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## The Afloat Photographer: Corporeal Immersivity as an Instance of Sheer Inactivity

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## Abstract

By discussing the bodily aspects of undersea immersion, this paper investigates the lived experiences of the photographer's body in space. To do this, it draws on the work of phenomenological philosophers who have theorized the body, such as Edmund Husserl, Edward S. Casey, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Gaston Bachelard, showing how the body is simultaneously active and passive in its environs. To make this point tangible, it examines a recent photographic work by contemporary Dutch artist Roosmarijn Pallandt, who attempts to capture her bodily sensations by submerging herself underwater while taking photographs. The paper argues that her photographic practice augments the bilaterality of the phenomenal body: being both a physical body (*Körper*) that needs to hold together kinesthetically *and* a lived body (*Leib*) that can go further proprioceptively. Consequently, by employing phenomenology vis-à-vis Pallandt's photographic practice, the author defines immersivity as being concurrently still and moving, static and dynamic, passive and active, that is: as being *inactive* in space. Following this line of argument, he puts forward that the bodily immersivity is an instance of sheer inactivity.

**Keywords:** underwater photography; phenomenology; the lived body; the physical body; immersivity; proprioception; kinesthesia.

## Résumé

En discutant la dimension corporelle de l'immersion sous-marine, cet article explore les expériences vécues par le corps du photographe dans l'espace. Il s'appuie sur la phénoménologie qui a théorisé le corps, comme Edmund Husserl, Edward S. Casey, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, et Gaston Bachelard, en montrant comment dans cet environnement le corps est à la fois actif et passif. Pour incarner cette idée est convoqué le travail photographique de l'artiste contemporaine hollandaise Roosmarijn Pallandt, qui essaie de capturer ses sensations corporelles lorsqu'elle est sous l'eau en train de photographier. L'article montre que sa pratique photographique augmente la bilatéralité du corps phénoménologique, en étant à la fois un corps physique (*Körper*) qui a besoin de se rassembler de façon kinesthétique et un corps vécu (*Leib*) qui peut évoluer de façon proprioceptive. En appliquant une lecture phénoménologique à la pratique photographique de Pallandt, l'auteur définit donc l'immersivité comme étant à la fois immobile et mouvante, statique et dynamique, passive et active, c'est-à-dire inactive dans l'espace. De cette façon, il affirme que l'immersivité corporelle est un exemple d'inactivité pure.

**Mots-clés:** photographie sous-marine, phénoménologie, corps, immersivité, proprioception, kynesthésie

Photographic shooting 'kills' not the body but the life of things,  
leaving only representational carcasses.

Rob Shields, *Alternative Traditions*.<sup>1</sup>

As proposed by Roland Barthes, thinking about photography can be subjected to three practices: "to do", "to undergo", and "to look", referring to the photographer, the photographed subject, and the spectator respectively.<sup>2</sup> In this classification, regrettably, it is usually the first partaker who goes unheeded in philosophical and theoretical discussions, that is: the photographer. The reason for this is that photography is habitually seen as a representational medium with two primary functions: documenting an external reality or projecting an internal feeling in the form of the photograph. But what about the bodily experiences of the photographers whose sensations, perceptions, and embodiments in space are the originating sources of the photograph? In such cases, can the photographic image disclose the inhabitational and affective experiences of the photographer's body? In other words, what if photographs are not merely some "representational carcasses," depleted of life and devoid of corporeal presence, but the corollaries of lived experiences in the phenomenal world?

