the skin and me (a piece to be read aloud and, if possible, amongst friends)

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Abstract: The following text revolves around a contrast in the form of a chiasm: the human skin of the word is the word of human skin, of its orifices and crevices. Halfway between a phenomenology of the life-world and quasi-surrealistic automatic writing, we attempt per impossibile to restore its rights to the living and speaking body, to allow the ear to speak (Heidegger), the eye to smell (Heraclitus), and the hands to look (Lucretius) – an exercise in synesthesia not devoid of a certain irony. In the process, the rules of writing are rendered as flexible, not to say evanescent, as they were in the beginnings of writing (in ancient Greek, for example, where no separation between words was even marked). Thus written language twists and turns against itself and, in accordance with the teachings of the Platonic dialogue Phaedrus, becomes a spur for oral, and corporeal communication, rather than simply replacing it. This is why we ask the reader to let himself be carried along by the flow of language, instead of attempting intellectually to recombine the fixed, rigid, clear and distinct units of meaning that serve to transform living speech into an instrument of domination.

A broken hand and how then will you be able to write well I think this is an excellent excuse for not worrying about anything an excuse to go on living without having to explain how things are going do you not think but how you can live without writing anything then again why write at all many people talk or read although it never occurs to them to write and when they do it is because they are concerned with serious things you know what I mean with things about work or perhaps a letter to someone in the family and you know above all this is why I am writing now to tell you we are all well here thank god and we hope you are too after writing something so long but you still did not know what to say other than sending your fond regards something rather anodyne it is true that is endlessly repeated yet after all the others learned that you were fine but now your hand is broken and you have to write something whatever it is with the computer of course with the tips of your fingers with the left hand if necessary it always takes you longer but you manage it in the end and the words start marching one after the other you know like a column
of implacable ants a black line on the yellow earth a line sown together as it
were with accents commas dashes a traffic of ants too egotistical perhaps since
they abandon the line or rather greedier because they have discovered a grain
to carry back to the ant hill though in the end everything is for the queen the
fact is there is little you can do with one hand above all because one shows
with the hand what would become of us if we did nothing but write rather
than moving the hands the face and even the body we think with the body
that is the point and it is when one of its exits or passages fails to function that
we describe our organs in these terms it is as if there were an inner you that
you do not believe there is for there is no soul but it is clear there is it is just
that it appears outwardly in the skin rests on the lips and on the forearms of
the other the skin is the limit though it is not that simple the skin is the soft
and porous membrane the threshold through which the inner sounds these
roving whispers and murmurs that warn us the enemy is already there crouching
within is also struggling to express itself is finding a soul for itself a soul on
the surface on the outside a carnal soul one ancient author called it as you
know and it is as if in turn the world were thronging pressing on your skin and
indeed an ancient Greek said that things emit a kind of film or skin that travels
from them and settle on your skin lending color to it wrinkling or softening
it as the case may be we are the legend of the world you know it is our skin
that feels the distress when we hear of the wretched satyr flayed by the sun god
with his fatal darts do not tear me from myself the lacerated creature cried and
the world lies out there somewhere outside the skin but this is not true the
world is external to the skin but not external after all do not be deceived by
what the eyes say for the eye is like an extended hand a distanced hand as it
were for to have a broken hand is like being blind in one eye like seeing every-
thing flat seeing everything from one side only but remember in the end the
wretched michelangelo in the last judgment transformed entirely into a shape-
less bag of skin held up by saint Bartholomew with his knife that the butcher
and the victim here exchange their roles it is as if the painter wanted to cry out
to the world and to the popes that he has left his skin behind that now without
a hide flayed but still in living flesh he passes through the world revealing his
insides for the skin also serves a use it is not true it serves for nothing on the
contrary we are all henchmen of the skin of our own skin and it protects us
and betrays us reveals us and conceals us the skin marks the passing of time and
all those little blotches that may who knows foretell some imminent mel-
ana and those swellings in the legs that livid hue apparent in the veins those
subterranean or rather hypodermic streams as we would have to call them and
when the skin tears and the blood surges up and you are astonished I do not
know if we are vessels of the spirit but we are surely vessels of what we call the
body and it would be there inside contained by the skin but not entirely for
