

Human Ontology or Human Genomics ?

**Heidegger's Health
Warning to Humanity**

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Philosophy and Medicine

- The foundations of both Western and Eastern medicine lie not in science or biology but in **philosophy**.
- ‘Philosophy’ is a word of Greek origin, and the Greek physician was above all a **philosopher physician** (*iatrophilosophos*).
- Hippocrates, the founder of Western medicine, regarded philosophical training as the **essential foundation** for training as a physician.
- In China and India, as in ancient Greece, philosophy was understood as the art, not only of thinking but of **living** – central to the life of the human being – a life irreducible to ‘biology’ of the human body.

Human Genomics

- **Human Genomics** brings to its ultimate expression the domination of a scientific and technological world outlook that:
 1. reduces human beings to their biology,
 2. turns them into objects of their own biotechnology
 3. seeks the **medicalisation** and quasi-military ‘conquest’ of all human suffering and dis-ease, thus denying it any personal, social or spiritual **meaning**.
- It has its origins in the bio-medical and eugenic models of social health propagated by Nazi physicians and psychiatrists –who provided Hitler with a model for the Final Solution for the supposed Jewish ‘virus’ or ‘cancer’ affecting the social body.
- Heidegger’s philosophy was the most profound challenge to Nazi racial-biological philosophy and the understanding of politics as ‘applied biology’.

What is Human Ontology?

- **Human Ontology** is a new philosophical foundation for the human and natural sciences in general, and for our understanding of health and sickness in particular.
- The term 'ontology' derives from the Greek *ontos* – being. 'Ontology' is the science of beings *as such*.
- The basis of **Human Ontology** is a fundamental distinction between the human **body** and **mind** on the one hand, and the inner human **being** on the other.
- Its fundamental principle is that the inner human being **cannot be reduced** to a set of bodily processes or cognitive behaviours, biological genes or unconscious drives. The inner human being is not some bodily 'thing' at all (an "It") but 'some-one': a being or "Thou".

Human Ontology and Human Genomics

- **Human Ontology** is a radical philosophical **antigen** to the new **gospel** of medical science and molecular biology– the **human genome**.
- It has its origins in the thinking of Martin Heidegger, and in his wish that this thinking would “escape the confines of the philosopher’s study and become of benefit to wider circles, in particular to a large number of suffering human beings”
- **Heidegger** was the first philosopher to challenge the fundamental preconceptions that lie behind the genetic-biological explanations of illness, and to warn of the dangers of its application.

Bioethics: the false debate

- Bioethics is dominated by an entirely **false debate** between those who emphasise the potential medical benefits of genetic research in ‘conquering’ disease. And those who question the **means** used to achieve this **end** (for example the cloning of embryos).
- No one stops to question the **end itself** – the attempt to achieve a ‘final solution’ to disease, and thereby eliminate all bodily and behavioural expressions of human suffering and **dis-ease** - whatever its origin.
- Nor does anyone question the **basic assumption** of the ‘science’ used to achieve this end: the reduction of human beings and human behaviour to human biology.

The Metaphysical Basis of Human Genomics

- The metaphysical basis of Human Genomics is **bio-ontology**: the reduction of the human being to the human body and brain.
- A genuinely scientific approach to human health is a genuinely human science of the body. The basis of such a science is not **bio-ontology** but **onto-biology**.
- **Onto-biology** is the scientific expression of Human Ontology - the recognition that the human being and human awareness is not a mysterious by-product of the human body and brain. Rather the **human body** is an **embodiment** of the **human being** – its living biological language.

Bio-ontology vs. Onto-biology

Bio-ontology

- We **are** our bodies. As beings we are by-products of our bodies.
- It is **bodies and brains** that see and hear, think and feel, act and speak.
- All diseases are the product of biological dysfunctions and genetic predispositions.
- The body is programmed by a biological master language.

Onto-biology

- Our bodies are a part of what we are - an embodiment of our being
- It is not bodies or brains but **beings** that see and hear, think and feel, act and speak.
- All diseases are the embodiment of an inner **dis-ease** of the human being.
- The body is a living biological language of the human being.

Decoding the “Book of Life”

- Human Genomics **also** rests on an understanding of the human body as a biological language – but a language without **meaning** and without a **speaker**.
- Its claim is that we can ‘decode’ the ‘book of life’ by understanding its molecular constituents and structure. This is equivalent to claiming that we can understand a book by:
 1. **‘scientifically’ analysing the ink marks on its pages,**
 2. **identifying a basic alphabet of these marks**
 3. **cataloguing their combinations and permutations,**
 4. **seeking to explain how these permutations produce whole sentences, paragraphs and chapters – indeed the whole book.**

'The Book of Life'

- We do not understand a book because our brains 'decode' the ink marks on the page and manufacture a subjective meaning from them.
- A book is no mere three-dimensional material object like any other – and nor is the human body.
- Its pages are the two-dimensional surface of a multi-dimensional world of **meaning**.
- The book is but the materialisation of a world of **meaning** inhabited by **beings** – not just the author as a human being but all the other beings in the author's life.
- We do understand the text of the book by chemical or mathematical analysis of the ink-marks on its pages.
- We can only understand the text, because as **beings**, we already dwell within the world of **meaning** it expresses.

