

# MAN AS A BEING OF HYGIENE IN A PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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## *Abstract*

The aim of the text is to address the phenomenon of hygiene as that which concerns the transitory boundary of our corporeality (the lived body in the physical body), as an ambiguous and diverse phenomenon, which presents itself in various ways (in the field of expressivity). The study draws on the fruitful cooperation between phenomenology and philosophical anthropology. In the first part, the text analyzes how corporeality is treated in the phenomenological reflection based on Edmund Husserl's conception of

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the lived body and in the following phenomenological thematizations of corporeality. Upon the foundation of such an approach, we engage in an elaboration of the problem of hygiene in its anthropological specificity. With the help of an anthropological study of Helmuth Plessner, it is possible, in the subsequent parts of the text, to approach the phenomenon of hygiene in its particular manifestations—as expressions of interaction in society (with examples of diplomacy and good manners) as well as in the field of artistic expressions (with examples of hygienic images in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). Hygiene thus appears as a phenomenon in the framework of a complex being in the world, and it cannot be derived from the outer (socially construed) or causal-physiological phenomena. This makes hygiene a specific leading clue for the research regarding subjectivity.

*Keywords:* Edmund Husserl, Helmuth Plessner, hygiene, lived body, works of art.

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### **Človek kot bitje higijene s fenomenološkega in antropološkega stališča**

#### *Povzetek*

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Namen besedila je obravnavati fenomen higijene kot tistega, kar zadeva tranzitorno mejo naše telesnosti (živo telo v našem fizičnem telesu), kot dvoumnega in raznolikega fenomena, ki se kaže na mnogotere načine (v polju ekspresivnosti). Študija se sklicuje na plodno sodelovanje med fenomenologijo in filozofsko antropologijo. V prvem delu besedilo analizira, kako o telesnosti razpravlja fenomenološka refleksija, utemeljena na pojmovanju živega telesa pri Edmundu Husserlu in pri nadaljnjih fenomenoloških tematizacijah telesa. Na podlagi takšnega pristopa se spoprimemo z razdelavo problema higijene v njegovi antropološki specifičnosti. S pomočjo antropološkega raziskovanja Helmutha Plessnerja se lahko, v naslednjih delih besedila, približamo partikularnim manifestacijam fenomena higijene ne samo kot izrazov interakcije znotraj družbe (s primeri diplomacije in lepega vedénja), temveč tudi na polju umetniškega izražanja (s primeri higienskih podob v prvi polovici 20. stoletja). Higijena se potemtakem kaže kot fenomen znotraj kompleksnosti prebivanja v svetu in je ni mogoče izpeljevati iz zunanjih (družbeno konstruiranih) ali kavzalno-fizioloških fenomenov. Na takšen način higijena postane posebno vodilo za raziskavo subjektivnosti.

*Ključne besede:* Edmund Husserl, Helmuth Plessner, higijena, živo telo, umetnine.

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The birth of the modern era of medicine is closely linked to the care for personal hygiene and safety during physical contact. At this birth, it was the physician Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis who in 1847 introduced rules for disinfection at a maternity hospital. He saved many lives, mainly the lives of mothers, by obliging the medical personnel to wash their hands regularly, although his approach was not without an initial backlash within the medical community. This event is significant from several points of view. Hygiene is here explicitly thematized, and the reactions to this intervention in hygiene are likewise significant. Hygiene is, moreover, implicitly present in various layers of human experience and expression. Diverse manifestations of hygiene arise; it becomes a truism, a matter of course, a need, or it is questioned.

How shall we situate hygiene as a philosophical problem—and where? Looking back at the history of ideas and sciences, we see that for the Greeks *ὑγίεια* literally meant health, cure, or medicine—for example, as in the saying that “sleep is the best medicine.” *ὑγιεινός* in antiquity thus denotes both a healthy state and the care for such a state—that is, it denotes what is good for health and for staying healthy (see also Tountas 2009). Alcmaeon puts it in the following way:

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[...] health is tough as long as the various elements, wet–dry, cold–hot, bitter–sweet have equal rights and that diseases come when one of the opposites prevails. The prevalence of either element tells you to be the cause of destruction. Health is the harmonious mix of opposite qualities. (DK 24 B 4.)<sup>1</sup>

Care for health and internal harmony of the elements and components of an organism—such as the equilibrium, which Pythagoras and Hippocrates speak of—was in Greek society closely linked with the development of the skills and

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1 Cf. Diels 1879.

habits of a human being and with his or her relationship with the environment; it was likewise closely linked with the form of the community oriented towards the promotion of health. As a consequence, the issues of health and hygiene entered the field of medicine and related fields. In philosophy, however, the explicit thematization of hygiene has taken a back seat, since the domain of theory is separated from the domain of practice, and since hygiene is linked to corporeality, which has usually only a secondary, derivative function in philosophy, depending on the gnoseological, ontological, and metaphysical presuppositions. An explicit thematization of corporeality in philosophy itself has therefore been rare. This view changed with the growth of the relevance of experience, behavior, and agency, as well as of the notion of man as being in the world. Once this happened, an appropriate approach to corporeality has become the key question. Corporeality thus re-entered philosophy at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it was made a central issue in phenomenology and related philosophy focused on subjectivity (see Doyon and Wehrle 2020). Moreover, the focus of philosophical anthropology on the point of view of the human being and his or her particular, concrete experience also offers us several notable examples of the phenomenon of hygiene.

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The relationship towards one's own body at the level of intimacy and cleanliness is crucial, since it is related to the protection of human life itself, as was the case of the maternity hospitals and as is likewise the case in a pandemic. Similarly, under normal conditions, this relationship is naturally related to the functioning of a reasonably healthy corporeality, and a lack or overabundance of hygiene can upset the bodily balance. I will argue that this balance is regained always again and anew according to concrete circumstances of an individual, whereby these particular circumstances can often change. Sometimes, the changes are not that noticeable, but at other times—such as during the pandemic—these changes can be significant. Considering the question of hygiene, though, we at the same time encounter countertendencies, such as prejudices or outright refusal, which hamper the change that is necessary in matters of hygiene. Even in the new millennium, we have been surprised by the elementary protective requirements (hand washing, mask wearing, and social distancing), which the otherwise developed and flexible global community has had difficulties handling. Another example is an exaggerated sanitariness of

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the environment (e.g., overprotection of children or excessive hand washing), which weakens the immunity and leads to mental disorders.

