Amending Heidegger's Hermeneutic Phenomenology Based on Disabled People's Lived Experiences

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ABSTRACT

Typically, philosophers ignore disability, treat it as a special case addressed at some point in the distant future, or, worse, view disabled people as nonpersons with nothing worthwhile to contribute to philosophical endeavors. However, philosophers and philosophy have much to learn from disabled people. This article, drawing on data collected with phenomenological methods, utilizes knowledge and insights gleaned from the lives of disabled people to amend Martin Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. This outcome stems from adding corporeal variability, an existential that accounts for differences between and changes over time within bodies. This is an important addition as bodily differences and changes influence other existentials and the process of Being. After describing several existentials constituting Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, the author presents pertinent data from Heidegger's own works, disability scholars, and disabled people's personal narratives that support amending the original theory with corporeal variability.

1. Introduction

Early in his career, the philosopher Martin Heidegger contemplated an answer to "*the question of the meaning of Being*" (1927/1962: 1). His response, consisting of a theoretical framework and accompanying description, comprised *Being and Time*. Though the framework is comprehensive, scholars believe it is incomplete because the body is notably absent, a condition unambiguously articulated by Joram who said, "If one of the purposes of *Being and Time* is to elucidate the fundamental ontological structures of Dasein, to leave out the body is a gross misstep" (2020: 2).

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The present article proffers responses to reasons forwarded to explain the body's nonappearance in Heidegger's opus, identifies a fundamental ontological structure representing the body, and furnishes support for incorporating the structure into Heidegger's theoretical framework. The foundational bases for the responses, ontological structure, and support rely heavily upon disability studies literature. Actively seeking out and consulting the perspectives of disabled people and inquiring into the experiences of disability marks a substantial shift in the relationship between philosophy and disability. Historically, disability is not a subject frequently or favorably addressed by many philosophers. Typically, philosophers ignore disability, treat it as a special case addressed at some point in the distant future, or, worse, view disabled people as nonpersons with nothing worthwhile to contribute to philosophical endeavors (Abrams 2016; Kittay & Carlson 2010; MacIntyre 1999; Nussbaum 2006; Reynolds 2017a, 2022b). These actions are especially troublesome given that MacIntyre (1999) clearly states philosophers and philosophy have much to learn from disabled people. He contends some things about human existence "can be learned and sometimes only learned" from the lived experiences of traditionally marginalized and excluded groups such as disabled people (MacIntyre 1999: 136). Wendell, speaking from a lived experience perspective, emphatically conveyed the importance of listening to the personal narratives of disabled people. She said,

> it becomes obvious that people with disabilities have experiences, by virtue of their disabilities, which non-disabled do not have, and which are sources of knowledge that is not directly accessible to non-disabled people. Some of this knowledge [...] would be of enormous practical help to most people [...]. Much of it would enrich and expand our culture, and some of it has the potential to change our thinking and ways of life profoundly. (Wendell 1996: 68-69)

Despite MacIntyre's contention, the proclivity of philosophy and philosophers is to focus solely on the able body. This tendency follows from the belief "that able-bodies, and able-bodied existence, wholly encapsulate the human way of being in the world" (Abrams 2016: 8). One such expression is Martin Heidegger's (1927/1962) hermeneutic phenomenology. "Curiously, everybody in *Being and Time* is healthy, robust and whole, [...] they [...] die but their bodies never seem to grow ill or lame, diseased or disabled" (Caputo 2001: 154). However, taking Wendell's claim seriously and examining the lives of disabled people leads to rethinking "the basis of the phenomenological enterprise"

and creating a more "egalitarian philosophical framework" (Abrams 2016: 32–33).