there are orifices too as if the skin had been invaginated or turned inside out as if it were curious to see what is happening down there below and what appears to the world outside as a red flush in the cheeks or a sickly glow in the eyes or a trembling hand and how is the hand it is very painful but this is not so bad for a philosopher I no longer remember which once said that pain is a privilege of living beings so we could say it hurts me therefore I am I do not believe it is so simple unless your existence is that of an animal you would have to say instead I hurt therefore I am but what do you mean by this I mean that this impersonal character of pain announces a rebellion from within that is difficult to control as when one looks at oneself in the mirror and notices that tears are gathering in the corner of the eye or that a drop of saliva is quivering on the lips on one side of the mouth that a ring of sweat has broken out upon the brow and the limbs are beginning to shake convulsively something is certainly amiss yet when I am in pain it is I myself who decides but how can one say decide this is to bring in a certain feeling to hold it fast almost as if it were an orphan to protect it within oneself and then return it to the other who is suffering and nor is it a question of cutting a splendid profile which we can also do and this is usually what transpires we can also be pained by the health or well-being of the other this is just what happens when the other matters to us and we feel this is like robbing us of our happiness of the possibility making something my own nor am I sure that suffering for the pain or suffering of the other is not also a way of robbing the other of his own suffering it would be like touching him with my tears encircling him with my trembling arms telling him I am here but then you are no longer really you when I cry because of you or when I embrace you so that the perfect pain the absolute condolence would only be possible when the other is dead but is not yet buried or more likely today is not yet cremated as if the perfect condolence would be the complete absorption without remainder of the expressive body of the other that here lies dead is here stretched out the skin cold and yellowish like wax and then I arrive in front of all the friends and relatives and I embrace him I weep for him I give voice to my pain that cannot indeed be his pain for I have appropriated it for myself you know in front of everyone I say there is no pain no grief like my pain my grief and the fact is I am no hypocrite I am surely not pretending no not I nor you nor he feels in truth this pain this grief a double pain and grief as it were unless we wish to extend it to one who says he feels the pain of all humanity of all human beings tearing their pain from them to place it in the cellar of other people’s sufferings so in the end one does not even have a pain one can call one’s own for the pain was that of others and he has taken all this upon himself and what is more we would have to be grateful to him for he says this is how we are redeemed but that is enough for I know where you are going with this I do not understand how you can say these
things when his bones were broken when he bled from the wound in his side when his feet were pierced with nails perhaps it was not his own pain but let us leave it there it is true he became a wretched figure but one cannot help thinking that in the end he was fulfilling a task that was not even his own that what is more this lacerated skin of his knees revealing the bone beneath the swollen livid flesh all this is then erased transfigured as they say yes if you insist transfigured into a glorious body a body more like a gleaming sphere a body that neither feels nor suffers or a body that is ashamed to be a body for what do you expect since this is a god but I believe that a god who does not suffer for us or with us does not deserve this name not because we are so important but because giving oneself to others is the only thing that can save us from the hell of the I and this indeed is new what is this question of the hell of the I look deep inside yourself but if we have no inside you used to say if all is skin we cannot see inside for this signifies what is latent gathered on the rim that which calls attention not to the outside but rather to this rim through which the inside would cease to be a fixed interior after all this is what the ancient philosopher justly described as place as the inner limit or boundary of the surrounding body a curious saying though as if the body were the whole surrounding world arrayed in layers like an onion and the limit would be the skin then what happens with the body with my body well the body is precisely what is limited by this inside remember that aristotle examined everything thoroughly from top to bottom as the master of principles that he was but then if the skin is the place of the world the limit of the inner as the classical and the german thinkers likewise claimed which is why they remain classic thinkers in their way then to express oneself without hope of receiving anything in return is surely the most divine gesture or expression one can offer of absolute sacrifice a pure surrender or abnegation and from what from what does this come but from the inside and the outside at once pain does not petrify the threshold despite the opinion of that incestuous poet who has proved so trying to the citizens of salzburg on the contrary the pain on the surface is the bloom of the skin since the skin is flower and fruit though it be the fruit of malodorous secretions the pain the skin exudes is the only thing that allows me to say I to myself without feeling any shame at usurping with this all-powerful pronoun the place of everyone else for distress is the only thing I repeat that allows us a sense of solidarity as long as we do not wish to remain entirely alone with ourselves nourishing resentment against our entrails against our innermost parts moreover that we will never know for what in truth they are except displayed on a screen and as a kind of echo and nor in death will we be able to see inside for it is what is inside that makes us who we are although we are not really ourselves this is if you like what the philosopher once so close to hegel liked to call the nature within god for what we see of course is not
