

The Sensed and the Un-sensed

*The Disappearance of the
Individual Body and the Myth of
the Freedom of Choice in Western
Sciences*

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Inhoud

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Jean Jaurès (song by Jacques Brell : trans. Mariska Stevens)

They were exhausted at the age of fifteen
And expired in the midst of their début
Twelve months a year were renowned in December
What a life our grandparents enjoyed
Between absinthe and great masses
They were old before their time
Moving the body for fifteen hours a day
Leaves on the face are the color of ashes
Yes, our esteemed master
Yes, our honored governor
Why did they slaughter Jaurès?
Why did they slaughter Jaurès?

We cannot say that they were slaves
But to say they have lived
Having won, we also leave
But to leave one's core is hard
And yet there blossomed hope
In the dreams, the eyes expressed
of those few who refused
To crawl into old age
Yes, our honored governor
Yes, our esteemed master
Why did they slaughter Jaurès?
Why did they slaughter Jaurès?

If they were fortunate to survive
Then, only to part for war
Then, only to end in war
On the order of a few ...
Who spat demanding from their lips
That they would open in the killing field
The twenty years in which they failed in being born
And died in complete fear
Fully miserably, Oh yes, our esteemed master
Covered by the clothed sacraments of priests

Yes, our honored governor
Ask this question, delightful youth,
Does time remain as the shadow of a memory
Does time remain longer than the draft of one breath
Why did they slaughter Jaurès
Why did they slaughter Jaurès?

Preface

Jean Jaurès was a French Socialist leader and historian who was born in 1859, he was the founder of the journal *L'Humanité* and a strong campaigner against extreme nationalism. In 1914, he was murdered by nationalists. His untimely death marked the beginning of an era that both formed and deformed European democracy. Jacques Brell wrote a song about Jaurès as an homage to all defenders of humanistic values in the age of the Industrial Revolution. Instead of the alleged progress, for Brell, the industrial revolution meant more of impoverishment, death to many in the mines and on the fields of battle, and absolute confinement to a position. "It is hard to leave one's enclave." Indeed, not just the enclave of social class, but also of nationalistic imprisonment. In Brell's view, Jaurès was murdered for leaving his enclave. To what does it all add up? Did the international social movement ever exist? And if so, why did it fail? The answers to these questions are less important as they seem. The social process does not reveal itself through its history, but through its actualization. Many people identify with social aims not so much for the sake of political outcomes, but to create a protective niche in which their vulnerability is hidden behind ideology.

My father, born a hundred years ago, was one of those "walking wounded ". There were at least 50 years between us, and this had a far-reaching effect on my views of the social world. Looking back, my father's life gave me an insider's view of Europe's history that I would not have had if he had been my grandfather or younger. I cherish that difference in age, it has given me the feeling of having lived a lot longer than anyone can imagine. When he died some years back, he left me with a legacy of a generation that has experienced two world wars and the peak of the industrial revolution in Europe.

My father was one of those who moved along with social change, with an unending energy for a better future. His hopes grew with the same industrial revolution that he cursed or praised, whatever the occasion. His was a long history of communist sympathies and faith in socialism. During the Second World War, he sheltered Jews. At the end of the war, the Germans sentenced him to death as a result of the fact that he did not know and refused to reveal the whereabouts of his wanted brother. He was taken away to the concentration camps where he awaited execution, but managed to escape with the aid of a German soldier. Having thus been one of the victims of the Hitler regime, he was later honored with the Cross of Resistance. But, despite

the honor, there was the fear. A fear he could not overcome, as so many like him. It was this fear that made him act in ways I, as a child, could not understand. My father would glorify Stalin, and as my mother was a social democrat, this would lead to tremendous fights within their marriage. In the course of time, it became clear to me that he suffered from a war syndrome, for which he never got or wanted help. His fear had become a way of life, serving political ends —some good, some bad —and, for the most part, resulting in an absolute rejection of others' ideas. Those who disagreed with his views were given no mercy. If I disagreed —and I could not —he was in the habit of not speaking one word to me for weeks. His extreme reactions did not align with the actual differences in opinion at hand. He felt all of them as a personal betrayal. Capitalism had betrayed him, and communism, in whatever ugly form, had to compensate for this betrayal. It took me time, lots of time, and tremendous hardship to figure out that his fear of dying was behind this all. I was and am still surprised (an understatement) about the lack of social knowledge, as well as the taboos on postwar syndromes in general, that came out of this dreadful war.

