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BOOK REVIEW

Christian Lotz, *Vom Leib zum Selbst*

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James Dodd

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Perhaps one of the most enduring unfulfilled promises of phenomenological philosophy is its potential contribution to ethics. This in spite of a number of classical attempts to articulate a way into ethics from phenomenology, such as Husserl's recently published lectures on ethics, Scheler's pioneering work on value theory, and Sartre's long complex struggle to formulate an ethics for our times.[1] It is safe to say that the results have been mixed. Too often phenomenology seems trapped, almost obsessively, within a tight circle of questions that are almost exclusively epistemological, or ontological, or both. As philosophers, phenomenologists have always been keenly aware of the task of ethics, but as phenomenologists, they have more often than not fallen short of the mark.

Christian Lotz's fine book, *Vom Leib zum Selbst*, attempts to assess what the resources of classical phenomenology could offer for ethical theory. The goal, however, is not to propose a phenomenological ethics proper; nor does Lotz systematically explore the consequences of his analyses for specific debates in ethical theory. His efforts here are instead towards making the argument that phenomenology can help establish a better understanding of the subjectivity that is presupposed by any successful ethics (9).[2] Much of the book is thus devoted to a selection of those epistemological and ontological questions that have been the focus of phenomenological research since Husserl and Heidegger; nevertheless, Lotz consistently and adeptly formulates his treatment of these traditional analyses with a clear vision of their significance for ethics in general.

[1] See Hua XXVIII and XXXVII and Max Scheler (1973); Jean-Paul Sartre (1992).

[2] Isolated numbers in the text refer to Lotz, *Vom Leib zum Selbst*.

J. Dodd (✉)
Department of Philosophy, New School for Social Research,
79 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003, USA
e-mail: DoddJ@newschool.edu

The argument that Lotz advances is essentially that ethical theory needs to take into consideration the advances made in phenomenology with respect to two fundamental aspects of human subjective existence: first, its robust conception of the corporeality (*Leiblichkeit*) of the subject, one that recognizes the body as the primary mode of situatedness in the world; second, its nuanced and multidimensional understanding of the complex relation between the subject as an *agency* and as a *self*. Lotz's book demonstrates that the sophisticated analyses of classical phenomenology of a situated, embodied subject that discovers its selfhood through its encounter of itself as a center of agency can serve as an effective prolegomena to the theory of ethical existence.

Lotz ingeniously takes advantage of that enduring fault line that runs through phenomenology between Husserl and Heidegger, and pursues his reflections in the form of a double critique, where each is used as the basis for a criticism, and with that a deepening, of the position of the other. Lotz first mounts a Husserlian critique of Heidegger's conception of the "surrounding world" (*Umwelt*) from *Being and Time*,[3] with the goal of establishing the importance of the corporeality of the subject in any phenomenological account of the world, as well of arguing for a recognition of an intrinsic dimension of value (*Wertdimension*) that structures the world as a field of encounter (§§ 2–4). He then turns to a Heideggerean critique of Husserl's phenomenology of the will (§§ 5–7), with the purpose of emphasizing a conception of a selfhood that emerges only from a concrete and immediate grasp of one's own practical essence as a subject capable of action (*handelnkönnendes Subjekt*).

One of the key assertions of Lotz's Husserlian critique of Heidegger (§ 2) is that Heidegger's analysis of the structure of the surrounding world as a unity or whole of significations (*Bedeutungsganze*) implies that it has a *closed character*. For Lotz, this entails that Heidegger in effect undervalues the formative function of developmental or learning processes as world-uncovering in favor of a static, pre-given sense of the world as something in which Dasein is always already submerged, or consumed (21, also § 2.1.4). The result is a kind of distortion of the nature of Dasein's worldhood as a situatedness, one that takes as its point of departure an overemphasis on the non-thetic character of Dasein's comportments. Lotz takes this thesis of the non-thetic character of Dasein's comportments as effectively rendering impossible any satisfying account of the phenomenon of "disruption" (*Störung*)—a rather serious criticism, since Heidegger himself relies on this phenomenon in order to articulate the sense in which the referentiality of the ready-to-hand can itself become something explicit, or expressed (see BT 103–105). Lotz argues that if what has been disrupted had not already been there for Dasein as a theme, at least implicitly, then it would make no sense to speak of an experience of disruption that would amount to a sense of its *loss*. (42–43). The sense of the failure of my pen to write is founded on a prior grasp of what it meant for it to be successful, as well as a witnessing of the very event of its fulfilling its function.

