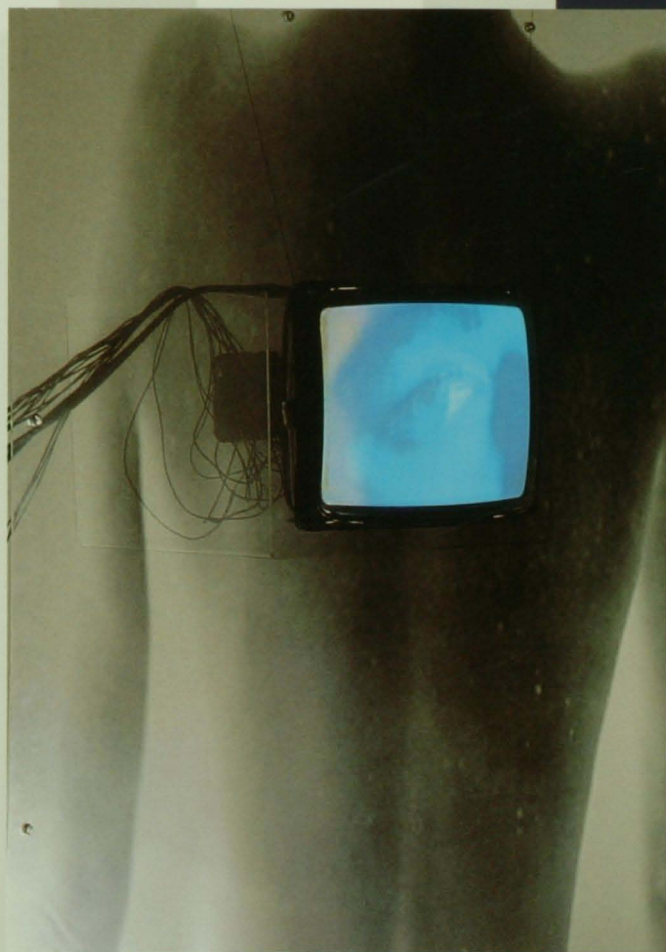


the **Body** and **Psychology**



Edited by
Henderikus J. Stam

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The Body and Psychology

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Part I
INTRODUCTION

1

**The Body's Psychology and
Psychology's Body**
Disciplinary and Extra-disciplinary Examinations

Henderikus J. Stam

This volume is an invitation to reconstrue psychology as a discipline of bodies. It is an invitation to conceptualize cognition and behavior, perception and development, attitudes and traits as the mere surface or transient manifestations of the body; as the inscriptions, productions, reproductions and other features of the body and embodiment that are commonly taken for the content of the psychologically real subject/object, packaged into disciplinary and sub-disciplinary units to be consumed by students and clients of psychology. The history of this discipline is an object lesson in what can be done when all of the many manifestations of the human body are figured along functional, mechanical, systemic or technological lines.

Psychology's Body

*It is necessary to begin with a definition.
Behavior is only part of the total activity of an organism,
and some formal delimitation is called for.*

(B F. Skinner, 1938, p. 6)

Of the two great metaphors that have organized research in the discipline of psychology in the twentieth-century, that of *organism* dominated the period in the first half of this century. Organisms are just organized bodies, "consisting of mutually connected and dependent parts constituted to share a common life" (*OED*). That very organization, however, leaves them capable of description in terms of stimulus and response, reflex and energy. As Danziger (1997) has noted, the adoption of an organismic language had its

roots in nineteenth-century physiology and allowed the language of physiology to move smoothly into the psychological domain. The net effect of this move however was to make the *body*, not the mind, the central concern of the nascent discipline. For had Skinner written, in 1938, a work called *The behavior of organized bodies: An experimental analysis* it would have required little change in conception. At the same time this body was not the same as the body conceptualized by the physiologists. Indeed it became a quasi-physiological entity, interchangeably human and animal, neither the body of any particular species nor a generalized mammalian body. Instead this body was abstract, precisely so that the attributes of stimulus and response, reflex and habit, drive and behavior could form a universal psychological language.