However, how shall we characterize the phenomenon of hygiene? What do we point towards when we call man a being of hygiene? Hygiene concerns a certain *transitory boundary of our corporeality*, which can be said to have two aspects: it is somewhere between the physical and the lived body, as well as between the personal domain and public contact. Hygiene is not only a matter of intimacy, since it is related to others, but likewise it is not only a matter of the external environment, since personal hygiene is precisely related to mental hygiene, hand washing, masks wearing, as well as to certain domains of subjective corporeality, lived experience, expression, and intersubjectivity. The notion of hygiene proves to be an ambiguous phenomenon, which presents itself in various ways. It can also be a fundamental leading clue for subjectivity or a significant anthropological phenomenon, respectively.

It is an approach of philosophical anthropology where we will follow analyses of Helmuth Plessner, which allow us to address this phenomenon in its particular manifestations and concreteness. The reason why philosophical anthropology can work in this way lies in the fact that it opens a new discourse, which considers the human perspective and takes into account man as being “in” and “according to” concrete situations, in the world and with others, becoming who he or she is in his or her performances and expressions. Man as “excentric positionality”<sup>2</sup> recognizes this situation as a certain conflict, as an impossibility to ground his life from the center. A particular attention is here dedicated to corporeality. How can the anthropological approach work together with phenomenology? The interconnections between these two philosophical approaches, which developed parallelly, have both historical and intra-philosophical roots. The cooperation between them can be accessed from both sides, which results in a thematically variable approach.<sup>3</sup> The first-person

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2 In accordance with the latest translation of Plessner's *Levels of Organic Life and the Human* (2019), I use the English term “excentric” as translation of the German term “exzentrisch.”

3 As far as the methodological questions are concerned, the confusion is surely not unavoidable, which is confirmed by multiple analyses; see: Brudzińska 2018; Wehrle 2013; Vydrová 2021.

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approach, the view of subjective corporeality from within, and the eschewing of dualism and causal interpretations allow one to see these phenomena within the “*anthropology of experience from the point of view of lived inner perspective*” (Brudzińska 2018, 16 f.) or, as Plessner puts it, within the “configuration of conditions specific to human behavior” (Plessner 2016c, 418).

I will therefore specify two contexts, in which hygiene is analyzed by Plessner (in corporeal schemas concerning diplomacy and good manners); then I will investigate the manifestations of human expressiveness, in particular in the domain of art in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (hygienic image). Hygiene, and all matters hygienic, will not be treated as exclusive problems of somatics, physiology, and medicine, but as issues, which concern the human being as an intersubjective and creative being, and which especially concern the human being as an embodied being. Such an approach gained relevance in the philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries thanks also to the way, in which the question of corporeality has been formulated by phenomenology.<sup>4</sup> This will be the basis for further analyses of hygiene and its possible forms in the life of man. I want to trace or relate, respectively, the individual manifestations of hygiene, which we can meet, precisely to this source. The phenomenon of hygiene will then be ultimately disclosed as a form of a balancing act, whereby both corporeality and environment partake in this balancing, although each in a peculiar, unique way. In the first part of this study, I will thus analyze how the body is treated in the phenomenological reflection—though the analysis will be understandably limited for the purposes of the topic at hand.

### **The phenomenological treatment of corporeality**

There exists a crucial characterization in phenomenology of the physical body (*Körper*) and the lived body (*Leib*). This distinction is based on the phenomenological investigation of corporeality in connection with the perception of things and the experience of the other (alien experience, intersubjectivity). Corporeality is intimately connected with the beginning and the end of my life, which would not be possible without a body. Together

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4 For the phenomenological approach to medicine, see Svenaues 2001.

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with others, corporeality is a founding layer intertwined with transcendental subjectivity.<sup>5</sup> Phenomenology situates the problem of corporeality in such a way, in order to tackle the problems of the objectification of the body and dualism, which affect our perception of the body in multiple domains. Maurice Merleau-Ponty analyzed corporeality as the basis of our perception, situatedness, and behavior. Many direct or derived analyses of corporeality, which thus became a crucial phenomenological topic, followed. Functional aspects of subjective corporeality were investigated by Husserl in *Ideen II* and also in manuscripts, which are focused on the genetic analysis, passive synthesis, or analysis of perception. Some of these thematizations occur in the manuscripts collected in *Hua-Mat VIII* (Husserl 2006), and the following text is based on them.

Specific aspects of our own corporeality are disclosed there by means of examples, such as touching hands, touching another person, bodily feelings (such as pain, tickling, cold), various forms of movement during interaction with the world and others (walking, working out, dancing, playing a musical instrument). The body is here subjective, feeling, and lived. Here belong even situations, in which the body is physiologically tired or in which the body reacts unwittingly, too. Moreover, this also holds true for cases of bodily phenomena, which I am not aware of or which I do not control (sneezing, blushing, as well as also crying and laughing). The terms *Leib-Körperlichkeit* or *Körper-Leiblichkeit* express the interconnectedness of both facets—the physical body and the lived body—forming the manifestation of corporeality as a whole.

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Corporeality involves various levels of activity and passivity, which are linked both to its lived and physiological facets, to various levels of experiencing, feeling, or attenuation (fatigue, sleep, the interconnection of the body of the mother and the child in the prenatal period). It can be said that,

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5 “The transcendental subjectivity inevitably has to understand itself as world being, if it wants to constitute the objective world, whereby the objectivity can be constituted only concerning the subject, which is bodily as well as social.” (Zahavi 2009, 96.) In the book *Edmund Husserls Phänomenologie der Instinkte*, Nam-In Lee (1993) points out that transcendental phenomenology entails both idealistic and realistic, rationalistic and voluntaristic tendencies, and is a theory of knowledge, but at the same time also transcends the theory of knowledge.