The Myths of Molecular Biology

- **Human Genomics** rests on three fundamental myth concerning the 'Book of Life'.
 - **The myth that the human body is a mere material object. This is equivalent to seeking to understand a book in the same way we would understand any other physical object.**
 - **the myth that we can understand human beings by analysing their bio-molecular alphabet. This is equivalent to attempting to understand a book by analysing the structural arrangement of the letters on its pages.**
 - **The myth that the human beings are reducible to their bodies and that their bodies are no more than biological machines constructed from the alphabet of their genes. This is equivalent to seeing the human being who authors a book as a product of that book! Indeed it is equivalent to seeing the actual material body of a book itself as a product of its own linguistic alphabet!**

The Illiteracy of Modern Science

- **We can no more find scientific ‘evidence’ of the human being by medical research into the human body or brain than we can find evidence of human meaning in a text by chemical analysis of its ink and paper or mathematical analysis the patterns of ink marks on the page.**
- **Today’s scientists and academics can no more be persuaded of the existence of an invisible ‘spiritual world’ – a world of beings rather than of bodies in space and time – than can an illiterate be persuaded that behind the material ink marks on a page is an invisible and multi-dimensional world of meaning.**
- **Modern science is both literate and illiterate. Literate because it takes its own verbal concepts literally, its own theoretical models and representations of reality as reality. It is illiterate because the modern scientist has no inkling of what it means to read the book of nature, to truly understand natural phenomena and processes as languages.**

The Myth of The Human Genome

- The geneticist R.C. Lewontin has pointed out that ‘the human genome’ is itself a scientific myth. For each individual’s DNA differs from others by around three million nucleotides. According to Lewontin:

“The final catalogue of “the” human DNA sequence will be a mosaic of some hypothetical average person corresponding to no one.” “Because there is no single, standard, “normal” DNA sequence that we all share, observed differences between sick and well people, cannot, in themselves, reveal the genetic cause of a disorder.” “..all of us carry one copy, inherited from one parent, of mutations that would result in genetic disease if we had inherited two copies. No one is free of these, so the catalogue of the standard human genome will contain...some fatally misspelled sequences which code for defective proteins or no proteins at all.”

Biological Fact or Ideological Metaphor?

- We tend to assume that Human Genomics is based on empirically proven, **biological facts**, whereas in fact, its basis is false **metaphors** that are then taken as literal 'facts' – in particular the linguistic metaphor of a 'book of life', without meaning and without an author.
- Talk of a 'book of life', of genetic 'instructions' that are 'read', of cellular 'communication', a molecular 'master language' etc. belong to the sphere of **biosemiotics** the understanding of molecular structure as an autonomous **sign system** without any semantic dimension – a molecular text without any inner dimensions of meaning.

Linguistic Fallacies of Genomics

- The linguistic metaphors employed in molecular biology conceal a number of basic linguistic fallacies.
 - We can no more say that the ‘causes’ of disease lie in missing or ‘misspelled’ genetic sequences than we can say that the ‘causes’ of a poor text lie in its bad language or misspellings.
 - We can no more predict a person’s behaviour or bodily functioning by analysing their genes than we can predict what they will **say** by analysing their alphabet or vocabulary.
 - Just as words mean different things in different contexts so are genetic ‘instructions’ read differently by the body in different molecular, cellular, organic, natural and social environments.
 - All that genetic science can ‘prove’ is that if certain letters are missing then certain words cannot be spoken or may be physiologically ‘mispronounced’.

Normal and 'Abnormal'

- A language is composed of a **finite** verbal alphabet and vocabulary but grants **infinite** potentials for the expression of meaning. The purpose of words is not to 'generate' standard, well-formed sentences but to give form to potential meanings, in 'unstandard' or apparently 'abnormal' a way.
- A body is composed of a **finite** genetic alphabet and vocabulary but can give expression to **infinite** potentials and propensities of being. The purpose of our genes is not to 'generate' standard, 'well-formed' bodies and brains. It is to give bodily form to unique individual potentials and propensities of being, in however 'unstandard' or apparently 'abnormal' a way.

'Normality' and Eugenic Cleansing

- From the standpoint of **Human Genomics**, a Down's syndrome child is genetically 'abnormal', whereas an adult President who drops nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki is genetically 'normal'.
- From the standpoint of **Human Genomics**, the human race can and should be **eugenically cleansed** of abnormalities – it is ethically acceptable not to give birth, for example, to a child with Down's syndrome.
- From the standpoint of **Human Ontology**, any limitation on **human genetic diversity** will ultimately block the expression of **human genetic potentials** - a race that cannot produce individuals *thought of* as 'mad' or 'disabled' will produce no 'genius' either.

A Molecular 'Master Language'?

- DNA is often compared to a molecular 'master language' informing the structure of all living organisms. This is a misleading comparison which reveals a basic misunderstanding of language:
- Organisms and their biological structures, like languages and their syntactic structures, are shaped by complex **organising patterns**. These organising patterns, however, cannot be identified with their expression or representation of any **one** structure or set of structures, biological or syntactic.
- To believe that one **master molecule** in-forms all others is like believing that one **master sentence, master text or master language** can provide the **key** to understanding the structure of **all other sentences, texts and languages**. This is like claiming that one poem exists that expresses the inner nuances of all others.

The New Eugenics

- The idea that we can use genetic engineering or gene therapies to eliminate undesirable bodily or behavioural traits is **eugenic** in principle.
- It assumes that a world without ‘abnormalities’ such as Down’s syndrome, blindness or the hearing of voices would be a **healthier** world rather than an emotionally and experientially **poorer** world.
- It assumes (in contradiction to its own Darwinist principles) that inherited abnormalities serve no **positive function** in human evolution - for example by providing a **biological** balance to dominant **social** concepts of health and normality.

A Genomic Master Race?