This body was also a mechanized body, but not mechanical. For psychologists in the early twentieth-century, it was a requirement that subjectivity be made precise, that it be measurable. Thus, as the behaviorists worried about the external problems of the body, researchers in sensation and perception concerned themselves with the need to quantify and hence eliminate the uncertainty associated with sensing and movement. Once quantified precisely, subjectivity was indeed eliminated, reduced to manageable measurements. Subjectivity was replaced by the quantifiable body that was, at the same time, a machine (Deleul, 1992; Stam, Lubek & Radtke, 1998). It came to incorporate the mechanical ethos of the twentieth-century in an organic form that was both organic *and* mechanical, or rather represented the mechanization of the organic.

What the fascination with normative, data-driven, statistical knowledge hid was the need to find the secrets of the body while regulating subjectivity. Thus G. Stanley Hall's Child Study Movement formed a foundation for determining the rate and progress of childrens' mental and physical growth. Alfred Kinsey made the sexualized body normal, if only by counting the variety of sexual acts and their frequency of occurrence. Mental tests quantified the very contents of mind, if not intelligence. What such movements gradually produced was a belief that the mind, for all its complexity, could be understood as a range of quantifiable events, a limited scale of possibilities. The body, on the other hand, came to occupy the place of the vehicle of this quantified mind. It too had its capacities and limitations, but these could be known normatively, even in the case of the preverbal infant - as Arnold Gesell showed. Bodies were no longer the source of consciousness and feeling so much as the casement for its expression. Indeed, the body was given in a pre-fabricated fashion. Consciousness and feeling however were the province of a science that sought out the range of its possibilities in its quantifications.

The body so delimited was not necessary to the further development of the discipline despite its organicist metaphor. If anything, psychology never took the problem of the organism seriously, misconstruing it as a species of

mechanism instead of a version that saw organic structure as fundamentally different from mechanical structure (see McDonough, 1997). Had psychology developed a notion of emergent organic structures seriously it might have avoided a sterile behaviorism altogether.

By mid-century however the abstract organism and its body failed to satisfy the burgeoning profession and the abandonment of the organic metaphor was inevitable. This was not so much the outcome of a dissatisfaction with the metaphor but instead followed from the requirement that psychology address the concerns of a modern society, first one at war and subsequently one in rapid post-war development simultaneously preoccupied with a new, Cold War to consume the energies of science and technology. It was to be the new technological sciences and the engineering fields that would provide psychology with its second great metaphor in the twentieth-century, that of *system*.

From Organism to System

... the input/output behavior of the hypothesized primitive operations of the cognitive architecture must not itself depend on goals and beliefs ... it must be what I refer to as cognitively impenetrable.
(Zenon Pylyshyn, 1989, p. 81.)

The metaphor of system was closely allied to what passes through systems, namely information. In the developments of industrialized nations, information and its movement had already become a preoccupation of the corporate world. With the development of corporate structures, information had to flow both vertically and horizontally. It was the appearance of cybernetics and complex machines capable of self-regulation that supported the extension of the metaphor of system, originally a biological term, to all manner of machine, as well as to corporate structures themselves. Systems carried information in visible ways in technology (e.g., radar detectors, heart monitors). The corporate problem of information flow was manifest in mechanism, and it required no more than a small step to incarnate itself in the psychology of human information processing. Suddenly we were all carriers of information.

Notwithstanding the dubious nature of the term, what kind of body was to carry this *information*? It was to be a model, predicted Kenneth Craik in 1943, that included any "physical or chemical system which has a similar relation-structure to that of the processes it imitates" (p. 51). This relation-structure should mirror the processes it parallels, argued Craik long before the advent of the digital computer. Although the language of people as "intermittent correction servomechanisms" no longer informs, it does reference the beginning of a move to the adoption of a language of system, an organization of units that is open and capable of forming part of larger

systems. Cybernetics, the science of control, has so come to dominate thinking about bodies that the mechanical organism no longer requires a biological reference point except in those cases where explicit acknowledgment needs to be made to the limits of feedback devices.