When my father approached old age, he retired more and more to the one room in the house where he had stored all his memories, all his relics, and all his ideologies. He would shuffle around among them. On the wall, three large posters: one of Karl Marx, one of Ho Chi Min, and one of Mao Zedong. Pointing at them, he would exclaim: "Look, look... These are the great thinkers of this world. They are the ones who changed the world!"

His communist ideology would never become mine. I did not want to live in Eastern Europe, nor did he, nor, for that matter, my mother. I could not believe the righteousness of Stalin's politics and in fact I could not believe in the holy future as one dabbled in blood. Instead, I became an anthropologist. Religion to me was not a sacred thing, but neither was it opium for the people. Despite the Marxist paradigm that dominated Dutch universities at the time, I had seen and experienced the fears that lie behind all collective truths. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, my father started to doubt his views. He fell into an ideological crisis that was most likely the worst of his life. I tried to help him at times, as carefully as possible, as any political discussion was out of the question and would have been an outright danger to his life, in trying to find coping angles. Softening the failure of communism, I would compare with all kinds institutionalized phenomena. And finally I would say to him: "Look, in effect Christianity or communism aren't as bad as all that, but when they become churches or states then the side effect will turn them into dangerous bureaucracies, moving away from their original intend." To my surprise, he

could live with that, though at that time he was already close to the end of his life.

On the night of his dying, an hour before I received my brother's phone call, I had a very peaceful dream about him, which later turned out to be the exact moment of his death. As he had stopped eating and drinking, his weight and appearance had made him a very fragile, thin figure. He would lie curled up in his hospital bed, and in a silent whisper, he would communicate to me his fear of dying, wondering what it would be like on the other side, or what would be at all. In my dream he lay in my arms, curled up in the same manner, asking me: "And what about death?" and I comforted him with this one thought; "If you do not want to believe in life after death, if you do not want to believe in any religion or ideology of any kind, then, think of Gandhi. As I know, you admired his actions as well. Look upon death as peace." "Now I understand," he said with tranquility spreading over his face and body, and then he died.

The synchronicity of my dream, however curious, is irrelevant. It was my perception of the physical reality of death. I wished him peace in the same way he had lived his life. He identified with the great names in history, not because of their greatness, but because, in the isolation of his dreadful past experiences with death, he needed this social link. It made him social even in his hour of absolute loneliness. In the process of mourning, following his death, I realized how much human life cycles dominate Western culture and how Western science has developed as an absolute denial principle of phenomena concerning death, endings, beginnings, and most especially independence. Developments after the fall of the Berlin Wall indicate that Western capitalism has won—at least, that is what we are made to believe. But there has always been a darker side to this supposed Cold War. Communism in the Soviet Union was more state capitalism than socialism, and we have good reason to believe the fight has always been about something else, not communism. Much more central to the European issue has always been processes of identification by individuals with higher macro levels of society, or indeed the opposite: processes of de-identification from state nationalism. This does not exclusively apply to Europe. The Cold War might have been a conflict between two industrial empires—the United States and Western Europe—versus the Soviet Union, China, and others, competing for world hegemony. However, the fear, which had been lurking in the dark, was, above all, a fear of losing civil control over the individuals who make up those same industrial empires. The death of a very poor, unadjusted individual suckers has become less frightful than the death of industrial power. And it

has left people with hardly any other choice than to either identify with great names in history or great nationalities on the one hand, or leave society at its feet and become anarchists on the other hand.

There is another ghost than that of Marxism that has haunted throughout the history of the European industrial revolution. In particular, it has hunted the sciences throughout their existence. This ghost lives in its singular performance, defies all rules, and laughs at reality. It escapes every trick of science, it painfully deduces reductionism, and it establishes the needle in the eye of the scientist, his blind spot, her gender, and its biology. There is an old Chinese tale that says that, to catch a ghost, it is useless to smear its face with ink. As it remains a ghost, it will have no trouble in covering up. Our ghost then, is no different. It plays magic, it is of an incomparable genius, originality. It never reveals itself to more than one person at the time, yet its nature is absolutely social and its existence is therefore highly disputable. Indeed this ghost has been smeared with ink, but its revelation never came closer to anything but the ink spot, not unlike that of Rochard, which was given numerous names. Identity, psyche, mind, self, and personality were among its more restricted names. Freedom, existence, individuality, consciousness, pre-consciousness, or subconsciousness were among its more lucid names. The ink, in the end, only appeared on paper. Without the ink, there was nothing, or at least, there was nothing to label. To me, however, this ghost is real, like the dream about my father, like death, and the experience of life itself. It seems to portray some individual notion, though not the one that has remained, but an image. I do not believe it can be grasped as easily as a name, as it is a ghost 'in continuous motion'. As such, it signifies the pluralized bodily experience of individuals, which stands for anyone in particular and no one in general.