- The implicit goal of the **Human Genome Project** is 'eugenic cleansing' – the elimination of undesirable bodily and behavioural traits.
- This is tantamount to the creation of a genomic 'master race', genetically incapable of giving any bodily or behavioural expression to all inner dis-ease.
- Such a 'master race' of 'designer' human beings, would were it possible to create one, actually lack an essential capacity of **human** being – the capacity to suffer dis-ease, and through suffering, discover and give birth to new potentials of being.

Dehumanising Science

- The piles of fused and stiffened corpses produced by the Nazi gas chambers are a potent symbol of what it means to reduce individual human beings to their bodies and reduce the latter to anonymous, dehumanised objects. Human Genomics is also inherently and essentially **dehumanising** in its basic philosophy:
 - **reducing human individuality to biological identity**
 - **reducing the patient to a ‘case’ of some generic or genetic disease**
 - **reducing child-bearing to gene bearing**
 - **reducing women to embryo factories**
 - **Reducing human and animal life to a standing reserve of genetic raw materials for standardised manufacturing processes.**
 - **Turning the human being into an object of biotechnology for corporate profit.**

Human Genomics and the Holocaust

- The Nazi state was the first to set as its aim the eradication of inherited diseases.
- The Nazi state was the first to introduce universal genetic testing through 'health courts' with the power to enforce sterilisation.
- Hitler did not impose an irrational racial-biological ideology or eugenics on the medical profession. On the contrary, he was persuaded by advocates of medical eugenics such as Ernst Rudin that forced sterilisation and gas chambers were the only 'rational solution' to inherited disease and disability.
- The first gas chambers built were for the disabled and those considered mentally abnormal.
- They were the first human beings to be branded as sub-human: "lives not worth living".

Human Genomics and Corporate Health Fascism

- The aim of the genomic research, like that of the Nazi state, is the eradication of inherited diseases and disabilities.
- Today it is not the state but private corporations that promote genetic testing and selection.
- 30% of US corporation already impose genetic testing. 7% select personnel according to the results of genetic testing.
- Genomic research has opened up a new market to exploit the fears of pregnant couples, encourage genetic testing and facilitate the termination of lives deemed 'not worth living'.

Health Fascism and Health Profiteering

- The **fetish** made of health and fitness in the media is itself a **symptom** of a fundamental **sickness of society** and serves the commodification and corporate marketing of new health products.
- The **medicalisation** and **medication** of human dis-ease and distress and the medical construction of new 'diseases' is the basis of **health profiteering** and **health fascism**.
- **Health fascism** is the organised promotion and/or enforcement of pharmaceutical, behavioural and genetic 'therapies' for disease and disorders irrespective of the underlying dis-ease they express.
- **Health profiteering** is the transformation of human suffering into a ever-more profitable market for the corporate health industry.

The Hidden Medical Holocaust

- **Medical treatment** itself is one of the largest single **medical causes** of death after heart disease, strokes, HIV Aids and cancer.
- The life-expectancy of **untreated** cancer patients is over nine years longer than those who are medically treated with chemotherapy and radiotherapy.
- **Vaccination** is a major cause of **immune malfunctioning**.
- **Psychiatric and mental health services** are the largest organised dealers of addictive and brain-damaging drugs, condemning many patients to straitjacketing with life-long ineradicable side-effects.
- In 60-90% of cases **placebos** have been shown to be equally or more effective than pharmaceutical medications but without their side-effects – or **profitability**.

A New Genomic Holocaust?

- Already gene-therapy has resulted directly in deaths of the patients treated.
- The consequences of attempted human cloning are fraught with dangers.
- **“Gene implantation may affect not only the cells of our temporary bodies, our somatic cells, but the bodies of future generations through accidental changes in the germ cells of our reproductive organs....any miscalculation of the effects of the implanted DNA would be wreaked on our descendents to the remotest time.” R.C.Lewontin**

Doctors of Infamy

- In the aftermath of the Holocaust, a book entitled “Doctors of Infamy” documented medical abuses in the Third Reich. Amongst its conclusions was the following statement:

“There is not much difference whether a human being is looked on as a ‘case’ or as a number to be tattooed on the arm.

These are but two aspects of an age without mercy... This is the alchemy of the modern age, the transmutation of subject into object, or man into thing...”

Post-Holocaust Medicine

- **Human Ontology** has its origins in the work of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger.
- Between 1959 and 1972 the Swiss psychiatrist Medard Boss organised a series of informal dialogues between Heidegger and a circle of physicians and psychiatrists - the Zollikon Seminars.
- Their aim was to enlist Heidegger's help in questioning the basic assumptions of the modern medical-scientific understanding of the **human body** and its relation to the **human being**.
- It was Heidegger's hope that in this way his work would **“escape the confines of the philosopher's study and become of benefit to wider circles, in particular to a large number of suffering human beings”**.

From the Zollikon Seminars

- According to Martin Heidegger what today passes as ‘science’ is:
“.....to a quite unimaginable degree, through and through dogmatic; dealing with un-thought-through conceptions and preconceptions. It is of the highest importance that there be thinking physicians, who are not of a mind to leave the field for the scientific technologists.”
- In particular, Heidegger argued that **“The essential realm in which biology moves can never be grounded in biology as a science..”** for this is to confuse the measurable aspects of the human body and human biology with the lived body- the human body as it is experienced from within by the human being.

Heidegger on Genetics

- Heidegger anticipated the importance that genetics would assume in modern medicine, but saw in the genetic explanation of illness a failure to address a basic question - what 'illness' essentially is.