The body in cognitive science has evolved into the sexless hull of the robomind, the complex machinery of information systems brought to its highest level of abstraction in the human facsimile. Despite this, it controls a body that, outside the rarefied sphere of cognitive science, is the object of bitter conflicts over gender, race, reproductive rights, health care, genetic modification and mapping, and is the crucible of new and more deadly epidemic diseases. Yet within the cognitive sciences it rarely rates more than secondary notice, having already been relegated to the mechanical realm or the problem of architecture. Even when cognitive scientists address the problem of the body, they can do no more than point to the fact that it is missing altogether from the transcendental fixtures of cognition that tie meaning to the relations between words and the world. When the body does secure a place in cognition, the presented alternative is often no more than an escape to mysticism (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1991). Whether concerned with the symbolic architectures of computational mechanisms or the so-called "brain-style" computation of connectionist systems, the body remains almost entirely the subject of the special sciences of biology and neurology.

While psychology continues its Cartesian dream, the body is finding a new place in the lexicon elsewhere in the academy, where it had previously been limited to an object of scientific investigation. Now it is a vehicle for social theory, a mainstay of cultural studies, a permanent fixture in gender studies and queer theory, and a host of other locations previously enamored only of the linguistic and representational problems of modernity. Gradually, more traditional disciplines have risen to the challenge of studies that claim a space for a political, gendered, social and racial body by encouraging and sometimes appropriating body topics that insist that bodies are more than mere vehicles. In its first moment, then, body talk crosses disciplinary lines; it is not interdisciplinary so much as it is *trans*disciplinary. Bodies resist boundary maintenance.

Yet disciplines exert a strong pull. Psychology's functionalized, physiological body remains the backdrop of the discipline. To approach the body as the object of disciplinary practices, as the inscribed carrier of social life, as the phenomenological origin of psychological life itself, requires that we bracket, if not undermine, that original conception of the body as a collection of sophisticated drips and squirts. More than this, body talk undermines the notion of disciplinary boundaries altogether. At the same time, disciplines move quickly to withstand the challenger as the body becomes another topic domesticated for slow and careful excision and

consumption within the confines of the investigative and rhetorical practices which define the field.

The Body's Psychology

*What is at stake in the struggle for control of the body, in short,
is control of the social relations of personal production.*

(T. Turner, 1994)

As body topics challenge psychology to rethink and reconceptualize its subject matter, psychology is in turn capable of challenging certain contested notions in the literature on embodiment. To claim this is to understand the capacities for the new language of bodies to deceive. The body emerges as a topic at the same moment as the politics of identity have come to dominate the human sciences. As *personal* identity is created in the context of a mass market of individualistic consumption, *collective* identities are being reclaimed around categories of gender, race and religion. Thus topics from sexuality and health to fashion and sport are the domain of a new embodied politics of choice and identity because bodies have become the "material infrastructure . . . of the production of personhood and social identity" (Turner, 1994, p. 28). Yet, as Turner implies in the opening quote to this section, the body also remains the site of oppression and inequality. To limit our exploration of the body in contemporary culture to the expression of personal identities or to manifest forms of oppression is, as Turner has it, to see all of these in strictly individualistic terms and to negate their possible social nature.

We are in danger here of construing the body as a new Cartesian entity, taking the place of the discarded dualism of mind with equally opaque categories that would psychologize the body into a language of discourse, desire, style, performativity and the like while jettisoning its sociality and materiality. The language of bodies can take on a highly individualized and ethereal character, being at one remove from both the social and the psychological. In this language bodies are no longer seen as constituted in social relations or, rather, the sensuous existence of the body cannot be seen as the primary prerequisite of all that emerges from persons. Whereas psychology splits and compartmentalizes the body into functions that deny the embodied nature of psychological life and experience, so can an individualistic language of 'bodies in discourse' deny the crucial manner in which the body is already and always social in its expressions and impressions. This is no attempt to hearken back to a universal physical body but a way of questioning the limits of a rarefied discourse of bodies that continues under new conceptions the abstract project of an asocial and ahistorical mind. It is precisely here that we must ask what a psychology can offer the body if we agree both to replace a cognitivized but bloodless

subject and revitalize a more or less passive body filled with “crypto-subjective desires and proclivities” (Turner, 1994, p. 30). It is just at this juncture that the historical, classed, gendered, racial body intersects with disciplinarity. For in refusing to be misled by the project of glorified systems theories or seduced by a desiring body, psychology can insist that the subjectivity reclaimed for the body be historically specific and not just the application of a set of theories appropriated from the new scholasticism of high theory.

