# rundezvous

## the meeting point of running, philosophy, and meaning

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## Abstract

What is the value of running? Despite injuries and painful consequences, why do people run? How does philosophy, a field known for its rigorous training of the mind, account for a lived, subjective, and bodily experience like running? Can philosophical reflection about running help make sense of issues such as the mind-body problem, personal identity, and the meaning of life? *En route* to answering these questions, two philosophy teachers present their phenomenological inquiries or personal contemplation about their physical struggle of being beginners on the road, using concepts drawn from existentialism, phenomenology, feminism, and Buddhism. The authors conclude that running provides a meaningful existence as well as a path to philosophizing. As runners-in-the-world, they characterize running as a journey toward self-discovery, amor fati, and authenticity.

## Keywords

Philosophy of running, existentialism, phenomenology

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## Introduction: The Gunstart

In 2017, more than 50,000 runners joined the New York City Marathon. It was one of the biggest marathons, in which 139 countries were represented (Snyder 2017, par. 1 and 4). There are requirements for joining the NYC Marathon, plus a specific qualifying time. Everyone must enter on behalf of a charity or apply through a lottery. Only one in four who apply through lottery actually qualifies (Luff 2018, par. 3). Elite runners do everything to get into this race despite the effects of marathons on their bodies. Given the rigorousness of the sport, some adverse effects include: microscopic tears in the leg muscles, fatigued heart and lungs, blisters, bleeding toenails that eventually fall off, abdominal pain, diarrhea and bloating, decreased blood flow to the kidneys, excess mucus in the respiratory system, and skin chafing (Rocheleau 2017, par. 7-31). Running definitely pushes the body to its limits.

By contrast, philosophy, most especially Western philosophy, affords persons a life of analysis, open-mindedness, and critical thinking. Although lately the issue has been the subject of much scrutiny and debate, philosophy has been viewed as too cerebral. And as far as dualism, which permeates most of Western philosophy, is concerned, there has been too much emphasis on the life of the mind and not so much of the body. In the same vein, philosophy practitioners are viewed as reflective and stern, logical but prone to an unhealthy lifestyle. And notwithstanding the interest of philosophers in philosophy of sport, the intellectualist and cognitive approach to the field is a trend that still overshadows phenomenological inquiry (Purser 2017, par. 1).

Two women teachers of philosophy in De La Salle University resist these stereotypes through running, incidentally reversing the above misconceptions. Narrating their reflections about their lived experiences, Biana and Sarza ask philosophical questions about the value and meaning of running. This paper presents two separate personal narratives of running as they train for what they call the "rundezvous," or the meeting point of running, philosophy, and meaning. Purser (2017, par. 1) refers to such an inquiry as a "phenomenology of sporting embodiment," i.e. a "philosophical exploration of the nature of athletic being(s)-in-the-world."

Nikolaidis and Knechtle (2017, par. 2) claim that the marathon, which covers a distance of 42 kilometers, is considered one of the "most challenging

endurance Olympic events." Besides physical training, nutritional and psychological preparation are also a must. Given the risks of weariness and other physical dangers that every runner knows about, why run? It is a very difficult and frustrating physical activity, yet human beings invest their time, money, effort, and whole selves in it. Can philosophy help illuminate these questions? Can reflection about running make sense of issues such as the mind-body problem, personal identity, and the meaning of life? To explain the lived and subjective phenomenon of running, the authors in their separate accounts employ concepts drawn from existentialism, phenomenology, feminism, and Buddhism. Although these are narratives from different individuals, both argue that running provides a meaningful existence and a path to philosophizing. Together they journey toward self-discovery, amor fati, and authenticity.