It is unarguably true that the spectators of photographs cannot have unmediated access to the lived experiences of the photographer, and that is why a phenomenological reading of photography is essentially a vexed matter. The hesitancy we have when a series of phenomena result in a photograph, philosopher Hubert Damisch notes, "is a revealing indication of the difficulty of reflecting phenomenologically ... on a cultural object".<sup>3</sup> Being fully cognizant of this difficulty, this paper does not aim to elicit or extrapolate the intersubjective experiences of photographers from the photograph, that is: to feel what they felt while taking the photograph. That, conspicuously, requires bending time and space and thus cognitively and somatically sensing what the photographer has sensed in the flesh. Instead, this paper wants to accentuate that photography begins with *the body* and not with the photograph. This indeed means a change of direction. Instead of seeing the photograph as *an end*, it sees the photograph as *a means*: as a tool for reflecting on the lived experiences of the photographer in the world. Thus, without pretending to make an ontological claim on behalf of photography, this paper aspires to propose an epistemological alternative in which the body takes precedence over the photograph. As art historian Hans Belting has put forward, in the triad of picture, medium, and body, it is usually the body that is overlooked. As he notes:

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1 Rob Shields, "Alternative Traditions of Urban Theory", in *Re-Presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital and Culture in the Twenty-First Century Metropolis*, edited by Anthony D. King (London: NYU Press, 1996), p. 23.

2 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (London: Vintage Books, 2000), p. 9.

3 Hubert Damisch, "Five Notes for Phenomenology of the Photographic Image", in *The Photography Reader*, edited by Liz Wells (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 87.

Photography, although it remained confined to a framed visual field, fed on its opposition to the concept of painting. It was not a medium of the gaze, for it replaced the gaze with the camera, but rather a medium of the body, which itself produced its own shadow. This shadow was arrested, held still at the moment of exposure, and as soon as it took shape in the print, the body was lost.<sup>4</sup>

To resuscitate the vanished body of the photographer, I employ a phenomenological scheme that pays significant attention to the lived experiences of the body in space. By focusing on the navigation, localization, and inhabitation of the body in space, I aspire to show how a photograph can function as the vis-à-vis of lived experience. To make this tangible, I will discuss a photograph taken by contemporary Dutch artist Roosmarijn Pallandt, who attempts to capture the bodily sensations of immersion by submerging her body underwater while taking photographs. As I will demonstrate, Pallandt's bodily immersion becomes a way of understanding the lived experiences of the body in space. To do this, I will draw upon the phenomenological distinction between "the lived" and "the physical" body. The first part of the paper will focus on the external operations of the lived body, and the second part of the paper will concentrate on the internal operations of the physical body. While the former allows us to better understand bodily orientation and direction through proprioception, the latter enables us to comprehend bodily localization and inhabitation through kinesthetic operations. In the following section, I will begin my analysis by explaining the relationship between image, space, and the body to foreground the relevance and importance of the phenomenological concept of the lived body for my discussion.

## Unfurling Space as a 'lived body'

The lived body is therefore the underlying form through which all organic sensations are conjoined.

Max Scheler, *The Being of the Person*.<sup>5</sup>

We tend to believe that photography captures, freezes, and at times immortalizes the images that are out there in the world. Yet, having been convinced by the corporeality of our dreams, we know well that not all images come to us from the outside. Some are born, sedimented, and internalized within us, deep down within our bodies. Hans Belting even goes further, to argue that images do not exist in the physical world but are shaped inherently in the body. As he claims, "the body is a place in the world, a locus in which images are generated and identified."<sup>6</sup> For Belting, it is through human bodies and physical activities

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4 Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2011), p. 28.

5 Max Scheler, "The Being of the Person", in *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, translated by Manfred Frings & Roger L. Frank (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1973).

6 Here it should be noted that for Belting the distinction between images and pictures is a vital

thereof that their perceptual system makes sense of the world, and in turn, constitutes images. Following this argument, he defines visual perception as “an operation by which we—our bodies—take in visual data and stimuli and analyze them. But the final outcome is not an analysis but a synthesis”.<sup>7</sup> This means that, in the process of taking in visual stimuli from the world, the body is not simply a passive recipient but an *active participant* in the scene of perception. It is within and through the body that the sensory information received from the world is processed, preserved, and at times simply passed by.