How then might psychology, on the one hand, be reformulated from the vantage of the lived body, from the body that is both the source and experience of subjectivity and is also the object seen, stylized, and acted upon from without? How, in other words, can psychology understand the body as both subject and object, as “the very intertwining of self and Other” (Leder, 1990, p. 6)? How can the question of the body, on the other hand, be made psychologically real so that it is neither merely the phenomenology of perception nor the source of abstract desire? These questions are far from traditional disciplinary problems. Indeed, they already presume a reformulated conception of the ‘psychological’ beyond the narrow boundaries of the North-Atlantic anglo-conception of the discipline.

The papers in this collection, all of which come from recent issues of *Theory & Psychology*, provide a remarkable range of answers to these problems. All agree that psychology has not taken the body seriously in most of its current manifestations. The degree to which the authors take this to be telling in psychology’s relationship with the body is widely divergent. They range from a wholesale rejection of psychology’s traditional project to a reconceptualization of certain contents in some or other specialty topics. Other papers are entirely unconcerned, if not downright hostile, to disciplinary intentions. Whatever the case, each paper was included in this collection for its unique contribution to an understanding of the psychological dimensions of embodiment, and the body’s expressions and dependencies in social life, gendering, and illness. Even this is insufficient as an introductory pointer however if only because “the body” is already a misnomer, a product of the social-scientific penchant for reification and abstraction. Elsewhere Radley (1995) argues that it is “the nature of the body-subject to be elusory” (p. 5). By this he means that the body is not just elusive in its avoidance of social control but that it is elusory because it retains a capacity to configure experience. To talk of *the* body in this context is to try to reconstruct boundaries and disciplinary discourses. But the alternative, that is, that there are only bodies that are now ill, now at play, now desirous, and so on, is equally unsatisfactory for its incapacity to specify just what it is that the body brings to understanding and experience. The authors try to work through this dilemma by locating the body in dialectical relations with self, culture, gender, race, history and more.

Social and Psychological Bodies

One of the crucial problems in the body literature is how it is that the mundane claim of the body's inherent capacities to be at once social and individual are theorized. This remains a problem for those who want not just to invite a reductionist take on the body as social artifact but want, with Leder (1990) and others to appreciate the simultaneous presence of the body as a first-person actor who lives through it from within while being, always, a third-person object of an external gaze. If we acknowledge the ever meaningful constitution of the body in its multiple manifestations as the accomplishment of culture, then an entirely new psychology ought to follow. In the first section, three papers address this question from divergent starting points. Each author argues that a psychology based on the traditional Cartesian subject is incapable of addressing the problems of embodiment. Moreover, none of these three authors is convinced that social constructionism can provide further insights into this problem. Instead, each struggles to return to more primitive categories to comprehend and do justice to the embodied, as well as social, world of subjectivity.

In the first paper, Alan Radley provides an insightful analysis based on Simmel's work on displays. In particular he notes that Simmel was careful to distinguish between displays that are in the order of alignments and stylizations, that are no more than our deployment of the body for a particular social purpose, and the manner in which individuals can "take up and . . . transform features of the mundane world in order to portray a 'way of being.'" This distinction is of more than passing value to Radley who notes that this is also the root of understanding that in engaging the world through a material body, the body makes itself understood. It is not only that this is an action of the body on the world or an "incorporation" of the world into the body but it consists of nothing less than the "con-figuring" of possible social worlds. Radley urges an important shift here from conceiving the body as merely expressing itself, as it does in emotions, to an understanding of displays as indications of how we constitute and are constituted not just through our bodies but with them.