## Crossing the Finish Line: Biana's Existential Inquiry into the Joy of Running

*Dry Run*. I got into running by accident. Thirty-eight years of my life had proven that I was a couch potato. My only sport was eating potato chips on the couch while binge-watching movies or TV series on Netflix. However, during a family outing, I ran into a good friend who happened to be a triathlon coach.[1] He encouraged me to start walking for fifteen minutes a day. After two months, I signed up for a race, and am now preparing for my sixth one. I started with a distance of 3K; I now run a 5K. The first time I decided to pick up my running shoes, I ran for the mall. What was the point of running just because? It was an activity that did not fit my routine of household chores, work, caring for the baby, and many other mundane tasks. I had to squeeze in fifteen minutes of this routine into my packed schedule. Fifteen minutes could be spent on more sleep. I made excuses, such as I would probably take up running during the summer or the holidays. Then I suddenly realized that at 38, I was at the youngest age I would ever be for this activity. My life was not a dry run for something else. This was it.

[1] Triathlon coach Al Gonzales is the head coach of Inside Track Athletics. He has a Teacher's Certificate from Total Immersion New York and is also an Ironman-Certified Coach. He has conducted triathlon workshops in the United States, Europe, and Asia.

Since then, I've found that running brings me joy; the phenomenon of crossing the finish line is philosophical in itself. Like life which has death at the end of the line, races always have finish lines. The only difference, I suppose, is that I rush with style to cross the finish line. In life though, I hope the end would come later than sooner.

*Runner's High*. Runners have various reasons for running. Joy is one of them. In Ancient Greece, joy was defined as "a kind of contraction—cowering, cringing, shriveling—joy is an emotion of expansion: 'joy wells up', or we feel as though we are 'bursting' with joy." Joy is an outburst compared to happiness that is more solid or settled as a disposition. Joy is sporadic, gone in an instant. Stoics claimed that joy is a good sentiment or emotion, one of the three *eupatheiai* (Caston and Kaster 2016, 7-8). When one experiences joy, it happens in sparks. Joy is an intense feeling or emotion. Baruch Benedict Spinoza, also known as the philosopher of joy, defines joy (*laetitia*) as an affect or an emotion that is "the passion one experiences in the transition to an increased power to strive" (LeBuffe 2015, par. 45). Naturally, according to Spinoza, "we strive to promote the occurrence of whatever we imagine will lead to joy." Thus, one strives to run to achieve that sense of joy. Rocheleau (2017, par. 33) discusses the release of brain neurotransmitters that can produce feelings of euphoria and numbness from pain. This profound psychological benefit is also known as the runners' high. This can make runners happy and joyful.

On the other hand, Whitehead (2016) wrote a paper on the runner's high phenomenon. Using the phenomenological method of Merleau-Ponty, Keen, and Giorgi, he asked runners how they would describe the experience of the runner's high. Ironically, runners did not describe the presence of euphoria or joy but rather the absence of something. Runners on a high "experience the loss of boundaries…. The runner's high is an experience of the absence of boundaries of body, time, and space (Whitehead 2016, 183)." One runner even described her experience as floating, gliding, powering along without effort. She claims she was "like a super being, like transcending (her) normal self (Whitehead 2016, 190)."

When I transitioned from a 3K to a 5K run, it happened by accident. I was signing up for the 3K race when the category got sold out. I decided to register for the 5K race just so I had a run for that particular weekend. I felt stronger and completed the 5K race with surprising ease.

When I run, my body is pushed to the limits. I have conversations with myself. I bargain with myself about whether I should run some more at a faster pace, or rest with a slower stride. Most often than not, I rest and reclaim my pace after a minute or so.

As a beginner, I take it easy. In every race, runners are always "waging their own internal wars" (Belliotti 2007, 1). These inner discussions or conflicts reflect a human being's drive. In relation to the loss of boundaries, Friedrich Nietzsche talks about overcoming of one's limitations as the harnessing of the will to power. Incidentally, runners do not compete with other runners, but with themselves and their internal weaknesses. Every time a runner puts on those running shoes, he or she fulfills the drive to dominate herself and the environment (Belliotti, 2007, 1-4).

Nietzsche espouses the virtues of "creativity, strength, boldness, vigor, and exuberance. . . (to) reach the highest goal: the affirmation of life." The ideal athlete or runner is Nietzschean in the sense that she does her best through perseverance and hard work, thus affirming life. (Parker 2012, 37-38) Indeed, Nietzsche gave much importance to exercise and the great outdoors. Many ideas are born outdoors while freely moving one's muscles.

