might be termed the global and ongoing gesture of “making a body,” including one’s habitual posture, habitual bodily tonus, habitual range of movement, and habitual movement style<sup>30</sup>—all of which has its own familiar somaesthetic feel. Similarly, familiar gestures that are always carried out in roughly the same way will be associatively linked with a particular felt quality. Thus although the if-then relation between kinaesthetic capability and somaesthetic sensibility is an invariant structural feature of embodiment per se, the actual links that are formed between specific movement possibilities and their corresponding familiar feel are a matter of empirical association.<sup>31</sup> What feels like “normal” embodiment will therefore vary with the personal history of the individual in question. How is all this played out in the context of violation?

As many descriptions of lived movement emphasize, some of its most deeply rooted patterns involve expansively prolonging movement into the pleasurable, and contracting, withdrawing, pulling back from the painful and unpleasant. Now imagine, for example, a child undergoing an abusive experience and being restrained—by whatever means—from moving away from the painful, the terrifying, the disgusting, the humiliating. How do these types of situations effect a structural violation of the victim’s integrity? They are not only deeply disrespectful in principle, but display the specific form of violating the kinaesthetic autonomy whereby we normally hold sway, at least to some extent, over our own somaesthetic sensations—for in such episodes, the if-then relation between the kinaesthetic and somaesthetic dimensions of experience has been expropriated by an alien force against which resistance is futile. We are no longer free, for example, to move away from unpleasant tactile sensations or to change a painful bodily position. And for some victims, the last stand on this front line—the last and desperate move of freedom and integrity—involves experientially leaving one’s body, abandoning it to the oppressor in order to save oneself, surviving by dis-associating the kinaesthetic and somaesthetic dimensions—the very dimensions that are normally the most intimately and

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<sup>30</sup> See GG, 186–88; note that the motivational if-then holds even when the kinaesthetic “if” is functioning at the level of a deeply sedimented, “habitual” style rather than as a deliberate gesture in which a wide-awake I actively holds sway (cf. Hua 14, 450).

<sup>31</sup> Hua 14, 75; cf. Hua 4, 381n.

reliably fused. In this way, the association between moving and feeling that is normally in play in making a body is itself “unmade.”<sup>32</sup>

It is in this sense, then, that we can speak not only of the embodiment of violation in sedimented patterns of bodily comportment, but of the violation of embodiment per se, for in dissociative embodiment, when the link to the nearest nearness has been unmade, what has been compromised is the very core of embodied personhood: the anchored aliveness whereby we each experience ourselves as some-body, this body, experienceable in our experiencing as “this warm-blooded being there for what we are doing,”<sup>33</sup> in full, living presence. Moreover, since our body is not at all an isolated thing, but—as Patočka puts it—“a moment of a situation in which we are,”<sup>34</sup> then when the localization of kinaesthetic processes in the home base of the felt body is disrupted, bodily relationality is shaken as well, effecting, for example, an experiential dis-location that uproots the person from almost every situation, so that one experiences oneself as a displaced person even within the familiar horizons of one’s own home world. All this deserves and demands further description. But let us pause to ask: when something as fundamental as embodiment has been rendered profoundly problematic by painful events, does phenomenology have anything more to offer besides a theoretical explication of the experiential structure of the situation? Can it support or suggest a practical response that can genuinely rise to the occasion of shaken embodiment?

## V. Embodiment Work in Theory and Practice

Here it is unfortunately not possible for me to demonstrate in detail how phenomenology can provide both theoretical foundations and practical suggestions for what I am calling embodiment work. Instead, I can only indicate that embodiment work for the victims of violation might well include the following sorts of approaches:

- 1) exploring mindful movement practices, where the focus is on initiating and varying movement in the here and now, thus retrieving the direct experience of the I can and nurturing “the capable body as the core of human dignity”;<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Cf. IB, 417 n.124, 140–41, 152–53; Kirkengen is here relying on Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>33</sup> Charlotte Selver, “Gravity, Energy, and the Support of the Ground,” *Sensory Awareness Foundation Newsletter* (Spring 2002), 6.

<sup>34</sup> BCLW, 27.