Edward Sampson adopts a different strategy in his paper. Arguing that neither cognitivism nor social constructionist metatheories have taken the question of *embodiment* seriously, he distinguishes the latter from a notion of the *object-body*. This body is an aspect of the ocularcentric bias of the western tradition and is shared by both the scientific and social constructionist traditions. Although phenomenology does take embodiment seriously, Sampson argues that this tradition excludes history, culture and community. Instead he urges a conception of embodiment that includes discourses among its phenomena. In his historical reading of the changes taking place in the western tradition, Sampson notes that three movements have contributed to our changing conceptions of embodiment. These are

feminism, the appropriation of Buddhist practices, and the pentecostal religious revival. All of these, in some measure, ensure a continued focus on and acceptance of embodiment as a vehicle of knowledge and practice. Sampson calls for a politics of embodiment that transcends even those writings in the social sciences that explicitly call for an epistemology based on the body. He hints at what might be a project for a future psychology that concerns itself with the bodily pedagogy of the oppressed.

Like Sampson, Harry Kempen too wants to return the body to psychology and avoid the turn to social constructionism and its implications of a culturally relativistic human nature. Instead, he argues that the human body “becomes filled with a self, a self that is embodied: a *corps-sujet*.” Vico’s corporeal imagination is the foundation of this newly conceived self and Kempen elaborates this into a notion of the self as a biological necessity that has five tasks. These tasks, that are carried out by a subjectifying body, are variables insofar as they can be carried out in different ways. Thus the subjectifying body is faced with a wide range of possible ways in which it can orient itself to the world in its boundary, its evaluations of the world, its activities and so on. It is at this juncture that culture intervenes and reduces the wide array of possible selves we might be by providing powerful constraints on the body. Or, in other words, culture is both the starting point and landing place of self-construction.

Sexed and Gendered Bodies

If the topic of the body has made any inroads in the academy then it is surely in the domain of the sexed and gendered body. Prodded in large measure by feminism, queer theory, psychoanalysis and the contributions from social and historical studies of human sexuality, most of the human sciences have been altered by the radical singularity and embeddedness of the subjective world in an always sexed and gendered body. The four papers that make this problem explicit in this collection each tackle an important set of questions and, in turn, raise serious and hitherto unaddressed problems for psychology.

Elizabeth Wilson interrogates both the Turing test and cognitive psychology on their stance towards the body and in particular for their indebtedness to a masculine morphology. Wilson argues that Turing enacts cognition in a fashion that makes the computer isomorphic with man, not woman. Cognition in this incarnation is nothing less than a masculine desire to shed the body. In cognitive psychology the binary logic is replaced with an “active, reconstructive, cultural, embodied, affective, non-conscious, non-unitary and over-determined” process, that is, an interpretive process, the very existence of which is denied by the creators of information-processing models. As such, these models will always be limited by the repressed necessity of

interpretation as the arbiter of what is "processed" in cognition. Following Irigaray, Wilson shows us the male imaginary at work in cognitive psychology and asks us to press the case not for a neutral cognitive science but for an intervention that makes explicit the masculine orientation behind disembodied cognition.

Pursuing a similar line of questioning, Betty Bayer and Kareen Malone relate questions of the body in psychology to a more general crisis in late 20th-century thought in which the body represents woman, the concrete, the Other, all in opposition to the phallogocentrism of dominant epistemologies. The body, in a stubborn refusal of universalization, has become a prominent figure in feminist theorizing, questioning long-held dualist traditions, the sexualization of science and a denaturalized body. Bayer and Malone argue that psychology too has, in its discourse and practices, brought about a displacement that has opposed woman to the body while failing to notice women's resistance to "master discourses." Although the place of the body in feminism and contemporary scholarship remains contested, Bayer and Malone find that there is no easy feminist way out. It is neither a home to return to nor the site of a final freedom. For these authors the "body can cleave to representations" yet "representation and body collaborate in undermining one another."