nature indeed it would be absurd to try and see it instead of concentrating on
the things that exist through nature as that other earlier thinker pointed out
but why should this be so this question is by no means clear but what seems
clear to me is how perverse it is to go on desiring the existence of some inte-
rior all-unifying power as if we feared the infinite variety of things and wished
to reduce them all to a single principle suspiciously similar what is more to our
cherished I that would also be commanding from within and passing through
our skin via openings and gestures it seems clear that all this is in perfect order
you will say this is the best arrangement for controlling things he who knows
how nature works will be able to repeat and even modify and augment its
processes and place them at our disposal you have just spoken of the I well
every I is the same every other and this implies that every I must also be
equated with every other we shall end up invoking an active principle the I
common to all and all of them identical and a passive principle the nature with
which we have effectively completed a circle we had begun by saying nature
was the interior active principle and now it emerges that it must be passive you
will rather say that human history has turned nature into a passive principle
that has been ordering everything including ourselves through drives and
urges through desires interests and passions but in the end the practice of sci-
ence and politics has reduced nature to a gigantic fount of resources and also
indeed to a no less gigantic heap of waste materials including of course our-
selves well in the end these materials are also recycled in turn because natu-
really we know their natural secrets I say that we know its secrets and are able
to manipulate things placing them in our service once again but in whose
service precisely but let us not start with your leftist pieties if you wish I will
concede in the service of the ruling classes or perhaps of the politicians and the
scientists and financiers yes of the financiers too though in the end everything
serves the good of humanity or at least should do so and if not the masses will
surely rise up but how will they do so how can you dare to say this just as well
I have a broken hand for my blood is beginning to boil with your concerns in
the end it turns out that this whole active principle that was nature has become
passive so that there is a power stronger than the forces of nature represented
by human beings but those human beings or most of them at least are passive
in turn masses you called them moldable precisely as a mass by the politicians
and the scientists or the pyramid culminates in a number of wise ones in the
structure of power if so I cannot see why they did not organize a pyramid once
and for all in perfect hierarchy with someone at the top who announces from
on high what has to be done but can you not see that the matter is not so sim-
ple that we need to know what the others think and want the others you say
including amongst the others the plants and animals and rocks well in the end
everything is a chain this is clear but then who gives the orders certainly some
start from the necessities of existence and the wealth of others they do not return the surplus of their labour to them but keep it for themselves and so the others although they still do not absolutely give the orders do live better I am sure they live better or are subject to the same wheel I believe in the end that we are all unhappy that we do what we do that no one really knows the reason although no one dares to propose a moment of general reflection to discover what to do you see this is how things are why do you get so worked up about other countries not everything is that bad and what is more people like to enjoy themselves they do not particularly care who gives the orders as long as they do not do it badly and in the end you will come out with the old vulgus vult depict you are not common or vulgar of course you are a philosophe well I simply observe what the others are like once I wanted to organize things myself and I soon realized that either I was manipulating them or they were manipulating me so that I preferred to play the spectator and describe in a more or less honorable and impartial manner what happens it is almost as if you were dead but what do you want I have no desire for a bad conscience for I am not deceiving anyone and there it is what is more you are not the one to tell me how I must be or what I have to do how I am not this at all when I am you we have been talking with one another from the beginning what happens is that you have never dared before now to face yourself or if you wish to face me and recognize that we are a doubled one for it is impossible to be oneself without speaking with the human being that one is oneself it does not seem to me to be so simple rather you are my skin so that we must begin here or it may be that you are the result of all the models that have shaped you those from without everything from without so that you have become my mask but I certainly know who I am inside when I shed this skin as if we were talking of scales this skin that resembles borrowed clothing the superego some call it those who think they are scientific by inventing words and talking of the unconscious well I do not believe that you are really very different now you are accusing me because I am not your true you or the true I as you wish and because I am inside you if indeed you are you when you stop using the external mask of your skin so that basically you start believing in nature once again or at least in your nature but consider for a moment if you can express yourself on your own by means of your senses by means of your gestures and expressions if you can grasp on your own what you call the world what the pores of the skin allow through if you intervene on your own in the world by means of this so solid skin as the corpulent knight of shakespeare would say but then how do you know what is there below or do you think I am deceiving you but you will not convince me because I know that you have always tried to trick me so that I cannot express myself as I know I am so all I can do is move to agitate the hands though certainly more carefully than before and to speak yet