<sup>35</sup> William S. Hamrick, *Kindness and the Good Society* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 232; cf. 192ff., and see also IHP, 143–44.

- 2) utilizing various strategies for consciously inhabiting and appropriating sedimented movement patterns from within, thereby releasing chronic patterns of tension by taking kinaesthetic responsibility for one's own habitual style of making a body;<sup>36</sup>
- 3) finding ways to heal bodily relationality by working with the lived experience of ground and gravity, actively partnering the abiding fields of balance and support;<sup>37</sup> and
- 4) cultivating bodily reflexivity so that the "how" of our own ongoing kinaesthetic life can be lucidly lived from within, in the act, without either making it into the target of a separate intentional act, or compromising its openness to, and connection with, the object of the current intentional act.<sup>38</sup>

Each of these practical possibilities could, of course, be described in great detail and explicated in terms of a Husserlian phenomenological notion of embodiment as "a continuously on-going act."<sup>39</sup> Indeed, since phenomenological work requires turning to firsthand experiential evidence, the very project of doing phenomenological research into "embodiment work" is profoundly "embodying" in and of itself.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, both the notion of a "reflexivity" that is qualitatively

<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., Elizabeth A. Behnke, "Matching," *Somatics* 6:4 (Spring/Summer 1988), 24–32, rpt. in *Bone, Breath, and Gesture*, ed. Don Hanlon Johnson (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic, 1995), 317–37; cf. GG, 193–94.

<sup>37</sup> On the links between safety, community, and our bodily relation to the earth as the "unshakable ground" of movement, see, e.g., BCLW, 149, 157; a related practical source might be Anngwynn St. Just and Darrell Sanchez, "Relative Balance in an Unstable World: Cross Cultural Kinesthetic Trauma Work with the Tuning Board and Physio Balls" (1995). The latter paper is mentioned at the website of the Arizona Center for Social Trauma ([www.ccstrauma.com](http://www.ccstrauma.com)), but I have been unable to obtain a copy. It should also be mentioned that many professionals in the field of somatics have developed multifaceted approaches to working with victims of violation. See, e.g., Peter Levine, *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic, 1997); Paul Linden, *Winning is Healing! Body Awareness and Empowerment for Abuse Survivors* (Columbus, OH: CCMS Publications, 2001, available as an e-book or softbound through [www.being-in-movement.com](http://www.being-in-movement.com)). I am accordingly reserving the term "embodiment work" for a generic principle or possibility that cannot be equated with any particular technique, approach, or practice; many types of transformative somatic practice can contribute to embodiment work in the sense meant here.

<sup>38</sup> See Elizabeth A. Behnke, "World without Opposite/Flesh of the World: A Carnal Introduction" (Felton, CA: California Center for Jean Gebser Studies, 1984; now also available at [www.lifwynnfoundation.org](http://www.lifwynnfoundation.org)).

<sup>39</sup> Richard M. Zaner, *The Problem of Embodiment* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 249. It should be emphasized that the focus here is not at all on some supposedly "disembodied" mind or spirit somehow attaining physical incarnation; rather, what is at stake is the dynamic, variegated "how" of embodying (e.g., "dissociative" embodiment is still a style of embodiment, a particular way of ongoingly "making a body" or, as we might say, "bodying"). Cf. Roger T. Ames, "The Meaning of Body in Classical Chinese Thought," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1984), 45, 48, 51, on the body as a "process" rather than a "substance" or "thing."

<sup>40</sup> Note that although the present paper uses crisis as a point of entry to embodiment work, such work need not be motivated by bodily breakdown or trauma; one may even begin with a purely

different from “intentionality” and the notion of “cultivation,” whereby we can actively participate in shaping not only the style of our own embodied life, but our way of experiencing this experience, already testify to a non- or post-European appropriation of the phenomenological tradition by those rooted in Asian thought and practice.<sup>41</sup> But the most important point here is that phenomenological practice itself is not confined to disclosing the structures of the ready-made world; phenomenologizing can be a transformative act that can contribute to a world in-the-making.