Mary Brown Parlee invites alternative readings of the traditional binary sex/gender categories by listening to those whose embodiment falls outside such distinctions. She is critical of academic constructions of sex and gender, noting how these typically privilege the former over the latter. In their stead she demonstrates how transgender activists undermine scientific and medical discourses of what counts as 'natural' categories. Claiming a name is an activity that constitutes identities and relationships and Parlee rightly notes that psychology does not have a tradition of discussing the ethics of representational strategies. The very range of terms used by both activists and medical communities raises not only ethical questions about the accountability of professionals but points to the limits of our knowledge. For those whose lives do not fit neatly into "the grid" of binary sex/gender categories, official ways of knowing, speaking and acting are deeply flawed and incapacitates our understanding, our ways of coming to know, those whose lives are gendered in ways that academic/medical traditions do not comprehend. It is here that different embodied experiences call for a change in academic practices.

In a related vein, Caterina Pizanias unearths the story of Susan Stewart's exhibit *Lovers and Warriors* after it had failed to leave its "mark in the art world." In the story of the show's creation and short life, Pizanias examines the boundaries of disciplinarity in the academy as well as the world of art. Incorporating Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* into her work, she attempts to uncover the representational politics in art and the social sciences. Her journey through the art world becomes a case study in its own right of the

“*habitus* in action,” the “*habitus* that includes those aspects of identity and praxis which are only partially surveyed in the standard social sciences’ theoretical frames.” Susan Stewart’s intervention of including in her photographic exhibit the narratives of her collaborators becomes the occasion for her exclusion from the world of professional art. By presenting subject spaces for lesbian women she transgresses the rules of the gallery’s *sanctum sanctorum*. Pizani presents the case as one way of coming to comprehend the *habitus* as fluid and unfinished, and to note that “to speak of the body outside disciplinary bounds” is fraught with dangers.

Sick and Healing Bodies

It is in illness and pain that the body undergoes a change that makes it incapable of being taken for granted. As Leder (1990) notes, our temporal horizon shrinks, and the body may appear both alien and threatening while demanding continued ministrations. At the same time, it is Radley’s (1991) contention that a chronic illness is not just something to which one adapts but rather the very adjustments made come to constitute the illness with which one must cope. The illness is “refigured through one’s efforts to maintain daily life” (p. 149). There is no singular path for doing so, narratives of illness express varied and difficult ways of living with illness and of re-figuring one’s bodily life to bear one’s illness. We have argued elsewhere that persons with a chronic illness such as cancer who explicitly integrate their illness into biographical narratives live different lives from those who “leave their bodies to medicine,” and who remain disinterested observers of what transpires biomedically (Stam & Mathieson, 1995). Illness remains a problematic for a psychology of the body precisely because modern “biopsychosocial” accounts are incapable of dealing with the body. In effect, such accounts reduce to functional, dualist conceptions that either privilege biology or abstract properties (such as “coping”) that have no meaning to the suffering body.

The papers that follow deal with the question of pain and illness but hold to very different conceptual agendas. Cor Baerveldt and Paul Voestermans walk through the problem of the body in anorexia nervosa as a way to a critique of psychology’s body and to validate the embodied experience of women who are anorectic. They note that accounts of anorexia have either ignored the body by focusing on a host of non-specific psychological variables or have argued for a “mannequin body,” one that is dressed up in culture but has no flesh. Turning to social constructionist accounts, they find that these have far too limited a take on the body as a vehicle for communicative acts and miss the body as cultural practice. To include bodily conduct which is meaningful as well as socially regulated within communication they suggest the broadening of the latter term to ‘co-

regulation.' This notion recognizes not only the fact that presentations can lack an explicit structure and hence can do more than merely "communicate" but also that bodily skills are slowly acquired through the refinement of a bodily sensitivity that can be expressive. Anorexia nervosa can now be recast without denying the anorectic's competence to "claim and sustain an identity." Baerveldt and Voestermans introduce the notion of the body as a 'selfing' device, a concept that has close affinities to Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*. On this account, anorectics objectify their bodies to the extent that they are no longer meaningfully engaged in the social world and their bodies become objects to be controlled. Thus, rather than focus on the meaning associated with the eating habits of anorectics, Baerveldt and Voestermans argue that the focus should be on the competence of anorectics to deploy their bodies in the social world and the manner in which this competence becomes restricted. This paper, then, travels across a wide conceptual and empirical domain to argue for a renewed conception of the lived body.