In the event of rain, I refuse to run outside for fear of falling ill. Thus, the trusty old treadmill becomes my refuge. When this happens, I usually have my cellphone with me and I listen to some music. I sing along sometimes, but the exercise makes me focus on how slow time seems to pass as I am on the device. Hochstetler (2013, 71) talks about how people on treadmills notice paintings on the wall or other people. He criticizes the act of running in place on the treadmill as less reflective. The outdoors "provide substantially more inroads to the phenomenological act of experience . . ." I notice that running on the treadmill is something that has to be done to get my running fix, but the experience is not as exhilarating as running outside. The boredom that stems from running on the treadmill is rooted in the fact that movement and vision are very limited (Hochstetler 2013, 75). Similarly, the predictability of the run reemphasizes the monotonousness of life. Runners distract themselves from this monotony through reading books, listening to music, or watching shows. Thoreau's commentary about early American culture brings forth the issue of distracting one's self through leisure activities. One tries to disassociate one's self from the experience at hand (Hochstetler 2013, 71).

*Run for Your Life*. There have been a lot of existential writings about living life to the fullest. From the ubermensch to Dasein, philosophers stress the importance of individuality and authenticity. This entails going after what makes life worth living, sometimes even to the point of hedonism. What baffles me is that very little has been said about making sure one has a healthy life in order to live life to the fullest. A sport like running offers meaning in connection to one's health. Humans engage in running to beat their personal best (time) or simply for health and well-being (Elcombe 2013, 89). Finnish athlete Ari Paunonen identified people's purposes for running in various stages of life. Children particularly run for play. The youth run for competition, the desire to achieve, and/or having a way of life or some sort of "spirituality.". Adults run for the same reasons as the youth but with specific emphasis on well-being, fitness and health (Koski 2015, 4-5).

Joslin (2003) takes it a kilometer further and claims that running is not only a form of exercise, but also a form of prayer. Running is traveling on a spiritual path. He describes the breathing, rhythm and cadence, and the peak of awareness involved in running which are similar to the elements of meditation. (8-9) Zen Buddhism's principles invite the runner to "run in the moment, to feel acutely aware. . ." (Shapiro 2009, 4). Zen runner Shapiro writes that runners' challenges are mental instead of physical. He enumerates motivational problems, time management, mindset, fulfilment, etc. These challenges can be addressed by practicing mindfulness and setting one's self free from certain attachments (such as a preferred running path or ideas about running). (Shapiro 2009, 11-12)

*Run Like a Girl*. Besides trying hard to run away from certain attachments, I also try to run away from the rigid box of society, according to which women cannot and should not engage in physical activities. As a matter of fact, in 2015, more women than men ran the half-marathon, 10K and 5K all over the world (Faulkner 2018, 4). Advertisements for races have even shifted their messages in order to target female audiences. In the United States, there are Disney Princess and Tinker Bell half-marathons. In the Philippines, there was a Hello Kitty Run (2017) and a My Little Pony Friendship Run (2018) with the pink and pastel colors as the tone for all collaterals. The Pink Run (2017) which seeks to increase awareness of breast cancer, includes free breast medical examinations on race

day. During women's month, the Women's Stride (2018) was held, a virtual race that only women could join.

Faulkner discusses how the stories of running women, feminism, identities, and every day running intersects. Women go against stereotypical discourses of the feminine and the physically-active. She concludes women's running experiences is feminist embodiment. (Faulkner 2018, 9-11). Meanwhile, Samuels (2011, 25) zeroes in on how running makes women feel. Running women are strong, capable, powerful, and sexy. Even if women are wearing skirts while running (or wearing any type of clothing, for that matter), they are serious runners. To "run like a girl" is to be a strong woman. A common theme of feminist perspectives in sport tends to focus on the woman's body and the embodiment of femininity. Critical work analyzes the experience of "women who take part in sports that have been traditionally defined as men's sports" (Scraton and Flintoff 2013, 102).