Therefore, armed with phenomenological data extracted from disability studies, the present article continues Abrams' work of "rethinking the place of embodiment" (2016: 5) in hermeneutic phenomenology. "Phenomenology is improved when we examine it through the lens of disability" (Abrams 2020: 16). Specifically, tapping into knowledge and insights supplied by disabled people leads to amending Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology by incorporating a fundamental, transcendental structure that accounts for variations among and changes over time within bodies. This addition leads to a more comprehensive and complete depiction of the process of human existence. To accomplish the goal, the article begins by outlining a central philosophical tenet and describing the major elements of Heidegger's original hermeneutic phenomenology. The second phase consists of confronting the arguments as to why the body did not appear in the original theoretical framework, identifying the new element, corporeal variability (Reynolds 2021), and supporting the proposed existential's inclusion by presenting pertinent data from Heidegger's own works, disability scholars, and disabled people's personal narratives.

Before proceeding, a note about terminology. This paper utilizes the identity-first phrase *disabled people* rather than the person-first phrase *people with disabilities*. The debate over which phrase is most valid and empowering continues with no conclusive settlement expected any time soon as both sides advance arguments demonstrating how their preferred phrase conveys respect for and promotes the social inclusion of disabled people (Grech et al. 2023). The present author sides with many disability scholars and Deaf, blind, and autistic people who, over the past few years, indicated their preference for the phrase disabled people (Grech et al. 2023; Walker 2021). Nick Walker (2021) forcefully and cogently presents the rationale, stating person first terminology springs from a paradigm that considers disability a personal, pathological condition requiring treatment. In stark contrast, the phrase disabled people derives from a paradigm where disability emerges from interactions among personal and environmental elements (Shakespeare 2014; WHO 2024). According to this paradigm, disability arises when the environment does not fully accommodate people, preventing or hindering their functioning and lowering their well-being. Inaccessible environments disable people.

2. Hermeneutic Phenomenology

2.1 Ontological Difference

A central tenet of Heidegger's (1927/1962) philosophy is a sharp distinction between beings and being. Beings are entities or all things that exist, and a truncated list includes people, rocks, animals, plants, buildings, and the sun. Each entity exhibits being or a process of existing. Capitalizing Being denotes the process specific to humans.

Heidegger called the division between Being and beings the *ontological difference*. The division recognizes two levels of understanding, ontological and ontic. The goal of ontological understanding is uncovering and describing the meaning of *Being* or the process of existing. In contrast, ontic deals with determining the empirical aspects of individual *beings* such as height, weight, color, material composition, and relationships with other beings. Abrams (2016), a Heideggerian scholar, differentiated between the ontological and ontic levels as follows. All people, including those with and without disabilities, those who are healthy, and those who are ill, "experience being in the world through the same fundamental structures [ontological]. [However,] the [...] ways lives are lived, where meaning is made, and where choices take place: these differ *ontically*" (Abrams 2016: 37).

Heidegger's (1927/1962) investigative focus was exclusively ontological, and his aim was to grasp the meaning of Being. Therefore, he sought to identify and describe the transcendental, fundamental structures or *existentials* that facilitate human Being. The commencing sections introduce Dasein, the term representing human's Being, and outline six of its' constituting existentials. These existentials, selected because they are central to Heidegger's notion of Being and relevant to the present discussion, include Being-in-the-world, aletheia, bodying-forth, care, spatiality, and temporality. Then the focus turns to depicting the proposed ontological structure, corporeal variability, and its connections with the preceding existentials.

This article focuses on the ontological process of human existence and constituting structures so readers may question why much of the presented scholarly evidence is ontic in nature, consisting of details gleaned from philosophical inquiries and the personal narratives of disabled people. Using ontic details to better understand ontological structures and processes is a method known as "ontological differentiation" (Abrams 2016: 103; Reynolds 2022a).

Heidegger (1927/1962) employed ontological differentiation, learning of and about Being by investigating the details of people's "*everydayness*" (38), their routine behaviors, projects, social interactions, thoughts, and feelings. The present case adopts Heidegger's method, using ontological differentiation to investigate "significant bodily changes [and the concomitant effects experienced by disabled individuals which] provide novel insights into" (Reynolds 2022a, para. 12) the structures facilitating Being.