Lotz goes on to argue that Heidegger's position also effectively obscures the role of sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*) in the structuration of the surrounding world (§ 2.4.3). One might quibble here, and point out that Heidegger's strategy is precisely to

[3] Martin Heidegger (1962).

undermine the tendency in modern philosophy to overemphasize the role of sensibility in the analysis of the facticity of the subject. Still, Lotz is right to be suspicious. Heidegger by no means helps us to fully understand just what was philosophically at stake, from the perspective of the phenomenological explication and hermeneutic interpretation of Dasein, in the debates over the nature of perceptual experience and empirical cognition that shaped the contemporary philosophical world of Husserl and Heidegger. It may very well be that Husserl's analyses, in particular his controversial theory of "hyle," or non-intentional noetic moments, provide us with a more direct engagement with the fundamental issues that are at the origin of these debates than is the case with Heidegger's ontological analyses of Dasein as care (*Sorge*).

More convincing is Lotz's illuminating treatment of a longstanding complaint concerning Heidegger's *Being and Time*—the fact that the lived body, however it may make itself felt in specific analyses (above all in the discussion of spatiality at BT, §§ 22–24), is conspicuously absent from explicit consideration. The absence of the body in *Being and Time* is probably rivaled only by the equally perplexing unannounced presence of theology. Just why it is the case that the body does not enjoy more prominence, however, is not an easy question to even formulate, though Lotz's suggestion that it is due to the fact that the lived body does not fit easily into Heidegger's *Vorhandenheit/Zuhandenheit* schema (48), is probably a good place to start: on the one hand, the lived body is clearly "of the world" in a manner comparable to the givenness of things; on the other hand, the lived body cleaves too close to the being of Dasein as an agency for it to be described in terms of a relation of Dasein to that which is other than Dasein.

For Lotz, however, Heidegger's account is simply incomplete. What is missing is an appreciation of the necessity for an account of corporeity as a *basic capacity* ("*basales Können*", 50) of the subject. Heidegger's account is characterized by an explicit focus on Dasein as a capacity to be, a *Seinkönnen* the ontological analyses of which in *Being and Time* are limited to the perspective of the question of its capacity to be a whole, or a *Ganzseinkönnen*. Lotz argues that this is a distortion, in that it shapes the entire conception of Dasein from an explicitly *global* or even "holistic" perspective—and more, authenticity accordingly turns out to be the firm entrenchment of the being of a *whole* (§ 2.1.2). The argument for the inclusion of the body in the account of the care structure of Dasein amounts to the idea of developing an analysis of a *local*, as opposed to a global capacity or *Können*, one that would capture a sense of worldhood as a progression or expansion, evading the temptation to "idealistically" absorb the bodily subject into the figure of the culmination of a singular, absolutely closed event (50–51).

There are a variety of Heideggerean objections that one could entertain at this point, but in any case the central issue is touched upon in § 3, where Lotz elaborates, in the context of a presentation of Husserl's aesthetics of the body, the fundamental question of how it is that the subject engages its own possibilities. In this chapter, Lotz shows very convincingly just how rich Husserl's analyses of the lived body from Husserliana IV and XIII-XIV can be when taken up from the perspective of the question of the manifold sense of the possible. More, though Lotz does not explore this in any detail, the way he lays out the question shows a deep appreciation of the

differences between Husserl and Heidegger on the essence of the possible, above all with respect to the question of its relation to the temporality of subjective life.