“The significance, indeed the necessity of the genetic approach is clear to everyone. It seems self-evident. But it suffers from a deficit which is all too easily and therefore all too often overlooked. To be in a position to explain an illness genetically, we need first of all to explain what the illness in itself is. It may be that a true understanding of the essence of an illness...prohibits all causal-genetic explanation....Those who wish to stick rigidly to genetic explanation, without first of all clarifying the essence of that which they wish to explain, can be compared to people who wish to reach a goal, without first of all bringing this goal in view. All explanation reaches only so far as the explication of that which is to be explained.”

What is 'Illness' ?

- We cannot explain the 'causes' of illness without asking the more basic question: what **is** illness? The question "what is illness" cannot be answered without distinguishing its measurable and immeasurable dimensions.
- Medical diagnosis and treatment depends entirely on **measurable** aspects of the patient's bodily functioning. This is a relatively new phenomena – at the time of the French Revolution physicians who begin to introduce methods of measurement such as thermometry were regarded as quacks.
- Blood pressure can be measured but not life pressures. Heart functioning can be measured but not **loss of heart or heartbreak, heartlessness or disheartenment**. The patient's **experience** of dis-ease, in the form of pain or discomfort, emotional distress or depression, is not in itself anything **measurable**.

The Limits of Measurement

- **“How does one measure grief? Obviously we cannot measure it at all. Why not? Were we to apply a method of measurement to grief, this would go against the meaning of grief and we would rule out in advance the grief as grief.”**

Martin Heidegger

- **“One cannot measure tears; rather when one measure one measures at best a fluid and its drops but not tears....To what do tears belong? Are they something somatic or something psychic? Neither one nor the other.”**

Martin Heidegger

The Denial of Meaning

- The patient's experience of dis-ease - of distress, discomfort or despair - is the **immeasurable** dimension of illness, one which always bears with it a specific **meaning** for the patient.
- The central, most axiomatic assumption on which medical theory and practice are based is that **illness has no meaning**.
- The axiom of **no meaning** runs directly contrary to human experience of illness – which always arises at specific times in our lives, in a specific existential context, and always has a particular significance for us in that context, affecting our lives in specific ways.
- Different people experience the same outward symptoms in different ways. Just as the same words and symbols **express** different meanings for different people, so do the same symptoms also **embody** different meanings for different people.

Psychiatric Psychosis

- An individual who takes his own fantasies as literal truth , believing for example that there is a bomb in his belly, is regarded as psychotic.
- A psychiatrist who takes his own words as names for actually existing things – seeing ‘depression’ for example as a chemical imbalance in the brain – is regarded as normal, even though there is not a shred of evidence to support this fantasy.
- Both the **psychotic** and the **psychiatrist** adopt a **paranoid** explanation of illness, attributing its cause to a ‘bad object’.
 - The psychotic explains his own fears as a result of some ‘thing’ - the bomb in his belly.
 - The psychiatrist explains another person’s unhappiness as the result of some thing - a chemical imbalance in the patient’s brain.

Language, Meaning and Being

- The denial that illness has any meaning is an expression of the bio-ontological basis of modern medicine – the assumption that it is bodies or brains that get ill rather than human beings.
- The medical focus on use of X-rays and blood test to determine the measurable dimensions of disease is equivalent to subjecting a person's utterances to detailed phonological or linguistic analysis without any attention to their meaning - to what they are **saying**.
- Reducing illness to a thing is equivalent to reducing the written or spoken word to a thing – a measurable physical phenomena.
- Medical science is a prime example of **scientific literalism**: taking diagnostic labels as words for actual 'things' – disease entities - whilst at the same time failing to understand the symptoms of illness as words, as bearers of meaning and not just as things.

Illegitimate Medical Causes

- The fact that a particular bacillus is always present with a particular illness does not prove that it **causes** the illness.
- Most major infectious diseases such as tuberculosis declined in the 19th century due to improvements in housing and nutrition – well before the germ theory of disease **causation** was invented and antibiotics discovered.
- Most cardiovascular diseases and cancers are not **caused** either by viruses or defective genes.
- Only a few rare diseases are clearly linked to defective genes. Yet no explanation exist for how these genes **cause** the diseases.
- The relation between genes and protein production is a reciprocal or **dialectical** relation and not a relation of linear one-way **causation**.

Beyond Causality

- Causal explanations of illness are the major sources of legitimisation of medical theory and practice.
- The causal model of explanation can be challenged on a number of grounds:
 1. It fails to distinguish between measurable aspects of disease and its immeasurable dimensions - the patient's inner experience of dis-ease and the meaning it holds for them.
 2. It posits the existence of distinct disease entities, assuming that just because we have word for a disease, the latter denotes an actual 'thing'.
 3. It fails to explain why the supposed 'causes' of particular illnesses do not bring about the same results in different individuals – why specific individuals do not get cancer from smoking or do not get infected during epidemics.

Physics and Phenomenology

- **Physical science** and physical-scientific approaches to medicine assume a world of pre-given 'things' independent of our own awareness of them.
- It is based on a belief in miracles – the miraculous emergence of aware beings from an otherwise non-aware universe of bodies in space and time.
- The terms 'physics' and 'physical' come from the Greek verb *phuein*– to emerge or arise.
- From the point of view of physical science, awareness as such is a mere 'epiphenomenon'.
- From the point of view of **Phenomenological science** on the other hand, the world **is** the world as we are aware of it, and every localised 'thing' in that world is a phenomenon emerging or arising (*phuein*) within a non-localised **field** of awareness.

