Vlieghe, Joris; Masschelein, Jan; Simons, Maarten

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■ *Beiträge zur Allgemeinen Pädagogik*

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Joris Vlieghe/Jan Masschelein/Maarten Simons

Corporeal experience and equality

A new approach to the educational significance of the body

Abstract: In this article we overview different positions that have been taken in educational theory in regard with the meaning of corporeality for education. We argue that the body either appears as a factor through which subjectivity gets discursively formed, which makes the body lose its material weight, or as a vehicle by means of which existing educational goals, such as the furthering of a fully developed personality or an accurate view of the world are more authentically and efficiently realized. We argue that these approaches imply an instrumentalization of the body which makes it impossible to conceive the body in its full physicality. The experience of coinciding with one's "flesh" might however carry a major educational importance out of itself, because of the radical equalizing and emancipatory qualities it might have.

1. Introduction

Going against the long standing tradition, characteristic for modern western thought, to disregard the body as a constitutive part of what it means to be human (Leder, 1990), there has been since the second half of the 20th Century a growing tendency in philosophy and social sciences to give the body back its rightful place. Referring to the title of a recent book by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2009) we might even speak about a "corporeal turn". This growing interest in human embodiment is evidently also to be found in the domain of educational sciences and philosophy (e.g. Bresler, 2004; Egger & Hackl, 2010; Kraus, 2008, 2009, 2010; O'Farrell, Meadmore, McWilliam & Symes, 2000), and goes back as early as Dewey's criticism of dualism (See Macintyre Latta & Buck, 2008, p. 315). It has become evident that teaching and learning are processes that are firmly rooted in corporeal mechanisms and that are dependent upon embodied experience. This however doesn't imply a mere reversal of the Cartesian opposition of mind and body (focusing all attention so to speak on the biological or organic body), but rather a recognition that all meaningful activities are in a deep sense bodily activities and that the body has therefore always a constitutive role to play in making sense of ourselves, others and the world (Kraus, 2009, p. 11; Peters, 2004, p. 25). Therefore, educational theory should "fall back into trust" with the body (Cf. Macintyre Latta & Buck, 2008).

Nevertheless, the battle to foreground the body appeared as not so easy to be won. Today there can still be observed a "disastrous disconnect with the body's role in educating teachers" (Macintyre Latta & Buck, 2008, p. 316) and the same could be said in connection with the organization of schooling and the way in which curricula are being given shape. Moreover, to some authors, the idea that corporeality and education are or should be closely interrelated is highly questionable. Robin Barrow, for instance,

recently claimed that the body might certainly be an important dimension of schooling generally (schools, as all other social institutions, should be concerned with health and fitness), but that attention for corporeality has no relevance for defining education *per se* (Barrow, 2008). This is because there is in his opinion no straightforward reason to accept that the cultivation of the body also contributes to the edification of that what is truly humane. Admitting that the organization of dance classes at school might result in the development of dancing skills, the question remains whether this subject is more important than math or history, or whether this subject contributes to the raising of a unique and valuable form of knowledge (apart from knowing the finesses of the art of dance). To Barrow, there should be an interest for the (training of the) body at school, but not *for strictly educational reasons.*

In this article we are concerned with developing an argument in favor of the *educational relevance of the body*. We will however depart radically from the ways in which in the last decades the importance of the theme of corporeality has been discussed. Fruitful as these approaches might be, we also believe that they make us blind for another side of corporeality that is nevertheless of the greatest importance for anyone concerned with the critical possibilities of education. This concerns more precisely the possibility of experiencing to coincide with one's body, which might for instance occur when one succumbs to a fit of communal laughter during a class, or when one engages in repetitive or exhausting corporeal activity: living through such moments of entirely being "flesh" might alter one's sense of living together in a radical, viz. equalizing way.

We will moreover argue that the existing approaches, even if they should be rightfully praised for asking more attention for the theme of corporeity in educational philosophy and theory, don't take the body seriously enough. To substantiate this claim we will first attempt to give an overview of the different points of view that have been taken in the literature on this subject, without however pretending to be exhaustive. We rather envisage to show that there exists a tendency to deal with the body either by seeing it as a factor through which subjectivity gets discursively shaped, which makes the body to lose, so to speak, its material weight (section 2: the constructivist approach), or by stressing the role it is supposed to play in the realization of a fully developed personality (section 3: the naturalistic approach) and of an accurate view of the world (section 4: the epistemological approach). We will try to show that in all three approaches, the body either is denied to have a reality of its own, or is made subservient or instrumental to existing educational goals. We will, on the contrary, elaborate a point of view which does take seriously the body in its full "fleshness" or physicality, showing it to have an unexpected equalizing significance (section 5).