I know that inside I have a thinking eye that sees things as they are and not as you like to present them to me and what is more that you may really know what you know and you always want to conceal it with guile as I imagine and nonetheless you confine yourself to speech for thought does not deceive us and spoken words your words are traitors with them you can say what you like you can conceal thought yet you cannot conceal your thought from yourself just go on accusing yourself all the time you have done very well for now but I warn you that I have already noticed how superficial you are and obviously I am too being all skin it is just that you are not going to let me speak of course I let you speak but observe that you never not stop forcing me to speak so that according to you I can distort or misrepresent everything that you would truly like to say the truth without saying it how can you claim to say the truth without speaking without doing anything how in short can you wish to remain alive if you insist on being dead on the outside and only alive inside well now you will tell me that thought can be reduced to words and deeds no what I am trying to tell you is that what you call skin or what in this case is the same thing what you call your skin is more intelligent more perceptive than your are yourself stubbornly wanting as you do to be a substance without accidents or a kind of foundation without a foundation or a cause without an effect so that in the end what you would really like to do is to flay me like saint bartholomew with the wretched michelangelo it seems to me you are repeating yourself well what can I say when it is michelangelo himself who painted the flayer and the flayed the executioner and the victim it is as if you believed there is some firm and independent core the soul as some have called it something that could continue to exist without the body just as the body could somehow go on living after being flayed but this conversation is pointless we shall never agree about this but why should we have to agree if this came to pass then one would be master and the other slave one would give the orders and the other would obey do you not realize that in reality we are two-in-one and that if you do away with your double you do away with your- self do not realize that you are the struggle here the fire and the water all this is so much talk I ask you again is the soul the same as the body is the body the same as the skin is nature the same as things and if you push me is god the same as the world what a torrent of questions well let us begin at the beginning or if you wish from the simplest question is thought the same as language and if it is not the same in what sense do they differ from one another and if it is the same why do I always feel that I could say things other than those I do or to say this another day why do I have the ability to lie to conceal the truth I do not know what to say to you you see for you seem defeated I do not say I do not know what to say to you because from the beginning we have been talking about what I have to say to you and you carry on without understanding
it at all it seems a lie that you call yourself a philosopher so much looking inside that you have forgotten not what is outside but the skin look and see if your skin that is already perspiring is flecked with marks feels withered and wrinkled and see if it is capable of saying anything to you look at what is happening to you for you carry on obsessed by the distinction between an absolute yes and an absolute no between the inside and the outside between the true and the false between the thing itself and the surface of the thing and what may well be good for calculations that is for higher mathematics does not necessarily hold good for the body and surely even less for the soul the trouble with you is that you keep thinking about the skin as if it were a detachable piece of clothing and surely the blame for such a superficial way of looking at things for it is indeed superficial and do not interrupt me here for I can see you want to shut me up but you cannot because then you would have to speak would have to concede that you need me if only to repudiate me for you are indeed a sophist but you will want to shut up some time to stop talking and then we can both go to sleep but I tell you that this would not help matters much either because we would clearly carry on arguing only without really knowing that we were doing so well enough is enough just tell me one time at least what you think of my earlier question the one regarding thought and words for you are boring me now which is fine but do not interrupt me for I shall tell you myself when I shall let you speak to your deep body or your soul or the inner man or whatever you want to call yourself bragging about not being here outside at all so I shall begin for we are all encouraged or condemned one way or another myself included to look at screens to listen to what they tell us and now even to touch them or just think of our mobiles so that we end up believing that everything has two dimensions although there is no underneath here that is to say that everything flows through a network of lines and traces that there are only flows and currents without depth that everything is liquid but this is precisely what I am complaining about that you attempt by every possible means to silence me I had begun to speak and you have already cut me off I am sorry I hold my peace but it is simply that one remains entirely without foundation and without identity well then you are right to complain now with your permission I shall continue and do me the favour of not interrupting me at any moment alright for what I want to tell you is that it is not language but writing that has accustomed all of us from the beginning to believe that what is written is what endures while spoken words not to mention deeds are carried off on the wind as though we were uttering written words and images similarly arrest the flow of time and petrify and congeal it so to speak until the reader or the interpreter arrives and brings them to life again in his own way though always differently from the way the author would do who for his part deludedly believes that he is the first reader