The Two Basic Laws of Phenomenological Science

- 1) **Fields of awareness cannot be reduced to or explained by the phenomena that manifest within them.** To do so is equivalent to claiming that a dream or nightmare was 'caused' by a an event monster that happened to appear within it. The dream or nightmare is not a set of phenomena but the field of awareness from and within which these events emerge. It makes no more sense to understand the human body as a product of the biological events and processes occurring within it than it does to explain dreaming as a 'result' of the events we dream.
- 2) **A given phenomenon cannot be said to by 'caused' by other phenomenon emerging in the same field of awareness.** A monster in a nightmare cannot be said to be caused by other objects or events in that same nightmare. Similarly, it makes no more sense to claim that events in one part of the body 'cause' changes in another part than it does to claim that certain events in a dream are 'caused' by other events in that same dream.

Physical & Primordial Phenomena

- **Physical science** offers causal explanations of **physical phenomena** but does not begin by recognising them as phenomena arising (*phuein*) within a field of awareness.
- **Phenomenological science** distinguishes between physical phenomena on the one hand and primordial phenomena on the other.
- The term 'phenomenon' comes from the Greek verb *phainesthai* – to 'shine forth' or 'come to light'.
- A **physical phenomenon** is something present in our field of awareness (for example a word we hear spoken)
- A **primordial phenomenon** is a phenomenon in the primordial sense – that which **comes to light** in our awareness through the physical phenomenon (for example the meaning that comes to light through the spoken word).

Phenomenological Medicine

- We can study illness and the human body itself as a purely **physical phenomena** or as a **primordial phenomenon**.
- Understood **phenomenologically**, all physical events and processes are languages – bearers of meaning. The human body itself is a living biological **language** of the individual human **being**, and all its ailments are meaningful expressions of that being.
- A **phenomenological** approach to medicine is one which seeks an understanding of illness as a primordial phenomenon – exploring what a particular symptom **brings to light** as an expressions of the individual human **being**.

The Physical Body and the Phenomenal Body

- Today there is not a single form of medicine, orthodox or 'alternative' that does not confuse the physical body with the phenomenal body.
- The **physical body** is the body as perceived from without. The **phenomenal body** is a unified body of awareness. It unites two field of awareness:
 1. the **inner field** of our internal bodily **self**-awareness
 2. The **outer field** of our body's own sensory awareness of the external **world**.

Heidegger on the Human Body

- In German there are two words for the body: **Körper** and **Leib** (related to **Leben** – ‘life’). Heidegger used these two words to distinguish the the **physical body** on the one hand and the **phenomenal body** or ‘lived body’ - on the other.
- **“The lived body (*Leib*) is certainly no thing, no physical body (*Körper*), but every body; in other words the body as Leib is always my body.”** By this he meant that our awareness of our own bodies and of other bodies in our environment are not separate.
- Our awareness of other bodies affects our own bodily self-awareness and vice versa. Next to a tall or heavy body our own bodies feel small and light. Our awareness of other bodies is part of our own bodily self-awareness.

The Unbounded Body

- “When I direct someone towards a windowsill with a gesture of my right hand, my bodily existence as a human being does not end at the tip of my index finger. While perceiving the windowsill....I extend myself bodily far beyond this fingertip to that windowsill. In fact, bodily I reach out even further than this to touch all the phenomena, present or merely visualised, represented ones.”
Martin Heidegger
- The **phenomenal body** is not a volume in space externally bounded by the dimensions of the **physical body**. When we look at a distant object in space our phenomenal body extends to embrace that object in its outer field of awareness.
- The **phenomenal body** is neither externally nor internally bounded by the physical body. The psychic interiority or aware withinness of our bodies links us with the insideness or withinness of the things and people around us.

Illness and the Phenomenal Body

- The **phenomenal body** has no measurable **physical** dimensions. But it is the site of all the immeasurable dimensions of illness. A person can feel fat whilst being measurably thin. We can locate a pain or discomfort in the physical body and identify nerve signals that travel to the brain from that part of the body. But our awareness of a localised pain or discomfort does not itself have a physical location in our bodies or brains.
- **Being** in pain is an experience of a human **being** not of their physical body. All diseases of the physical body-mind are the manifestation of an inner **dis-ease** of the human being, experienced through the **phenomenal body**.
- Awareness is always an awareness of ourselves in relation to something or someone other than self. Dis-ease is not a thing. It is a felt **relation** to the world and to aspects of ourselves we experience as foreign, alien or 'other than self'.

The Phenomenology of Illness

- When we are ill, we do not ‘feel ourselves’. Our bodies or minds feel foreign or alien to us.
- **Biological medicine** attributes this sense of foreignness to ‘foreign bodies’ such as microorganisms, viruses or ‘non-self’ cells affecting the physical body.
- **Phenomenological medicine** understands illness itself as a natural part of the health process – a process that begins with not feeling ourselves and ends with feeling and fully incorporating another self – an aspect of ourselves we previously experienced as foreign or ‘non-self’.

Nazism and Biological Medicine

- Nazism understood itself as applied biology: the application of a biomedical model to the diagnosis and treatment of social ills – like seeing the Jews as a virus or cancer in the social body.
- The basis of the biomedical model does not lie in **empirical facts** but **military metaphors**: the idea of healing as a war against ‘foreign’ elements in the individual or social body.
- The ideal of this model is one of an individual or society genetically cleansed or immunologically ‘defended’ against ‘foreign bodies i.e. against all experiences of **otherness** which the human being cannot assimilate and incorporate.