These differences become relevant at several places in Lotz's discussion, so for example where he takes up the theme of the sense of "distance" constitutive of spatiality. (74) In *Being and Time* and the 1925 lecture course *History of the Concept of Time*,[4] Heidegger describes spatialization as a delimiting or negation of the distant (*Ent-fernung*), thus as a *making close* of what lies in tension with proximity—the idea being that the negation of the distant, as a kind of future brought near, illuminates the productive tension between the futurity of Dasein and its being-present or now (*Gegenwärtigsein*). A distance, in other words, should be described as the manner in which the future emerges in the present, forming the distinctive oriented character of the spatiality of Dasein's present. In Husserl, by contrast, as Lotz emphasizes, there is instead a central role given to sensations of location, or systems of kinaestheses; above all, the sensation of touch is analyzed by Husserl in terms of a function of fixing the proximity of bodily place by setting it over against a distance. As such, the fixation of touch is nestled in a spread of the sensuous that orbits away from the body in the manner of a negation, not of what lies afar, but of *nearness* (here Lotz follows some very intriguing analyses in Hua XV, but much of his argument could also be based on Hua IV). Thus for Husserl the sense of distance, thanks to its kinaesthetic foundation, is not comparable to a future folding into the present, which would make space visible by negating its exteriority, as it is in Heidegger. Instead, the feel of distance is grounded in the capacity of the subject to orient itself by moving out from itself "towards" an exteriority that emerges as a negation of the proximate or near, which is phenomenalized as an *Entnahung* as opposed to an *Entfernung*.

What is at stake in this confrontation between Husserl and Heidegger is illuminated by Lotz's argument for the role of the body in a properly phenomenological conception of *practical subjectivity* (69). This is due to the fact that in both cases—the question of the temporality and spatiality of the subject, and the question of its practical existence—the issue turns on just how to understand the manner in which the subject is "present," or in Heidegger's language, how the "Da" of Dasein is to be conceived. As Lotz argues, the very essence of the practical relies on the "here" from which I act, from which the "I can" has both its origin and enduring locus of orientation. The centrality of the Da, one could say, unifies Lotz's critique of Heidegger (or his criticism that the absence of the body distorts the situatedness/concreteness of Dasein) with his appropriation of what he takes to be the core of a Heideggerean philosophy of action.

For both Husserl and Heidegger, as well as for Lotz, the necessity of such a "thereness" of the subject is as valid for the simple employment of a tool as it is for the manifestation of the horizon of the world as such. With respect to the former, Lotz formulates an interesting criticism of Heidegger's account of the phenomenality of the tool (*Zeug*) as being too narrow, in that the focus is limited to the "with which" (*Womit*) character of the tool, at the expense of its rootedness in the situatedness of Dasein as a body. The tool is not simply a "with which," Lotz

[4] Martin Heidegger (1985).

argues, but must also be seen as an extension of the body, literally a "part" of it (*Leibteil*, 71): its phenomenality, in other words, is not fully determined by the network of referentialities (*Verweisungen*) in which it is enmeshed, but is also determined by the kinaesthetic orientedness of the body as an organ of perception and self-movement. Again the point is Husserlian, and is found in an even more developed form in Merleau-Ponty: to understand that out of which the functionality of the tool emerges, we must be attentive to the sensuous dimension of its event character, as well as the context of referentialities that delimit the scope and end of its use.

Another of Lotz's criticisms of Heidegger is his failure to supply a sufficiently robust conception of something absolutely central for Husserl: *motivation*. Above all, what falls out of Heidegger's picture for Lotz is the articulation and embodiment of motivation in the form of *value laden things* (*Werthaftigkeiten*, see especially § 4.4). Again, the reader could imagine here a Heideggerean rejoinder, one that would argue for evading any hint of ascribing priority to value. For such "values," the Heideggerean might say, are more often than not vehicles with which Dasein loses touch with its fundamental relation to its own possibility; values for the most part belong to a given, encountered world from out of which inauthentic Dasein seeks to understand itself.