As philosopher Alfred North Whitehead asserts: “We have to admit that the body is the organism whose states regulate our cognizance of the word. The unity of the perceptual field therefore must be a unity of bodily experience.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, human corporeal activities are not only the primary source of perception but also directly at the helm of perceptual unity. “Your perception takes place where you are, and is entirely dependent on how your body is functioning,” states Whitehead.<sup>9</sup> If the body can function as a perceptual apparatus whereby images are shaped and reshaped, then the question is: how do different bodily activities (such as walking, swimming, or simply breathing) affect how the body registers visual sensations and synthesize them into images? In other words, how does the body in its entirety, comprised of external and internal organs and not just the eye, takes part in the process of perception? And more notably, can we apprehend such internal and external bodily endeavors by attending to photographic images? In short: *can we perceive a perceiving body via the photograph?*

To begin answering such questions, one needs to consider how the body navigates itself in the world by estimating the position and location of objects in space. Even though we usually think of orientation as a purely mental activity, hence disregarding our bodily interventions in the act, it is the body that determines our very sense of direction in space. As philosopher Edward S. Casey puts forward, “things are not oriented in and by themselves; they require our intervention to become oriented. Nor are they oriented by a purely mental operation: the *a priori* of orientation belongs to the body, not to the mind.”<sup>10</sup> The principal bodily intervention that determines the sense of direction is movement. In other words, all it takes for the body to distinguish left from right, forward from backward, and up from down is simply moving into space. Accordingly, not only movement breathes life into the body but also enables it to spatially coordinate its surroundings. This specific body, which oversees orientation in space, cannot remain inert or still but is necessarily in motion; it is an animated body that shapes its spatial schema as it moves.

Deemed phenomenologically, this active and alive body is referred to as the “lived body”. As the philosopher Edmund Husserl, the modern founder of phenomenology, once distinguished, in terms of perception the body exists as a bilateral entity: the physical body (*Körper*) and the lived body (*Leib*). While the former refers to the crude physicality of the

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one. The image, he puts forward, “may live in the work of art, but does not necessarily coincide with the work of art”, and pictures are where images “may reside”. Belting, *An Anthropology of Images*, p. 2.

7 *Ibid.*, 38.

8 Alfred North Whitehead, *Science of the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1952), p. 91.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

10 Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), p. 205. (Emphasis in original).

body in space, as an object among other objects, the latter refers to the dynamic involvement of the body in perceptual processes, such as seeing, waking, or hearing. The lived body, as Husserl puts it, “is the only one which is actually given (to me as such) in perception.”<sup>11</sup> That is why for Husserl the lived body “is never absent from the perceptual field,”<sup>12</sup> for without the synthesizing and entwining aspects of the lived body the process of perception comes to a halt; for example, when one dies. Whereas the physical body can be dissected and analyzed, philosopher Shaun Gallagher explains, the lived body is only experienced in a “none-objective way”; “it is the body that sees or exists in the act of seeing”.<sup>13</sup> The lived body is therefore an experiencing and expressive body, both affecting and affected by the space in which it moves. Thanks to being fully assimilated into lived experience, the lived body is not limited by its physical surface as the corporeal body (*Körper*), but it is capable of projecting itself onto its surrounding space, for example: when one finds one’s way on the street; when one points at an object in space; or when one swims underwater. For Husserl, the lived body is effectively “the zero point of orientation,”<sup>14</sup> because it is from and within the lived body that we establish our sense of direction and location in space.<sup>15</sup> As philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone notes: “Indeed, what constitutes the zero point *tout court*, the hereness of a lived body, is a dynamic felt bodily presence, a here being-in-the-flesh that is moving alive.”<sup>16</sup> To be clear, when one says “come here”, this *hereness* is established by the corporeal proximity of the lived body; and when one says “go over there”, this *thereness* is determined by the spatial projection of the lived body. Hence, whereas the lived body is always in motion, it functions as the zero point of orientation. For example, when a photographer holds an upright position to shoot a photograph, he or she is not simply in space as a physical body but is actively projecting the schema of that very space as a lived body. The sheer act of standing up, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan notes, is one of the unique features of the lived body. In an upright position, he writes:

man is ready to act. Space opens out before him and is immediately differentiable into front-back and right-left axes in conformity with the structure of his body ... In

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11 Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 107.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 106.