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on the one hand, the limits of our corporeality cannot be transcended, but, on the other hand, it is precisely the body schema, upon which our relationships with the world and others stand (or to use Merleau-Ponty's language, we are chiasmatically woven into the world). Even in the cases of limit forms of passive corporeality, reflective reactions, or instincts, the phenomenological analysis avoids straightforward causal explanations. There are practical examples in Husserl's texts, stemming from everyday existence, which disclose how subjective corporeality is constituted even at the lowest levels as the present I. Let us look at Husserl's examples: the first example concerns the first movements of a newborn child, and the second concerns various forms of movement of a hand.

146 The I is a center of affects and actions; it is the constituting and acting I. The I is in the world as projecting within the horizon of experiences, interests, directions, and attitudes; it is in the world as an embodied I. What happens in the instance of the very first experience, though, where there is not a matter of some structured goal-directed movement or of an action fulfilling a certain intention? What happens in the case of that very first movement, with which a person finds the limits and possibilities of his or her own corporeality? We can look to a newborn sucking its mother's milk after birth, for example. Whereas in Husserl's earlier texts a static analysis of the "intention-fulfilment" structure of intentionality were dominant, here Husserl is focused on pre-intentionality and instinctive intentionality. The instinctive directedness of a newborn and its sucking reflex are accompanied by the kinesthetic experiencing, to which other experiences are connected. The body with its organs is then a sedimentation of the "I can" in certain typical forms of action (Husserl 2006, text No. 79)—firstly as pre-modes [*Vormodi*] of will.<sup>6</sup> Husserl introduced the example of the sucking of milk by the newborn in the following way:

What is purely I-like in kinesthesia? Nothing other than the affection aroused in the I by deceiving perceptions (smell, etc.). Does

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6 "Der Leib mit seinen abgegliederten Organen ist eine Sedimentierung von Vermögen des in solchen und solchen typischen Formen Tun-Könnens." (Husserl 2006, 345.) The following translations of German texts, if not stated otherwise, are mine.

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it not come to drink as soon as it is there? For example, the smell alone awakens something else, an empty apperception, so to speak, which has no “conscious” goal. If contact then occurs, the way to fulfillment is, however, even more so a continuing instinctive drive, which is unfulfilled intention. Then in the fulfillment swallowing movements, etc., [themselves] appear as fulfillment, as revealing the instinctive drive. These are modes of desire, modes of will, so to speak: pre-modes [which are], however, associated with them, [that is,] with the sensation complexes belonging to the disclosure of this fulfillment. (Husserl 2006, 326.)

Thanks to self-experiencing, these movements are more and more refined, and complex motor skills are developed on their basis. The exploration of the world also proceeds as the development continues.<sup>7</sup> The movements cease when the baby is fed, and after an intermission they are renewed with a renewed need. The baby practices the movements of the mouth even without actual sucking, and we could call these practices an initial form of play. This leads to habitualization and related new experiences. At the later stage, the infant gets to know the object through the mouth. More and more, an infant is capable of inserting things into the mouth with its hands, and its hands subsequently take over the function of the mouth in its exploration of the world.

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Another significant example, which we encounter at another place in the text, but which is relevant here, is the description of the movements of a hand in its developed forms. Intentional action stems from the intertwining of the physical and the lived facets of the body:

As a worldly I, I have formed my lived body as a lived body, I have got to know its organs as controllable and learned this control in general: it

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<sup>7</sup> In this connection, we can mention the principal phenomenological investigations of the child world, like for example those by Merleau-Ponty, who considers the world of the child as complete in its own way and therefore different in comparison with the world of adults, contrary to Piaget, for whom the world of the child is regarded as similar to the adult’s world, but as incomplete, deficient form of the adult’s world. See also note 16 in Lipták 2021, 262.

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is now my organ—for my living and working in the world. In my worldly life, I learn to master nature practically through the lived body and putting the lived body into play in the various directions of striving and achieving, I train it or myself in special ways—as a carpenter, locksmith, etc., I learn the “hand movements,” that is, my hand refines itself as an organ in certain directions, and so does the whole lived body in different directions of activity. I continue to gain “strength” physically, and I can and could do more and more. But this physical [*körperliche*] force is more precisely called bodily-mental [*leiblich-seelische*], especially since I am also the one who directs the development of forces, who drafts the plans for the external world practice [...]. (Husserl 2006, 156.)

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Husserl states that the body manifests itself in its mental form as an expression of a bodily action, whereby the hand is a significant example (see Husserl 2006, 399). Individuation in the world is linked not only to the bodily needs and the refining of motor skills, but also to the more complex and more goal-directed endeavors, activity, and practice, which lead to the creation of the personal, societal, and communicative milieu. Corporeality in its expressive facet thus manifests itself in various directions. The body here functions as an original organ or as “the original object [*Urobjekt*] with expression and as participating in all expression” (Husserl 2006, 401), respectively. Corporeality also operates in the mental domain (transcendental domain), and the body here always forms a basic reference to the original core, the primordial world or nature, with which we are already connected in the constitution of the corporeality. Husserl writes that corporeality is “the system of organs, the first ‘mental’ object [*geistige Objekt*]” (Husserl 2006, 402). The hand under discussion expresses vividly this connection of the primordial base and transcendental sphere, which is manifested and developed in the life of a person within the lifeworld. To put it from the perspective of philosophical anthropology: this concerns the link between the biological and the cultural, which is expressed in the form of a sense-making, existential attitude.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The action of the hand is a complex phenomenon imbued with multiple meanings:

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This inquiry into the phenomenological consideration of corporeality enables us to open the question of the human being as hygienic being. Hygiene is part of the body schema; in its asymptomatic presence, it produces a balance or harmony between me and the environment. This balancing, this setting of equilibrium, is vulnerable and can be violated. In case of movements or work of the hand, its injury or its lack of strength act not only upon “physical organs for external world practice, but also ‘mental’ [*geistiger*] strengths” (Husserl 2006, 156). In the same way, the lack or excess, respectively, of hygiene can cause not only somatic or mental illnesses, but also social distance, remoteness, or other excessive manifestations and expressions—as will be clear from the following text. However, what phenomenology of corporeality teaches us up to this point is that relationship to corporeality is the original way of understanding the phenomenon of hygiene, which in this relationship is grasped in its relation to healthiness, that is, it is seen as the condition of realization of my full physical and mental strengths—of realization of my goals. This original understanding is always present, despite the fact that it is insufficient. We will get to this in the next section. But now we still need to corroborate the intertwining of hygiene with the body schema exactly in the way, in which it stems from the lived body and physical body.