Robert Kugelmann provides a thorough critique of the psychology of pain in general, and the gate control theory of pain specifically, motivated by an attempt to understand the way in which medicine has come to "treat" all of a patient's existence under the new biopsychosocial models. Pain is emblematic of the changing landscape of bio-medicine and psychology has played an important supporting role. Kugelmann tells the history of this development noting how the theory and treatment of pain began to change dramatically after 1950, albeit not in tandem. It was not until the emergence of the gate-control theory in 1965 that a model of pain encapsulated both the divergent theoretical strands in the pain literature as well as changing clinical conceptions of pain management. According to Kugelmann, pain could now be seen as a process rather than a strictly sensory matter. One implication drawn from this and other developments was that pain was now an "experience" that allowed for a much wider variety of treatment and intervention, including the scientific expropriation of cultural healing techniques. Kugelmann argues that this constitutes an extension of the limits of bio-medicine into all aspects of a patient's life, an account of the gate control theory that provides a corrective to the rather more optimistic versions found elsewhere in the body literature (e.g., Scarry, 1985).

Anyone who has attempted to chart the process of the problems of embodiment and illness in the contemporary literature will know how vastly it has reached into many disciplines and subject areas of the academy. In an encyclopedic and insightful account, Arthur Frank reviews ten major book-length studies of the body, focusing particularly on the "narrative construction of the lived body." Frank organizes his review around a set of propositions that bring into focus the very important works on the body now reshaping social scientists' understanding of illness. This understanding is not so much above the body, observed as it were from outside, but a recognition that we come to know ourselves and the world through our

bodies and we had better not allow this insight to be suppressed in the name of medical treatments if we want to retain that self through an illness or if we want to reclaim ourselves on the other end of illness.

These papers are neither an introduction to theorizing the body nor do they provide any closure on the topic. They invite further elaboration, contradiction and dialogue. If they can be said to have a common theme it is, as Frank notes, the ethics of body talk. Each author invites us to consider certain questions and possibilities of psychological and social life that the body opens for valuation. They request a suspension of belief in scientized psychological categories for the empirical problems bodies pose. By empirical I mean it in its older and etymological sense of *experience* or *skill*, the experience and skill of embodied life.

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Part II
SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BODIES

2

Displays and Fragments

Embodiment and the Configuration of Social Worlds

Alan Radley

ABSTRACT. This paper draws a distinction between the concepts of embodiment and the body. It focuses upon embodiment as a central condition of social life, through which individuals are able to symbolize their world. The physically bounded body is often seen as a matter relating either to individual experiences of corporeality, or to social evaluations and constraints concerning its scope of action. Embodiment, however, is fundamental to how people collectively and individually 'take a stand' towards each other, and in so doing define or propose the worlds in which they meet. The paper explores this idea through an examination of display in social life, drawing upon the work of Goffman and of Geertz on expression, Simmel on style and Goodman on exemplification. It argues that display enables us to reconfigure possible 'ways of life'. This involves us, as embodied beings, in entering into and transforming the present moment. This refiguring of everyday experience is achieved by virtue of our appearing as exemplars of the social worlds portrayed (i.e. those that we embody), such as the spheres of play, ecstasy or danger.

In this paper I try to show that *embodiment*, rather than the body, is central to psychological life and to social relationships. This is because it is the medium for individuals to display things that matter to each other, and how they matter. If being a medium of display is key to the body's role in social life, and if display is more than a matter of establishing, endorsing or challenging our social identities, then what is it that we are able to do because we are embodied beings? The broad answer is—to engage the world so as to fashion semblances and configure social worlds: in short, to symbolize. It is the capacity to do such things as mime, flirt, play at, invite moods or close off possible futures. The question then becomes: how can

our physical appearance, manner and what at first sight are merely mundane actions make this possible?

Before addressing this issue, it is worth dealing with the objection that the body is not essential to all such occurrences. People are able to use words expressively, and can convey moods through written texts and by means of the plastic arts. Metaphor is everywhere: why, one might ask, focus upon the body? The argument implied by this objection is misleading, because it attempts to reinsert the division between the (physical) body and discourse, insisting that the former be considered only as a field or material resource, while the latter be accorded signifying powers. Once this happens, the question of embodiment is side-stepped in favour of making the body into just one object (or medium) amongst others.