2. The constructivist approach: the body as site of subject-formation

As we said before, the interrelationship of corporeality and education has for a long time been a disregarded subject in educational theory and philosophy. This has undoubtedly to do with an overall dualist and intellectualist account of schooling and education,

which is well illustrated by the thoughts of Barrow on the – in his view – questionable pairing of education and physical activity, and which finds, more generally, its clearest expression in Richard Peters' influential thesis that education should be defined as the initiation into worthwhile forms of knowledge (Peters, 1966). Pupils and students are addressed here as "fleshless spirits". That is why Michael Peters argues, following Richard Rorty, that there exists in western education a "culturally deeply embedded dualism which educational theory and practice must come to terms with" (Peters, 2004, p. 14). It is against *this* background that we must appreciate the contribution of a first type of body-centered approach to education. In the same article Michael Peters argues that much should be gained from engaging with poststructuralist authors, such as Foucault or Butler, in order to give the body back its rightful place and to develop a more "embodied curriculum" (p. 25).[1] More broadly, it could be said that a lot is to be expected from rethinking the body from a "constructivist" perspective.[2]

To this approach subjectivity isn't regarded as something always already there, but as something that has to be constituted in the first place. This line of thought goes against the habit of many philosophers to start with "the subject" (mostly in terms of consciousness and cognitive capacities) in order to explain coherence and stability in the world. The first enigma to be solved is, on the contrary, to explain why a stable and coherent subject form is actually possible. So, to this view, subjectivity is seen as a result, rather than as a fixed starting point, and, interestingly, corporeality often appears as a crucial axis in this formation process: individuals become particular subjects as a result of performing practices that involve the body, and through discourses and apparatuses that work upon it (Butler, 1993). Concrete embodied actions and especially routines, often in regard with seemingly banal things such as the way in which one eats or the food one prefers (Shilling, 2004), as well as body-related discourses that mold these actions (e.g. the prevalent discourse on hygiene), determine "who we are" – and thus determine also what we are not (but what we could have been in other circumstances). There exists therefore no subjectivity prior to or outside of what we, as concrete bodies, actually do and experience. Discursively shaped gestures and corporeal routines are not so much expressive, though exactly formative of contingent subjectivities.

Now, this "constructivist" point-of-view not only implies a definitive farewell to any intellectualist view on education. It also makes clear that educational theory and research should better take corporeality into account when reflecting upon the goals of education (traditionally considered as initiation into a future society) or upon its critical and emancipatory possibilities. Consider for instance the role a "corporeal" practice

1 The suggestion is of course that there exists a parallelism between the traditional way of doing philosophy and the commonly held concept of education as the cultivation of intellectual potential. Therefore to conceive adequately a more body-centered form of education, an alternative philosophical approach is required.

2 We prefer to speak here about a "constructivist" approach, as we try to bring together various perspectives that are obviously not post-structural in a narrow sense, i.e. also views that are not solely concerned with the "productive" side of power (Foucault, 1982), but also with the uncovering of mechanisms of oppression and the reproduction of inequality.

such as calligraphy plays in the formation of gender-specific subjectivities. As Alison Jones (2000) shows, a boy's handwriting is, as rule, quite easily to be distinguished from that of a girl: western educational system generally requires a girl's handwriting to be much more delicate and regular than that of boys. So, one's identity (as pupil or student) gets fixated through the kind of handwriting that is displayed: when an outsider has to evaluate anonymously written examinations, he or she may, before engaging with the content of the text, establish to have in front of her the work of a man or a woman with a high degree of probability. But, according to Jones, the extent to which calligraphic practice shapes subjectivities is more far-reaching: this is because girls are to be judged above all in accordance with formal criteria, while boys, regardless of their "bad" calligraphy, are far more often judged on the ground of the content of what they write. In addition, girls get invited to become erotically engaged with their handwriting (in the sense that they enjoy excelling with regard to this particular skill and do not shun the harshest of competition with their same-gender peers). Precisely for this reason the opposition between boys (presupposed to be "naturally" interested in the content of things, the stuff that really matters) and girls (presupposed to be "naturally" inclined to stop short at the surface and the embellishment of things) gets affirmed time and again.

Let us consider another example of subjectivation that is dependent upon educational practices and discourses that concern the body. Following Foucault (2004), it could be said that today we live under a discursive regime that asks individuals to relate to themselves as "entrepreneurial selves" (p. 232). This means that the western ("neoliberal") subject is urged to invest and reinvest relentlessly her own talents and achieved competencies in a never ending attempt to safeguard and promote her own position in life. This obsession with individual excellence not only advances one's own strength and flourishing, but contributes at the same time to the preservation and progress of society as a whole. Evidently, this has major implications for the way in which actors in the educational field see themselves (viz. as "life-long learners" rather than as pupils or students, see: Biesta, 2006). This "entrepreneurial" regime also defines the way in which *physical* education is given shape. Pupils and students are individually addressed to be constantly engaged with *bodily excellence*: this is because they are supposed to understand that a maximally sound and fit body decreases the occurrence of heart disease, diabetes and other manageable pathologies. "Enterpreneurial selves" are thus found obliging to wear out their bodies during harsh and daily training practices – no matter the degree of discomfort these demanding practices require, – because scientific discourse assures that this kind of exercise will make them live healthier and will, at the same time, guarantee their efficient employability as the kind of productive agents neoliberal society is in need of (Markula, 2004; Cf. Hackl, 2006). This is also why the promotion of the "fit" body, i.e. the maximally adaptable body, is set high on the (physical) educational agenda and why competitive sport and fitness training programs have come to replace "traditional", non productive practices such as rhythmical gymnastics or folk games (Eichberg, 2009).