## Aching Achilles: Sarza's Phenomenological Narrative on Running

*Logic and Loathing*. I *hate* running. Under an unforgiving sun, I sweat buckets. My armpits, inner thighs, nape, and even my legs perspire enough to quench any hobo's thirst whom I just pass by. "Give up and walk instead. You do not have to do this," my right and left lungs cry in unison. If they could beg on their knees, I know they would do it. My calves, varicose veins, feet, and shins are not cooperative either. In fact, they seem to form an alliance with my stomach: "Pancake House is just around the corner," I hear them protest. As far as my physical activities are concerned, I have been swimming, riding my trusty bike, and running on a regular basis. Truth be told, I accomplished my dissertation while teaching full-time, *and* still managed to keep my sanity thanks to what I call the "holy trinity" of walking, biking, and running. However, among the three, I have the utmost dislike for running. Is it because of the degrading concoction of humidity and sweat? Maybe I am not "born" to run? Or am I doing something wrong?

Given my frustration and professed loathing, my actions seem to be logically irreconcilable with my feelings about running. First, since I started my 3

KM late last year, I have been training twice a week: Weekdays, weekends, after my classes, or even before I start my day. I make sure that I run at least 10 KM a week. Second, I am not a morning person, a fact about which I have waved the white flag years ago. I do not dislike mornings. In fact, my aspiration previously was to witness the sunrise, a metaphor for hope, energy, and renewed self. However, in my 7:30 AM classes, I am a zombie devoid of any consciousness, self-awareness, or any of the lofty words I mentioned in the previous sentence. Yet today, I woke up at exactly 4:00 AM. On the dot. I did my stretching and despite the oppressive Manila air and summer humidity, I completed my 6 KM. I am an advocate and sometimes fixated with KonMari[2] for months now, but buying good pairs of running shoes entices me. Online shopping discounts on anything related to marathons continue to lure me. On my birthday, I gifted myself with a new pair of long-distance running shoes *and* an electric foot soak machine. Some say it is an obsession; I say it is an "investment that *sparks joy*." Also, I have been frequenting what they call a "fun run," which is a half-truth. Every month.

*Why do I do all of these?* Honestly, running is not something I find instantaneously pleasurable or easy. There are times when I hit 16 on my personal Borg Scale[3] and my heart seems to explode. Consequently, I would suffer from migraine because of overexertion. Despite this bundle of physical pain, I *always* look forward to my training. *What does this mean?* Judging from my cadence, pacing, and overall performance, I may be considered a mediocre runner. On a dreadful day, I am even worse. I am completely aware of it, yet I still run. *What is the value of this?* At first, I had intended to run for health reasons. However, after merely three weeks of dedicated training, I had shingles. "You have herpes," is my physician's flat diagnosis. Endurance training, especially

[2] The KonMari Method was invented by Marie Kondo, the celebrated author who champions organizing homes and eventually, lives. In *The life-changing magic of tidying up: The Japanese art of decluttering and organizing* (2011), she advises readers to keep only material possessions that "spark joy" or *tokimeko* (flutter, palpitate), in order to avoid hoarding and mess.

[3] As explained by Tanaka (2016, 42), the Gunnar Borg rating of perceived exertion (RPE) scale measures a patient's perceived perception during exercise or training. This quantitative measurement is introduced by Gunnar Borg. It ranges from 6 (no exertion) to 20 (maximum exertion).

amidst the embrace of the Manila smog, weakens the body's immunity to sickness and viruses. Defeated and frustrated, I complied with her medical instructions. This included a weeklong complete bedrest *without* any strenuous activities. As I lay on my bed, I Google searched the following: "how to run with shingles" and "can I run with shingles." On 10 February 2018, exactly seven days after my diagnosis, I ran my first 5 KM. I finished it with shingles, dysmenorrhea, and migraine.