of what he is writing or the first spectator of what he paints do you know what comes to pass with these written words and images it seems that time no longer passed at all that is why the written word inspires more trust than spoken words or gestures seem to do this all clear until we ask ourselves what it is we mean or want to say and then each one of us says more or less what he hopes yes hopes I know what you are going to say that each of us says more or less what he is thinking you see without thought we could not recognize that what is written or the images in question can say quite different things without there being any way of making them acceptable to reason so that they would honestly say only what they are or only what they mean and that it is how it is but you do not realize that if this were so they would be redundant we would not need them after all for we would always honestly say exactly what we honestly write or paint or photograph or film and then all such repetition would be superfluous so that in the end you will accept I am right precisely because our words and images can signify quite different things in spite of possessing a true corporeal form and that is precisely why thought exists that which decides what it is in truth they ought to say and when they fail to do so they are subjected to a rigorous and punishing diet such as logic and mathematics pursue so that thought and its expression shall coincide completely it seems to me you still do not understand the way it is there is no need to resort to mathematics and the sciences if you we can come back to this what matters now is that you carefully bear in mind the following that the written sign is always imperfect by excess or by default and for certain in the same the way I am your skin so that you cannot believe that I am telling you the truth for then we would be back at your profound position except in reverse I would be like that other thinker who in a moment of weakness said that the soul was a lie and the body alone was truth as if by renouncing duality we would have clarified anything about what matters the signs must function as a second skin of things since all things have their skin softer or harder as the case may be but all things express themselves and speak and speak to us and do so like we do letting themselves be seen and making themselves conspicuous but in order to catch them since we need them to live and thrive we cover them with a second skin as I was telling you a second skin that is even more or own because it has sprung from us and we see ourselves in it some have called this the exoskeleton of our organs of perception driving towards the complete externalization firstly of our nervous system through electronic means and then of our thought processes by means of digitalisation but let us leave it there the fact is that having covered the skins of things with our own fabricated vestments of skins for the sake of controlling them we believe we understand these things I realize of course that all this talk of things is misleading since it seems from beneath that they are what they are as long as we have flayed them too in order to sub-
mit them to another borrowed skin and we even think that their own skin is
ultimately not good enough for them and so we get rid of them and dress their
flesh with the signs and graphics of logic and mathematics but do not interrupt
me as I see you are about to do the fact is that fail to grasp that we are con-
fronted here with a play of skins or membranes in contact with different filters
with different entities and we begin to make distinctions in order to begin at
all we believe there is an absolute inside that we call the I the mind the soul
that thinks and nothing else and then an absolute outside that we call the
world and we impose another equally absolute inside on this outside and call
it nature and sometimes not content with this we believe this inside of the
outside itself contains an inside even more interior and more intimate than the
intimacy of things and we call it god or if we are more generous and pluralistic
in outlook we speak of gods and demons and angels and I know not what
when in reality what we have here is a continuum that has been called the
flesh of the world a continuum that turns inside out that unfolds and refolds
that superimposes itself that creeps and slides that coils and winds and distends
itself in manifold ways and we call this thought or rather you call it thought
for I am more careful here than you because my skin is blooming or rather I
am the bloom of my skin I say you ascribe the name of thought to this possi-
bility of folding and unfolding these processes that seem to be internal when
they are nothing but the folds of the flesh of the world and you yourself body
or soul or whatever you want to call yourself are nothing but the result of all
these sheathes and orifices these doublings and in the end you will also have
to turn yourself every part of you into this exteriority and what is more you
already are but the fact is you are ashamed to speak of your necessary functions