These examples illustrate that an understanding of processes of subject-formation in relation to embodied practices offers a way to leave behind an intellectualistic account

regarding education and that it might offer fruitful tools of analysis and criticism of the phenomenon in question. These examples however also make clear that the body is discussed in a very particular way. Corporeality is never considered to be a substantial physical reality, as it is solely appreciated as a vehicle that contributes to make subject-formation intelligible. To this view we grasp more adequately the way in which *subjectivity* gets constituted when we take into account bodily practices (e.g. writing in a careless or neat manner) on which *self*-identity is *based,* and when we pay attention to discourses *about* the corporeal (e.g. the all-pervasive manner of thinking and speaking in terms of individual excellence and employability, or the belief in the salutary powers of fitness-training) in accordance with which contingent forms of *self*-understanding are generated. Seen from this perspective the body has no weight of its own any longer, as Maria Carozzi argues (2005, p. 29)[3]. Corporeity has only significance insofar as it contributes to the constitution of *subjects* or *selves*. The very concept of *human corporeality as a physical reality of its own* has become meaningless here. This view on the body is moreover in line with another major constructivist concern, viz.: that discussing corporeality *before or outside* discourse and practice (referring to "the body" as a kind of "pre-discursive reality") is to be condemned as morally and politically reprehensible (Butler, 1993). This is because claiming to have scientific – and hence universally valid – knowledge about the body covers up that this knowledge is only a contingent and historical situated construction, which serves to make us believe that e.g. gender roles or distinctions between "normal" and "disabled" people are natural, and that they are by necessity always and everywhere the same. So called objective speech about "the" body (as an ontological essence) operates as a dangerous tool of exclusion e.g. in connection with physically impaired pupils during physical education class (Fitzgerald, 2005).

Now, this first "constructivist" way in which the body is dealt with in educational philosophy and theory today stands in sharp contrast to other perspectives that are currently in vogue and which consider corporeality as a dimension that has its own substantiality. These approaches criticize the view we have just analyzed for not taking the body seriously enough. More precisely, to these perspectives – which we will analyze in what follows – the body *as such*, i.e. the *physical* body, should be considered as a forgotten or even a repressed dimension of humanity we should put at work (again).

3 In a daring but very original article, Carozzi (2005), risking herself to become the victim of a "chicken and egg causality dilemma", turns upside down the whole perspective of constructivism (which claims that all statements regarding the physical body are but discursive effects): she precisely tries to show that the daily academic practice of scientists in the humanities is to such a great extent disembodied, that they can't help but to regard the body as an effect of "incorporeal" discourse.

3. The naturalistic approach: the body as a constitutive part of humanity

At first, the approaches we label as "naturalistic" might seem to underline the same point that was at stake in the "constructivist" perspective. Even so, there exist crucial differences. To make this clear, let us consider for a moment an in our view clear exponent of this other approach, viz. the line of thought that criticizes western schooling apparatus in terms of a far going disciplinarization (e.g. Deacon, 2005; Freund, 1982; Gleyse, 1997; McLaren, 1999). Referring to Foucault's work (1977) on the history of penitentiary institutions, schools (because of the way in which they are organized on an everyday basis) are exposed as being predominantly concerned with the production of "docile bodies" (rather than for instance with transferring knowledge and skill): they aim at constraining and controlling the exuberant forces and unproductive yearnings the body displays. Harsh bodily drill produces a kind of automatons that are willing to fulfill accurately and within planned time and space tasks imposed upon them (bringing to silence the inclinations to eat, to sleep or to think about sex all day long). In this way a reservoir of efficient labor power is guaranteed. Inglis and Holmes (2000) offer a concrete example of a school-practice that envisages maximal productivity, viz. in regard with the regulation of the hours when and places where urinating and defecation is allowed to happen. It is only permitted to relieve of excrements and to "waste" time during strictly regulated breaks. This imposition on natural tendencies prevents any loss of efficiency. Fecal rupture of time regime is maximally fended off. Through enslaving one of the most essential bodily functions, pupils become fully subjected.

As we said, this kind of analysis also deals with the construction of particular forms of embodied subjectivity. Nevertheless, it departs in two important ways from "constructivism". First, the body is seen here as having a substantive reality of its own: the formation of the subject is considered to be much more "enfleshed", as Peter McLaren (1991) would argue. Subjectivity gets produced (and societal order reproduced) through what he calls "the non-discursive penetration of the flesh" (p. 154), and therefore "oppression leaves its traces not just in people's minds, but in their muscles and skeletons as well" (Fay, 1987, p. 146; quoted in McLaren, 1991, p. 153). So, *the physical body has a weight of its own that was denied in constructivism*. Second, according to this approach, corporeality also functions as a *normative* category: that we undeniably *are* made out of flesh and bone should decide the question what education should and should not consist in. What is at stake in this line of research is to show that under disciplinary (schooling) regimes people continuously are denied *the possibility to develop themselves as completely flourishing human beings*. That is why we will call this approach "naturalistic".

