

International Congress



Bodies in movement3

June 21-22-23 2017

# BODIES TRANSFORMATIONS

& III French-Brazilian Symposium  
Body, Education and Culture of the Movement

Faculty of Education - University of Montpellier



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2 place Marcel Godechot – 34000 Montpellier – Tél. 04 67 61 83 00 – Tramway Ligne 1 station : Stade Philippidès – [www.fde.umontpellier.fr](http://www.fde.umontpellier.fr)

# Bodies in movement 3

## *Bodies transformations*

Life sciences govern contemporary representations of the body. They separate the healthy from the unhealthy, security from risk, conjecturing about the modalities of life and death. They contribute in defining beauty, eternal youth, form, all of which are high priority social demands. Their discourse, largely relayed through the media, filter into every sphere of existence portending a control over life. The use of biotechnology allows to manipulate the body, to open and enlarge the scope of possibilities; in this sense, it seems to offer a new creating power. This power would be rational. Often put in action in concert with the medical field, it is scientifically controlled. Transplants, surgical genital modifications, interventions in the field of reproduction, enhancing performances through doping, genetic modification prospects, cloning, and other biotechnological interventions are so many possibilities for taking control. In essence, the point is to make of the human body what is desired, based on the mastery and calculations now possible through new means. Thus emerges the fantasy of a body controlled by reason. Mankind believes that it possesses the instruments necessary to realize its will for transforming its being. The dream is within the reach of drugs, diets, physical training, scalpels...

## **Themes**

### **Theme 1 - Bodies under control**

A repositioning of the body is initiated as a consequence of several historical factors. The manners in which the body is perceived, felt and represented have known important changes: we have gone from a production society during the 19th century industrial revolution, in which the body was reduced to a working tool (Brohm, 1975) concealed by age-old traditions and religious morality, to a « consumer culture » (Featherstone *et al.*, 1991), where the body is synonym of health and leisure. The ageing of the population also questions the concept of health. The fear of ageing also gives rise to new forms of « body maintenance ». Medico-technical progress, as well as training programs and dietary counseling, become a significant contemporary help in this attention given to the body and encourage the individualization of self sculpting. Thus, medical power, responsibility towards oneself, questioning the future and the pressure of the markets, stimulate a new impatience for creating bodies.

This creation of self involves criterions, at least technical ones. Even the behaviors that seem most natural are in fact social and cultural (Elias, 1993). Under the effects of self-constraint, the body is fashioned, it « straightens » (Vigarello, 2004), it becomes normalized. Exercise becomes a categorical and rational imperative, an obsession, indicating the slipping towards a *leitmotiv* health. The practice of body modification, using technical means which are always increasing in number and in sophistication (from cosmetic surgery to bariatric surgery, and including medication), questions the appropriate balance and the relation between freedom and servitude, pleasure and pain, in the construction of a controlled body figure as an expression of one's self (Vigarello, 2012). When it calls for a daily effort to be free, is the dominant image of a young, beautiful and tonic body not a source of alienating self-constraint? To what extent do the demands that it imposes disrupt ways of life and/or create a distancing, even a stigma that has to be dealt with?

### **Theme 2 – From the augmented body to the capable body**

The progress of modern medicine reinforces the belief in malleability and plasticity of the body. At a time when new possibilities for corporal existence are announced, this last adopts « hybrid » forms (Andrieu, 2008). Biotechnology renews the subject's sensory coordinates as well as his/her possibilities of action. The idea of maintaining or repairing the body (injured or handicapped bodies) relates to a purely mechanical conception of it, but also to new body capabilities (Andrieu, 2017). Like a machine, it needs to be cared for, and sometimes to be repaired,

in order to be efficient. The concept of the « body-object » dominates modern medical and experimental thinking. Body modification practices, of its enhancement and the use of equipment (which is also found in competitive sports, as in the Paralympics for instance) are based on modern tools of body management (Dufour, 2015) which offer « biotechnological engineering ». The living part can thus be activated by a technical intervention or by incorporating the environment depending on the body's use (Agamben, 2015). Capability is not an improvement but a realization of the possible self (Héas, 2010), but not yet a conscious potential.

They are often combined with nutrition, muscle building exercise and even with the use of drugs. Attaining certain limits is the price to pay to achieve an idealized body, which can only be contemplated in view of a reasonable construction. Considered as a primarily esthetic object, and submitted to ever more advanced techniques, the living body's capable emersion disrupts the bio-psycho-social normativity. The quest for an idealized body, using the means offered by a technological type of reasoning, can therefore sometimes lead to the production of a monstrous body. To what extent can the desire to enhance the body produce a mutant man and disrupt the norms in effect? Is this the face of an inhuman man due to too much dehumanization or is it that of a superman, overtaking humanity to carry it further, higher, and lead it to accomplishment? We don't really know any more where are the limits of the possible and the impossible, of the lawful and the unlawful, of what can be changed without feeling our identity.