and it is a fitting punishment that such necessities and necessity as such that
excrement and logic should fight it out together each one being the laughing
stock of the other and in the end when your skin coincides with the skins of
what you believe is the outside when this shall come to pass you will be dead
or rather this is what your I this little exaggeration will call death although it
is nothing but one more fold or pleat in this undulating field of surfaces and
now indeed I can tell you that even the distinction that I made earlier pro-
domo for you see that even skins learn their latin that this distinction between
writing and speech was also only provisional was merely didactically presented
for someone as profound as you and forgive the irony but the distinction
seemed necessary to me I say since speech is nothing more than a doubled
writing directed towards the inside or towards what seems to be the inside
unless strictly speaking we give the name of writing to every exchange and
doubling and recognition on the part of skins then writing is originary and
speech is derivative and then time that has been stayed is more authentic than
time that flows because time stayed is already written described inscribed in
our skin and in the innermost fabric of our brain and even of our soul in such a way that if we insist on distinguishing between a past and a future that are absolutely different this is because we delude ourselves that this distinction is one that we produce ourselves on the basis of a present or an absolute presence that would be inscribed within our innermost self except that we do not know how to read it since others have inscribed it in us or someone else has done so although in this regard I have no idea of who or what precisely has accomplished this and for this reason I am nothing more than skin and forgive me once again if I sometimes sound ironical it is just that I believe that we do not know how to read it because we lose our way amongst the folds and thus delude ourselves that if we were to say what we truly feel instead of writing it or painting it then we should always dwell in the truth when what we do not understand is that we never truly know what we feel until we say it and above all until we write it or is it not true clever soul that you are that it is only when you start to write that you begin to realize what it is you wanted to say that the question of saying always arrives too late and that this is an answer you know to use amongst friends to pass the time but if want time to keep its own rules of flowing and staying you have to write because in the end and here I already fall silent for I see you are becoming upset as I am speaking am speaking to you am speaking to myself because in the end I say I write that writing is the human skin of the word and that without this writing it is not that there would be no word but that there would be no skin either for the skin is something about which one writes and I know who I am and who you are because I am writing yes writing with the skin but what foolishness is this enough of such nonsense you are writing with the fingers that are the extension and extremity of hands that belong to a body that acts and moves at the keyboard of a computer because I want it to do you understand because I want it to and I am the one who commands you in my fingers commands the computer that says what I want it to say and so it is and do not even think of interrupting me for you have already annoyed me no end with your useless chatter about skins and folds and pleats in the end you sounded like a tailor who was cutting a suit for himself a suit measured on himself without reflecting about who is giving the commands who is speaking who is writing so it is now you that are going to have to listen I am foolish skin I am the one who uses and develops it is true what my parents have left me to and what I have carefully allowed to enter into me and pass out of me with greater or lesser effort I have been constantly fashioning myself it is true that this my skin is true that you recount my story yet this story is mine it is true I have no other choice but to speak to externalize what I am thinking and I have no other choice but to listen to see or to read in order to learn what others are saying and if you wish to wax lyrical to learn what the things of the world are telling me and even if you will to learn
what gods or angels or demons are telling me through these things but for the
love of god do not conflate the expression with what is expressed the hearing
with what is heard the spoken in the final analysis with what is thought for you
do not see that it is precisely the world and the trace it leaves in me a trace that
could of course be better if instead of arguing with me all the time you tried
to spare me these frigid problems these burns and shocks and shivers for in
truth I am rather tired of you but what am I supposed to do I have already got
used to this and what is more I would feel ashamed to go around quite naked
deprived of skin although I am sure that we would then understand one
another better and if not consider the number of people who believe in telepa-
thy and who think that language is not necessary but wait just wait you are
already interrupting me I just need a moment to tell you that haptopathy not
telepathy is best the contact of skins of intimacies of caresses and if necessary
of knocks and blows that thus we would need no language at all well it is fine
that you interrupt me to tell me stupid things do you not realize that we would
need no language for we would be behaving not even like animals or plants
but as if we were garments or old clothes though living ones in constant con-
tact as if it were not enough having to put up with sweats and secretions of one
kind or another but I stay silent because I am a philosopher but such things do
not disgust you good grief do not talk nonsense to me I am skin and I delight