13 Shaun Gallagher, “Lived Body and Environment”, *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol 16, No. 1 (1986), p. 140.

14 Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Amsterdam: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), p. 61.

15 As phenomenologist Edit Stein further explains this idea: “This zero point is not to be geometrically localized at one point in my physical body; nor is the same for all data. It is localized in the head for visual data and in mid-body for tactile data”. Edith Stein, *On Problem of Empathy*, trans. Waltraut Stein (Washington, DC: ICS, 1989), p. 42. For a detailed and more recent elaboration on the concept of “zero point of orientation”, see Shogo Shimizu, “The Body as Zero Point”, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 42. NO. 3 (2011): pp. 329-334.

16 Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, “The Living Body”, *The Humanistic Psychologist*, Vol. 48. No. 1 (2020), p. 7.

deep sleep man continues to be influenced by his environment but loses his world; he is a body occupying space. Awake and upright he regains his world, and space is articulated in accordance with his corporeal schema.<sup>17</sup>

To illustrate the spatial orientation of the lived body, I will now turn to the underwater photograph taken by Dutch artist Roosmarijn Pallandt (fig.1). Taken in 2021 at The Azores Triple Junction in Portugal, where the boundaries of three tectonic plates intersect, Pallandt's photograph works as an illuminating example of corporeal engagement with the phenomenal world. By diving approximately two meters underwater without an oxygen tank and taking photographs while being afloat, Pallandt aspires to show how corporeality leaves its mark in her image-making practice. After setting the camera according to the light and clarity of the water, she submerges her entire body underwater, using the rhythm of her breathing as a "stirring wheel" to remain afloat. Having reached a state of ataraxy, in which her body remains between sinking and rising back to the surface, she then closes her eyes and pushes the camera's button. In this condition, the lived body of the photographer is not simply the holder of the camera; that is, a prosthetic extension of the optical device. It is, instead, a somatic interface that determines all the visible directions in the photograph.



Fig. 1. Roosmarijn Pollandt. *Untitled*. 2021. Courtesy of the artist.

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17 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), p. 37.



Being the only body in the underwater space, here the lived body of the photographer is not simply a passive object floating in space, but an *active agent* in charge of all spatial coordination, that is: right is recto her body and left is verso her body; forward is her ventral and backward is her dorsal; up is where her head goes and down is where her toes point. In other words, what we see in the photograph is what the lived body has projected onto its surroundings through proprioception actions.

In a general sense, proprioception refers to a sense of movement and position the lived body has in space. Unlike vision, which acts as an external sense, proprioception refers to “the internal awareness one has of one’s body in space,” which “includes the recognition of limb position and the relationship of each limb to the other limbs”.<sup>18</sup> It is thanks to proprioceptive activities of the lived body, that we can orient ourselves in space without consciously thinking about orientations; because the body “knows” its way. To better understand this point, imagine diving underwater and rotating your torso around until the point at which your sense of position and direction completely vanishes. To regain spatial awareness in this situation, all you need to do is to stop rotating and thus allow the proprioceptive activities of the body to project the spatial axis once again. Consequently, what we see in Pallandt’s photograph is not simply a representational means (i.e., what the underwater looked like in Portugal), but a spatial projection of the geographical coordinates of her lived body. It is a visual testimony to a phenomenological claim, that the lived body is evidently “the zero point of orientation,” whence direction and position are proprioceptively cast onto the circumambient space.