2.2 Existentials

(I) Dasein

Dasein is the term Heidegger (1927/1962) employed to capture human beings' distinctive Being; a continuous, active process, beginning at birth and continuing until death. Compared to other entities, Dasein's Being is unique for several reasons. A key reason is that it involves posing and striving to answer the question of what it means to be human, a task continued with the current line of inquiry. Dasein is "distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it [...]. Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being" (Heidegger 1927/1962: 32).

The subsequent sketches of existentials and interrelationships strive to achieve two objectives. First, establish a rudimentary portrayal of the process of Being. Second, create a foundation for the upcoming discourse centered on incorporating the proposed existential, corporeal variability, into the original theoretical framework by demonstrating its connections with the following collection of ontological structures.

(II) Being-in-the-world

"The 'essence' of Dasein lies in existence" and existence primarily unfolds through the existential *Being-in-the-world* (Heidegger 1927/1962: 67). The hyphens signify the tightly intertwined, mutually dependent relationship between people and the world. People do not experience Being without the world and the world does not exist without people.

Existence or Being consists of people interacting with entities in the world while completing everyday practical activities and then uncovering the

meanings of those beings. The ensuing web of practical activities, individual entities comprising the activities, entities' meanings, and interrelationships among activities, entities, and meanings form a person's world. In other words, Dasein creates his/her world; Dasein is "world-forming" (Heidegger 1995: 193).

(III) Bodying-forth and Care

As noted in the preceding description of Being-in-the-world, a central aspect of Being is encountering entities. Encounters ensue from actions associated with the next two existentials, bodying-forth and care. In the *Zollikon Seminars* entry dated May 14, 1965, Heidegger (2001) distinguished between *Körper*, the body as a corporeal entity consisting of anatomical organs and physiological processes enclosed by the epidermis, and *Leib*, the lived body that facilitates Being.[1] "The corporeal thing stops with the skin" but the lived body extends far beyond the physical limits of the skin (Heidegger 2001: 86). This extension or *bodying-forth* (*leiben*) permits Dasein to interact with entities as a Being-in-the-world. Heidegger (1927/1962) called these interactions *care*. Care is "our basic mode of worldly engagement, the practical action-structure in which our daily life unfolds" (Abrams 2016: 14). A short, incomplete list of incidents of care includes mowing the lawn, shovelling snow, playing board games, working, going to school, cooking, shopping, volunteering, recreating, exercising, talking with friends, attending religious services, and receiving healthcare services.

(IV) Aletheia

Interacting with entities during care imbues the entities with meaning and *aletheia* is the existential structure through which people come to know those meanings. The ancient Greek term refers to an entity's meaning, which is normally concealed (Heidegger, 1927/1962), being "uncovered, discovered, revealed or allowed to show itself" (King 2015: 111). The meanings people uncover are neither universal nor immutable (Heidegger, 1927/1962, 1961/2008). A person's beliefs, prior experiences, family and friends, social roles and norms, gender, culture, and disability are among factors determining revealed meanings (Abrams 2016; Heidegger 1927/1962). Thus, different

[1] Heidegger drew upon the distinction found in Husserl 1989.

people may discover different meanings for the same entity; and the meaning a person uncovers for an entity may change over time because the person and entity continue being or existing.

(V) Spatiality and Temporality

Space and time, as lived experiences and not scientific entities, gather meaning from bodying-forth and incidents of care (Fealy 2008; Heidegger 1927/1962). Scientifically, space is a multidimensional grid where an entity's location is determined by three dimensional coordinates while time is a continuous, linear sequence of discrete instances that recede into the past and project into the future. In contrast and from a lived experience perspective, envision a man sitting and intensely thinking about a loved one who lives on the other side of the country. At some point, he finds himself in that distant locale, sitting 'next to' his loved one though his physical body has not moved measurably. Existentially, he is closer to his loved one than to an object that may be only a few inches from his physical body. Correlatively, while sitting on a couch in her living room, a young woman becomes engrossed in a television documentary covering the history of Bethlem Hospital (Bethlem Royal Hospital 2024). During the documentary, she finds herself transported three hundred years in the past to London, England where she 'walks' along the hospital's corridors, growing incensed over the treatment of mentally ill patients. She spanned three centuries though only a few minutes ticked by on the wall clock. Existentially, she is in the 1700s, not the present day.