in contacts indeed I am nothing but a series of contacts well that is how it is
but let me speak just as I let you speak before I do let you speak but remember
that while you say and speak what you think you are thinking you are actually
moving the lips and the tongue and the hands and the body and you look
around you without being able to concentrate your attention on anything for
I am your skin and not something outside also bearing in mind that I do not
really believe that there is an outside of any kind but you wish to keep quiet
for once see I keep quiet too and everything is over but it would not be over
because you would have to open your mouth or nose simply in order to breathe
you would continue to sweat or shiver with cold you would still have to move
so I am sorry but I shall always defeat you well you will defeat me because I
am body and am made of earth but precisely for this reason I feel within me
that I am mind and thinking mind and what is more I readily understand
those who believe in the soul and in god and in everything that is spiritual
although I cannot get this far myself as long as I keep you away do you hear
whatever means that you will win in the end and I shall die through agreeing
with you but while I will cry to the world that I am myself that it is I who
speaks since I think the one who moves me since it is my will that I sense since
I desire do you not see that I express myself in the first person indeed in a
particular language well then enough let me speak for once let me say what I
have to say that it is one thing that we yield to the earth and quite another that
we fail to uphold our human dignity as opposed to you who have sold yourself to the enemy but now it will turn out that I am not your skin am not you what is it you want that I really care about you either you stop talking or I stop writing that is fine by me but let it be clear that I am sweating in truth that you are unbearable and that I nonetheless have to stay with you for life thank goodness that we still have not talked about the shadow that both of us cast it is clear I shall never be able to talk if the talk turns to what you want what serves your interest I say so you fall silent for you are a mere instrument as my body also basically is and even if you press me the surrounding world which we therefore call the world around us around my I and around my mind and around my will and around my feelings and around everything that is mine mine you understand it is true this instrument is not very reliable but that is precisely why we have invented language and writing and the arts and technologies for the purpose of rendering what is outside ever more adequate to my hallowed will or perhaps you wish I should not exaggerate our will the will of human beings yet human beings in truth or that which we ought to be and wish to become namely human beings that belong to the kingdom of ends moral and religious beings which are the source of law and politics and the sciences and technology and everything we mean by inhabiting this earth so that you yourself are skin are the result of this whole process of adequation and do not forget that truth means adequation and that we have long since realized that the true adequation is that of things to the mind of the world to the I of the Is in the plural and the many languages and races and bodies to man with the capital letter to the humanity that is our end and purpose a single city and cosmopolis and a single body and a single mind a single everything but enough I am already feeling sick for the good people that those of your kind despise calling them communists are not as stupid as you since they believed and struggled and there are those who still struggle and I would sometimes quit my own skin to give them a hand as long as you too felt that they believed and still believe for I say the last man need not be a single one at all on the contrary each human being will be a perfect monad a singular universe reflecting itself in other singular universes like a constellation of stars instead of this standardized uniformity that you are taking us towards for I could already see the know-it-all neo-liberals here but what neo-liberals and what stories what I am saying that if there are conflicts and wars and inequalities and sufferings this is precisely because we have different bodies and inhabit different places and if there were no avoiding this and one could only make up for it at least partially by means of simulacra by means of digital detours that could replace these solid and sweaty bodies of ours at least temporarily but yes I realize you are already blaming me again well if indeed we could do this and we are already attempting to do so with what we call community and nation and state and
with other densely organized bodies and so unlike our own marked as they are by earth and animality in the end a concoction of chemicals do not think you are going to offend me if it were not for this your whole discourse that resembles the spume of the days would not exist if I admit you are right in this why not what I am telling you is precisely that everything we call history and civilization and progress has been nothing but a crusade against the body against the earth against everything that escapes our will and look it has not turned out so bad I am not going to start criticizing the system now to play the confident ecologist all I am saying is that all these interventions have been nothing but strategies of survival on the part of this same animal and earthly form of life that you say you despise so much it you strike me like a pair of boys fighting it out to see who wins without realizing that the only important thing is the struggle itself and who are you it is true what are you doing here and you should not be so impertinent neither of you should be so impertinent you know very well who I am and why have you