Lotz is not unaware of this kind of objection, for it is, mutatis mutandis, exactly the kind of Heideggerean critique he himself brings to bear on Husserl's practical philosophy, as it is formulated in his lectures and essays from the 1920's that one finds in Hua XXVII (which he cites) and XXXVIII (which was published after *Vom Leib zum Selbst* appeared). The core of Lotz's Heideggerean critique of Husserl turns on the contention that in Husserl the self-relation of the acting subject manifest in its resolve, or will, is interpreted in accordance with the same structures that define the manner in which the subject relates to the world. That is, for Husserl the subject faces the possibilities of its own action in the same manner in which it faces those possibilities bound up with what is encountered in the world. (99) Lotz is critical here of Husserl's apparent unwillingness to drive a sharp enough distinction between the relation of the subject to possibilities of given being and to possibilities of action, one that would differentiate them in terms of the manner in which the subject stands before possibility as such. More specifically, Lotz is critical of Husserl's apparent reluctance to reject the idea that the modifications of an objectivating reason might not, in some way, be common to both species of the possible.

Here Lotz does an excellent job of filling in the background of these reflections by a brief but illuminating look at Husserl's theory of reason (§ 5.2), in particular the central role Husserl gives to belief. This emphasis on the positional character of intentionality leads, as Lotz shows very ably, to a difficulty in making a convincing distinction between *willing* and mere *wishing* (§ 5.3), which Husserl attempts to do in Hua XXVIII. Husserl tries to link the phenomenon of willing to a drive to realization, which would distinguish it from a wishing that would remain neutral or uncommitted to any project of realization. The temptation here would then seem to be the attempt to think of wishing as a kind of modalization of willing, along the lines of the modalization of a belief. Yet, as Lotz points out (112–113), it becomes

clear that *neither* wishing *nor* willing could possibly be founded on belief: to be convinced that something will happen is not the same as willing it, but in fact would imply a *cessation* of the will. More, willing, if it is in fact directed towards a realization, is in some sense a case of being-posited; but this means that it must fall outside the purview of what Husserl calls non-objectifying acts—willing does not merely qualify or emphasize something given in a properly positional act. Likewise, it is clear that wishing cannot be a mere modalization of a positional act either; to wish that I could speak Russian is not simply to posit it in imagination, or as an open possibility, or even as an expectation.

Lotz makes the interesting suggestion that, in his attempt to clarify just what makes the will unique, Husserl fails to see something that will be decisively emphasized by Heidegger: namely, the fact that the will does not have a proper "objective" correlate, since its genuine correlate is the *Umwillen seiner* itself—the manner of being in which Dasein "is", on account of, or for the sake of itself (113). If so, Lotz goes on to assert, then willing effectively amounts to acting itself (113).

In § 6 Lotz develops his argument with a reading of authenticity and inauthenticity in Heidegger as grounded in a sharper, and subsequently for Lotz more compelling, distinction between wishing and willing than Husserl would allow. Here the issue once again has to do with the relation of Dasein to its own possibilities (119–120), or better, with the different modalities in which this relation is uncovered or revealed. The idea is that authenticity, as a fundamental choice of self, is a modality of self-relation in which Dasein reveals to itself the essential possibilities that constitute its capacity to be, while in inauthenticity, as a denial of self, these capacities are obscured, or negated, by being covered over or neglected (120).

Just what such a modalization of the possible amounts to is of course a difficult question. That for Heidegger it cannot be something that takes the form of a theoretical accomplishment—that the subject does not choose its being as the result of a deliberation—is clear, as Lotz emphasizes. (121) In the sphere of the practical self-relation of an agent, reason is only capable of commenting on what it is that the subject *has already become* as a being with the potential to act; deliberation itself does not crystallize the choice "to be," but presupposes it. Nevertheless, this choice "to be," Dasein itself, is supposed to be a revealed possibility; thus we need to understand just how Dasein could illuminate itself in a manner other than the theoretical.

Thus the "Da" remains the key question. Lotz's reading of Heidegger's notion of authenticity as a modality of self-relation is surely a step in the right direction, but perhaps it is not yet a complete appropriation of what Heidegger has to offer on this score. Lotz seems to argue that, as inauthentic, Dasein somehow simply fails to choose something of itself that calls to it, while as authentic, it chooses without hesitation. If that is all there was to Heidegger's notion of authenticity, then it really would only amount to a kind of "actuality" of practical being; more, it could be illustrated by the distinction, sharply drawn, between wishing and willing, as Lotz argues (122): willing, Dasein relates to itself in the immediacy of its capacity to act (as *handelnkönnendes Subjekt*); wishing, Dasein instead exists in the wake of its failure to act.