To this view, perfection and happiness are dependent upon recognizing that in the history of western schooling the body has been suppressed in a counter-natural way and therefore that it is high time to give to the body back its rightful place: instead of teaching to suppress its tendencies for sensuous gratification, play, laughter, exuberant display of force, grace and stamina, or rest now and then, the body should be set free to do what is inclined to do spontaneously. However, according to this "naturalistic" approach, the plea for bodily emancipation doesn't necessarily imply a license to do what-

ever one likes: it is not as if the rediscovery of a *deeper bodily self* calls pupils to follow any impulse one might have and to give oneself over to the unbounded freedom to do whatever feels good. On the contrary, as Susan Stinson (2003) argues, a more authentic sense of autonomy might be reached as the result of revaluating human embodiment. A sport teacher might address an urge for self-discipline which resides under the skin, e.g. when she commands pupils suffering from ADD to switch very quickly between a lying position and standing right up, until they feel their hearts beat quite rapidly. When they are asked thereupon to remain lying down on the floor and to begin breathing at a slower pace, they might become aware of their own heart-beat slowing down. So, they are invited to realize that they are able to master their own corporeal energies. So, pupils discover a fundamental capacity which they (perhaps) didn't realize to possess. This mastership refers to an authentic and embodied form of self-management (which is *not* an imposed societal demand). The regaining of this natural ability is educationally so relevant that this type of exercise should be included within curriculum (Stinson, 2003, pp. 157-158).

To elucidate further the specificity of a "naturalistic" approach, we finally turn to the domain of the feminist criticism regarding the way in which corporeal practices fixate gender identities and create gender opposition. Whereas we earlier presented the discussion regarding the activity of handwriting, we now concentrate on a simpler example: throwing. We refer here to the well known article by Iris Young (1990), in which she argues that there is a distinctive way in which boys and girls typically "throw". Even if primary and secondary gender characteristics were absent, one would still be able to pick out the boys from the girls when seeing them for instance play a ball game. Now, the "girlish" way of throwing is not so much a biological given, according to Young, though the result of the masculine gaze women continuously have to undergo: this is because women, being very much aware that they are the object of this gaze, are taught to feel uncertain and inhibited. Consequentially they develop a style of movement that is much more reserved. Their movements always appear as *more artificial* (and thus *less natural*). Women "are not given the opportunity to use their full body capacities in free and open engagement with the world, nor are they encouraged as much as boys to develop specific bodily skills" (Young, 1990, p. 154). So, a full and unreserved deployment of their physical potential is ruled out. Emancipation therefore would consist in reconnecting with more authentic possibilities of bodily activity. In conclusion, we can say that this view, even if it clearly dovetails with the "constructivist" interest in processes of subjectivization, should be termed "naturalistic" in the end. This is because Young's analysis is based upon the idea that there exists an original richness of physical potentiality that, irrespective of (prescribed) gender or social roles, should meet the opportunity to come to full expression.

4. The epistemological approach: the body as carrier and precondition of meaning

When overviewing the literature that discusses education in relation to corporeality, there exists a third perspective that is also concerned with the body *as such* (the *physical* body, rather than the *constructed* body) and which is therefore close to the "naturalistic" approach. We would like to call this approach "epistemological", as, in contradistinction to the "naturalistic" interest in corporeality this approach ascribes a pivotal role to the body in so far as it is claimed to be indispensable for transmitting and developing knowledge, insight, skill and character (rather than because of the role it is supposed to play in the advancement of true human freedom and perfection.) This perspective is not solely concerned with the often disregarded material context of teaching and learning, for instance with the architecture of classrooms and school buildings (which might stimulate learning outcomes, but which could also have detrimental effects on students' learning motivation, Cf. Rittelmeyer, 2002). More important is that this "epistemological" approach presupposes that the physical body plays a major generative role in the constitution of *all* meaningful relation to the world and to others. This is perhaps, as Merleau-Ponty (1995) shows, because the body has an "intentionality" of its own. When playing the piano for instance, our fingers might produce a unique interpretation of a Beethoven sonata, even if one is not exactly able to explain how one managed to do this. It is therefore allowed to speak about "corporeal knowledge" and about "an original body logos" (Sheets-Johnstone, 1990, p. 7), which is in a sense *older* than and preconditions all intellectual ability: the body already "knows how" to relate in a meaningful, viz. melodic and harmonic, way to the keys of the pianoforte and how to express feelings of, say, utmost loneliness. Moreover, any theoretical knowledge concerning the performance of interpretation of music is only made possible as a further elaboration of this pre-reflexive corporal intentionality.

This "epistemological" line of thought is often substantiated by invoking examples of meaningful phenomena that at first sight seem to have nothing to do with the corporeal. In a recent article, Robin Barnacle (2009) for instance elaborates a rather extreme argument, which deals with treatment of chronic depression, an affliction which is commonly interpreted as a *mental* problem (p. 25). Nevertheless, the medication used to overcome this illness effects the control of the digestive system, and more precisely the disturbed regulation of the neurotransmitter serotonin, which is responsible for a fluent transit in the bowels. Depressive moods, so Barnacle argues, don't originate in the first place in a wrong or negative self-image, though in the disorderly way in which the body takes in nutrition and excretes feces. The mental states involved in depression might thus be considered as epiphenomena to this dysfunctional physiologic process, so it is suggested.