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The layers of the constitution of corporeality as well as the various levels of activity and passivity against the background of activity and affectivity of the I can be expressed through the dual view, as formulated by Wehrle (2013): it concerns a horizontality of the corporeality, which expresses the being of a body (whereby we are the body), and a verticality, which investigates how we have a physical body. “While *being a body* refers to both being a lived and material body, *having a body* represents the fact that we can address ourselves as Körper.” (Wehrle 2020, 501.) We can see this in the philosophical-

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for example, grasping [*Greifen*] or pointing [*Zeigen*] are two different actions, but in the first case it is a spontaneous, immediate action, whereas in the latter case it is an action, which is at the same time abstract (see Wehrle 2013; Wehrle follows Merleau-Ponty and Goldstein in the analysis of a pathological patient who was capable of grasping objects, but could not point to them). The hand expresses different kinds of gestures and in creative activity it is linked to our thinking—J. Pallasmaa (see 2009, 19, 21–22, 70 ff.) investigates the connection between hand, eye, and mind, as well as different meanings of hand.

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anthropological approach of Helmuth Plessner, who focuses on particular examples of *Leibkörperlichkeit* and *Körperleiblichkeit* body schemas, such as limit expressions of laughter and crying (Plessner 1970), our performance in the public domain in roles, but also, for example, expressions linked to artistic production. Our investigation of corporeality is thus enriched by a new dimension:

The body thus appears not only as a medium and border of concrete intersubjective encounters, but at the same time as the subject and object of the cultural and normative constitution of the image of the normal or pathological, healthy or sick, as well as the beautiful or ugly body. (Wehrle 2013, 220.)

In such a configuration, we can look at the body and related forms of hygiene—or sanitarness.

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### **The public domain and the hygiene of the soul**

If we introduce phenomenological understanding of corporeality into the anthropological context, we can present some of its manifestations in greater detail as well as trace these manifestations back to their original grounding in the body. Viewed anthropologically, a human being is an excentric positionality; that is, a human being does not have a fixed center, but is defined by its situatedness and by the ways, in which it tackles this situatedness. One of the basic manifestations of life, where we can point out the anthropological difference—that is, the way, in which a man differs from the plant and animal sphere,<sup>9</sup> in which a man is de-centered or ex-centrally present—, is *corporeality*. The fact that we both are a body and have a body is a cause of the continuous balancing of physical body and lived body, and therefore a reason for constituting oneself in life. A human being is also a social and historical being. In other words, the excentric positionality concerns all domains of the life of a human being—corporeality (I am a body and I have a body), social

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<sup>9</sup> This distinction is reflected in the way the positionality, the being of an organism in the environment, and relation of an organism to this environment, are configured.

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roles (I am always in a certain role and at the same time I create this role), historicity (I am always in a certain historical situation, which I am somehow aware of). How do we encounter hygiene in this context?

It is not by chance that the issue of hygiene appears in Plessner in relation with the human being in society, when he investigates societal movements and changes. Hygiene does not appear here primarily as a physiological need or as a protection of the health of the somatic body, but it concerns societal expression and communication. But, as we will see, hygiene in these cases is not primarily an issue of outer construction or social convention, but it stems precisely from corporeality. In the following part, we will thus investigate how this social appearance of hygiene is grounded in the phenomenon of corporeality and how both the physical body and the lived body are expressed in it.

In the text, “Grenzen der Gemeinschaft. Eine Kritik des sozialen Radikalismus” (1924), hygiene is analyzed in relation to the issues of *diplomacy* and *good manners*. These phenomena include schemes of behavior, which are situational and individual, but which are also subordinated to certain principles. They represent the duality of our corporeality, which is constituted as lived corporeality in the spontaneity of its expressivity and, at the same time, is a means, a bearer of the outer features, which manifest our behavior outwardly. A human being co-creates these phenomena by establishing them, animating them, even transgressing them (subversions can likewise be functional).<sup>10</sup> To put it differently, they express both what is spontaneous in the human being and what is schematized, formalized. Therefore, the protective layer of a human being is produced through diplomacy and manners, and at the same time its vulnerability is recognized by it. Diplomacy supplies the means, which make communication possible and which balance the tensions and forces that affect the human being. At the same time, these tensions and forces neutralize behavior and can strip it of unpredictable liveliness. Various factors are operative here,<sup>11</sup> and they lead to an eventual broadening of what we can do (the power), on the one hand, and our protection, on the other.

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<sup>10</sup> Constitutive elements of this sphere are also taboo, transgression, forbidden forms of behavior, alienation, but also personal protection.

<sup>11</sup> “The play of threat and intimidation, cunning and persuasion, action and negotiation.” (Plessner 1981, 99.)

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The schema of public behavior—what I do and how I do it—is thus connected with gestures, symbols, signs, public expressions, roles, and masks. In the spontaneity of intersubjective situation, we, for example, see facial expressions of the other as facial expressions, but at the same time they are immediate bearers of sense (Husserl 1952, 235). Corporeal expressivity represents the visible expressions, which function for both communication and hiding what we cannot or do not want to express publicly. Corporeality here both reveals and hides. Being a body and having a body, which are constantly shifting here, means that in the public domain we take up roles—we are always in some role linked to certain expressions.<sup>12</sup> In other words, *a specific configuration of being a lived body in the physical body appears*. We create a ceremonial level, which preserves an “order” of our life as we understand it; we feel acceptable within the framework of this order. This order is supposed to be a healthy environment, a domain free of all that is improper, free of all the suspect “junk” (*Plunder*; Plessner 1981, 87). This order is thus linked to respective hygienic measures and regulations instituted, in order to protect us and maintain a healthy environment.