Fooling around with such a ghost is a dangerous cloak-and-dagger game. Fear of the unknown in human life -whether it is called death, future, heaven or hell- is the most prominent blind spot of social science, and it has been banished to the land of Magic -the unscientific- or as Conan Doyle called it The Land of Mist, through which some contemporary (and still) ridiculed his scientific position. Even though Conan Doyle defended his position with his argument "We need less faith and more knowledge (1995:415), the mere recognition of a possible nameless ghosts as the Spiritist movement proposed was enough to question his scientific judgment. Seeing is believed to be believing, but only what **we** see, not what **I** see, not what **you** see, not what **they** see. I might be a lunatic, you are delirious, they are primitive and animistic.

I have taken a position that is neither essentialist nor constructivist. Neither is it modern, nor pre-modern. No doubt it will be called post-modern, but for that, I really do not care. I do not name my own position, for how else can one "spot" a ghost other than by becoming one? I am therefore quite alone in this, but what better way to seek our ghost of individual experience than by being alone (or all-one as the Taoist would say)? I feel, therefore, quite the opposite -that is, more social than ever. For the most part, this book is thus also a homage to those scientists whose work has remained but whose individual spirits have disappeared, often unseen during and after their lifetimes. Science itself suffered significant criticism for its objectifying stance. Scientists themselves, however, have been subjectified away, as instruments of objectivity. They too have become great names that want to identify—virtual abstracts of their own bodies and of time. Social science is part of the same flow of culture, by which nationalities and industrial competition are constructed. It should not be a surprise that, unless with equal minds, discussions in social sciences increasingly resemble a "War of the Wor(l)ds". The question has become "who owns what piece of the social?" rather than "what is social?" It might be naive to assume it was never about money and power in the first place. I, however, feel with my own body that individuals are not the subjects of industrial states, but of self-fulfilling providence. To see what the merits of this self-fulfilling providence have to say about, one has to return to the sources of all sources, which is the problem of induction and how individuals in the sciences have solved it at one time or another, and afterward how their individual bodily experiences have been heavily ignored through scientific institutionalism.

1 INTRODUCTION: TO THE READER

"Come, Watson, come!" he cried, "The game is afoot! Not a word! Into your clothes and come!" (Conan Doyle: 1995, 711).

These are the immortal words that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle made Sherlock Holmes express in utter enthusiasm. Sherlock Holmes is the undefeated detective who has become the master and archetype of all deduction. Holmes uttered the words "The game is afoot!" at the beginning of most of his adventures, revealing Conan Doyle's somewhat sarcastic approach to the science of deduction. Later, the humorous persiflage of Sherlock Holmes held that if the criminal were expected to be 20 inches tall, with hair on the hands and feet, and accompanied by a large goat, however improper this possibility seemed, and if excluded by all other options, it must be the truth. It usually was, though even Sherlock Holmes never ceased to amaze his audience with improper—though correct—deductions. The improbability of outcomes is precisely the issue of his adventures.

Writing about the perceptions and expressions of individual bodies seems a similar undertaking. It cannot be called a game of chance, but improbable outcomes nevertheless dominate it. In this sense, the topic has been approached as a challenge to the deductive capacity of social science since the early twentieth century. Here, the similarities between Sherlock Holmes and early twentieth-century science fall absent, for Conan Doyle proceeded where rational science ceased to develop.

Arthur Conan Doyle was as much a fantasy novelist as a scientist. The contemporary flow of scientific undertaking in his time did not, or at least pretended not to, allow for one type of speculation beyond the boundaries of scientific premises about the difference between fantasy and science.

Fantasy became a fundamental part of science within the discipline of psychology. The dream could be analyzed as text—an image of the mind referring to a psychologically fantastic reality—which, in essence, might have been Freud's most outstanding contribution to science (Freud, 1984). The construction of a subconscious reality, in turn, supported the idea of the

'psychological concept' in developing linguistic theories, allowing the 'word' to become disconnected from the object of its name or body while simultaneously creating the notion of the 'arbitrariness of signs' in the work of Whitney and De Saussure (1966). From a cultural anthropological point of view, levels of culture and realities of knowledge were unfortunately supported by the theories of social Darwinists, which posited racial development in knowledge and skills. Within the natural sciences, this process of 'rationalizing the irrational' was further elaborated by philosophers such as Carl Popper (1972).