One could say that Lotz's argument on pages 124–125 is convincing only because it resolves an ambiguity of Heidegger's own analysis in favor of the robust conception of action that Lotz wishes to articulate. The source of this ambiguity lies in BT § 42, which Lotz is using here at his point of departure. In this section Heidegger takes some pains to emphasize that the ontological structure of care (*Sorge*) is not ultimately determined by phenomena such as wishing, willing, urge (*Drang*), or tendency (*Hang*), nor that his point is to declare any precedence of the practical over the theoretical (BT, 237–239). The care-structure saturates all sides of these distinctions and phenomena equally: "When we ascertain something present-at-hand by merely beholding it, this activity has the character of care just as much as does a 'political action' or taking a rest or enjoying oneself." (BT, 238). Instead, Heidegger wants to argue, what is primary here is care as an ontological structure, and that authenticity and inauthenticity are in the end modalities of the understanding of being that is fundamental to the existential structure of care. When Heidegger then goes on to discuss the will (BT, 238), his point is to argue that the ontological possibility of willing rests on the threefold structure of care (as being ahead of itself, already in the world, projected upon a possible future). (BT, 239) Thus the capacity to be, revealed in care itself, is already in place, presupposed by willing; this means that willing, grounded in care, can serve as an ontological point of departure for the elucidation of its ground, the unity of care: "In the phenomenon of willing, the underlying totality of care shows through." (BT, 239)

The ambiguity that emerges is that Heidegger's point in these pages can be taken in two rather different ways. First, and this seems to be most compatible with Lotz's reading, the self-understanding around which Dasein crystallizes as a "will" (or a *Seinkönnen*) can only have the form of an immediate self-relation—the will is the maturation, or better the phenomenalization, of care as the ontological opening of Dasein's possibility. The same analysis, however, can also be taken in a different direction than Lotz's, one in which willing is instead seen as something derivative, or at best a clue, but which in the end should be carefully distinguished from the phenomenon of care in general. Only the possible elucidation of care, in this alternative reading, would truly determine the ontological horizon of Dasein. If so, then it is not necessarily the case that we must identify the genuine encounter of Dasein's own possibilities with a *willing* or even an *acting*—since that would imply that the meaning of the being of Dasein is exhausted by the manner in which it shows itself in willing and acting.

This ambiguity grows in importance when Heidegger turns explicitly to the phenomenon of *wishing* (BT, 239), where the point is that the estrangement of possibilities characteristic of wishing—Lotz's "failure" to be an agent or an "author of oneself" (quoting David Carr)—is equally dependent on what is illuminated thanks to care (BT, 239–240). Again, this could be taken in two ways. Is wishing a modality of what is accomplished in willing, in the sense of its negation or failure—to wish being a way in which one fails to act? Or is wishing a modality of something that it holds in common with the will, which forms the ground of both? If it is the latter, then perhaps wishing itself must be understood as a species of illumination, though a kind of illumination that belongs to obscurity—an idea that could perhaps

be filled out in more detail with a consideration of Heidegger's reflections in texts such as the *Beiträge*.

Consistent with his solution to this ambiguity, Lotz grapples with the problem of how it is that Dasein is brought before the state of its given futurity, or what Heidegger calls *Wiederholung*, by interpreting it as a kind of *affirmation* or *confirmation* (*Bestätigung*) of the event of a will already in place (127–129). This is consistent with the thesis of the immediacy of the self-relation of the willing subject: the subject is its possibilities only in its immediate choosing of itself, and it can be brought before itself only in a repetition of this same choice in which it is, as such, constituted. This reading also lies behind Lotz's subsequent discussion of Heidegger's appropriation of Kant's conception of respect as a moral feeling: he reads respect as a kind of inner affirmation which, thanks to the immediacy of Dasein's practical self relation, amounts to the demonstration of an instance of moral affectability (*moralische Affizierbarkeit*). Important for Lotz's argument here is the idea that respect for Heidegger is not a mere feeling of conviction, but is experienced as a genuine *opening of possibilities*, thus constituting an essential dimension of the ontology of Dasein.