152 Plessner observes that the public domain also allows for such a “hygiene of the soul,” which is related to the balancing of the tensions concentrated in the personal, intimate domain. Hygiene contributes to resilience. Living in tensions and conflicts with oneself can be unbearable, and therefore the tension is released and relieved by entering the public domain—a person, for example, takes up a role in the workplace or in the community, identifies with a certain social task, and so on. This provides her or him with functioning behavioral frameworks, which need not be constantly confronted with their interiority. Plessner states in connection with this:

For the Westerner, there is a new compulsion to defend all that is ceremonial for reasons of hygiene of the soul. Its evaluation—which entails perhaps an overestimation of the personality—consequently leads to the development of an increased protection of the psyche from exposure, injury, and humiliation in public. (Plessner 1981, 87.)

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12 There can be quite ostensible situations, such as when we wear masks, which can, under certain conditions, become an armor-plate. See Fischer 2002.

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As a certain compensation, society creates and strengthens the ceremonial domain pursuant to the degree, in which the individuals comprising such a society are individualistically, socially, or community-oriented, as well as the degree, in which the society is open or closed, and to which it feels threatened or free.

A stable space for the human being can be secured here. This happens, for example, when one's gesture in the public domain is accepted with understanding, and one can express oneself in a free way. However, a deviation concerning the understanding of a healthy environment—allowing for the protection and, therefore, the hygiene of the soul—can also take place here; hygiene is then changed in a negative manner. Pursuant to Plessner's diagnosis from the 1930s, the issue here is whether we are more concerned with *Gemeinschaft*—a community—or *Gesellschaft*—a society. Undue emphasis on one's own interiority and on narrow, personal, or "blood" relations can lead to cold rationalization when protecting this interiority or relations, or it can lead to irrational excesses. In this manner, a social radicalism can arise. Plessner also pays attention to certain symbols (for example, clothing), gestures, and expressions in public.<sup>13</sup> A century later, another example is at hand: wearing masks during a pandemic. At the primary level, this concerns the protection of health. This means, however, other things as well: it expresses a social or political position, solidarity with the endangered groups, or one's own vulnerability. We can locate all these meanings within dual corporeality (*Leibkörperlichkeit* and *Körperlichkeit*); that is, we can define them as ultimately a corporeal phenomenon.

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We see, however, that the original understanding of hygiene from the position of phenomenology of corporeality has gotten more complex, complicated, and in a certain way contradictory. Institutes of hygiene can be insufficient for the purposes of the realization of my physical and mental strengths. Public domain on the other hand can impose hygienic demands, which may be seen as excessive, too; exceeding what is sufficient for my goal-directed action, for the realization of my physical and mental strengths as perceived on the basis of my original understanding of my corporeality, which,

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13 Also, for example, what it means when we strip someone of them.

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as we have seen, is always somehow present. However, once we introduce the point of view of philosophical anthropology, it is clear that this realization, this successful goal-directed action, presupposes others, presupposes community or society, and therefore this public domain—together with its seemingly excessive hygienic demands—is outlined by the very same corporeality. In a way, the body takes part in the production of what is alien to it. The balancing act becomes much more difficult—not only because it is difficult for a man to achieve an equilibrium between body and environment, but because the dividing line between them becomes blurry, because they start to melt into each other. The conflicts become harder to resolve because it becomes more difficult to determine what is in conflict. Rather than being the final instance for the resolution of conflicts, the original relationship to body—as disclosed by phenomenology of corporeality—serves only as a constant reminder and even a source of conflicts. Rather than resolving these conflicts, we will look in the next sections at how they manifest themselves, firstly, in social practices and, then, in the artistic production.

154 To conclude, the basis of this thinking is that subjectivity is corporeality variously articulated in its unity (see Husserl 1952, 241–242). It can be manifested in the peculiar “having” a body, whereby the body, which “we are,” is objectified in how we “have” a body in particular. The outer features of corporeality are linked to the fact that I always “am” a corporeal being, realizing my corporeality, which involves both becoming familiar with a given role in its realization and the spontaneous performance of gestures:

Being a body must be characterized by an inherent pre-reflective self-awareness, whereas having a body refers to the realm of object perception or thematic reflection that, in turn, is founded on the former, more primary form of intention and self-awareness. (Wehrle 2020, 506.)

### **Hygiene in art: Images of the hygienic body**

Helmuth Plessner leads us further in the investigation of the topic of hygiene. Hygiene is a phenomenon of our corporeality, which concerns both the personal and the public domain, and its influence in the life of a human

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being is multidirectional and can be seen in various facets of our action and experience. It can be seen in the domain of culture as well. Let us look now into this domain, which is related to expressivity, to a human as a cultural being; in particular, let us look at the situation of an artist. In art, the question of hygiene is posed as a novel issue; it is explicitly thematized, for example, in the fine arts and literature.

In 1965, Helmuth Plessner (2016b) wrote a text on the occasion of the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of Ernst Bloch entitled “Über die gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen der modernen Malerei.” Plessner here looks more closely into the relationship between art and the political system, and he does so both in the case of art in a totalitarian society and art, which is not explicitly subject to a totalitarian regime, but which “is in” the society and reacts to its conditions and possibilities. Being “in” the situation, being “according to” the situation and taking part in its unfolding, reacting to it and co-determining it—which all expresses the excentric positionality as a basic determination of a human being—, therefore, in this case concerns an artist.

To put it differently, the questions of “what” is worth depicting and “how” it should be depicted concerns a human being’s understanding, whereby a human being is an intersubjective, social, and historical being always interconnected and situated in the environment, which is likewise co-created by him. Every formalized and externalized scheme concerns not only the framework images of a human being and configurations set from the outside, but also particular, concrete forms of our experiencing and behavior, that is, it concerns corporeality. What does this mean in the life of a human being in particular? 155

Industrialism is the form of communication, expressionism is art, social radicalism is the ethics of tactlessness. The call for physical hygiene, which is already satisfied with the skylight and tiled walls, aligns perfectly with an art that rushes straight into the essentials, with a morality of ruthless sincerity and the principled harming of yourself and others. (Plessner 1981, 110.)<sup>14</sup>

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14 This observation is not accidental; it appears also during the thematization and

Such tendencies in society, culture, medicine, and art (the fine arts, literature, theatre, architecture, and so on) are intertwined. Good examples can be found in the works of Slovak and Czech artists from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where hygiene also appears in their works of art.