Since then, rationality as the greater good of scientific theory has dominated every view of individual perception and expression. Science entered its secondary age of enlightenment, maintaining belief in ever higher and better levels of knowledge. Generalization and rationality became undeniably linked to both the 'quality' and 'quantity' of scientific theory, the movement that firmly established modernity.

Yet, simultaneously, the result of this scientific quest for rationality led to the disappearance of individual bodily experiences among both researchers and subjects. As hypothesis testing became the center of scientific interest, the model for testing became more important than its referential reality.

By the 2nd quarter of the 20th century, the rationality quest did not seek origins in individual perception anymore, not in language, the world of religion, instinct, or intuition, or the multiple domains of individual body expression. If an individual experience could not be translated 'upwards' towards the level of general law, it could not become a theory. It would, therefore, remain in the domain of sheer obscurantism, a fantasy, never to reach the 'real world.'

Yet, since scientists were constituting 'science,' their individual bodies have been the source of their scientific values. One can presume they would never be able to produce anything without their bodies as a commencement for reference (unless they were gods, of course). It must be said that the abandonment of individual experience is undeniably connected to the problem of repetition of the phenomena that scientists are inclined to study. Through repetition, it seems evident that others can check the validity of scientific statements, as repetition establishes common ground. Intuitive sources and experiences seem less important once a causal chain of phenomena is established.

At the beginning of the 20th century, modern rationality initially criticized the logical positivism of August Comte and consorts, who established confirmation through induction, mainly creating the possibility of

moral imperatives. But in this war against induction, other, more dominating assumptions in social science could escape criticism completely. These assumptions consisted of:

- The Cartesian body and mind split,
- The domination of language as a vehicle for generalization in science,
- The domination of culture as a vehicle of social relations.
- And the expectation is that science will develop with increased objectivism.

These above basic assumptions, for better or for worse, have dominated every theory concerning individual body (and mind) perception and expression while at the same time establishing absolute control over theories relating to the oppositions between 'self' and 'other'; 'individual' and 'society'; 'freedom' and 'restraint'; and last but not least, 'independence' and 'dependency.'

These basic assumptions have also become so overwhelmingly self-evident that the endless repetition of the preceding oppositions seems to have befallen the faith of social science.

I am content with the idea that science changes and grows. The change would prevent science from becoming a dogmatic, tautological, and highly dangerous instrument. The question, however, is: does it change through the endless repetition of oppositions? As I mentioned before, all changes generally occur at the expense of individual bodily experience. I, personally, would not give up so many years of my life for the sake of generalized laws that risk destroying so many free perceptive moments.

This book, then, attempts to deconstruct the underlying scientific assumptions concerning individual body perception and expression and to remove the topic itself from the everlasting battle between body and mind. So far, it has not been easy, as scientific language categories are so interwoven with common perception that, at least in Western scientific discourse, it hardly allows for a language both by and of individual bodies. It is, therefore, no coincidence that deconstructing language models has become a dominant part of my efforts.

Simultaneously, deconstructing older categories and attempting to create space for individual expression by crossing genre boundaries are currently under constant attack. Crossing the boundaries of multiple disciplines and genres is post-modernistic. The phenomena are not easy to grasp, as there seem to be as many postmodernists as individuals. As always, some make sense, and some do not. But, although I am a very pessimistic person, I cannot help but view the attempts of postmodernists as a reaction to

a smothering universal moralism that does not allow individual bodies to be what they are, but instead constantly pushes individuals to become part of one generalized category or another. I will call these generalized categories 'body images.' I consider these body images a simulacra of reality, consisting of linguistic constructions that determine what individual bodies should be.'

I also want to introduce the nature of the difference between abstraction and generalization. Contrary to popular belief, the two are not interchangeable. I view generalization, which appears as the Cartesian abstraction, as an explanation principle that first reduces particles of phenomena and then categorizes them into universal laws. I view abstraction in a way similar to Franz Boas. Abstraction need not be part of a language, yet it should be able to form abstractions as soon as required. I do, however, have some doubts about the need and allowance. Abstraction is the capacity of individuals (bodies & minds) to communicate their private experiences with another individual (bodies & minds). It might be desperately needed yet allowed, or it might not. Therefore, the capacity for abstraction emanating from individual body perception easily conflicts with science's possibilities and goals.