Still, the difficulty with Pallandt’s photograph is that we, the spectator, cannot visually take the position of the photographer in the photograph, for the photograph is rotated by 180 degrees. This means that the glistening curvatures below are the surface of the sea above, and the skylike horizon above is the stygian deep-sea below, wherein the photographer is hovering afloat. In other words, our “body schema” as the spectator does not correspond to that of the photographer in this situation; hence our gazes are led astray. The term “body schema” refers to “the internal, dynamic representation of the spatial and biomechanical properties of one’s body, and is derived from multiple sensory and motor inputs that interact with motor systems in the generation of actions”.<sup>19</sup> Having been internalized in our bodies since childhood, the body schema allows us to position ourselves as a three-dimensional object in space, thus perceptually taking the position of another object/body therein.<sup>20</sup> The body schema, however, is an anthropocentric notion, in that it centers the human way of seeing and doing at the core of all spatial experiences. For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the anthropocentric nature of the body schema becomes evident in the way we use spatial prepositions in language. As he puts it:

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18 Victoria C. Anderson-Barnes, et al. Caitlin. “Phantom Limb Pain: A Phenomenon of Proprioceptive Memory?” *Medical Hypotheses* Vol. 73. No. 4 (2009), p. 555.

19 Melita J. Giummarra, et al. “Central Mechanisms in Phantom Limb Perception: The Past, Present, and Future”. *Brain Research Review* Vol. 54. No. 1. (2007), p. 223.

20 The main systems that contribute to the properties of the body schema are: “a) proprioceptive and somatosensory systems, b) vestibular system, c) visual system, and d) movement systems and efference copy—that is, the neural copy of a movement command that is sent to parietal cortex to be mapped onto the body schema to generate expected sensory outcomes.” *Ibid.*,

When I say that an object is *on* a table, I always mentally put myself either in the table or in the object, and I apply to them a category which theoretically fits the relationship of my body to external objects. Stripped of this anthropological association, the word *on* is indistinguishable from the word “under” or the word “beside.”<sup>21</sup>

Accordingly, to project our body schema onto Pallandt’s photograph, we need to dispose our bodies according to that of the photographer; only then we can impartially say that the photographer is *under* the water and not *above* the water and the water surface is *on* her body and not *under* her body. In other words, by adopting her body schema via the conduit of the photograph, we reinstate our bodies in relation to the lived body of the photographer. That is why presenting her photograph in a rotated form is not simply an aesthetic choice, but a phenomenological one: it asks us to perceptually place ourselves where the photographer is corporeally. It is a demand for a perceptual alignment between two lived bodies: that of the photographer and that of the spectator.

Nevertheless, while the lived body can actively project the schema of space through proprioceptive movements, seen as a physical body, it also needs to be located amongst other objects in space. Thus, having now discussed the specificities of the lived body (*Leib*) apropos photographic experience, by retaining my focus on Pallandt’s photograph, I will next examine how the physical body (*Körper*) intervenes in space. If the lived body allows us to *actively* move into space, the physical body *passively* localizes itself, thereby becoming a nourishing ground for inhabitation.

## Localizing Space as a ‘physical body’

The body is a thing among things; it is caught up in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*.<sup>22</sup>

If we can geographically coordinate and spatially navigate ourselves through the lived body, we can come into with our surroundings through the physical body. Corporeally speaking, every perceptible point in Pallandt’s photograph is in touch with the material body of the photographer: the undertow is stroking her; the frigid temperature is penetrating her organs; and the water density and gravity turn her body buoyant. If such bodily experiences seem trivial on the ground, they cannot go unnoticed once one is underwater. Being fully submerged underseas (to use Merleau-Ponty’s terms), Pallandt’s body “is not primarily

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21 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 173.