We find here an exalting of hygiene, the image of a hygienically clean, sanitized body, but also a broader perception of hygiene in certain coldness in or disregard for relationships. We can say that this is related to a loss of the nearness of the other person and a certain stiffness, curtness in action; Plessner pointed to similar phenomena. Hygiene can contribute to a healthy and safe environment, but the sterility strips it of vitality and viability. Exaggerated bodily sterility, which accompanies physical distancing and the experiencing of one's own corporeality by sterility, can lead to an emotional distancing or a damaged relationship to one's own body. Hygienic claims thus appear at different levels of life of a human being and culture—from hygienic living, work hygiene, and hygienic city even to hygienic love.

156 The literary scholar Fedor Matejov notices a passage in a prose text by Charles Louis Philippe (1874–1909), *Bubu de Montparnasse*, concerning a “hygienic matter” (*une chose hygiénique*).<sup>15</sup> He then proceeds to pursue this theme in the works of the Slovak writer Dominik Tatarka (1913–1989).

One does not have to thoroughly consult Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, in order to say that we are not here in the domain of an emphasis of corporeality as weakness, fragility, temptation, sin, redemption, or damnation, but in the domain of the bodily condition, “live-lihood,” way

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criticism of the artistic production on the part of the artists, too. In the text “Súčasná situácia maľby [Current Situation of Painting],” Zdeněk Rykr, whom we will speak about later, states: “If the Renaissance has a symbol of a lion, the Gothic a symbol of a dragon, decadence a symbol of an orchid, post-war Cubism a symbol of a herring, then let us have a bathtub in our coat of arms. It is almost amusing how people dislike that water. Especially for artists, eau de cologne and ‘only’ dipping suffice for them if it helps to avoid a real shower.” (Quoted in: Lahoda 2016, 146.)

15 “She kissed him on the mouth. It's a good hygienic matter between a man and his wife, which entertains you for fifteen minutes before you fall asleep [Elle l'embrassa à pleine bouche. C'est une chose hygiénique et bonne entre un homme et sa femme, qui vous amuse un petit quart d'heure avant de vous endormir].” (Philippe 1905, 39.)

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of living, passing time [...] of course, the emphasis matches the particular period—we are talking about the end of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th—, and it is venereal. (Matejov 2020, 34.)

The image of the body is here projected into the state of the human being, its condition and perception of its own corporeality. The body expresses itself in such a way that it avoids unpredictable emotions, passion, and warmth in form of a physical contact, all of which can disrupt this condition. There appears in works of art a symptomatic type of an impersonal interior, in which a person is situated: a bathroom, a hotel room, a hall, a canteen. As an archetype, the impersonal interior permeates the image of other habitable rooms and the perception of spaces and people in them. The interior is cold, because a human being does not expect the experience of the nearness of the other body there, or this experience is transferred to the spaces linked with the domain of hygiene, respectively. Modern living has been clean not only, insofar as its forms and shapes are concerned, but also insofar as individual pieces of equipment are concerned; Peter Zajac enumerates, for example, “canalization, showers, running water, bath, central heating, fume hood, flush toilet, and sometimes even bidet” (Zajac and Vydra 2018, 114) among them.<sup>16</sup>

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On the one hand, there is a type of schematized contact in the public, which lacks enough personal relationships, and, on the other hand, there is even a personal and corporeal domain, which is likewise permeated by impersonality. The bathroom and the boudoir are places of intimacy, privacy, secrecy, but at the same time they involve the coldness of ceramic tiles, metal accessories, cold touches of naked parts of the body. Here, we find an image of corporeality as “boudoir corporeality” as well as an image of the human being of hygiene. Zajac<sup>17</sup> states the following in his analysis of the Slovak town Bánovce nad Bebravou:

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16 In *Farská republika* (*The Clerical Republic*; 1948), we read: “He went to the bathroom and opened the tap fully several times. He was on fire as the water sprayed all over the white porcelain sink.” (Tatarka 1948, 95.) I thank F. Matejov for the references to this text as well as for the 1948 edition.

17 “As P. Zajac sees it, the contemporary context of [boudoir corporeality] lies in Surrealism with Baroque-Rococo reminiscences.” (Matejov 2020.) At the same time, Bánovce nad Bebravou is a town where the priest and president of the Slovak State during Second World War—Jozef Tiso (1887–1947)—worked.

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The human being of *hygiene* in Bánovce is likewise new. This is because in the 1930s Bánovce was becoming a modern, hygienic town. “Hygiene” in a novel is as unique and crucial a word as “modern” or “new.” However, the ideology [of the hygiene] plays a peculiar role. (Zajac 2020, 133.)

158 Which corporeality is thus influenced by the demands of hygiene? The key layer here is not the lived corporeality, but more a condition of the body, images of healthy corporeality—that is, corporeality in the third person. Here, we can turn to Plessner’s analyses of various domains of human experiencing and expression. The disanimation of the body and sterility of the body schema manifest themselves, for example, in direct addressing of our body during play as a prominent phenomenon of cultural production, or, in particular, in sport, where we no longer perform as a living organism spontaneously manifesting our corporeality, but instrumentality, planning, and competitiveness (competing either with myself or with others) prevail. An insufficient or inappropriate position towards one’s own body produces a need to return back to it somehow. This “new” or “modern” return is, however, problematic on multiple counts. Let us mention one of them, where Plessner refers to Scheler and his critique of “*Körperkultur*”:

Since sport is a resublimation, that is, restitution of a measure of the drive energies that were previously excessively directed toward thinking, work of the body and physical culture, in an artificially regulated form, and indeed [this measure] wants to be explicit, are not a pure, beautiful expression and higher formation of the well-formed body like the Greek gymnasium, but rather a reflection and artificial renewed care of an intrinsic value of the physical existence that has been neglected for centuries. (Cited in: Plessner 2016a, 150.)