Greece is the birthplace of many things. Among them are Western philosophy and the marathon. According to myth, Pheidippides, the first marathoner, was tasked to deliver the good news to the Athenians: Greece had defeated the Persians and so finally the war was over. Tragically, after running a total of 25 miles from Marathon to the Acropolis and then announcing the message, Pheidippides dropped dead. On the other hand, the famed Socratic dictum mentions, "An unexamined life is not worth living." It would have been comforting to know that, before dying of exhaustion, Pheidippides had been able to contemplate on his life, particularly the meaning of running and his underlying reason for doing it (apart from it being a sacred duty).

In this paper, I contemplate on my life choices, specifically my affair with running, before another bike runs me over. As I chase its value and meaning, I reflect on both Western and Eastern philosophies to make sense of my journey. One can say that my existential questions about running resonate with those of Leo Tolstoy's. However, when Tolstoy encountered such a crisis, he was already considered to be Russia's living saint, addressed as a "count," respected as a famous author and philosopher, and was the father of thirteen children with his loving wife. Still, in *A Confession*, he repeatedly asks, "What is the meaning of my life?" Amidst his wealth of experience and public admiration, he finds himself seriously and dangerously entangled with this existential crisis.

In my case, it is the other way around; apart from my three medals (3 KM and 5 KM), I do not have any running accolades. If anything, this physical activity has resulted in torn ligaments, bruises, injuries, headaches, etc. I have a dearth of experience, most of which is heavily laced with sweat and pain, yet paradoxically I still pursue the activity like a madwoman. This baffles me and at the same time fuels me to pursue this phenomenological investigation of running.

*From Nike to ASICS: The Value and Stages of Running*. "Do you hate running?" asks the old Japanese old man in a YouTube video I am watching. (My

answer is a resounding "yes.") Then he proceeds to explain that I do not need to suffer while running. In fact, I can do it with a smile. As it turns out, this man happens to be Dr. Hiroaki Tanaka of Fukuoka University. Advocating the *niko niko* (literally "smile" in Japanese) pace or the slow jogging technique, he finished a marathon at exactly 2 hours and 38 minutes at age 50. After reading his book, I tried this pace the next morning with a constant reminder to myself to slow down and take it easy. Coming from the Western idea of "no pain, no gain," it is difficult at first. But when the caffeine from my morning coffee mixed with the endocannabinoids due to the *niko niko* pace, the effect was glorious. I was literally smiling *while* running. Then a bicycle without any breaks hit me from behind, sending me on all fours into a putrid canal. I was injured, and I seriously stank. The only logical thing to do was *to go home running*.

Why do I run? As I mentioned earlier, I initially thought that I should run for health reasons. However, acquiring shingles and tendonitis is indirectly proportional to being healthy. As I gain muscles, I do not lose weight. Yet, I still do it. As a philosophy philosopher at the University of Miami and a self-confessed dedicated runner, Mark Rowlands (2013) wrote *Running with the Pack: Thoughts from the Road on Meaning and Mortality*. He mentions that people would run for various reasons: health, camaraderie, enjoyment, stress-reliever, happiness. The list goes on and would even include competitiveness, for most find it very challenging. Rowlands (2013, xi) claims that such reasons are utilitarian and at best instrumental; the significance of running, individual or evolutionary (hunting, gathering, and competing for food), is heavily anchored on its *function* or when it is seen as means to an end. Although he admits that running indeed has instrumental value, he strongly claims that this should not be judged as its *sole* and/or the ultimate value. In describing our era's *Gestell* or "enframing," he quotes Heidegger (1954) in his essay, "The Question Concerning Technology":

> The characteristic of the modern age is a *Gestell* of a singularly instrumental or utilitarian form. In the *Gestell* of the modern world, everything is reduced to a resource of some or other sort. We encounter and understand things only in terms of their use—broadly speaking, in terms of what they might do for us, whether for good or ill—and we fail to even understand that there might be anything else of value to them.