Now, the idea that the physical body relates out of itself to the world in significant ways and thus preconditions all other meaningful phenomena legitimizes a (plea for a more) body-centered practice of teaching and learning. This involves, of course, more than serving easily digestible food in school canteens. It would, according to

this "epistemological" perspective, also consist in acknowledging that even the most abstract kinds of thinking, such as mathematics, presuppose the body: we count up to ten, because, before calculators were invented, we had to use ten fingers. This insight might have major implications for the organization of math classes.[4] To give another similar example: when a biology teacher explains that the heart functions as a complex pump-device, she might illustrate this by using her two hands performing the widening and shrinking of the heart-chambers. This case presents a fine example of embodied knowledge and embodied didactics. Even so, pupils get usually examined in ways that are completely opposite to the gathering of this knowledge: they have as a rule to write down how the heart works, using abstract concepts. So a criticism might be raised here against the existing educational system: this is because a pupil, who fails for this kind of testing, might pass *maxima cum laude* when she was allowed to use her body as an expressive medium and thus had been able to show that she in fact understands how blood circulates (See: Pozzer-Ardenghi & Roth, 2007).

Still another domain where, to this view, the constitutive role of the body should be taken into consideration concerns the improvement of understanding and of solidarity between people of different gender, social or ethnical background. This worthwhile initiative is doomed to fail if students are solely addressed as rational and self-reflective subjects, or – to use a term from Monica Hogan –, if one relies on an "ethical content approach" (Hogan, 2006), i.e. when one believes that theoretical instruction will suffice. This is because, "the body is the material foundation upon which the desire for human liberation and social transformation rests" (Shapiro, 1999, p. 100). Learning responsibility or acquiring feelings of empathy presuppose, to this line of thought, that one's personality is firmly imbedded in the affective body. Moral insensibility could thus be compared with colour-blindness: just as people suffering from this disability are completely unable to detect (certain) colours, those that are dead to their own corporeal feelings are utterly unable to feel grief, compassion and consideration for others. To this approach, moral susceptibility is based on the acknowledgement of being a fully embodied body, and precisely *this* should be the objective of moral character building in school (Ibid.).

For the moment we may conclude that the approach that we have called "epistemological" is on a par with the "naturalistic" variant, as far as for both – in contradistinction to the "constructivist" perspective – corporeality is taken *as an autonomous and substantial reality*, and as for both this physical body (respectively as a dimension that asks to be recognized and developed in order to attain a fully human development, or as the very precondition for acquiring insight and moral sensitivity) functions *as a normative category* in the name of which the right way to educate should be conceived. This is to say that a body-centered pedagogy is required, as it is clear to these approaches that the potential the body might offer, and which has been all too often forgotten or ne-

4 Which is e.g. the case in the didactical approach towards arithmetic in schools that apply the Montessori method.

glected, or which even suffered the fate of repression, should be retrieved. We should fall back in trust with our bodies and put them at work (again).

5. Towards an alternative approach: experiencing corporeal democracy

However, in this article we want to argue for a different and in our view more compelling reason to concentrate on human embodiment. We will present a fourth approach that also concentrates on the physicality of human existence, but which tries to conceive it in a to our knowledge as yet unexplored, though *radically positive* direction[5].

5 We should mention though that there has recently been developed a new body of scholarship that also ascribes a primordial role to the materiality of the body, but that so far has not met with much attention in educational theory. This comprises various lines of thought, ranging from "feminist materialism" (e.g. Barad, 2003), over "new materialism" (e.g. de Landa, 2006), to "medial ecology" (e.g. Kittler, 1987). In her "agential realist" account of materiality for instance, Barad rejects perspectives that view matter as a passive substance that is need of cultural and linguistic meanings imposed upon it to come to "matter"', i.e. to be real or relevant. Although Barad follows Butler's idea, we discussed in the first part of this article, that (gender) subjectivity is only the effect of reiterated bodily activities, she objects that what the body actually does is in Butler's view always dependent upon discursive regimes that promote particular embodied identities at the cost of excluding others. Under a heteronormative regime e.g. "abnormal" sexualities have the power to destabilize existing apparatus, but in the end draw this insurrectionary force only from being defined as the ab-normal, the outside of a category that is understood as normal. Thus, "what the body is able to do", is defined only negatively.
Barad, and the other "materialists" we mentioned on the contrary, give the body back its own agency. This move constitutes however not a mere reversal of representationalism: the point is not that we should see the body as a biological infrastructure that is more powerful than the representational realm, but as a constitutive part of a world that is at the same time material and symbolic. This is to say that instead of speaking about things versus meaning we should see the world, at an ontological level, as an "ongoing open process of mattering" (Barad, 2003, p. 817) in which materiality and discursive processes constitute reality together ("intra-actively"). This implies that identitary differences that count as relevant (e.g. between homo- and heterosexuals or between (wo)man and animal) are contingent and temporarily, and remain open for changes and contestations that are in a very positive sense "caused" (821) by material or corporeal forces: "Matter is not little bits of nature, or a blank state, surface, or site passively awaiting signification […] Matter is always already an ongoing historicity" (p. 821). Matter/corporeality is thus real, has its own agency, but is at the same time part of a larger history of materializations. It plays a role in its own materialization. Exactly here resides the possibilities for criticality and real change.
Although this view clearly concentrates on the body in its full materiality and is able to do this in an entirely positive way (this approach is not defining matter in relation to processes of signification that it would escape), we are not sure whether this line of thought is exactly the same as the one we advocate here. This is because the main focus of this approach remains a form of ontology that eventually may help us to get a truer picture of what the body is capable of. In that sense it would be a correction of the "naturalistic" approach we discussed in the second part of this article (more precisely stressing other possibilities of embodied life, and especially post-human forms-of-life, and how these might come to flourish). In this article we