22 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind”, in *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology: The Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics*, ed. James M. Edie et al. Trans. Carleton Dallery (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 163.

in space; it is *of* it".<sup>23</sup> Thanks to the sheer physicality of the body, it can entangle the flesh with the water, the self with the other, among other ways, via the sheer act of breathing in and out. Not only through breathing does the body absorb from and discharges into the environment, but it also vibrates in space; it moves while being spatially localized. As Sheets-Johnstone suggests, breathing should essentially be seen as a spatial experience, as a form of movement, not only from within but also from without. As she puts it:

The self-propelling dynamics of breath, like the generation of warmth and auto-poesis of life itself are part of the wonder of insides. We thus see from this perspective too that insides are not an object but akin to fluids, shifting and fluctuating on their own, precisely dynamic rather than static. We can see further that the concept of breath as 'air in motion' is tied to our own animation as living bodies, that is, to *first-person spatial experiences of ourselves in motion*.<sup>24</sup>

By breathing through her body, thus, Pallandt is not only sustaining her life under the water but is also imperceptibly reverberating onto the marine space. Phenomenologically speaking, this air in motion perfuses through every modicum of this photograph. Even if we cannot see the corporeal aeration of the physical body, we are reminded of such bodily experience via the starry dots that have sparked across the frame: *their effervescence reflects the efflorescence of breathing*. If terrestrial breathing feels like a given, being submerged under the sea makes it evident that there could be no motion, no life, and therefore no phenomenology of the body without this internalized first-person spatial experience. Undoubtedly, breathing is the body's primordial mode of inhabitation, not only externally in the world but also internally in the flesh. The only reason that it is not usually deemed as such is that it takes place within the inaccessible inside, that is: in the physical body.

Although the distinction between the lived and the physical body may suggest that there are two different bodies under consideration, Gallagher remarks that "a human being neither 'has' nor 'is' two bodies; the body as it is lived and the body as it appears in objective observation are one and the same body".<sup>25</sup> The distinction between the lived and the physical body is thus a perceptual one, allowing phenomenology to first separate and then combine these two bodies into an indistinguishable whole. To be clear, while as a lived body one can move in space and thereby determine orientations, as a physical body the human being is seen as an object among other objects in the world: it is a "thing" among other things in space. The word "thing", according to literary theorist Bill Brown, tends to "index a certain limit or liminality, to hover over the threshold between the nameable and unnamable, the figurable and unfigurable, the identifiable and unidentifiable".<sup>26</sup> It is consequently the physical body that dethrones humans from their anthropocentric ascendancy; in that, perceived only as a material object, the body is simply a 'thing' occupying space. However, it is

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23 *Ibid.*, p. 250.

24 Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, "On the Challenge of Language Experience", in *The Corporeal Turn: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2009), p. 375. (Emphasis added).

25 Gallagher, "Lived Body", p. 140.

26 Bill Brown, "Thing Theory", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28. No. 1. Things (2001), p. 5.

owing to the objecthood (or thinghood) of the physical body that we can occupy external spaces and eventually feel inhabited therein. To be clear, to inhabit a space one cannot be continually in motion as the lived body but must also localize in it as a physical body. That is why the ultimate rule of survival in free diving, which has enabled Pallandt to take this photograph, is both comforting and confronting: one needs to become a thing (a physical body) in space. Therefore, to reach this corporeal state, which is required for the equalization of oxygen in free diving, Pallandt had to succumb to the immobility of her physical body. Nonetheless, even in that supposed state of motionlessness in space, her body must have been in motion internally, through bodily-kinesthetic experiences.

Even though as a physical object the human body seems to be inert and still, it is internally operational: it is in motion without being moved in space. While we can habitually see the spatial movements of the lived body (as one moves her arm), we cannot observe how receptors in smaller body parts (e.g., tendons, joints, etc.) take part in perceptual processes. Such internalized and localized movements are not seen but are felt within the body through kinesthetic operations.<sup>27</sup> Bodily-kinesthetic experiences refer to “the internal corporeal movements of the human body whereby it constitutes itself, which are not visible in the way that spatial movements are, but are nevertheless felt through movements and stoppings of internal body parts”.<sup>28</sup> Owing to the invisible kinesthetic movements of the physical body, even a body that appears to be at a standstill is, too, in motion. For Husserl, the imperceptible holding sway of the body, which enables us to remain in position in space, is an exemplar of kinesthetic motions. As he explains:

My body—in particular, say the bodily part ‘hand’—moves in space; the activity of holding sway, ‘kinesthesia’, which is embodied together with the body’s movement, is not itself in space as a spatial movement but is only *indirectly co-localized in that movement*.<sup>29</sup>

Whereas the body can actively move in space, Husserl suggests that it also requires the internalized kinesthetic activities of the physical body to retain itself in that movement. In other words, while as a lived body (*Leib*) we can project the coordinating schema of space by moving in it, being simultaneously a physical body (*Körper*), we also need to attach ourselves to those movements. In a sense, the kinesthetic operations of the physical body stitch passivity to the active spatial movements of the lived body. That is why when a moving or resting body holds sway, it is not at a standstill but is internally co-localizing itself in its surroundings. That is why Casey contends that the human body fundamentally “resists direct localization”<sup>30</sup>; that is, it can never be seen as a fixed location in space, for it is either externally in motion (as a lived body) or internally (as a physical body). Geographically speaking, the term location “refers to an absolute point in space with a specific set of

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27 The term kinesthesia refers to “the inner experiences of the moving or resting body as it feels itself moving pausing at a given movement”. Casey, *The Fate of Place*, 2019. p. 219.

28 Ali Shobeiri, *Place: Towards a Geophilosophy of Photography* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2021), p. 20.

29 Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, p. 217 (Emphasis added).

30 Casey, *The Fate of Place*, p. 223.

coordinates and measurable distances from other locations.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, due to the kinesthetic operations of the physical body, a human body cannot be reduced to an absolute point in space. In other words, seeing the human body as a location in space is to announce its death, thereby disregarding its inner kinesthetic activities. In light of this, Merleau-Ponty insists that we must “avoid saying that our body is *in* space, or *in* time. It inhabits space and time”: “I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them”.<sup>32</sup>

To better understand this point, all we need to do is to imagine being in Pallandt’s position: to remain buoyant underwater, she had to continually exercise her bodily-kinesthetic motions to avoid sinking into the abyss or surfacing back to the open water. Even if she may have appeared to be fixed in space to a person from above, she must have been continually in motion *within* her body. Albeit such motions are undetectable to sight, they are kinesthetically detected by the physical body. Accordingly, imbued with the kinesthetic operations that are sensed from within her physical body, she is continually, yet indiscernibly, *co-localizing in the space of which she is a part*. In other words, by allowing her physical body to propel her from inside kinesthetically, she is not a body locked in space, but one that is loosely anchored in her movements. As a result, Pallandt is not occupying the space by simply being in it; she is inhabiting the space by kinesthetically pulsating into it. Here, in Casey’s words: “The difference is that between a strictly geometric centeredness and an inhabitational being-centered-in.”<sup>33</sup> While the former suggests that the physical body can become a fixed location in space (like a monitor on a desk), the latter disavows such a claim by foregrounding the kinesthetic vibrancy of inhabitation.

## Inhabiting Space as a Phenomenal Body

The world is large, but in us it is deep as the sea.

R. M. Rilke, quoted in *The Poetic of Space*.<sup>34</sup>

To explore the sui generis essence of inhabitation, philosopher Gaston Bachelard developed the method of “topo-analysis.” Drawing on psychology, poetry, and phenomenology, he defined topo-analysis as “the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives.”<sup>35</sup> Through such a method not only can we grasp how our most deep-seated feelings become sedimented in spaces, but we can also realize the different inhabitational modalities each space can offer. Being fully cognizant of the perceptual bilaterality of the body, for Bachelard (similar to Merleau-Ponty) inhabitation is not a matter of simply being in space

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31 Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing LTD, 2015), p. 1.