2.3 Reasons for the Body's Absence

An explicit ontological structure representing the body's role in Being is absent from the preceding list of existentials. Why? Two reasons for the absence appear in the literature. First, in the *Zollikon Seminars*, Heidegger famously declared, "The problem of method in science is equivalent to the problem of the body. The problem of the body is primarily a problem of method" (2001: 93). His declaration expanded upon and clarified a statement he made in *Being and Time*, "This 'bodily nature' hides a whole problematic of its own, though we shall not treat it here" (Heidegger, 1927/1962: 143). For Heidegger, the problem lies with using the scientific, calculative perspective to understand the body. Science's methods rely upon measurement and quantification which treat the body as an

object, completely missing the perspective of the body as a phenomenon involved with Being. Additionally, the question of the meaning of Being is ontological in nature so phenomenology is necessary for formulating a response; "*only as phenomenology is ontology is possible*" (Heidegger, 1927/1962: 60). Phenomenology signifies methodology that enables entities to show themselves as themselves. In other words, phenomenological investigations seek people's lived experiences and concomitant meanings of entities rather than scientific, objective descriptions of those experiences and entities conveyed through measurement and quantification.

Fortunately, a number of recently conducted studies employing phenomenological methods illuminate the body's role in Being. The primary data sources are personal narratives of disabled people and philosophical investigations into the experiences and meanings of disability. Specifically, investigations adopted critical and/or crip phenomenological frameworks. *Critical phenomenology* explicitly seeks to identify and interrogate quasi-transcendental social structures such as ableism, racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism (Guenther 2019; Wiessler 2023). Quasi-transcendental structures are not primordial or *a priori* but arise from on-going deeds executed by numerous people with the deeds collecting and coalescing into firmly entrenched, institutionalized patterns of thoughts and actions (Wiessler 2023). These, oftentimes covert, structures "are not things to be seen but rather *ways of seeing*" (Guenther 2019: 12), leading people to perceive, believe, and act in ways that "privilege, naturalize, and normalize certain experiences [and meanings] of the world while marginalizing, pathologizing and discrediting others" (Guenther 2019: 15; Wiessler 2023). For instance, the quasi-transcendental structure of ableism privileges typical bodies while pathologizing and marginalizing atypical bodies. In the present case, a form of critical phenomenology known as *crip phenomenology* is especially germane (Hall 2021; Reynolds 2017b; Wiessler 2023). Crip phenomenology aims to expose "the able-bodied assumptions of a given conceptual terrain" and ground reconstruction of the terrain on disabled people's lived experiences (Reynolds 2017b: 426). The two methodologies counter ableist assumptions embedded within hermeneutic phenomenology and generate data divulging that disabled or atypical bodies disclose the world differently than typical bodies. Recognizing that atypical bodies disclose the world differently and closely examining those differences leads to amending the theory, making it more comprehensive and complete.

The second reason pertains to the body's lack of ontological relevance. Consider a representative argument forwarded by Aho, who asked if an "analysis of the body [is] [...] needed to complete Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology" (2009: 44). He (Aho 2005, 2009) asserted Heidegger neglected the physical body because it is an ontic level entity that does not contribute to an ontological understanding of Being. Aho explains that, according to Heidegger, we can only "understand and make sense of [...] the 'corporeal body' (*Körper*), the 'lived-body' (*Leib*), and all of its manifestations" after completing the task of fundamental ontology (2009: 4). Investigations of the body yield results "intelligible only *on the basis of* Dasein" (Aho 2005: 20). Therefore, understanding the body is secondary to uncovering the transcendental structures of Being.