It seems that the effort to reach a *well-formed body* is a complex phenomenon, which stems from the care of self in form of a care of soul. A *body in good condition*, a well-maintained body, does not necessarily reach it, if it is oriented on the “thematization” of body-object and if it is obsessed

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by its measurement, condition, hygiene, and so on; this is a limited view of corporeality.<sup>18</sup>

### The creative work of a hand and hygienic painting

We can now turn around this optics of corporeality—where the physical facet, translating itself to certain “modern” hygienic image of body, prevailed—and look at what happens, in this case in a painting, if we return to the intimate link between expressivity and the body schema from the point of view of lived corporeality. In this way, we can also follow phenomenologically-inspired analyses of Juhani Pallasmaa who points to examples of crafts or works of art produced by hand, and shows that on the basis of creative activity there is an essential connection between hand, eye, and mind. One could connect these descriptions with the description of the body schema developed above on the basis of Husserl’s texts. Creative activity is based, on the one hand, on training, practice, a refining of skills, and the condition of a hand and its physical state [*körperliche Leiblichkeit*], and, on the other hand, on spontaneity, try-and-fail, and bodily-mental possibilities [*leiblich-seelische*]. Moreover, not everything in the creative attitude is subordinated to intentional skill. Such a skill often takes a backseat in favor of free sketching by hand; the hand makes way for the matter itself, playing the instrument makes room for rhythm and melody; such an action captures the shapes and proceeds towards the thing itself or the depicted landscape. Invention, uncertainty of the result, and experimentation—all of which makes the project an open activity—enter the creative work of an artist or a craftsman. How does hygiene appear in art in connection with all this? We need not be led towards the image of the body seen from the position of the third person—on the contrary, we can be motivated to cope with our own feelings of corporeality and sensuality, which are “a question of composition and organization of an image as well” (Lahoda 2000, 74).

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18 One could say that subjective motivational contexts make way for natural-causal relations, which means that we leave the attitude focused on subjectivity (which Husserl also calls “personalistic”) and we view our own corporeality differently, through differently objectifying optics (Husserl 1952, 210).

Since hygiene has a tendency to schematize corporeality in certain body image, we are usually led in the opposite direction. Hygiene—as found in works of art and in the outer features of the seriousness of our social coexistence in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—is manifested in the treatment of the theme of social contact (often in form of depersonalization) and in the search for a suitable form (aligning oneself, for example, with formalism, schematism, or instrumentalism). We have seen this in the previous part, when discussing the images of the hygienic body. We can meet them in the New Objectivity movement, in the case of purism in art and in a radical form in tendencies of Futurism, where war is considered a hygiene, a cleaning of the world. Reactions to this situation can be, however, expressed in the opposite way. This is the main interest for us now—as an endeavor to reach the original phenomenon of hygiene. These expressions can be more or less functional, trying different forms of depiction, in order to address this question without succumbing to it. The Czech painter Zdeněk Rykr (1900–1940) tackles these issues in a peculiar way. The term “hygienic painting” is linked precisely to his oeuvre (Lahoda 2016, 13).

160 Rykr was a unique artist. He was literally trying different themes and genres, in order not to get stuck in a single style or single position. In his oeuvre, we can find “a unique relationship between a modern artist and an advertisement [...] so that this livelihood permeated Rykr’s intentional work and vice versa” (Lahoda 2016, 11). Rykr was a talented artist with a mastery of multiple artistic techniques, but he is also an author of the famous logo of the Orion chocolate. This approach resonates with Plessner’s thinking about form in art. It is a central topic of his text “Wiedergeburt der Form im technischen Zeitalter” (1932). Under the rubric of “form,” Plessner understands measure or equilibrium. Plessner is not a superficial critic of modern technology, but he looks for possibilities concerning how a society or an individual can cope with it (literally, to achieve equilibrium). When looking for a form in new artistic conditions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was necessary to transcend the schema of new against the old, which can be seen in reactions against tradition. On the contrary, this means the reconciliation with the situation, in which we live, an openness towards it—and this situation is created precisely by the turn towards technology. Rykr could be precisely the artist whom Plessner is looking for when seeking the new form. Various features of Rykr’s work bear

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witness to this: “a rejection of static categories,” an openness “towards various graphic media,” “a dissolution of a single individual style in parallel currents” (as disclosed by: Lahoda 2016, 11), “a freedom of ‘interplay’ with the product,” “a joyful interplay between the viewer and the product,” an interplay between the material and the environment, and forms, which are open towards new possibilities (as described by: Plessner 2002, 55 and elsewhere).

In what particular way is Rykr’s painting “hygienic”? Hygiene here has a two-fold form. In the first case, it is related to the outer, public domain and to the visual surroundings of a human being.

[Rykr] sought certain hygiene of the public domain where aesthetics should operate, and the impacts of widespread kitsch and tastelessness hurt him a lot; he felt almost physical pain. His engagement in advertisement can be understood as a response to the crisis of public taste. (Lahoda 2016, 13.)

Here, hygiene has a positive function of healing the visual surroundings, cleaning these surroundings, and expulsing what does not belong there. The second case, which is more significant for us, can be seen in his final, remarkable series of paintings titled *Koupelna* (*Bathroom*), for example, the painting *Žena v koupelně* (*A Woman in a Bathroom*) from 1939 or in the earlier painting *Schodiště* (*Staircase*) from 1928. These paintings no longer concern the outer domain, but we can see here an artist coping with the experience of one’s own corporeality, sensuality, and relationship to another person. Rykr finds himself at the limits of sensualism and tries to proceed towards pure perception in his own artistic production. Hygiene is considered a challenge for the artistic production when the artist tries to achieve an equilibrium in the elements of the image, as found already in Cézanne or Picasso.<sup>19</sup> Artistic expression is an expression of an artist’s contact with the canvas, of this touch as a gesture of a basic corporeal experience, which is free of stylization and

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19 Lahoda (2000, 69, 78) states that this concerned the “purification of the means of expression and the exclusion of the inessential; in the first case, the experience and tradition given by the hygienic purification of Cubism, and in the second case, given by the new impulse of the ‘pure painting’ of Impressionism.”

ornamentation, that is, which is linked directly to the corporeal experience of the artist. An artist can thus reach actual form as original and pure form of expression. Rykr proceeds from the possibility of capturing the human body in its particular shape towards the dissolution of its shape. The shapelessness of a female body, presented as body in its organic originality or basis,<sup>20</sup> stands in contrast to the geometrically arranged bathroom tiles.