I have retained the terms 'individual body perception' and 'individual body expression' to explicitly state that this exposé is not about the history of individualism as constructed through Western philosophical thought. For the same reason, I have restrained myself from giving a singular definition of what individual body perception and expression is. The underlying argument of this book is that such a definition would do no more than deliver an a priori body image, which immediately motivates an inescapable sequence of oppositions that restrain bodies (& minds) from perceiving and expressing themselves individually.

I will argue that acknowledging individual body expression and perception as the dynamic force behind scientific theory is a social necessity rather than an a priori truth. This social necessity prevents science from creating models for social hierarchy. I will show that there are views on language and culture that deny individual expression, just as there are views that specifically focus on individual expression. It will be argued that the individual body is given the position of an enlightened animal and that the lack of attention given to individual expression originates from the lack of power designated to individual expression concerning the generality of language. In this book, individual bodies (& minds) are not viewed as persons with private language, inner structures, or autonomous bodies in space. They are seen as

personal entities, detached and attached, characterized by differences that any general theory cannot eradicate.

In the following pages, I will explain how I view the relation between language and individual body perception and expression. I decided to connect the topic primarily to ideas in the work of Roland Barthes and Edward Sapir. Roland Barthes has exemplified the position of the individual body within Western discourse in a way quite unlike that of any other contemporary scientist. Edward Sapir, I view as one who has exemplified a theory of language concerning culture and individual originality equally unique.

I will first describe the difference between generalization and abstraction, and by which particular means the body has been expelled or incorporated into scientific discourse. This 'operation' will constitute the background of existing body images as models concerning contemporary society and the 'state of affairs' concerning the image of the senses within contemporary Western thought.

Secondly, I will address the existential conflict between individual expression and discursive language, and how the body participates in this conflict as a model or image of individuals. Two dominating conditions that structure hierarchy models in existing scientific theory will serve as examples. These conditions will show how perceptual suppositions about consciousness and subconsciousness in hierarchical models prevent scientists from accentuating individual expression.

Thirdly, I will explain how causal chains of signification further support hierarchical models used in scientific theory. It will be argued that a term like **subconscious** implies emptiness, nothingness, and slavery. This term is used in hierarchical opposition to **consciousness**, which implies perceptions, freedom of action, and morality. Replacing objectivity with inter-subjectivity, relativity, or dialectics does not intend to disrupt such hierarchical oppositions as long as they are primarily within the language domain. After this, I will conclude which options, and more precisely which preconditions, could be considered more open-ended points of view.

In the last part of this introduction, I will describe this book's form, sequence, and chapters. This part is jokingly called 'the style which fits the crime' as the biggest irony of writing about the individual (bodies & minds) in scientific discourse is that it is dominated by a form of writing that hardly allows for individual expression. We are not allowed to utter "I think," but only its generalized forms: "it seems, research shows, so and so wrote, the authority has it, it is said," and such. I bluntly deny the power of generalization concerning this specific topic.

1.1 *Linguistic Generalization and Individual Body Experience*

If we look at the phenomena that give science its representative character, it is not difficult to conclude that it literally breathes generalization. In this sense, the discourses of scientific concepts belong to languages (like Latin) that can survive without the physical perceptions of individuals who speak them. According to the same evolutionary scheme that creates the status of science as a non-religious and non-metaphysical operation (no one would dare see anymore that it is non-ideological), science itself derives much of its status from its supposed capacity to be "abstract."

Initially, the construction of the motion abstraction was derived from the mathematical models of the natural sciences; that is, one assigns a number to a thing ($2o$ = oxygen) and then has a unit to juggle with (H_2O + water). This type of abstraction is doubtless Cartesian. By submitting a formula for the constitution of matter, one can create a discourse that leaves out lengthy descriptions about what is unimportant. It is a way to create a "discourse on the method," as Descartes (1985) described. In doing so, an abstract discourse is born.

Partly, however, it becomes abstract because of its inaccessibility to those unable to know its rules, and partly, it becomes inaccessible to those whose language does not seem to have the capacity for abstraction, which is an old but grand and quite persistent prejudice about the so-called "primitive languages." Last but not least, abstraction seems abstract, partly because its character pluralizes phenomena to a level that can be tested as hypothetical theories.