32 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 139-140. (Emphasis in original).

33 Casey, *The Fate of Place*, p. 293.

34 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetic of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1944), p. 201.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

as a location but suffusing through it as a phenomenal body. The Bachelardian topo-analysis allows us to conceive of the body as a kind of joining node between the intersubjective inside and the concretized outside. In his view, it is this corporeal liminality of the body that makes us feel inhabited in the world: the fact that the body allows us to bridge the inside with the outside and the self with the entire cosmos. Nonetheless, for Bachelard the traversal between the body (the inside) and the world (the outside) is neither via the imperceptible kinesthetic activities, nor via the perceptible proprioceptive movements, but through daydreaming. It is this projective bodily experience that allows a person to feel the immensity of the entire existence from within. While daydreaming, Bachelard writes:

Immensity is within ourselves. It is attached to a sort of expansion of being that life curbs and caution arrests, but which starts again when we are alone. As soon as we become motionless, we are elsewhere; we are dreaming in a world that is immense. Indeed, *immensity is the movement of motionless man*.<sup>36</sup>

Following Bachelard's prescription, to feel the immensity of existence and the expansiveness of life, all we need to do is to remain motionless in space, thereby allowing this stillness to teleport us to the external world. Such a spatial movement, which allows the body to project itself onto the world, is neither proprioceptive nor kinesthetic, but inherently oneiric. If diurnal movements would delimit the body to the exterior space and the nocturnal motions would sink the body back to itself, the solitary experience of daydreaming allows the physical body to conduce a feeling of "intimate immensity" in stillness. It is a situation in which the physical body can extend itself beyond its corporeal and spatial limits through the conduit of daydreaming. Bachelard perceives such an adjoining of bodily and spatial experiences under the theme of "correspondences." As he writes:

Immensity in the intimate domain is intensity, and intensity of being, the intensity of a being evolving in a vast perspective of intimate immensity. It is the principle of 'correspondences' to receive the immensity of the world, which they transform into intensity of our intimate being. They institute transactions between two kinds of grandeur.<sup>37</sup>

For Bachelard, it is through daydreaming in solitude that the intimate inner space and the infinite outer space find their "coexistentialism." In other words, within the conceptual framework of "intimate immensity" a solitary body corresponds the grandeur of the universe to the intimate depth of inner experience via daydreams. "When human solitude deepens," Bachelard asserts, "the two immensities touch and become identical."<sup>38</sup>

To reach such an existential correspondence between intimacy and immensity, through which the phenomenal body becomes a threshold between the inside and outside, one need

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36 *Ibid.*, p. 202. (Emphasis added).

37 Bachelard, *The Poetic of Space*, p. 210. (Emphasis added).

38 *Ibid.*, p. 219.

do nothing but imagine being alone undersea. By closing her eyes and remaining motionless underwater, Pallandt is not only *corporeally enmeshed* but also *existentially conjoined* with the aquatic space. Engulfed in silence and submerged in semi-darkness, the body of the photographer seeps into an imposed daydreaming. It is during such a fugacious psychosomatic stupor that the intimacy of experience coalesces with the immensity of existence. It is indeed a condition of “correspondences”: between the solitary photographer and the colossal sea. During such a somatically induced reverie, the body of the photographer falls into abeyance between active and passive intervention in its circumambience. While as a lived body she is *unfolding* onto the immensity of the world, as a physical body she is *enfolding* into the intimate kernel of the self. It is because, as I have discussed in this paper, the phenomenal body is simultaneously a lived body that can *project* itself onto the world and a physical body that can *introject* the entire world into itself. Therefore, being simultaneously a physical body (*Körper*) that needs to hold together kinesthetically and a lived body (*Leib*) that can go further proprioceptively, the afloat photographer is both still and moving, static and dynamic, passive and active: she is *inactive*. It is how corporeally immersivity manifests the sheer inactivity of the phenomenal body: a condition of “coexistentialism” par excellence.

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