So, how does Aho's argument hold up? His critique "rests on the assumption that if corporeality isn't treated overtly, then it is lacking altogether" (Visotchi 2022: 16). Scholars challenge the assumption, claiming that although Heidegger "failed to thematize a structure [existential] accounting for its [the body] effects on Being" (Reynolds 2021, Corpoietic Bodying section, para. 3), this failure does not mean the body plays no ontological role in Being. Relevant portions of text drawn from Heidegger's own works further bolster the claim. For instance, in chapter 3 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger states how people come to know the world, not through "bare perceptual cognition" but when they "manipulate things and put them to use" (1927/1962: 93). "No matter how sharply we just *look* at the 'outward appearance'" of entities, we cannot discover their meanings (Heidegger 1927/1962: 98). Discovery takes place "when we deal with them [entities] by using them and manipulating them" (Heidegger 1927/1962: 98). Heidegger's other examples in this chapter, penning notes, hammering nails, grasping pieces of metal with tongs, sewing with needles, hand planing wood, and unlatching doors, clearly denote that meanings arise from the direct, physical manipulation of entities during incidents of care.

Another scholar, Visotchi, claims that although Heidegger initially believed in the physical body's secondary nature to Being, his thoughts changed over time. Visotchi employs the term "voices" (2022: 23) to represent Heidegger's multiple and evolving perspectives on the topic. Pertinent for the present discussion, the refractive voice, apparent in his later works including *Zollikon Seminars* (2001), "unmistakably [...] [conveys] embodiment as *ontologically* constitutive of human existence" (Visotchi 2022: 18). Consider a few examples. First, "leanness is not merely a phenomenon of corporeality, but of

the [lived] body as well" (Heidegger 2001: 87). Incidents of care such as running long distances and navigating tight spaces likely mean something different for obese people as compared to lean people. Second, Heidegger states, "we must characterize all comportment of the human being as *being-in-the-world*, determined by the bodying forth of the body [...]. Comportment [...] always [involves] a relationship [between a person and entity], for instance, when I take something into my hand" (2001: 91). Finally, "the body participates [in bodying-forth] by hearing and seeing" (Heidegger 2001: 88).

Think about how setting off fireworks during a 4th of July celebration is a vastly dissimilar experience for someone who can see, hear, and grasp as compared to someone who is deaf and blind and does not have hands. In conclusion, evidence drawn from Heidegger's own works strongly suggests that the body does exhibit ontological relevance and while he did not explicitly propose an existential recognizing of the body's role in Being, his later self might not vehemently contest such a proposal.

The preceding discussion and excerpts contest the reasons forwarded to explain Heidegger's failure to explicitly propose an existential recognizing the body's role in Being. The next steps are introducing the new existential and supporting its incorporation into Heidegger's framework.

3. Corporeal Variability

Corporeal variability is an existential forward to represent the body's influence on Being. Consistent with the generality associated with existentials, corporeal variability conceives of body-based heterogeneity broadly, as a general feature of the human population and not as specific differences between and changes within individual bodies (Abrams 2016). In other words, the transcendental structure acknowledges the inherent diversity of sizes, abilities, and functioning levels exhibited by human bodies and that this variation can impact several other existentials such as care and aletheia (Abrams 2016; Carel 2019; Garland-Thomson 2011; Hurst 2003; Martiny 2015; Reynolds 2021, 2022a, 2024). "The form, function, comportment, and sensory modes of human bodies inform the ways we interact with human, built, and natural environments [entities]" (Garland-Thomson 2011: 601) and these interactions influence the meanings of entities. Different bodies interact differently with an entity which leads to potentially different revealed meanings.