We think, first, that the "naturalistic" and "epistemological" views in the end always treat corporeality in a functional way, rather than that they take the body seriously *as such*. The views in question invariably stress the benefits teaching and learning might gain when one is willing to consider the body to be a tacit, though not to be neglected carrier of meaning ("epistemological" account), or to be a source of genuine self-expression and self-realization ("naturalistic" account). These perspectives start from the presupposition that education should consist in helping to realize maximal personal flourishing, or in conveying knowledge and increasing ethical sensibility. And then they show, but *only* in a second moment, that the body should *also* be taken into consideration. The corporeal is thus paid attention to *because of* the important role it is supposed to play in the optimization of already established educational goals. That is why we claim that the body is not understood positively, but only instrumentally.

Second, we also argue that both approaches hide from view a very particular register of corporeal experience that might allow thinking differently about the proper educational side of the physical. To elucidate this last point, we have to refer here to a distinction which Husserlian phenomenology draws between *Leiblichkeit* and *Körperlichkeit*. The first term refers to the way in which we usually relate to our own embodied condition, i.e. as lived-through body: experiencing the body "from within". The second term relates above all to the way in which another person relates to our own body: as objective, physical body, i.e. perceived from an external point of view. As *Leib* we might feel pain, whereas as *Körper* we might be said (by a doctor) to suffer from the inflammation of an organ we perhaps didn't know to possess. Now, as Plessner (1961, 1965) argues, the very same phraseology might also be used to account for certain dimensions of corporeal self-experience. Usually our thoughts, feelings and desires are in harmony with our actual corporeal behavior. In this case the body is expressive and we experience ourselves as *Leib.* This happens for instance when we look sour, in order to show our disagreement with a situation. However, there are also moments in which it is no longer possible to experience embodied life as expressive. This concerns the cases in which the body reacts or responds to a situation *beyond* our own intentional control. The impersonal flesh acts "as it pleases" (Plessner, 1961, p. 86) and therefore we coincide with our body (in which case we no longer *have,* but entirely *are* our body). Laughing and crying form two cases in point: when we are overcome with an unstoppable flood of tears or when we succumb to a fit of laughter – i.e. to completely involuntarily spasms of the midriff and the facial musculature and when we cannot help to utter the most meaningless sounds[6] – we experience to be fully inexpressive *Körper*, or as we

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we want to remain at an experiential level, and want to stress the (not as yet discussed) educational relevance of corporeal experiences of incapability.

6 This analysis of course does not apply to expressive forms of laughter that evidently also exist: the sympathetic laughter (smiling) that expresses warm and tender feelings, the sardonic laughter (scorn) that is used to offend someone, etc. Another clarification we should make is that the self-experience of having a body part sedated has of course also to be described in terms of Körperlichkeit. However, what we are interested in are only those self-experiences in which one coincides with one's body.

will call this dimension from now on, "flesh". To be clear, this is not to state that this Plessnerian description presupposes some kind of mind-body dualism: what is at stake is the difference between two ways to experience corporeality, viz. an expressive and personal modus versus and non-expressive and anonymous one. Our analysis takes for granted that it doesn't make sense to draw a distinction between two opposed ontological dimensions in (wo)man.

Many phenomena might be described in terms of experiencing to be non-expressive corporeity. One might consider here the example of getting carried away with rage, which Judith Butler (2004) brings forward in her body-centered analysis of political resistance (p. 20): she stresses the fact that political militants often are not able to appropriate the precise meaning of the visceral reactions of indignation that take place when contesting an unjust order. So, instead of reducing this emotion to precise claims regarding subjective rights, the whole sense of this embodied anger and rage lies in the experience of losing all self-control, becoming vulnerable and experiencing to be anonymous ("public") flesh (p. 20). Other illustrations might comprise the experience one can undergo after partaking in exhausting physical activities: when it has become impossible to move a foot, one completely coincides with the body[7]. Certain systems of gymnastics (e.g. the "Swedish" variant) which only demand the repetitive group performance of the most essential, banal and meaningless body movement forms (stretching, flexing, bending, etc.) in a quasi-mechanical way might also bring about the experience of to be fully "flesh": this is because instead of expressing oneself (in play or dance) or realizing and perfecting oneself (in sports or athletics), one experiences oneself as a repetitively moving body amongst other bodies that cannot ascribe any "higher" meaning to what one is doing.