One way of answering the question posed in the opening paragraph is to reanalyse some proposals about the nature of expression in social life. While the idea of the body being expressive—or having some expressive function—is by no means new, the claim that this capacity is fundamental to people's conceptions of their situation, and thereby to an understanding of the body in psychology, does make a novel challenge for the discipline. Much of the writing about the body in recent years has been stimulated by the aim of determining what is special about our corporeal existence. The fact that we are fleshy beings is clearly important: we feel pain and are ill, we have desires, we are conscious of our practical dependence upon the material world, we shape cultural norms to contain or to proscribe bodily functions and capacities. All these things redirect our attention towards the body as a focal entity in psychological life. They tend to make it distinct in our analyses, suggesting that social scientists have managed to catch under the spotlight of their inquiries something particular, bounded and coherent. Under certain circumstances this might be true, but to adhere to this position alone renders the puzzle of embodiment in general into one concerning 'the body' in particular, as if questions about the former could be satisfactorily answered in terms of the latter. They could if embodiment was only about 'the body' considered as individual being: they cannot, because embodiment is also about social worlds, not just those which are material and extant, but also those which are ephemeral and possible.

This argument underlines the fact that human beings would not be what they are if they did not have bodies (Wertz, 1987). More to the point, socio-psychological life would not be what it is if it were not embodied through and through. This means, for example, that we are individuals who do not just happen to find ourselves in male or female bodies. Instead, our existence as sexual beings is involved in all aspects of our lives. This does not mean that sexuality is a blind factor in all of life's equations, but that the ground from which an individual acts is a gendered ground, and that its features can be sought in the largest or in the smallest actions. Again, this is not meant to imply that sexuality is a natural characteristic: the marking and cultivation of

physical difference is cultural and symbolic (Laqueur, 1990). The remaking or undoing of that difference in action is, however, an endorsement of the fact that we are differentiated in our being, not just in our social identities.

Because embodiment has both a material and a sentient aspect to it, we do more than know a ready-made physical reality through our separate bodies: we transform it through the actions that we make together. In the case of something like flirtation, what is conveyed is not simply an emotion but an invitation, a call to the other to participate. The material aspect of the body then takes on a greater significance, because the physical world is now defined in relation to social projects, cultural mores, shared and contested meanings. What we are capable of showing through our embodied actions, therefore, are matters concerning our social condition. While this includes face-to-face relationships between individuals, such as those involving flirtation or play, it also extends to all kinds of groupings and crowds in which matters of collective feeling are nurtured and conveyed by virtue of the physical presence of those concerned. For example, the technological innovations of the funfair make new bodily sensations possible, but they do not of themselves make the atmosphere of enjoyment. For this to happen something else must occur, something involving the way that people lose and recover balance (and dignity) in each other's eyes.

This reference to the mutual visibility of bodily conduct is the stuff of display; how this relates to questions of the body is the core issue for the remainder of this paper. However, an analysis based upon display cannot be one of 'the body in total'. There are important reasons why this should be the case. First, of course, an argument based upon display is limited to the body's appearance in movement, and has no concern for the individual's sensing of or reflection upon his or her physical condition. But there is a more important reason. The idea that there might be an explanation of the body assumes that there is a single entity to be explained. I have already said that the specific question of the body is not to be confused with the broader issue of embodiment. It is not the (physical) body that concerns us here so much as what is made possible because we are embodied—in brief, what can be shown forth about ourselves and our situation.

Display: Embodiment as Expressive Form

The concept of display is useful because it highlights the fact that embodiment not only provides the ground of being, but places us in relation to each other in our mutual visibility. For phenomenologists, the individual body 'conceals itself as it projects itself across the physical world', so that understanding it is a matter of revealing its role in the tacit basis of individual action (Leder, 1990). However, in social life individuals do not merely stand somewhere: they also see where each of them stands, and how