Several scholars apprehend the body's ontological link. Reynolds said, Being is "always already shaped through the variability of one's singular body" (2021, Corpoietic Bodying section, para. 2), a relationship echoed by Abrams who stated Dasein and the structures of Being are not "wholly autonomous *of* embodiment" (2016: 26). Lived experiences of disabled people offer confirmatory evidence. After learning she had an incurable lung disease and dealing with its effects, Havi Carel declared bodily changes transform "one's entire being-in-the-world, including one's relationship to the environment, social and temporal structures, and one's identity" (2014: 249). She went on to state, "I had to overhaul all of my plans, expectations, goals, projects and horizons. Most importantly, I had to rethink my idea of a good life" (Carel 2019: 77). Corporeal changes led to alteration of her "entire way of being in the world" and consequently, substantial revisions to the meanings she ascribed to entities, her conceptualization of living well, and her world (Carel 2019: 91).

3.1 Care and Aletheia

The commencing series of examples illustrates the relationship between corporeal variability, an entity, and revealed meanings. To begin, envision an oversimplified situation where three people arrive at the bottom of a long, steep flight of stairs with narrow treads, the only means of getting to a place they all want to reach. One person injured his spine a few years ago causing paralysis and requiring the use of a motorized wheelchair; the second is an older adult toting multiple bags, each filled with canned goods; and the third is a pregnant woman whose delivery date is in one week. In the first case, the person does not possess the physical functioning necessary for completing the care of stair climbing while in the second case the older adult can climb stairs but does not have the muscular endurance to tote heavy bags and climb the stairs simultaneously. The woman has the requisite motor function and probably the endurance but recent changes to her body's center of gravity increase her risk of falling. In each case, bodily features interact with the architectural structure, inhibiting or preventing the three people from using the stairs as a means of conveyance.

Furthermore, analyzing the probable future courses of the bodily variations supplies insight into the meanings people reveal. Continuing with the previous scenario, the first person's physical condition is not likely to change so he probably thinks of the stairs as a permanently inaccessible, built feature. The

situation remains fixed until the community builds an accessible route, or he secures equipment (i.e., off-road motorized wheelchair) capable of navigating the terrain. Relatedly, the meaning of the stairs he reveals will likely not change since it is doubtful his physical condition or the architectural structure changes. The other two people probably think of the stairs as a temporary inconvenience because their bodies can and will likely change, promoting changes in their ability to perform the care and concomitant revealed meanings. Corporeally, the older adult can increase his muscular strength and endurance by regularly exercising and once the baby is born, the woman's center of gravity returns to normal. These corporeal changes increase their likelihood of climbing the stairs. Correspondingly, the meaning of the stairs for both may change from an inconvenience to an efficient and effective means of getting from one point to another point.

Two scholars steeped in Heidegger's philosophy lay out additional vignettes elucidating how bodily differences influence the meanings of everyday entities, a pitcher and bowl of soup (Abrams 2016; Reynolds 2021, 2022a, 2024). Designed to hold and dispense liquids, a particular pitcher's meaning stems from a person picking it up and dispensing potable liquids in personally valued situations such as graduation celebrations, holiday family meals, romantic dinners, and wedding receptions (Heidegger 1971). Over time, the particular pitcher gathers meaning from its use in treasured situations and becomes a symbol representing important milestones in the person's and her loved ones' lives (Abrams 2016). What this example, though compelling, fails to explicitly acknowledge, however, is the assumption the pourer possesses the ability to use the pitcher as intended (Reynolds 2021). In order for a pitcher to be or exist as a pitcher, the pourer must have functioning arms, hands, and fingers so he/she can pick up the pitcher and dispense the contents. In many instances, the assumption holds true, and people use a pitcher as intended and they reveal comparable meanings. But, when the presumption does not hold, as in cases where people without hands encounter the pitcher, the pitcher's being and meaning alter. "The thinghood [being and meaning] of the pitcher is *different* for some humans born with atypical limbs" because they use the pitcher in an alternative manner or not at all (Reynolds 2021, Corpoietics, Disability, and Access section, para. 8). They may experience extreme difficulty or an inability to distribute beverages with the pitcher and probably consider the utensil an impractical or unusable piece of kitchenware.