The Militarisation of Medicine

- The language of immunological science is replete with military metaphors:

“When immune **defenders** encounter cells or organisms carrying molecules that say ‘foreign’, the **immune troops** move quickly to **eliminate the intruders.**”

“The immune system **stockpiles** a tremendous **arsenal** of cells. Some **staff the general defenses**, while others are **trained on highly specific targets.**”

(from teaching material on immunology)

The False Metaphors of Immunology

- The **facts** of immunological science run directly counter to the **metaphors** used to describe immune functioning. The immune system works not by 'hunting out', 'attacking' or 'destroying' foreign bodies or 'antigens' but by searching for cells with a specific molecular **affinity** to those antigens - one that allows them to be assimilated and incorporated by the body.
- All the discomfiting symptoms of viral or bacterial infection are **not** produced by the viruses or bacteria themselves but by the body's own struggle to assimilate and incorporate them.
- This struggle is the biological expression of the individual's struggle to **assimilate** and **incorporate** experiences that appear initially to threaten their identity or sense of self – and thus to require mental 'defences'. It is **over-activity** of the individual's **mental defences** that weakens the body's **immune functioning** – its ability to assimilate and incorporate foreign bodies.

From Militarism to Maieusis

- Pregnancy is not an illness, but illness, understood phenomenologically, is a form of pregnancy – a natural part of the **health process** by which we gestate and give birth to unborn and hitherto ‘foreign’ aspects of our inner being.
- The term ‘maieusis’ comes from the Greek *maieuesthai* – to ‘act as a midwife’. The **healing process** is one in which we act as midwives to ourselves – not by using medicine to bring about changes in our bodies but by allowing our bodies to bring about changes in us.
- The **military metaphors** of biological medicine treat healing as a **war** against suffering and disease. Medical ‘cure’ of **disease** is a bodily **abortion** of all that lies pregnant in our **dis-ease**.
- **Suffering disease** is not the same as **bearing dis-ease**. We suffer disease to the extent that we are unable to bear dis-ease: - letting it give birth to a new inner bearing towards the world.

'Collateral Damage'

- The assumed benefits of modern medicine must be weighed against its sickening effects. For the empirical facts are that:
 - **“A third of all people admitted to hospital are there because of the negative effects of medications.” (Guylaine Lanctôt M.D.)**
 - **“700,000 Americans die each year of secondary effects from medications.” (Guylaine Lanctôt M.D.)**
 - **There is no statistical evidence for the effectiveness of costly intensive care units. (Ivan Illich)**
 - **“Neither the proportion of doctors in a population nor the clinical tools at their disposal nor the number of hospital beds is a causal factor in the striking changes in overall patterns of disease.” (Ivan Illich)**

The Ontology of Illness

- Physical medicine seeks the causes of illness in organic damage and dysfunction.
- In doing so it ignores the distinction between **functions** belonging to **the human body** and its organs **capacities** that belong to the **human being** – for example the capacity to breathe in, absorb and digest new experiences and extract **meaning** from them.
- The word ‘organ’ comes from the Greek *organon* – meaning a tool or instrument in general or a musical instrument in particular.
- A tool such as a pen has **functions** but not **capacities**. It functions as a tool of writing but has itself no capacity to write.
- Similarly, bodily organs possess **functions** but not **capacities**. Capacities belong to the human **being** not the human **body**, and are shaped by the human organism.

Organs and Organisms

- According to Heidegger “..we cannot say that the organ has capacities, but must say that the capacity has organs.”
- The organ does not ‘possess’ a capacity but is “in the possession of a capacity” – subservient to it in the same way that the pen is subservient to our capacity to write.
- For Heidegger life itself is essentially capability (*Fähigkeit*). **“This capability, articulating itself into capacities creating organs characterizes the organism as such.”**

Human Ontology and the Human Organism

- The **human organism** is neither the **physical body** nor the **phenomenal body** but is made up of organising patterns and flows of awareness that shape our physical perception of the world and our physical actions within it.
- It is through these organising patterns and flows of awareness that we embody our innate **capacities** as human beings – expressing them in organised patterns of physical action and perception.
- Physiology in the deepest sense is the *logos* or organising pattern of *phusis* – our life or **movedness** as living **beings**.
- The essential character of this movedness, according to Heidegger, is a self-unfolding, which, like that of the plant or tree, is at the same time a rooting or grounding movement of “going-back-into-itself”. These two basic movements of our being – that of **self-unfolding** and **going back into ourselves**, are the basis of all human capacities and the true life of the human organism.

Ontodynamic Physiology

- According to Heidegger “**We** hear, not the ear.” And what is true of hearing is true of all our bodily senses and physiological functions. We see not the eye. We breathe, not our lungs. We think, not our brains. Breathing and metabolism, like seeing and hearing – are capacities not functions.
- It is not bodies or brains that possess these capacities - that see and hear, think and feel, breathe and metabolise – but beings.
- **Ontophysiology** is an **ontological** understanding of human **physiology** - the understanding that all physical, organic functions of our bodies are the embodiment of inner capacities of our being.
- We do not hear because we have ears. We have ears because we possess the capacity to hear. Similarly, we do not think because we have brains - and nor is it our brains that think. We think because we are thinking beings. Our brains are the embodiment of our capacity as beings, to think - and not the other way round.

Heidegger on the Brain

- **Ontodynamic Physiology** runs directly contrary to the idea that it is **brains** that think, and that mental illness is caused by **brain dysfunction**.
- “When it is claimed that brain research is a scientific foundation for our understanding of human beings, the claim implies that the true and real relationship of one human being to another is an interaction of brain processes, and that in brain research itself, nothing else is happening but that one brain is in some way ‘informing’ another. Then, for example, the statue of a god in the Akropolis museum, viewed during the term break, that is to say outside the research work, is in reality and truth nothing but the meeting of a brain process in the observer with the product of a brain process, the statue exhibited. Reassuring us, during the holidays, that this is not what is really implied, means living with a certain double or triple accounting that clearly doesn’t rest easily with the much faulted rigour of science.”

