

Proposal for a Hypatia Special Issue: *Ethics of Embodiment*

Editors: Debra Bergoffen and Gail Weiss

I. Narrative

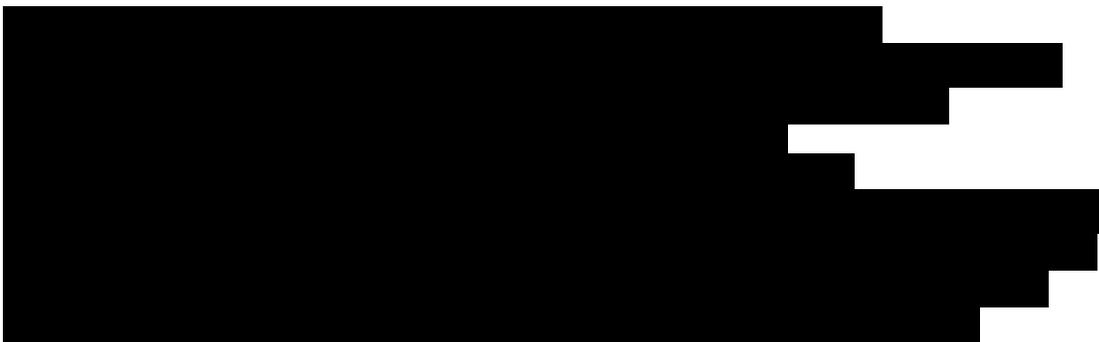
Over the years, feminist philosophers and theorists have provided us with a multi-faceted analysis of what it means to embody (or to fail to embody) a given gender, race, and social class. They have examined the price people and groups have paid when their bodies are seen as transgressing social norms. They have detailed the ways in which people have been oppressed for their bodily differences including differences in comportment, styles of dress, and ways of speaking.

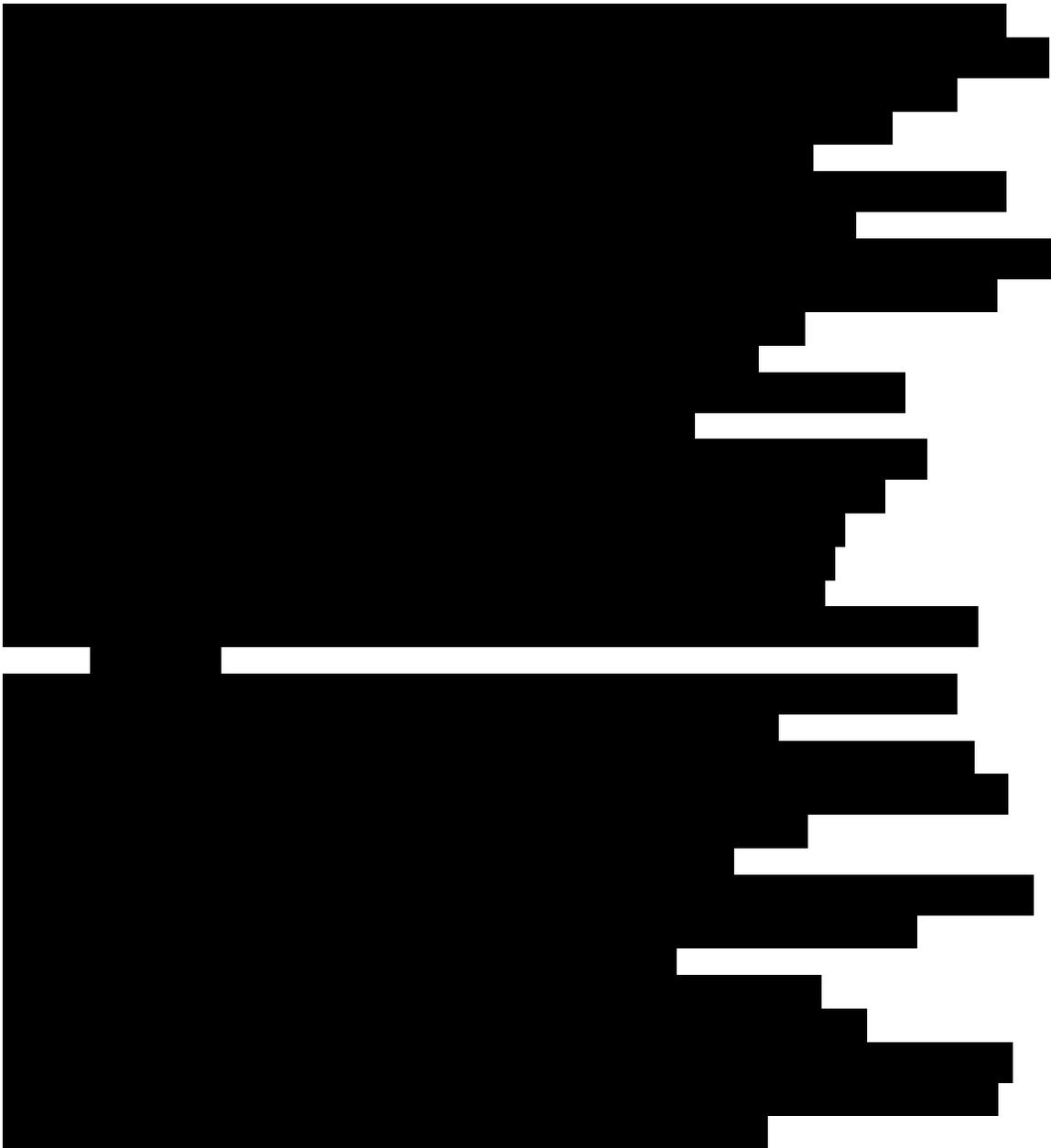
Despite the centrality of the body in discussions of gender, race, class, religion, ethnicity, and ability and their respective intersections, the implications of feminist analyses of the body as a ground for ethical theorizing, as the subject of ethical demands, and as the very means by which these demands are articulated, is yet to be the subject of a volume or journal issue. We seek to remedy this important gap by bringing together the writings of both well-established and up-and-coming feminist philosophers/theorists who are doing some of the most exciting work in embodied ethics today.