There is something odd and remarkable about these operations and processes concerning the process of 'abstraction.' There seems to be no difference between abstraction and generalization when creating abstract formulas. All generalizations are called abstract, and a closer look usually shows that abstraction hardly has a more pluralizing capacity than average generalizations. Franz Boas once explained that abstraction might not be part of a language, but that every language has the capacity to create abstraction as soon as the 'need' arises (1948). Nevertheless, the scientific process hardly ever pluralizes beyond general categories. The **need** for abstraction is pretty much defined through the convenience of the situation, which seems rather inclined to ensure the continuity of the middlebrow.

If social science aims to create hypotheses for testing or to use texts as references, it could do without abstraction and limit itself to the more comfortable level of generalization. Social science, I found, is usually pretty poor at abstractions. Abstractions are too singular events to serve a scientific purpose, or, as Stephen Tyler once explained, do not fit in with the ever-lasting Cartesian matrix. To which, I might add, they do not fit in with their ever-lasting generalization, as this is explicitly the wisdom of their purpose.

What might be suitable for science —or, more particularly, for some scientists —has been questioned with increasing concern by a great many others (scientists, too). Roland Barthes, for instance, writes:

My body cannot accommodate itself to generality, to the power of generality, which is in language. Isn't that an individualistic view? (Barthes: 1988)

As a social scientist, I, too, have to conclude that language is not merely a means of expression and communication but also a means of control. As a means of abstraction, it enables us to generate concepts rather than things; simultaneously, the power of language to disembodify is one of the most horrifying human capacities. In social scientific theory, there is a tendency to reify such concepts as "the Self" and "the Other" without regard for the living human beings (bodies & minds) who communicate through, with, for, and about their bodies.

The last decade has delivered an incredible number of publications linking the human body to various social contexts. Awareness of this topic has irreversibly claimed its place in the social sciences. From earlier work on body behavior and body language, such as Birtwistle (1990), Hall (1969), Poyatus (1983), Polhemus (1978), and their likes, the accent has shifted towards images of the body. Excellent extended studies, such as *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* (Feher: 1990) and *The Body and Society* (Turner -1989:1991), suggest the robustness of the topic. On the other hand, the topic has become fashionable. Incorporating the body into social theory has often failed to transform it. Still, it has reinforced existing theoretical paradigms — incarnating them in their bodies, so to speak. This in itself is at least remarkable. What was intended to provide a fresh outlook on our existing theories, in fact, risks inscribing theoretical texts on the body. As a result, no truly revolutionary changes have occurred, even though many authors have

presented new and exciting research. What has happened? Have our theories become stereotypes of themselves, reifications of their reflexivity?

Apparently, social-scientific discourse, especially textual practices, has taken over our linguistic capacity to speak about the body without the mediation of metaphors, symbols, and generalizations. This seems largely the result of a body gaze, which offers the same possibilities as postmodernism does nowadays. Our bodies have become extensions of our theories while remaining mute simulacra of themselves. In the postmodern world and within mass culture, numerous body images are being created. These body images do not seem to be of flesh and blood, as would be the case with simplified racial features. They partially reflect a dualistic worldview expressed in linguistically mediated oppositions such as nature/culture, female/male, individual/society, and so on. Nevertheless, they are now infinitely more refined, difficult to analyze, and dangerous than ever. These body images are primarily produced by those groups in society that profit from mass consumerism. Fashion designers, advertisers, politicians, medics, and many other groups all have a stake in constructing body images in advertisements as close to their liking as possible.

Barthes states:

To write the body.

Neither the skin, nor the muscles, nor the bones, nor the nerves, but the rest: an awkward, fibrous, shaggy, raveling thing, a clown's coat (1988:180).

This begs the question: What is "the body," anyway? If we look at its epistemological history, we soon have to conclude that it consists of textuality and textuality alone--as it must. In the many fine works written about the body, one aspect has never reached the arena of intellectual discussion: our bodies make us the individuals we are. Each of us lives in a specific body whose existence eludes such linguistic attributes as "cultural," "natural," "feminine," "masculine," "political," or "discursive." What remains is a nagging sense of absence regarding the bodies of individuals because the dominating powers of representation have not been eluded. Nevertheless, many discussions persist about the 'subjection' of the individual body. If we look at Foucault's "Discipline and Punishment (1983), the individual body becomes a mere shadow in a panoptic space, subjected to discourse. If we look at Freud's "Totem and Taboo (1984)," the individual body is itself subjected to the