broken your hand I am your wife or someone else in relation to both of you someone other than you other than your skin other than your I and nonetheless if I did not exist there would be no meaning at all to this whole contest that you are both pursuing on the keyboard of the computer so you should let me be the arbiter for once well have we not spent enough time discussing one another discussing with one another while now we must see one another with another skin with another body with another I so you are going to have you are both going to have no other choice but to listen to me and keep quiet in order to begin at all if you have a broken hand it is because you have fallen off the horse you wanted to mount precisely to show me what a good rider you are when I know that in life well at least in the life that we lead together the most you have ever climbed up or climbed into is a staircase or a car or an airplane and even then with a sense of nausea for I know you and see in your skin how you start turning pale unless you wanted to show off in front of me now you would need both hands indeed and you would not have to keep working the keyboard so industriously and moreover you will be you though only because I am your I and what is more your better I enough enough it seems to me you are going too far and why is your good hand trembling although you try to conceal this from me and why are you speaking in such a broken and hesitant manner I do not exist you know this already it is my skin look do not regale me with these stories if you speak and think and feed and defecate it is because you are nobody without a duality external to yourself to your skin without a being that is prior to you but how conceited you are you should not react like that I am referring to your mother in the end what do you want me to say just recognize that without people like me you would not even exist if not just consider the catholic priests do not get into this for you know very well that there
is no way out here if there are celibate catholic priests this is amongst other
things so that they are able to mediate between man and wife able to celebrate
weddings and hear confessions able to understand something about the sexes
with whom theoretically they never get involved or at least are not supposed
to get involved precisely in order to understand them properly and do not
come to me with examples drawn from actual experience however scandalous
they may be for the point here is not to get a priest involved as well as a kind
of tertium interveniens for we have had more than enough quarrelling between
the two of you between the I and your skin and I come to bring if not peace
then at least an honorable truce in relation to the two parties reminding you
both that it is only through this rare thing rare for you of course that I am at
all you two can go on squabbling and arguing about the soul and the body and
the I and the skin but wait a moment this is not everything that you are but
indeed I am in a different way but distinct in what way and what are we to say
about the whole issue of equality and feminism and the fact that we women
give birth and make their own decisions look do not come to me with these
stories that I have come to reconcile you both with one another and remind
you both that the skin is right and that without these sexual contacts you
would not be here ranting and talking I know not what nonsense about the
outer and the inner and indeed you had started so well that I was listening to
you and thinking about it for the matter is quite clear the skin is the limit and
the only thing that truly exists for what we call the world and its things on the
one side and the body and the I on the other requires a threshold that consti-
tutes both sides and is constituted by them and this is the source of its mobility
and subtlety and also of its stubbornness when one insists on living exclusively
in relation to the outer as we say that animals do forgetting that animals are all
border all contact with the world and with their soul that they certainly pos-
sess even if it is a sentient and proudly animal soul or when the human being
insists on living exclusively in relation to the inner as if one were a ghost in the
machine that he regards as insensible that he has himself constructed forget-
ting it is god who made us and I am not getting involved in major theological
debates for I see that this masculine I of mine is getting irritable that the skin
in the last instance always yields to me and starts to ask who made god and
above all why we insist on talking about everything as if it involved a logic of
production when it is he he himself and that peacock I of his that first took
itself to be a sort of engineer inside a space ship that goes where he wants it to
go and transforms everything that exists into a spectacle for your eyes only for
you watch you both watch I too watch spy films and in short

(Note from the owner of the laptop) – I discovered this text – or whatever
it is – already composed early one morning when I went to look at some
notes that I had stored. I swear that my wife was still sleeping and that my dog does not know how to write and certainly not on the computer. But not wishing to create problems and without making any further investigations I send it off exactly as I found it, and not without certain reservations about its incompleteness – I shall never know what transpired between husband and wife, and even less between the skins of both – and nor do I really believe the story that the broken hand was caused by a fall from a horse, above all because in our district there are no stables or horse racing establishments or riding schools. But when all is said and done such things do sometimes happen and since we are neither positivists nor verificationists perhaps that is how it is.

(Translated from Spanish by Nicholas Walker)

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