Likewise, the meaning of a bowl of soup for someone with tremors is different than for someone without tremors. "It's that the bowl of soup *is* different in its very essence for these two people. [...] the able-bodied person encounters a different 'bowl of soup' than someone disabled through tremors" (Reynolds 2022a, para. 11). Instead of enjoying the fruits of grandma's culinary skills, the disabled person may worry about splashing hot liquid over her face, hands, and torso. The bowl of soup becomes a potential source of pain and, if consumed in front of unknown others, social discomfort.

Corporeal variability can influence existentials other than care and aletheia. The following two subsections explore the existential's potential impacts on temporality, bodying-forth, and spatiality.

3.2 Temporality

"The transformation in being-in-the-world that occurs with disability incorporates [...] a change in temporal experiencing" (Toombs 1995: 19) amongst one or more dimensions of phenomenological time: past, future, and current. Normally, the three dimensions operate as a unity. For instance, people perform certain actions now that build upon prior actions with all actions aiming at achieving a subsequent, meaningful goal or project. However, in the case of non-progressive, acquired disabilities such as traumatic brain injuries and amputations, the temporal focus shifts predominantly to the present (Toombs 1995). Alterations to bodily ability prevent people from envisioning a future due to each day being filled with challenges because even previously mundane tasks like tying shoes or buttoning shirts suddenly require full concentration, and much effort and time. In contrast, progressive disabilities such as multiple sclerosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), cystic fibrosis, and muscular dystrophy shift the temporal focus to the future (Toombs 1995). For example, Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD) is an inherited neuromuscular disease that affects males with most not living beyond 30 years of age. Their futures become void of meaning as a consequence of the inevitable decrement in function (Abrams et al. 2020). Against the background of premature death, boys and young men struggle to conceive of and experience meaningful lives, especially since normal developmental milestones such as increasing independence, pursuing a career, and raising a family are not always possible or feasible.

In some cases, considerable bodily changes such as those caused by spinal cord injuries (SCIs) disrupt all three dimensions (Papadimitriou & Stone

2011; Stone & Papadimitriou 2010). These changes disconnect people from their pasts because their previous experiences do not guide or inform them of how to navigate their present circumstances. Additionally, the changes close off a wide range of choices and projects in the future. Coupling the two sets of outcomes results in people becoming temporally unmoored as the present loses its connections with the past and future. Similarly, anxiety, marked by a pattern of racing thoughts that may be random, disorganized, and incoherent, makes it difficult to interact with entities and pursue personally relevant activities and projects. The constriction of possibilities is projected forward in time leading to "disclosing a world that is fundamentally meaningless" (Aho 2020: 266). In addition, anxiety can cause people to reinterpret past experiences that were pleasant and significant as insignificant events, failures, or missed opportunities which contributes to an overall sense of meaningless existence.

2.3 Bodying-forth and Spatiality

Corporeal variability influences bodying-forth and spatiality as dramatically conveyed when limb prostheses and assistive technological devices such as canes and wheelchairs become incorporated into the body. Consider a study where people with congenital limb loss or upper or lower limb amputations described their experiences with prosthetic limbs (Murray 2004). Many stated how initially using the limbs to access entities required much attention and awareness. However, with training and practice, accessing entities became intuitive. The prostheses became part of them; "a prosthetic can be transformed from an 'extracorporeal structure' into a corporeal one" (Murray 2004: 971). Similarly, a well-known phenomenologist, Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962), in his seminal work *Phenomenology of Perception*, utilized the example of a blind man who incorporated a cane into his bodily space. After extensive, sustained use, "the cane is no longer an object *for* the "blind man," but is part *of* his being" (Reynolds 2017b: 423). Through incorporation of canes, blind people extend their physical reach but more importantly, they extend their existential reach by enhancing their access to entities. For instance, an adept cane user can navigate environmental entities previously inaccessible such as crowded sidewalks or hallways that lead to desired destinations. Relatedly, adventitious blindness "is a disruption of the fundamental nature of being in the world" (Hull 2001: 181) but enhanced access precipitated by competent use of mobility aids and techniques marks transitioning from "being a sighted person who cannot see, [...]