Heidegger on Thinking

- Heidegger describes thinking itself not as a **function** of the brain but as “a listening that brings something into view “, i.e. brings it to light in our field of awareness through a type of inner seeing and hearing. He emphasised however, that his was no mere ‘metaphorical’ understanding of the nature of thinking, for seeing and hearing are not essentially physical capacities of our eyes and ears but capacities of our being – and of thought itself.
- **“If we take thinking to be a sort of hearing and seeing, then sensible hearing and seeing is taken up and over into the realm of nonsensory perception...In Greek such a transposing is called *metaphorein*...So thinking may be called a hearing and a listening, a viewing and a bringing into view, only in a metaphorical sense. Who says “may” here? Those who assert that hearing with the ears and seeing with the eyes is genuine hearing and seeing.”**

Ontodynamic Psychology

- **Biopsychiatry** treats mental illnesses as diseases of the brain with a genetic basis.
- But the ‘effectiveness’ of psychopharmacological drugs in treating mental illness lies only in their capacity to distort or suppress brain functioning – often with damaging results.
- **Human Ontology** understands mental illnesses as expressions of states of being not as disorders of the brain.
- Brain activity itself is the expression of mental-emotional activity and not the other way round, **unless** brain functioning is artificially interfered with and damaged through the use of psychiatric drugs.

Ontodynamic Psychology

- We can **be** in a certain state without **feeling** that state of being – without feeling how we **are**. Feeling how we are means letting our awareness follow one of two basic **movements** – the movement in towards the self and the movement out towards the world.
- Western psychology is based on the myth that life as such is essentially an energetic movement out towards the world, and that the ‘introspective’ movement **in** leads ultimately to a dead end of depressive withdrawal, regression and ultimately, death.
- **Ontodynamic Psychology** understands the movement **in** as the necessary condition, not only for the restoration of organismic vitality (for example through sleep) but for experiencing healthy **inner contact** with our own being and other beings, a healthy and fulfilling **inner relation** to both self and world. It is the lack of this healthy inner contact with ourselves and others that is the basis of both physical and mental ill-health.

From Genetic Medicine to Organismic Medicine

- **Organism Medicine** is a phenomenological exploration of the relation between physiological functions and ontological capacities: the dynamic flows of awareness through which we relate as beings to the world. Each of these dynamic flows of awareness has its own organising pattern.
- Respiration, for example, is not merely a physiological function through which oxygen is absorbed from the air and fed into the bloodstream. It is the embodiment of an organismic capacity, as beings, to breathe in our awareness of the world, and in turn allow our awareness to flow out into the atmospheric field around us.
- **Organismic Medicine** does not locate the 'cause' of respiratory disorders in the respiratory **organs** but understands the disturbances of respiratory functions as the inhibition of a specific **organismic capacity** – our capacity to experience and embody this rhythmically patterned flow of awareness.

The True Nature of the Human Organism

- Before birth we dwell in our mother's womb. After birth we continue to dwell in the womb of our own **organism** or 'mother-body' (German *Mutterleib*), a womb filled with the fluid medium of **feeling tone** – felt tones of being that permeate our field or 'feeld' of awareness, colouring both our self-awareness and our awareness of the world.
- The organism as 'mother-body' is a living matrix of organising patterns and flows of awareness, comparable to musical scores, from which we constantly give birth to our own bodies.
- We do so by giving bodily form to inner feeling tones – embodying them in cell and organ tone, muscle and skin tone, and expressing them in the tone of our voice and that of our thoughts themselves.
- The mind is the **musculature** of the human organism. Sensation is its outermost skin. Feeling tone is its fluid or 'humoral' substance.

Gender, Genomics and the Human Organism

- In the past women were treated as mere bearers of the male seed, and if possible, male progeny.
- **Human Genomics** now places womankind in the role not of child bearers but as gene bearers.
- Pre-scientific medicine identified the human organism with the womb or uterus – understanding illness as a *hysteria*, a ‘troubled womb’ that could affect both men or women but which the latter were naturally more sensitive too. Healing meant dissolving old obstructions and restoring ‘humoral’ **fluidity** to the felt body.
- **Human Genomics** and scientific medicine now understands the womb as a mere incubator of cellular and genetic raw materials, and illness as a mere failure of structural-genetic programming.
- Medical treatments that seek to affect how a human being feels from without - by manipulating the body’s chemistry or genes – are essentially **violations** of the mother body or organism.

Bodying as Organismic Activity

- “We know by now a great deal – almost more than we can encompass – about what we call the body, without having seriously thought about what **bodying** is. It is something more and different from merely ‘carrying a body around with one’.”
- Biological medicine understands the body as a living ‘thing’ rather than as a basic capacity of the **human organism** - the capacity for bodying inner patterns and flows of awareness.
- At the heart of this activity is feeling. “**Every feeling is an embodiment attuned in this or that way, a mood that embodies in this or that way.**” (Heidegger).
- Actively **bodying** feelings is not to be confused with what psychoanalysts call ‘somatisation’. It is the capacity to embody the specific mood or tone of feeling underlying a given mental and emotional state. Feeling tones are not emotions – they are felt tones or chords of feeling that permeate our awareness.