Unconscious, the Ego, the Id, sexuality, and censorship--in short, at least five bodies at the same time. However, Barbara Stafford's "Body Criticism" (1990) depicts a body that has been subjected to a history of dissection and abstraction. The work of Dorinda Outram in "The Body and the French Revolution" (1989) explains the body as a political image that emerged from the French Revolution, not for individuality, but to create a middle class—a "body politic," so to speak. Last but not least, Frederic Jameson, in his "Post Modernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" (1991), argues that the individual body has been lost in the postmodern space of late capitalism (ibid:45). Whatever the body seems to express, theories indeed suggest that there is a possible consensus about the meaning of that same expression. This prospective consensus links the human body everlastingly to the generality of the natural, social, and linguistic sciences. Ferdinand De Saussure made it quite clear in his Course in General Linguistics that:

The characteristics that animals of the same species have in common are much more significant than the difference that separates them (1959:106).

Did scientists ever really disagree with him on this? However, a consensus on the body would rule it out as a spatial individual expression and turn it into a historical sequence. This timely distance (distancing operation) results in a ping-pong game between nature and culture in which the individual body is either a scale denomination (i.e., one example of the species), an enlargement of itself (society is a body), or a discursive construction (the cultured personality).

If we set aside the body as a gift from God or as a product of consensus, we might be able to address more pressing matters, such as appropriate attitudes toward our scientific theories. To this end, one of the most intriguing linguists and anthropologists I have encountered is Edward Sapir, whom I experience as a summer breeze in a winter of moralistic criticism. Sapir was a free man, as yet unspoiled by fragmentation, and determined to describe the ontology of language rather than its epistemology. Dramatically, one might say, he became the victim of ruling body images, being Jewish by birth and working in a climate of academic anti-Semitism. One story has it that he died of grief as an indirect consequence of academic isolation (Darnell 1990, 401).

Sapir suggests that language is primarily a process of classification, where delimitation is crucial. For example, to understand a stream of speech, a native speaker refers to "phonetic stations" — that is, "isolated sounds" — that create "psychological barriers," enabling us to recognize the "gaps" between sounds and thus to recognize and distinguish symbols referring to one thing or another. Language, therefore, imposes form on phenomena. Essential to any given language is its "system" of differentiation on the one hand and its "system" of barriers or limitations on the other hand. This systematic practice of differentiation and limitation constitutes what I like to call the "art of recognition." In Sapir's words:

It is imperative to realize that once the form of language is established, it can discover meanings for its speakers, which are not simply traceable to the given quality of experience itself, but must be explained to a large extent as the projection of potential meanings into the raw material of experience (1985:10).

It is precisely this raw material of experience, as yet unclassified by language, which seems closest to the individual body. Once it is classified through language, the experience of the individual body gets linked to a field of symbolic reference. Like the body each of us is born with, each field of reference--that is, each language--differs from every other and is not of our choosing; each language, like each body, is an accidental inheritance. However, unlike our bodies, language is a communal enterprise. The historical, collective process, which is the symbolic construction of the body--i.e., the body image--seduces each individual body into an identification with its chain of causes and effects.

Therefore, says Sapir, language simultaneously helps and hinders us--renders us retarded--in the exploration of our individual experience (ibid:11). For Sapir, the individual aspects of language remain ever close to the body. These include factors such as tone of voice and personal voice characteristics (i.e., the domain of adverbs). It will be obvious why individual body expression gets so easily lost in the social sciences, insofar as we rely upon a culture of writing and reading. However, elements in the social sciences go beyond the mere fact of our dependence on writing.

First of all, we should realize that Western concepts of the body entirely dominate the social sciences. Despite the escapist tricks the rhetors of the

social sciences may employ, their practices still betray their Platonist/Cartesian origin, whose essence is the assumed split between body and mind, placing the abstract (and superior) mind in the natural (and inferior) body. This assumed schism is reflected in a dualizing linguistic practice that long pre-existed the social sciences and which, in Sapir's view, projects potential meanings onto the raw material of experience. Abstract discourse - Cartesian style- still dominates the social sciences, even as it seeks to dominate so-called primitive peoples, whose ranks nowadays include those who do not wish to comply with virtual reality and who are not supposed to have any capacity for abstract language. Such nonconformists are liable to be seen as little more than animals following the rules of their collective body, not unlike Descartes' animal bodies. One can wonder whether the body/mind split is indeed about the mind. I, for one, feel that it is more appropriately understood as the split between the body and discursive perceptions of the body--i.e., between the body and language--as well as a discourse of power over the bodies of others.