Now, laughing, crying, getting carried away with rage, suffering exhaustion and performing repetitive gymnastics, might also occur in educational contexts. Nevertheless, when overlooking the literature on this subject it is striking to see that these instances of fully being flesh only seldom form the object of discussion. This is because the body, to the "naturalistic" and "epistemological" accounts, almost solely appears as *Leib*. Being either a source of human completion and happiness or a constituent of an adequate and rich view of the world respectively, corporeality is time and again defined as a medium through which pupils and students realize themselves in significant ways. In these views there is no room for corporeal experiences in which one is no longer in control of one's body and in which one coincides with inexpressive and anonymous "flesh". So, P.E.-manuals might mention exhaustion, but not as a worthwhile dimension of the educational situation, though as a biological inconvenience we reluctantly have to take into account. And laughter might be appreciated, not for its desubjectivating ("körperliche") effects, but only as a tool teachers might use to stimulate a more relaxed school atmosphere, motivation and creativity (See e.g. Gruntz-Stoll & Rissland, 2002). We, on the contrary, want to bring under attention that while laughing or being exhausted, the body – in its plain physicality – *has* relevance in and of itself. Therefore it cannot

7 Exhaustion is thus phenomenologically to be distinguished from pain, which is, on the contrary, an experience of not coinciding with (parts of) the body.

be made functional to pre-established educational goals. Moreover, we will also try to show that the experience of fully being flesh is equalizing and therefore *educationally* significant.

Let us therefore briefly consider an old commonplace which might come near what we defend, but that nevertheless departs substantially from our point of view, viz.: made of flesh and bone, in spite of all distinctions human kind might invent, *we are all equal*. Whether we are king or beggar, we are to the same degree inhabitants of an entropic body: we are without distinction prone to the vegetative and sometimes ungovernable urges to eructate, to defecate or to masturbate and in the end we all, without discussion, have to die. In that sense corporeality might be said to possess a nonnegotiable "democratic" quality. Now, even if one cannot wish this equalizing force away, there exist nevertheless strategies that guarantee a minimal confrontation with these corporeal interruptions of existing societal order, which is as a rule differentially and above all hierarchically organized (Vandekerckhove, 1982). We might think here about the taboos and conventions concerning the overt manifestation of these "democratic" aspects of corporeity: farting, spitting and speaking about orgasm or one's period are generally not highly appreciated in public places. Perhaps this is because these phenomena reveal too directly that we are ultimately not in control over our own life. They also interrupt the fiction that society is rightfully structured according to higher and lower positions, because we are, at those very moments, *nothing but flesh* (Cf. de Wachter, 1995)[8].

This way of thinking not only explains why we are inclined to banish defecation or sexuality to private spheres, it might also help to understand why for instance laughing poses difficulties to the sphere of education. After all, this concerns a world that is preeminently hierarchically shaped (being based, as it were, on non-negotiable distinctions between teachers and pupils, or oppositions amongst pupils themselves – according to their talents, needs and efforts). This might explain why outbursts of laughter in classrooms are felt as most unwelcome. Even if it cannot be prevented that everybody, the teacher included, bursts out in laughter and everyone is momentarily confronted with the uncontrollable, meaningless and thus equalizing muscular reactions laughter consists in, the one in charge will do her best to restore the interrupted order as quickly as possible, demanding seriousness again. Everyone should play her well differentiated role as pupil or teacher, boy or girl, smart ass or blockhead, etc. This is also why it is most embarrassing for a teacher to get sweat stains on the pits of her t-shirt on a sweltering summer day: this submissiveness to uncontrollable physical reactions betrays an equality that contradicts not only her higher position, but the whole educational system she represents.

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8 This approach, which comes near to the approach of Julia Kristeva (1982), differs from a constructivist analysis of taboos on "abject" bodily phenomena, because it explains the negative appreciation towards these phenomena in terms of a danger that the physical body, as an autonomously functioning reality, poses. To a constructivist view these dimensions of the body are equally explained as an interruption of existing societal order, but they are only seen as a constitutive remainder or unintelligible outside that has no material weight of its own.

What we suggest to do is to elaborate this idea of *bodily democracy* in a completely different direction. First, instead of defining it in terms of recognizing an ontological truth, this idea might also be taken to refer to an experiential category. The examples we have just discussed are a matter of being confronted with incontrollable aspects of embodied life, which force us to *acknowledge that we are equal* (ontologically spoken). What is at stake in these examples is an experience of the body, which presupposes on the one hand a subject that normally is in control of her own existence and on the other hand a truth about herself she has to admit. This kind of analysis clearly bears witness to a dualistic view of humanity.