This Hypatia Special Issue will bring together a variety of feminist ethical approaches to embodiment to reveal the ongoing contributions embodied perspectives make to ethical theorizing about human and non-human bodies. The essays in this volume will reveal how ethics is always concretely embodied in ways which affect and transform us and the world that we inhabit. We are especially interested in showcasing the diversity of ethical approaches to embodiment that have arisen out of the ethics of care, existentialist ethics, virtue ethics, discourse ethics, environmental ethics, transgender and transsexual studies, and disability studies, as well as the deontological and consequentialist traditions. A major goal of this Special Issue is to reveal how feminists have drawn from many different philosophical and critical traditions to uncover the ethical implications of both human and nonhuman embodied experience.

Note: the names of prospective contributors and reviewers have been redacted for reasons of confidentiality.

II. List of Feminist Philosophers and theorists who could be potential contributors or reviewers for this Special Issue:





III. Draft of the Call for Papers:

This special issue examines the intersection of ethics and embodiment. It draws on the diverse ethical traditions that have sometimes neglected the centrality of the body to create a new conversation that will enrich our understanding of the ways in which the body is always implicated in our ethical theories. It looks to these diverse traditions to understand the influence of our ethical theories on how bodies are valued and lived. We invite papers that create new paradigms of embodiment that can productively inform contemporary philosophical theorizing about ethics. We are especially interested in work that proposes new approaches to medical practices and/or social justice policies that harm those who are seen as violating accepted bodily norms.

Questions authors may want to consider include:

How does bodily vulnerability inform ethical demands?

How might an emphasis upon the primacy of embodied experience transform traditional, cognitive-based, ethical theorizing?

Does a focus on embodiment allow for new ways of bringing together ethical theories and practices?

What ethical traditions are most (and least) helpful in developing an ethics of embodiment?

Should an ethics of embodiment be understood as a theoretically independent field or can it be better understood as falling within one or more existing ethical frameworks?

How might considerations of nonhuman forms of embodiment affect ethical understandings of human embodiment (and vice versa)?

What current bodily practices are challenged by an ethics of embodiment?

How might an ethics of embodiment help to alleviate the oppression of people whose bodies have been socially, politically, medically, and/or legally denigrated?

Does an ethics of embodiment offer new ways of thinking about space, time, and/or intersubjectivity?

Preliminary List of Places the CFP Would be Published:

Listservs:

SWIP
FEAST
(further suggestions are welcome!)

Websites:

SPEP
Merleau-Ponty Circle
North American Sartre Society

Newsletters:

Beauvoir Society

Conference programs:

International Association for Philosophy and Literature

The CFP will also be emailed to each of the potential contributors/reviewers listed above with a personal invitation to submit an essay for review for the Special Issue.

IV. Curriculum Vitae (for Gail and for Debra) Please see separate attachments

Our qualifications for, and interest in, editing this special issue:

Both of us (Gail and Debra) have focused on issues related to embodiment throughout our philosophical careers and are well-known for our respective work in this area. Monographs, edited volumes, and articles we have published present the body (including our bodily exchanges with other bodies) as the ground of ethical obligation. While there are several differences in our approaches to embodiment, especially in terms of the specific topics we address, both of us work out of the phenomenological and existential tradition and bring the latter into conversation with the concerns of contemporary feminist, critical race, human rights, queer, and disability theorists. More generally, we are both advocates for as well as practitioners of an interdisciplinary approach to embodiment, and our work has also been informed by contemporary bioethics, psychoanalytic theory, and contemporary interdisciplinary scholarship in cultural, critical, and performance studies. Further, because we are interested in encouraging a conversation that cuts across the various philosophical traditions, we will actively solicit submissions from traditions other than the ones used in our work.

As well-established scholars, we believe we will have no trouble enticing potential contributors to the volume. Indeed, a concern we have is how to accommodate the large number of first-rate papers we anticipate will come once the CFP is published and once specific people are invited to contribute an essay for review. Although this may be premature, we are wondering if it would be possible to make this a two-part series if (and only if) we ended up with two issues worth of fabulous articles.

Editing this Special Issue on Ethics of Embodiment seems like a natural step for us. We have taught in the same area since 1991 (Debra at George Mason University, Gail at The George Washington University) and are not only local colleagues but also good friends. We participated for many years in an interdisciplinary research seminar on the Body with other faculty from the Washington D.C. Consortium of Universities, and are now in a writing workshop together with three other continental feminist theorists from American University, Towson University, and George Mason University. We are both known as dependable and responsible, and we have great relationships with the publishers we have worked with in the past. We will meet all Hypatia deadlines and will be in regular touch as we work on this volume.

Both of us look forward to collaborating on this volume. Not only will we turn out a terrific Hypatia Special Issue but we will also have a lot of fun doing it together! We look forward to hearing from you and moving forward on this project.