## VI. Toward Embodied Ethics for an Embodied World

Let me begin the final section of this paper by posing a difficult question: what makes me think that I can stand in solidarity with the community of the shaken simply by presenting a paper at a philosophy conference? For no matter what I myself may have survived, here I am speaking from a zone of at least relative safety. And no matter how compelling—or how questionable—my theorizing may be, it cannot reach into the past and prevent the pain from happening, nor can it come to the rescue of those who are undergoing violation at this very moment. It seems difficult to see how phenomenologizing could have any far-reaching effect on the actual predicament of the victims of violation.

It is, however, at least possible to think of a phenomenology of embodiment work as having a local, near-reaching effect—indeed, one that reaches into the nearest nearness I have described, not just in the case of those identified as victims of violation, but for the typical style of contemporary embodiment in general.<sup>42</sup> In other words, the crisis in embodiment is not just something happening “elsewhere” and affecting certain unfortunate “others”; rather, these overt violations are situated within broader encompassing styles of embodiment, and more research into the social shaping—and silencing—of

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theoretical interest in describing the “how” of embodiment phenomenologically, and discover along the way that the research process itself allows the relevant phenomena to emerge in a richer, more optimal fashion. I am indebted to Josef Moural for raising this and other issues in discussion at the Prague conference.

<sup>41</sup> On reflexivity, cf. Jitendra Nath Mohanty, *The Concept of Intentionality* (St. Louis: Warren H. Green, 1972), 153–77; Iso Kern, “Selbstbewusstsein und Ich bei Husserl,” in *Husserl-Symposium Mainz*, ed. Gerhard Funke (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1989), 51–55. On “cultivation” and transformative practice, cf. YUASA Yasuo, *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory*, trans. NAGATOMO Shigenori and Thomas P. Kasulis (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), Part II; NAGATOMO Shigenori, *Attunement Through the Body* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992).

<sup>42</sup> On the epidemic of “sensory-motor amnesia” in contemporary life, see, e.g., Thomas Hanna, *Somatics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1988).

alienated bodies is clearly called for. Moreover, bodily stress and dissociation are all too appropriate in response to current global events—whether by “global events” we mean the increasingly severe weather patterns arising with global warming, along with the accompanying “natural disasters,” or the “unnatural disasters” arising not only from global political violence, but from the climate that makes such violence an ever-present threat (whether this threat is labeled “terrorism” or “preemptive strike”). Within such a climate, there is a sense in which we are all somewhat shaken, all victims, to a greater or lesser degree, of dissociative embodiment, all at risk for embodying a constant mobilization against the actual or impending or still reverberating violence all around us.

But in Patočka’s prophetic words, “the solidarity of the shaken can say ‘no’ to the measures of mobilization that make the state of war permanent.”<sup>43</sup> And this in turn effectively means to say yes—here and now, in a palpably bodily way—to an open zone where something other than force and counterforce is still possible. The work of building a community of compassion and tolerance is not only a front-line ethical task in general, but a task for embodied ethics in particular.<sup>44</sup> I therefore second the call for a “Somatic Bill of Rights,” for a “United Nations for Somas,”<sup>45</sup> for practical missions in somatic relief work and somatic task forces to accompany the work of Truth and Reconciliation commissions everywhere. Yet we cannot afford to wait for such ideas to become full-fledged institutions; we must do what we can from here, taking whatever small steps we can into such a future—even if all this means is taking a deep breath together and holding open some theoretical space for practices that retrieve the lived immediacy of primal motility and anchored aliveness, thereby contributing to a climate of respect for embodied personhood as it is lived from within by the person whose body is at stake. It is in this spirit that I offer a phenomenologically-informed theory and practice of embodiment work as a way to support the emergence, even in these darkening times, of a body of dignity, justice, and peace.

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<sup>43</sup> HE, 135.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. GG, 196–98. One teacher and professional who has made an explicit commitment to a concrete body/movement practice of “embodied ethics for an embodied world” is Carole Amend of Bodies Mind Studio (Mill Valley, CA; [www.aim-academy.org](http://www.aim-academy.org)).

<sup>45</sup> See Eleanor Criswell Hanna, “Reflections of the Editor,” *Somatics* 12:3 (Fall/Winter 1999–2000), inside front cover