To conclude, although this is an example of the hygienic painting, there is no objectification of the body in the form of a hygienic body image or body viewed from the third person; on the contrary, Rykr's paintings lead us towards original layers of lived, subjective corporeality—that we are the body, and how we are the body. He calls for the purity in art, but by that he means purity in the sense of purification, which leads to the original contact of the artist and the painting, to the original sensing of oneself.

162 What is important for us in these works of art is neither some social critique nor some artistic or political statements for or against hygiene. Rather, what should interest us here are the very tensions they presuppose and point towards. As argued above, phenomenology of corporeality in cooperation with philosophical anthropology allows us to describe these tensions in some detail: my lived body outlines my possibilities in the realization of my strengths; but, in doing so, it also outlines the relationship with others and constitutes the public sphere, which however comes back with demands upon my lived body that may seem alien. The analyzed works of art do not resolve these tensions, but they are a valuable confirmation of these philosophical insights. And these philosophical insights, in turn, protect these works of art against reductive interpretations or even political misuses.

### **Hygiene today?**

We have questioned hygiene as an ambiguous and diverse phenomenon in the framework of a human being's complex being in the world and with others;

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20 Concerning "organic matter," see Lahoda 2000, 187 ff. This dissolution of corporeality is linked with the rooms, which are connected with purification, and the beginning and end of life as a place of frequent suicide. After finishing this cycle, Rykr killed himself on the railroad tracks.

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that is, of a human being as a corporeal and social being viewed in changes of her or his expressivity. This keeps the phenomenon of hygiene in close relationship with the life of subjectivity and the subjective perspective of experience. This led us to a significant conclusion that hygiene cannot be originally derived from the outer (socially construed) or causal-physiological phenomena. This does not mean, however, that it cannot appear in inappropriate, derived, or limited forms. In order to develop these investigations, we have followed Plessner's texts, which tackle the issue of hygiene and pregnant examples of its manifestations, and we have connected them with the phenomenological analyses of corporeality as a lived body and a physical body. This grounding in the phenomenology of corporeality allowed us to follow anthropological observations: hygiene thus concerns the being of our lived corporeality as well as the forms of body expression.<sup>21</sup>

Since we connected these analyses to the philosophical-anthropological investigations, we were able to follow the changes of the expression of hygiene in art and in social relations. Where the theme of hygiene appears in relation with the body schema, we can say—following Plessner—that through this phenomenon a human being is confronted with who it is and who it is becoming. The human being is confronted with its situation of contingency, uprootedness, rupture, and the instability of the world, in which it lives. Hygiene does not appear from beginning onwards as either a wholly positive or a wholly negative matter, but in particular manifestations it can take on the form of pure expression (Rykr's paintings), the hygienic body, or hygienic relations (in the public domain of diplomacy and good manners). As Husserl reminds us, the body is my original organ, through which I realize my actions; it is an organ of my will. At the same time, I establish myself and a body becomes the lived body through experiencing, sensation (see Husserl 1952, 151–152). We also have the physical body, *Körper*, in view. Maren Wehrle discloses the possibility of this view—of this focus—in the following way:

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21 We follow the original “connection with the body” (e.g. see Husserl 1952, 247), which as subjectively motivated is both an expression of a spiritual life and a “part of nature”.

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Having a body as explicit corporeality and temporality is not merely a default mode of embodiment [...] While it certainly can be alienating, it also implies the capacity for one to take a distance towards their immediate actions and feelings, and thus gain a sense of distance and control, makes it possible to reflect on and evaluate one's bodily behavior. The body as object thus mustn't be necessarily a burden but could also be a blessing (dependent on the respective circumstances). (Wehrle 2020, 518.)

Since corporeality appears at the center of phenomenological analyses, we can reach through it to the question of human nature:

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Above all, however, the bodily determination of human subjectivity offers a new, methodically reflected possibility to approach the question of human nature in such a way that it transcends reductionist misinterpretations. Phenomenologically, the lived body does not show itself as an objective nature which, as if remote-controlled, operates as a chain of causes and effects [...] Experienced from within, the lived body—and thus human nature—present themselves rather as a context of sense-realization (*Sinnleistungszusammenhang*). (Brudzińska 2018, 16.)

We have begun with describing how corporeality entered the view of philosophy thanks to phenomenological approach, which considers the body as an intertwining of lived and physical body. Thanks to this, the original absence of philosophical consideration of hygiene turned into a continuous discovering of its presence in the life of man at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. This has confirmed our assumption that hygiene can be one of the leading clues in the research of subjectivity. However, the following question arises: what is actual and still relevant in the examples of the permeation of art and our life by hygiene? We can answer that we should recognize the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon. Hygiene in its exposed form can manifest itself in a deficient, inadequate way, but it can also be an appropriate reaction to the actual situation, too. In both adequate and inadequate forms, this is a balancing

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act between man and environment, a coping with the situation. This does not concern only the limiting of our social contacts or social proximity during a pandemic. Sterility, impersonal contactlessness, imagology, or visual pollution have been present in our lives before, and so also have been the reactions to them. The situatedness of a human being (in relationships or in art) can lead to both appropriate and cold or pathetic attitudes. For Plessner, a human being is an open question. As in art, the equilibrium is not in our hands in advance, since it is a balancing act of coping with the essentially unstable world.

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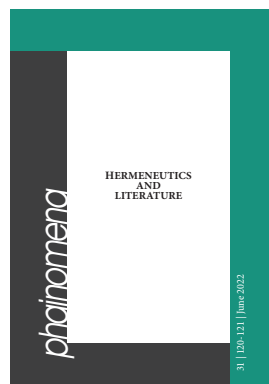
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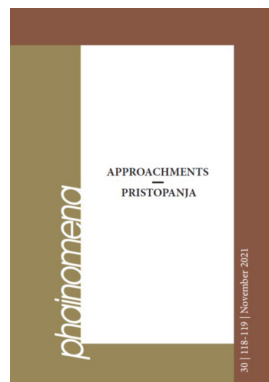


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