Viewing running through an instrumental *Gestell* is misguided, "an error that is perhaps great enough to be considered a monstrous historical lie" (Rowlands 2013 3-4). Instead, the value of running is something that is "intrinsic" or "inherent." As opposed to utilitarian, this intrinsic value of running means that a person does it for its own sake and not because of anything that she will hopefully achieve after running. This dispels my initial goal of running (for health reasons) and demystifies the puzzle of doing it even if I am not achieving my supposed objective. To run contrary to its function, consequences, or expected outcome drives the self to just do it because running is valuable on its own.

Interestingly, Rowlands (2013, par. 3-6) highlights three phases of running: (1) Cartesian, (2) Humean, and (3) Sartrean. Cartesian dualism views the human person as a bundle of two separate objects: the mind and the body. In Descartes' version of the mind-body problem, bodies are considered not just physical entities but also machines that are governed with their own laws, *except* when there are minds that are supposed to override their control. Here, minds influence bodies by "pulling the levers" in a machine that can operate on its own (Descartes 2017, 6). To say that my body and mind are two separate entities during my first ten to twenty minutes of running, is an understatement. Whenever my mind tells my shins, "Do not kick!", that is the moment when my shins revolt and start kicking instead of landing on the forefoot. Sometimes my mind is a bit encouraging. "Actually, you can go more than 5 KM today," it says. But my right thigh argues against the left, "Stay away from me! I am chafing here!" My mind likes to oversee everything and so it gets frustrated when the calves do not listen. When this happens, it starts to negotiate: "Finish this extra mile then we can walk, deal?" Whenever I encounter this phase, it is the moment the mind lets the existential question sink in: Why am I doing this?

The second phase is an allusion to David Hume's take on personal identity, that there is no "self":

> For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. (*Treatise*, 1.4.6.3)

As persons, what we consider to be as "self" or an entity that is permanent or unchanging through time and space is merely a collection of thoughts, emotions, etc. Yes, this bundle of perceptions exists but the subject that possesses it is merely an illusion. As Rowlands (2013, 74) experience the Humean phase, the "self" is dissolved and no longer recognizable for it is already in a state of "introspection:"

> No longer the duplicitous master, what remains of the self is simply the dancing of thoughts in the empty blue sky where I took my mind to be. My mind is simply the transient configurations it adopts. The self is the dance—there is no dancer over and above the dance.

He adds that this "Humean self of dancing thoughts" is the effect of two things: "tiredness and rhythm." When runners experience fatigue and then maintain their rhythm, this Humean phase kicks in. Although I can relate to Rowlands' experience during this phase, I will not call mine Humean. Rather, I am comfortable with the term "yoga phase." In Sanskrit, "yoga" literally means "listen" and sometimes "unite." Both Humean and Buddhist accounts of personal identity negate the existence of an enduring "self," but it is the latter that posits meditation as a way to achieve this truth. Transitioning from the Cartesian phase when the mind is clearly distinct and disjointed from the body, this yoga phase is the stage when my legs stride with a rhythm conducted by mind. In this stage, it seems as if Kihachiro Onitsuka's prayer of a sound mind in a sound body (*Anima Sana in Corpore Sano* or ASICS) has been realized. Amidst weariness, my heart does not protest anymore. My lungs no longer explode for I just unconsciously discovered proper breathing, through my nostrils and diaphragm. Yes, just as Rowland describes, the body suffers yet does not complain anymore. The mind stops being overbearing and begins to compromise. However, my experience is closer to meditation: the mind learns to listen to the body and the body unites with the mind, finally.

