INTRODUCTION

About Perspectives

*Perspectives: International Postgraduate Journal of Philosophy* is a peer-reviewed annual publication, featuring articles, book reviews and interviews encompassing a broad range of current issues in philosophy and its related disciplines. *Perspectives* publishes work from within both the analytic and continental traditions reflecting the diverse interests of students and faculty at University College Dublin.

About this Issue

The inaugural issue of *Perspectives: International Postgraduate Journal of Philosophy* is a special edition on the theme of the body and embodiment. This theme was chosen to reflect the work presented at the last two annual conferences organised by postgraduates at Univeristy College Dublin: *Perspectives on the Body and Embodiment* (2007) and *Perspectives on Intercorporeality and Intersubjectivity* (2008).

Since the investigations of phenomenological theorists such as Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, the themes of embodiment and situatedness have enjoyed increased popularity over a wide range of disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, cognitive science, neuroscience, literature and women’s studies, among others. Recognition that the body is not merely an appendage to the self, but rather is what opens up the possibility of meaningful subjective existence, has radically shifted the classical philosophical understanding of the body.

This special issue of *Perspectives* aims to explore the themes of the body and embodiment in contemporary discourse featuring papers which approach the theme from a range of perspectives: cognitive science, art and performance, psychology, feminism and medical ethics.

The issue opens with an interview with Professor Gail Weiss from George Washington University who discusses her work in the field of the body and embodiment. Professor Weiss was an invited speaker to the *Perspectives on Intercorporeality and Intersubjectivity* conference which was held at UCD in June, 2008. We are pleased to include her reflections on some key themes on the topic of this special issue.

The first paper is a contribution from Dr. Margrit Shildrick, one of the keynote speakers at the *Perspectives on the Body and Embodiment* Conference in 2007. In her article “Contesting Normative Embodiment:
Some Reflections on the Psycho-social Significance of Heart Transplant Surgery”, she looks to normative biomedical expectations of the body and its consequences in post-transplant identity.

Laura Greene’s “‘Bodiless Bodies’: Perception and Embodiment in Kant and Irigaray” draws on Luce Irigaray’s analysis of sexuate difference to highlight the ‘masculine logic’ underlying Kant’s transcendental subject. Sergio Levi approaches the phenomenon of embodiment from a neuropsychological perspective in his contribution “Affective Simulation, Imitation, and the Motor Mirror System”, in which he explores the role that our own emotions play in recognising and empathising with the emotions of others. He draws upon recent research in order to differentiate this process of affective simulation from the cognitive process of mirroring the actions of others, suggesting that the two similar mechanisms give rise to very different phenomena.

In her paper “Understanding the Body’s Critique: Repeating to Repair”, Karin Nisenbaum offers an original analysis of the embodied compulsion to repeat, looking at the body as a site where normative structures come into view. She draws on the work of Freud and Ricoeur and offers a conception of ‘Erotic Life’ as a means to configure embodied life more humanely. Through Walter Benjamin’s studies on temporality and political structures, her investigation is widened to consider political bodies. And finally, artist and theorist Nathaniel Stern, gives an interesting analysis of what he terms the ‘implicit body’ in his paper “Implicit Bodies through Explicit Action”. Like a mobius strip, the body, Stern argues, feeds back between affection and reflection. Stern offers compelling examples from contemporary digital art where the body acts as a site for emergence and inter-action. This issue closes with a selection of book reviews written by University College Dublin postgraduates, showcasing a broader selection of philosophical themes.

It is with great pleasure that we present these papers in this inaugural issue of Perspectives. Many thanks to our contributors, editorial board, designer and all others whose support and encouragement have been invaluable.

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