### **Theme 3 – Educated bodies, esthesiology and culture of movement**

**The thème 3 includes the III French-Brazilian symposium « Body, Education and Culture of the Movement »**

Offered in a range of forms, and often commercialized, the means to keep a body under control swiftly evolve. A true "market of the body" develops, on the basis of combining and recombining models. This market is characterized by several recurrent themes: slenderness, tonicity, youthfulness, apparent "good health". Physical activity is now duly recommended to sculpt one's body. The pressure to take-up practicing an activity in the field of "healthy sport" intensifies. Notably, the aim is now to prolong the lifespan and, more globally, to satisfy a quest of greater welfare associated with new medical considerations. Moving seems to be a gage of a controlled existence. On the contrary, inactivity is stigmatized, a symbol of a sad slackness. Attention to the body takes discipline, consistency, determination, and finally, suffering (Rauch, 1983). From there is born the pleasure of appealing to oneself and to others. Thereon, asceticism leaves monastery walls to integrate all the actions of everyday life (Weber, 1964). It is within this framework that can develop the "self-governing" logic described by Foucault (1984). Asceticism, nutrition and temperance appear as self-controlling techniques which aim to dominate existence. These techniques are part of the "micro-physics of power" where the shaping of bodies is relayed by institutions - the schools, the army, hospitals - developing controlling and monitoring measures, inducing the internalization of norms. Nowadays, the evolution of these self-controlling techniques comes up against the question of limits and acceptability.

Educating the bodies also includes the *Clandestine Bodies* (Chobeaux, 1993) at school, the bodies educated by an everyday physical education (Denis, 1997) and by Physical and Sports Education, the accepted and explicit aim of which is, in France, very different from in Brazil. When in France the education of bodies is largely carried out to supply the federal sporting institution with followers, and is based on physical and sports practice (Personne, 1990; Parlebas, 1985), in Brazil, sport is only one aspect of a "culture of movement" which encompasses a multitude of other non sport-related corporal practices in the federal sense of the term (various dances, indigenous practices, capoeira ...) (Da Nobrega, 2012; Genu, 2015).

The theme of this symposium emphasizes body sensations as well as body art (Nobrega, 2015). This interdisciplinary event is thus complemented by subjects such as Arts, Philosophy, History, Social Sciences, Anthropology and Education, amongst others. The approach to these fields, as described in our programme, works as evidence for esthesiology: the body and its

sensations, the body in movement with its ability to create a new possibility of life and to exist in the world amongst others.

But educating bodies is also educating the bodies of the teachers to run the class: mastered bodies, controlled bodies, sometimes denied bodies which participate in all disciplinary didactics and in many educational methods (Pujade-Renaud, 1983). Educating bodies is also educating the bodies of boys and the bodies of girls (Duru-Bella, 1990; Mosconi, 2012), as early as primary school years (De Boissieu, 2009) with segregated playing areas, and with corporal and proximal injunctions which are very different for each gender, even if largely unconscious. Educating bodies relates to the gender stereotypes instilled from the moment of birth (Bellotti, 1974; Vidal, 2010). They are the boys' and the girls' corporal assignments created in the reading manuals or in any other school subject. It is also all the stereotypes that figure in children's literature, in iconography, in so-called traditional stories... The education of bodies is, for instance, the absence of feminine bodies and feminine thoughts in all the subjects of the Baccalauréat. The education of bodies is the invisibility of women and the ultra visibility of men. It is also and lastly boys with hardly scholarly bodies and mostly boys who desire punishment and sanction in order to show themselves as "men", potent, but therefore not finding their place in a strongly feminine school context (Ayrat, 2010).

#### **Theme 4 – Body, innovation and self-construction**

Contemporary individuals want to create their own bodies. Customizing what can be, they have a feeling of differentiating themselves from the others while they communicate with others. This construction project of the body and its modularization depends on a socio-cultural and a socio-historical contexts. Like an incarnate biography, the body is a project that must be made to evolve in order to fit with the "proper" personality, while composing with the supposed or fantasized characteristics of the dominant social norms. Corporal marks (piercings, tattoos, scarifications, implants, splitting, so called "Bodmods" for Body Modifications) have been diversified and have been combined till the mid 90's and new body leisures such as suspensions or play piercing. They are also so many "signs of identity" which, for Le Breton (2002), allow to physically express one's individuality and upkeep the feeling of controlling destiny's run. Thus the body is seen as a resource for the construction of a singular self. Indeed, the body "only speaks when it is clothed in artifices" (Borel, 1992: 15). As a mirror of the self, the body is covered in signs. In transgressing the expected norms, it enters in resistance. As different as they can be, the body modifications brought on by body-art, bodybuilding, or even cosmetic surgery, allow the production of a non-standard, but singular, body which, in turn, produces new standards. In this context, what can we think of the people who seem to turn their nose up at all these normative injunctions, advocating a non-standard body which, with so much differentiation, runs a risk of stigmatization? To what extent can we speak of a "resistance via the body", whether it is done in an active or a passive way? The different forms of body reclaiming (clothing attitudes, eating habits, games of appearance) "constitute a material which is that much more interesting that, in developed societies, a new modality of the relation between the individual and society is at play, which is simultaneously based on a submission to fashion and its codes and on an individualistic affirmation of self. The protagonists and the structures can thus be considered through the modalities and the way in which they connect" (Berthelot, 1991 : 120-121). An internalization and objectifying (incorporation) process which links the body with social environments (more or less changing) is at the heart of the subjectivation process. It deserves our attention.

Communications can be presented as **oral communications (20 minutes and 10 minutes discussion)**. The conditions for submitting to these workshops are the same as for communication submissions.

Submissions for communications should be received before the **November 30, 2016**.

**The submitted abstract should be formatted in the following way:**

Title of the submission, (Times, 12, left aligned)

Name(s) of the author(s), addresses (Times, 12, left aligned)

Abstract with a maximum of 300 words (Times, 12, justified).

Keywords: 5 keywords correctly specifying the themes and scientific fields.

Please send them to the following email address: [eric.perera@umontpellier.fr](mailto:eric.perera@umontpellier.fr)

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