From Gene Therapy to Organismic Healing

- **Ontodynamic Physiology** and **Ontodynamic Psychology** provide the foundations for new methods of **Organismic Healing**.
- **Biological medicine and psychiatry** separate the patient as a human being from their own symptoms, reducing them to 'cases' of specific functional or organic, physical or mental, bodily or behavioural disorders. The healer-patient relationship is a purely external relationship, in which the patient's problems are turned into a clinical object.
- **Organismic Healing** is based on the healer's capacity to directly receive and respond to the patient as a human being, using his or her own organism as a medium of resonant attunement and resonant inner contact and communication with the patient. Its aim is not to cure disease but to resonate and respond to the patient's inner **dis-ease**.

The Aims of Organismic Healing

The aim of organismic healing is to help the patient to:

1. **Understand** their dis-ease 'maieutically' - as a form of organismic pregnancy allowing them to feel and embody new aspects of their inner being.
2. **Actively attune to and body** their own feeling tones and states of being rather than expressing them in bodily and behavioural symptoms.
3. **Balance and harmonise** the two basic movements of awareness that constitute the very life of the human organism – the movement in and the movement out.
4. **Establish and sustain** a resonant inner contact with themselves and others through an inward movement of awareness that reaches down to their 'inner ground' – allowing them to resonate with the fundamental tone or *Grundstimmung* of their own being.

The Topsy-Turvy World of Medicine

- In the **topsy-turvy** world of biological medicine it is not beings but bodies that move, not beings but brains that think - 'causing' us as human beings to feel and move in the way we do.
- **Human Genomics** reduces the human being to the human body and brain, and reduces the latter to its genetic 'programming'. DNA is considered a molecular code of "instructions" for "making" a human being.
- In doing so, it **turns reality on its head**, attributing characteristics belonging essentially to **beings** (for example the capacity to think and communicate instructions) to things - to material **bodies** in space and time.
- It identifies the **organising matrix** of the human organism with **molecular structures** of the human body, rather than understanding the latter as one expression of the former.

The Hubris of Medical Knowledge

- **Human Genomics** is the ultimate expression of what Ivan Illich called medical *hubris* – the arrogance of believing that ultimately, we can know all there is to know about the human body, and become ultimate technical masters of all biological processes.
- Medical knowledge of or about the body consists itself of bodies of concepts that remain fundamentally unquestioned and which ignore the fundamental question of what sort of **relation to the body** constitutes genuine ‘knowing’.
- Is it a relation in which the human body is turned into a clinical object for an unrelated observer or one in which the body itself is understood as a body **of** inner knowing – of molecular, cellular and organic awareness.
- “The relation that distinguishes knowing is always the one in which **we ourselves** are related and in which the relation **vibrates** through our basic comportment.” Martin Heidegger

Medical Nemesis

- The price that patients pay for **medical hubris** is a high one. **Ivan Illich**, in his book entitled **Medical Nemesis** analyses in detail the sickening effects of modern medicine.
- “The medical establishment has become a major threat to health. The disabling impact of professional control over medicine has reached the proportions of an epidemic. *Iatrogenesis*, the name for this new epidemic, comes from *iatros*, the Greek word for ‘physician’, and *genesis*, meaning ‘origin’....A professional and physician-based health-care system that has grown beyond critical bounds is sickening for three reasons: it must produce clinical damage that outweighs its potential benefits; it cannot but enhance even as it obscures the political conditions that render society unhealthy; and it tends to expropriate the power of the individual to heal himself and shape his or her environment.”

Illich on Iatrogenesis

- **“clinical iatrogenic disease comprises all clinical conditions for which remedies, physicians or hospitals are the pathogens, or ‘sickening’ agents.**
- **“social iatrogenesis...obtains when medical bureaucracy creates ill-health by increasing stress, by multiplying disabling dependence...by lowering the levels of tolerance for discomfort or pain, by reducing the leeway that people are wont to concede to an individual when he suffers, and by abolishing even the right to self-care. [It] is at work when...all suffering is hospitalized and homes become inhospitable to birth, sickness and death.”**
- **“ cultural iatrogenesis...consists in the paralysis of healthy responses to suffering, impairment and death. It occurs when people accept health management on the engineering model, when they conspire in an attempt to produce, as if it were a commodity, something called ‘better health’.”**

The Gospel of the Human Genome

- **Human Genomics** has become the medical-scientific **religion** of the new millennium, replacing the **Book of Genesis** with with **Gospel of Genetics**.
- This is a **pseudo-scientific** religion and a **pseudo-religious** science, a seemingly beneficial **scientology**.
- The biotech labs are its corporate **temples**. Its credo is that we are **creations** of our genes. Its holy book is the **Human Genome** – understood as a ‘book of life’ **produced by its own alphabet** but lacking any author or inner dimensions of meaning.
- Marketing and the mass media are the messengers of its **Good News**. Its false promise is **salvation** from all disease through gene technology.
- Its true agenda – to turn the sickness of human relations in capitalist society into a source of corporate profit - by eliminating all bodily and behavioural expression of **dis-ease**.

Summary

- **Human Ontology, Ontodynamic Physiology and Psychology**, lay the basis for a truly human approach to health and healing: for **Organismic Medicine and Healing**.
- At the heart of **Human Ontology** are a number of basic distinctions obliterated by the medical scientific world outlook.
 1. **between the human body and the human being,**
 2. **between physical science and phenomenological science,**
 3. **between the physical body and the phenomenal body**
 4. **between organic functions and the human organism**

Heidegger's Health Warning

“Sometimes it seems as if modern humanity were rushing headlong towards this goal of *producing itself technologically*. If humanity achieves this, it will have exploded itself, i.e. its *essence qua subjectivity*, into thin air, into a region where the absolutely meaningless is valued as the one and only ‘meaning’ and where preserving this value appears as the human ‘domination’ of the globe.”

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