[to] being a blind person" (Hull 2001, back cover) with a particular way of Being-in-the-world that is "positive, generative, and rich" (Reynolds 2017b: 425). Studies that collected and analyzed the perceptions of people who learned how to use manual and motorized wheelchairs supply other striking cases of extending one's existential reach by embodying a noncorporeal entity. "Becoming enwheeled after [a] SCI [spinal cord injury] entails a transformation of one's corporeal schema to include the physical features of the wheelchair. The wheelchair becomes "part of the flesh" (Papadimitriou 2008: 699), meaningfully assimilated into one's body. Toombs, a philosopher who experiences multiple sclerosis, a neurological condition that results in progressive muscle paralysis, unambiguously said, "My wheelchair has become, in effect, my legs - an integral part of my body" (1995: 21). "This transformation is not merely of one's body but also of one's general being in the world" (Papadimitriou 2008: 697), a realization echoed by Standal who stated, "learning to use a wheelchair ... is a process that affects the wheelchair user's being-in-the-world" (2011: 178). "Appropriating fresh instruments [e.g., wheelchair]" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1962: 66) enhances access to entities, empowers pursuit of valued activities and projects, and engenders concomitant meanings.

A final example of how assimilating a noncorporeal entity extends people's lived body comes from interviews conducted with power soccer players (Richard et al. 2020). For instance, one said "I'm overheated' when the temperature of the motor on his wheelchair was too high to continue playing" (Richard et al. 2020: 1193). Other players reported they 'feel' where and with how much force the ball strikes their wheelchairs. Even though they experience significant and widespread muscle paralysis and concomitant loss of physical sensation, they 'feel' the world around them through their wheelchairs "like a blind person sees the world through the white stick" (Richard et al. 2020: 1194).

4. Conclusion

For some scholars, the body's absence in Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology is due to a lack of appropriate methodologies or ontological relevance. For others, regardless of the reason for nonappearance, the exclusion marks a misstep. To address the claims and critique, the present study drew inspiration from Alasdair MacIntyre (1999) who said philosophers and philosophy have much to learn from disabled people and their lived experiences. Similarly, a disabled philosopher, Susan Wendell articulated that disabled people have unique

knowledge and experiences that possess "the potential to change our thinking and ways of life profoundly" (1996: 69). That potential was realized in this situation. Tapping into the traditionally ignored pool of disabled people's lived experiences led to accessing data obtained with phenomenological methods, identifying and describing an ontological structure that accounts for the influence the body exerts on Being, and underpinning the proposed existentials' inclusion into Heidegger's original theory. The overall consequence is an amended theory that more comprehensively and completely portrays the process of human existence.

Beyond amending Heidegger's theory, the present study demonstrates how a 'problem' can contribute to a solution. As Abrams clearly stated, "disability is problematic for phenomenology because it challenges some of the core beliefs that many phenomenologists hold dear" (2020: 15). However, examining those beliefs in light of lived experiences reported by disabled people led to insights that combatted ableist features, resulting in a theoretical framework that recognizes and truly affirms an array of ways of Being. If a goal of philosophy is creating a better understanding of Being, then integrating insights gleaned from the lives of disabled people marks a step toward achieving that outcome.

To conclude, though this author believes the presented arguments are sound and amply supported by data, humility demands he recognize and acknowledge that the findings of this one paper do not definitively resolve the issue concerning the ontological status of the body. By its very nature, philosophy is an investigative activity marked by ongoing and evolving deliberations. Thus, scholars should thoughtfully critique this article's contents to determine the appropriateness of the proposed revision and consider further revisions to Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. Relatedly, they should also continue questioning and exploring the effects of predominantly relying on able or typical bodies to establish the foundation for understanding human existence.

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