It is no longer politically correct to label technologically less advanced, non-Western cultures as "primitive"; such a practice is today labeled as inexcusably ethnocentric (which it generally is). However, other ethnocentric notions from Western science have been spared such attacks. The issue of ethnocentrism seems to have blocked out questions about the habitual use of abstract notions or, more accurately, the application of generalizations and grammatical structures to the body. In many studies, the objectivity of both of these concepts is being questioned, while the method itself has remained intact. In Stephen Tyler's words, the king has been dethroned, but the kingdom still exists (1990:).

At the same time, the concept of objectivity in the social sciences is under pressure; the shift towards cultural relativism has led to an awareness that the existence of the individual body is itself a Western construction anchored in the history of the French Revolution. This construction may be called the Rousseauian image of humans, and it might not apply in non-Western cultures. However, one must question whether this so-called Western construction of the individual body is as individual as advertised. Is it indeed individual, or is it an image of a public perception whereby some individual (and male) bodies are more individual than other (female) bodies? Or, in George Orwell's politically canny phrase, are some bodies more equal than others?

Perhaps more important is to recognize that the mere presence of such images does not negate the personal expression of the individual body. Yet the sum total of our means of interpretation might not reveal this as long as the expressive force of language remains hidden behind alleged oppositions of social scientific discourses. Prophetically enough, Sapir warned us about this tendency:

Language is heuristic (...) in the much more far-reaching sense that it predetermines for us certain modes of observation and interpretation. This means of course that as our scientific experience grows we must learn to fight the implications of language (Sapir, 1985:10).

Now, one could easily say that Sapir was blind to the economy of language and naive about the growth of scientific experience, just as one could say that Bourdieu (1977) is equally cynical about both. But the process Sapir fears here engages more than the heuristics of language alone. It also warns of a linguistic process in which individual bodies are fragmented by observation and subsequently incorporated into a larger body —the modern industrial society. For Sapir, were he alive today, would the heuristics of society itself have condemned the individual body to the experience of spurious culture? In his article "Culture Genuine and Spurious," he is pretty clear about this:

An automatic perpetuation of standardized values, not subject to constant remodeling of individuals willing to put part of themselves into the forms they receive from their predecessors, leads to the dominance of impersonal formulas. The individual is left out in the cold; the culture becomes a manner rather than a way of life, it ceases to be genuine (ibid:321)

In light of this observation, we are left with a body that must fight language's implications to survive its textual alienation. The outcome of such a process is comparable to Jameson's views on postmodernism. It all depends on one's orientation. Postmodernism is, in fact, no more than an attempt to offer some deconstructions of these body positions and of an overarching cultural determinant in which society itself has become an industrial body and in which individuals seem to exist primarily as components of a grammatical-language. It should become clear that this body has little to do with the organics of

society in the traditional sense of the word. It more resembles a product — for example, an artificial grammatical construction — than a given social community, for its recent development has been in terms of a global economy rather than those of a traditional society. And this entails a significant risk, as Jameson points out:

What happens is that the more powerful the vision of some increasingly total system or logic (...), the more powerless the reader comes to feel. Insofar as the theorist wins, therefore, by constructing an increasingly closed and terrifying machine, to that very degree, he loses, since the critical capacity of his work is thereby paralyzed, and the impulses of negation and revolt, not to speak of those of social transformation, are increasingly perceived as vain and trivial in the face of the model itself (Jameson: 1990, 5-6).

1.2 The Abstracted Senses and a Sense of Abstraction

The models to which Jameson refers have an immediate impact on body image. The Cartesian body-mind split is indeed the prevailing model within the social sciences. In accordance with the separation of body and mind, the senses have also been modeled, and the body has become the site for ambiguity (See also Falk, 1994:2).

On the one hand, the degree of modulation of the senses depends on views of scientific observation. The senses are, for instance, more or less reliable instruments of observation depending on the nature of scientific models. One example is the battle between Goethe and Newton over the observation of colors. In Goethe's view, the color 'white' consisted of a perceptible radiation of light, while Newton considered 'white' to be a composition of spectrally pure colors. In Goethe's view, observation of the external world emanated from the senses. In Newton's view, the technical reproduction of the color white seems to prove that the perception of light by the body had nothing to do with the external qualities of colors. In later theories, for instance, Piaget's work on the myth of sensory perception (1978), the senses became increasingly suspect as means for everyday observation, and the strong separation between fantasy, hallucination, and reality, which dominated the twentieth century, further reduced the significance of sensory perception.