Now, our point is that next to such an *experience of the body*, something completely different might occur: one might lose oneself completely in a *bodily experience* that no longer presupposes a subject that is asked to acknowledge some truth. The only thing that matters is what takes place at the experiential level itself, viz. that one is *fully* flesh (which is something quite different from being confronted with the "fact" that one is *merely* flesh)[9]. Whereas the impossibility to conceal sweat stains or to suppress eructation (inciting scorning or ironical forms of laughter) might cause *experiences of corporeality*, other occurrences of laughter, especially the spontaneous and contagious forms that come into existence without a real reason or those forms to which the occasion is immaterial[10], as well as that what happens after engaging in exhausting activities or when performing repetitive corporal exercises, are better described as *corporeal experiences*. They are not dependent upon acquiring some *negative* knowledge *about* the body (i.e. recognizing to be merely flesh), because, in the last examples, we coincide *with* the body in a *positive* and *immanent* way. With this last expression we mean that this corporeal experience is not mediated by a reference to a "normal" condition which is (temporarily) interrupted and from which the experience in question derives its meaning. This furthermore means that equality is not resulting from the recognition of the truth that we are *but flesh*, though that equality might also be an inherent quality of experiencing to be *entirely flesh*.

So we come to a second point at which the old *topos* "all are flesh and thus equal" might be elaborated in new ways. Although equality is as a rule defined in terms of positions and/or identities within social life, it is also possible to conceive the equalizing experience of coinciding with anonymous flesh as finding oneself completely without any interest in identity and position whatsoever. This is to say that we are usually inclined to define equality as an issue that relates to the fair chance for everyone to achieve an appropriate place in life or to live an existence that corresponds to one's genuine and unique "self". Nevertheless, when we experience *to be fully flesh*, in the positive and immanent sense we described above, we are in a radical sense "out of position" and

9 This opposition might be important for distinguishing our point of view from that of Elaine Scarry (1985), who has laid bare the logic behind strategies of torture and inflicting pain, showing these practices to be about causing experiences of being completely reduced to mere flesh.

10 This laughter has thus nothing to do with the insight that we are all sweating bodies and thus equal (laughter of relativization), nor with the insight that some people are not prone to the vegetative working of the body and thus superior (sardonic laughter).

"beyond identity": what is lived is *not* that we share the same position or that we are identical, though that position and identity just don't matter. Any demand to order living together according to logic of difference or sameness becomes meaningless and inoperative. This implies a special kind of emancipation which has nothing to do with the traditional concept of it (that we after a period of oppression finally obtain the right to position and realize ourselves), but which on the contrary means that we free ourselves from the desire to relate to one another on the basis of a private and fixated position/identity, and that therefore the future is set free in a radical way. This means that the way in which "the coming community" (Agamben, 2005) is going to look like isn't determined whatsoever by the way in which living together is currently structured. Therefore, when pupils (and teachers) succumb to (non-scorning, non-ironical) communal laughter, when they get carried away with rage or when they participate in exhausting activities, the undergoing of the experience of being impersonal flesh might grant the "potentiality" (Ibid.) of an unforeseen future: in such moments we appear to one another as equals in view of having no specified destiny.

For this reason we argue that corporeality, conceived in this fully positive manner, has *an educational value in and of itself*, which is absent in the other approaches we discussed (*even if* they did stress far more than the constructivist view the importance of the physical body). Instead of falling back in trust with a forgotten aspect of the body that might help to realize (more authentically or more efficiently) already existing aims such as complete human flourishing (naturalistic approach) or a just and adequate view of the world (epistemological approach), living through moments of corporeal equality, we are rendered equal in relation to an open future that is *not* conditioned by the present. It could be said therefore that the other approaches directly (constructivist acount) or indirectly (naturalistic and epistemological account) neutralize the radical democratic and educational potential the flesh might have. Of course, we should add here that instead of sticking to the traditional definition of education, conceiving it as offering possibilities for self-affirmation and self-reinforcement, which all the views we have discussed do, we on the contrary try to rethink the very meaning of education by taking seriously the idea of a corporeal experience that is intrinsically equalizing. It becomes then possible to formulate the educational significance of corporeality in terms of self-loss, or even better: in terms of a deep self-transformation.

We are however not claiming that spontaneous laughter or performing exhausting activities *ipso facto* lead to a deep alteration of future living together. So, the approach we defend is not concerned with legitimating, nor with designing concrete pedagogical tools or programs. Furthermore we are not at all claiming that the corporeal experiences we have brought to the fore are comfortable ones. On the contrary: it interrupts habitual ways of looking at the way living together should be organized (on the basis of identity and position) as well as at the usual manner in which education is conceived (on the basis of authority and hierarchy). We would therefore say that the relevance of this new perspective on corporeality and education lies in the possibility that we might as educators take an attitude that allows the unforeseeable to happen, instead of immunizing us against the potentiality of a living together without destiny.

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Anschrift der Autoren

Dr. Joris Vlieghe, Catholic University of Leuven, Laboratory for Education and Society, Vesaliusstraat 2, 3000 Leuven, Belgien
E-Mail: joris.vlieghe@ped.kuleuven.be

Prof. Dr. Jan Masschelein, Catholic University of Leuven, Laboratory for Education and Society, Vesaliusstraat 2, 3000 Leuven, Belgien
E-Mail: jan.masschelein@ped.kuleuven.be

Prof. Dr. Maarten Simons, Catholic University of Leuven, Laboratory for Education and Society, Vesaliusstraat 2, 3000 Leuven, Belgien
E-Mail: maarten.simons@ped.kuleuven.be