The Sartrean phase happens when runners experience anguish upon realizing that they are free. From the Humean stage when the "self" is dissolved, one recognizes she is indeed exhausted, weary, and even dehydrated. These are all valid reasons to stop and rest. In the Sartrean phase, no matter how reasonable and powerful these reasons are, they do not have any authority over her. Yes, she might already have a torn muscle. But no, she will not stop. She is

free. This freedom for me translates as a form of rebellion; it is freedom from rigid gender roles and my biological and physiological limitations. In my case, this explanation is not just Sartrean, but existential in general. Every second I spend running spells a certain kind of metaphor: I jump out of this box that society and my congenital physiological conditions have already put me in without my consent. *Women cannot and should not engage in physical activities. If you must, do not run like a girl. Do not do it alone. Do not wear shorts.* Except for my glaucoma doctor, my rehabilitation physician, physical therapist, and allergologist all advised me against running. Because I am such a bad patient, I did the complete opposite. As I tie my shoelaces to start training, I tell myself that it is time to embrace the absurdity—I have not chosen to be born in this world where I suffer from different congenital defects, yet I am to face this facticity for the rest of my life. However, as Sartrean consciousness explains, I am what I am *not*. Yes, I am a middle-aged woman who has had two major surgeries in one year, an unstable spinal cord and bad posture, hypersensitivity to almost anything, and suspected glaucoma. For Sartre, "I am defined by not being what is true of me. I am not defined by not being what is false of me" (Rowlands 2013, 174). From the Cartesian phase to the last stage, I embrace this Sisyphean boulder and rebel against the absurdity of my existence. Dry wind slaps my sweaty face, my hamstrings tighten, my tendonitis flare up. Physical pain exacerbates all my facticities and all are enough reasons for me to stop. But I cannot. I should not. Why? Because as I run, I run away from all of these. They incarcerate me. Running liberates me. As I charge away from it all, I run towards self-discovery, realization, and fulfillment.

Pheidippides's main task is to be the messenger to the Athenians. Before meeting his death, he made sure that his people would hear him: "*Nike! Nike! Nenikekiam!*" (Victory! Victory! Rejoice, we conquer!) (Karnazes 2016, par. 1). Unlike most of us who run, he had as his main task not to be healthy or to achieve that "runner's high." Rather, he served as the conduit of truth. He can be likened to the freed prisoner of Plato's allegory of the cave. Emancipated and filled with joy, he returns to the rest of the prisoners to deliver the good news. Both Pheidippides and this person know, prior to their decision to do it, that the task is daunting and risky; yet they still pursue it. Their message clearly resonates with me. Significantly, Rowlands (2013, 5) writes that "Running [...] is a way of understanding what is important or valuable in life." This I find not only significant

but also self-reflexive. To understand why I live, I must run—and to understand why I run, I must live.

## Conclusion: The Finish Line

Others see running as competitive and so running for them means they should be the fastest among the rest. These are the people who attempt to win the race by being the first at the finish line. Then there are some who run to find truth as they grasp the finish line tape, whether they stand on the placers' platform or not. Although this paper presents two separate phenomenological accounts from different individuals, both conclude that running can be a "path to self-discovery, a part of our pursuit of happiness, [which] provides a time of solitude within which we are able to reflect on our lives and some bigger questions in life" (Austin 2007, xii). Running coincides with philosophy as both "help us to learn something about ourselves, what is really valuable in life, and perhaps even something about the nature of reality itself" (Austin 2007, xii).

This paper's starting line was the journey toward the value and the lived bodily experience of running—why people run, because and in spite of various factors. The authors hoped to arrive at the *rendezvous* or in this case, "*rundezvous*" of philosophy and running. How have the authors defined their philosophy of running as *runners-in-the-world*? Thousands of people join races every day and every year. They endure painful injuries and challenge their bodies to cross finish lines. Whether a purely cognitive thinker or an elite athlete, runners, when engaged in running, benefit from their various experiences. Biana and Sarza, through their phenomenological analyses, assert that the meaning of running comes from the joy, detachment, mindfulness, freedom, liberation, health and well-being it brings. Through the runner's high, the runner transcends her limits and detaches from her worldly body metaphorically. She is pushed to go beyond her weaknesses, thus affirming her life. This affects her health and well-being, as both the mind and body collude to dissolve their distinctions—thereby making running a reflective, transcendent, and/or spiritual practice. As a rebellion against one's bodily limitations and against society's gender stereotypes, running becomes a form of liberation. *Runners-in-the-world* run toward the *rundezvous*, to win physically, mentally and spiritually as they run the world.

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