This discussion of respect at the end of the book illuminates the significance of how Lotz deals with the ambiguity of the will just discussed for ethics, above all in relation to Kant. For the ambiguity comes down to how it is that we are to understand the horizon of moral encounter, or the structure of the field of existence thanks to which we come to understand our agency as something specifically *moral*. Kant's relevant insight in this respect is that the encounter with the moral law, embodied in the feeling of respect, does not occur in a space that can be defined in terms of a means by which we have access to the moral law (as Lotz, following Heidegger, seems to suggest on 134). Practical philosophy for Kant is not simply an inventory of principles that govern our capacities to have certain types of feelings, or make certain kinds of judgments, but is ultimately grounded in a transcendent experience of an unassailable and irreducible dimension of height, of the absolute, and the corresponding breakdown of the natural self in order to give way to the emergence of a moral personality (*Persönlichkeit*).[5] Again this is a question not simply of how a will encounters itself, or functions as an unfolding reality of a choice, but rather of the horizon of transcendence that ultimately determines the ground for the *determination* of the will.

From a Kantian point of view, it may be that it is precisely an appropriate conception of transcendence that is lacking in Heidegger's account of human existence, perhaps even rendering it useless for ethics. To be sure, Dasein itself, as futurity, is for Heidegger a kind of transcendence, but is it the transcendence that shows itself to us in moral life? Looked at in this way, Lotz's Heidegger turns out to be closer to Husserl than to Kant: for the latter, the celebration of the capacities and accomplishments of the acting subject were always suspiciously *schwärmerisch*. For Husserl and Heidegger, on the contrary, the ethos is expressed in the call for subjectivity to come into its own (for Heidegger the call is to "authenticity," for

[5] Immanuel Kant (1956), p. 77.

Husserl to "renewal"); both call on the subject to unfold itself as the realization of its essential promise, even if the emphasis for both is on its finitude.

The distance from Kant can also be discerned in Lotz's brief, but thought provoking discussion of the phenomenon of regret (§ 6.5), where he endeavors to suggest a possible way to supplement Heidegger's theory of action with a theory of value. That is, regret—the capacity to appreciate the extent to which one has failed to be what one has been called to be—reveals a deeper, *reflective* aspect of the being of the subject as the choice of itself. (137) If we accept this, Lotz suggests, then we are led to recognize that finitude is not simply the unavoidability of possible failure, but also the potential to be "false," to emerge and be seen as a distortion and failure of the promise to be. In short: the condition of finitude takes the form of a recognition of the *value* of those actions one is capable of, calling one to be "true" or "false" to oneself.

The idea that one's actions are instances of exposed, risked values, leads Lotz to the very intriguing suggestion in the last few pages that an analysis of vulnerability (*Verletztlichkeit*) is an important potential contribution of phenomenology to ethical theory (139–141). The theme of vulnerability is also where Lotz begins to tie together the themes of body and selfhood; for both, he argues, are characterized in a fundamental manner as the manifestations of the vulnerability of agency, of a fragility of projects rooted in a constitutive sense of their potential or actual value. This is all presented in a very preliminary fashion, but it is convincing enough to indicate that this is probably not Lotz's last word on the topic.

Vom Leib zum Selbst is a very readable, engaging, and suggestive book, one that attempts to formulate in a substantial way a phenomenological account of moral subjectivity. It is by no means conclusive, but it was not meant to be; the questions it sets into motion are all essential, and merit the attention of not only scholars of Husserl and Heidegger, but anyone interested in a more nuanced and robust conception of subjectivity in the context of ethical theory. Above all, this book is an important sign that a younger generation of phenomenologists is committed to exploring the philosophical promise of classical phenomenology for ethics.

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