

Drew Leder, *The Absent Body*

Week 3 (January 23) Reading questions: pp. 69-99 “The Dys-appearing Body” and pp. 103-106 “The Immaterial Body—A Diagrammatic Summation” [skim pp. 106-125] and pp. 126-148 “The Threatening Body.”

Our emphasis will be on chapter 3.

Chapter 3: “The Dys-appearing Body”

Leder claims that “it is *the body’s own tendency toward self-concealment* that allows for the possibility of its neglect or deprecation.” What are these forms of “self-concealment” (from chapters 1 and 2) and why might these “disappearances” “characterize normal and healthy functioning”?

The goal of this chapter is to discuss “problematic or dysfunctional” body experiences. Why? What, very generally speaking, is motivating Leder here?

1a. Leder’s first theme is pain. Pain, he suggests, can overcome focal, background, and depth disappearance. He provides a phenomenological description of this process. What are *sensory intensification*, an *episodic structure*, an *affective call*?

1b. Pain is a mode of sensing, Leder says, but it also reorganizes our being-in-the-world. How does pain effect *intentional disruption* and *spatiotemporal constriction* that renders the painful body as an *alien presence* that exerts a *telic demand* (with a *hermeneutical* and a *pragmatic* moment)? (Be sure you can explain the italicized words in a sentence or two each.)

2. How does Leder define *disease*? How is disease like pain, phenomenologically? How is it different?

3. What is *dys-appearance*? To what states does it apply? What is the relationship between *disappearance* and *dys-appearance*? What does it mean to call disappearance a *primary absence*, and dys-appearance a *secondary absence*?

4. What is the role of the Other in *dys-appearance*, according to Leder? (Specifically, say what he means by *mutual incorporation* and *social dys-appearance*.)

To ponder: Which of the following are states of dys-appearance, on Leder’s analysis (and of what kind): having a heart attack; becoming a wheelchair user following a skiing accident; menstrual cramps; being born with short limbs due to Thalidomide; becoming short-sighted; being deaf; being bad at sports; being chronically sleep-deprived; being 8 months pregnant; feeling fat all the time; being the only Black person in the room; being the only white person in the room; having terrible toothache? (Add your own controversial or difficult example.)

pp. 103-6: make sure you can summarise the diagrammatic representation of his argument Leder presents in this section. Specifically:

a. What does “axis 1” represent? Axis 2? Axis 3?

b. Each axis defines a complemental series. What is a complemental series (defined last class)?

c. What is a “phenomenological anatomy” (discussed last class)? To what degree does Leder describe each axis as anatomically specified?

Chapter 5: “The Threatening Body”

“I wish to suggest...that our imagery of the body can be understood not only in reference to the cultural projects at play but as an articulation of certain phenomenological possibilities and predispositions arising out of the lived body...The sense of the body as threat is, I will argue, suggested by the phenomenon of dys-appearance...I will attempt to make this point in relation to three images of embodiment that have played a central role in the Western tradition.” [127]

What are these three images?

Leder’s goal is to “investigate those structures of embodiment which render possible and give experiential support to the Cartesian view” [130]. What are these structures, and what aspects of Descartes’ philosophy (primarily in his *Meditations*) do they support?

The source of error that the body (allegedly) causes are both epistemological and moral. How does Leder distinguish and characterize these two types?

How does Leder argue that disease, death, and dys-appearance operate in Descartes’ method and metaphysics? How does the figure of the corpse specifically operate? (Remember that the end of chapter 5 uses some of the same material as the article posted for week 1, and recall our brief discussion of the distinction between *Leib* and *Körper*.)