

HYPATIA VIRTUAL ISSUE: EMBODIMENT

Edited by Linda Martín-Alcoff

Introduction

Embodiment has been a central theme in feminist philosophy from its early days. Our recent Special Issue on *The Ethics of Embodiment*, edited by Debra Bergoffen and Gail Weiss (26:3, Summer 2011), generated such interest that it resulted in two subsequent thematic clusters: “Contesting the Norms of Embodiment” edited by Bergoffen and Weiss (27.2, Spring 2012), and a second ‘found cluster’ assembled by the *Hypatia* editors, “Further Essays on Embodiment” (28.1, Winter 2013) in conjunction with which we are publishing this Virtual Issue. The essays selected here illuminate how the topic of embodiment in general has been broached over the years by *Hypatia* authors, how it has developed, and what topics have received the most focus. *Hypatia* has been the site of some of the most innovative feminist theorizing on this subject, from the groundbreaking early work of Luce Irigaray and Ann Ferguson to the innovative developments of Kelly Oliver, Lois McNay, Margaret Whitford, and Alison Stone, just to name a few.

There are many ways to define what embodiment has meant in feminist philosophy, and this collection showcases the expanse of issues that the concept of embodiment has engendered. In general, embodiment has signaled the idea that there is a constitutive relationship of the lived body to thought, to knowledge, and to ethics, taking leave of the modern idea that bodies can be left behind as the mind does its work. Such dualism was rarely allowed women, after all. But, beyond thinking our way past dualism, feminist philosophers have also sought new ways to conceptualize the materiality of bodies, the discursive nature of embodied experience, and the contested figure of the maternal body. Within feminist theory itself there has occurred a lively debate over dualism, naturalism, essentialism, and gender normativity in relationship to embodiment.

In the following Virtual Issue, readers can find essays covering many of these topics. The first section, “Historical Resources,” showcases the fact that women from ancient to early modern times engaged with issues of embodiment. Both Hipparchia and Elisabeth of Bohemia addressed issues of the body in relation to reason. The signal feature associated with female embodiment has always been maternity, eliciting various worries among feminists but also creating opportunities for new thinking about gender norms and bodies in general, as section two reveals. Feminists have of course been particularly concerned about the danger of essentialism, but have addressed this danger with wide variance, as section three reveals. And feminist philosophers have debated with some vigor the philosophical resources and/or dangers of certain key theorists, such as Irigaray and Foucault, represented here in sections four and five.

These papers by no means exhaust the resources that the *Hypatia* archive has to offer scholars interested in questions related to embodiment. In addition to the rich body of work that has appeared since 2011, in the Special Issue on *Ethics of Embodiment* and the two subsequent clusters on embodiment, *Hypatia* published a special issue on “Feminism and the Body” in 1991, guest-edited by Elizabeth Grosz (6:3). The fifteen essays included in this virtual issue represent only a small part of what *Hypatia* has published over its nearly three decades. We hope, nonetheless, to provide a taste of the range and development of the work by feminist philosophers on embodiment.

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I. Historical Resources

1. “Hipparchia the Cynic: Feminist Rhetoric and the Ethics of Embodiment”
Kristen Kennedy
1999 Volume 14 No. 2
pp. 48-71
2. “Princess Elisabeth and the Problem of Mind-Body Interaction”
Deborah Tollefsen
1999 Volume 14 No. 3
pp. 59-77

II. The Question of the Maternal

3. “Motherhood and Sexuality: Some Feminist Questions”
Ann Ferguson
1986 Volume 1 No. 2
pp. 3-22
4. “Adoption, ART, and a Reconception of the Maternal Body: Toward Embodied Maternity”
Sarah-Vaughan Brakman and Sally J. Scholz
2006 Volume 21 No. 1
pp. 54-73
5. “Conflicted Love”
Kelly Oliver
2000 Volume 15 No. 3
pp. 1-18

III. The Question of Essentialism

6. “Corporeal Habits: Addressing Essentialism Differently”
Vicki Kirby
1991 Volume 6 No. 3
pp. 4-24
7. “From Radical Representations to Corporeal Becomings: The Feminist Philosophy of Lloyd, Grosz, and Gatens”

Claire Colebrook
2000 Volume 15 No. 2
pp. 76-93

8. Embodied Gender Norms
“(Re)fusing the Amputated Body: An Interactionist Bridge for Feminism and Disability”
Alexa Schriempf
2001 Volume 16 No. 4
pp. 53-79

9. “*Corpus Meum*: Disintegrating Bodies and the Ideal of Integrity”
Diane Perpich
2005 Volume 20 No. 3
pp. 75-91

IV. The Contributions of Luce Irigaray

10. “Is the Subject of Science Sexed?”
Luce Irigaray
1987 Volume 2 No. 3
pp. 65-87

11. “Irigaray’s Body Symbolic”
Margaret Whitford
1991 Volume 6 No. 3
pp. 97-110

12. “The Sex of Nature: A Reinterpretation of Irigaray’s Metaphysics and Political Thought”
Alison Stone
2003 Volume 18, No. 3
pp. 60-84

V. The Debate over Foucault

13. “The Foucauldian Body and the Exclusion of Experience”
Lois McNay
1991 Volume 6 No. 3
pp. 125-139

14. “Foucault, Rape and the Construction of the Feminine Body”
Ann J. Cahill
2000 Volume 15 No. 1
pp. 43-63

15. “Anarchic Bodies: Foucault and the Feminist Question of Experience”
Johanna Oksala
2004 Volume 19 No. 4
pp. 99-121