

Call for abstracts:

Bodily Phenomenology

Conference at Södertörn University, Sweden

Arranged by the Centre for Studies in Practical Knowledge

19-21 of May 2010.

Keynote speakers: Natalie Depraz, Gunn Engelsrud, Sara Heinämaa, Drew Leder, Fredrik Svenaeus

The crucial role of the lived body in nearly every area of human life has been acknowledged and researched in various ways for a long time. There are countless conferences, books and papers on embodiment in philosophy, medicine, art, media, teaching, sociology, anthropology, history, etc. Why yet a conference on this theme? To start with, it is not enough to say that the mind is embodied, one must also say how. This is still a project very much in its infancy in which the connections between philosophical and empirical traditions need to be encouraged and deepened. The exchange developed recently has not been without its problems, and it could be argued that it has failed to yet realize its true potential. There are several reasons for this.

One reason is that, from the very start, phenomenology, the main tradition engaged in the philosophy of embodiment, has been wary of the danger of empirical contamination in its contact with other disciplines. But phenomenology cannot disconnect itself from the facticity of life, if it wants to stay true to its original mission. Consciousness, when phenomenologically analyzed, as Husserl, as well as other influential phenomenologist, recognizes, is always found to be situated and contextualized – dependent on a body and a world, which bestow it with existence and meaning.

Even if empirical findings regarding the workings of the body cannot be imported directly into phenomenology in the form of scientific theories, empirical accounts of bodily being are nevertheless highly relevant to philosophical reflection on the conceptual patterns of experience. It remains to be settled, however, how the empirical third person and phenomenological first person might be cajoled into

joining hands. Indeed, an emphasis on the second-person perspective (elicited, for example, by asking a person experiencing a phantom limb what it feels like), rather than the third-person perspective (produced by taking a picture of her brain), may offer a more promising approach for making phenomenology more receptive to knowledge established within other disciplines. In what ways do phenomenologically inspired qualitative studies in medicine, nursing, and other fields of research involving the body in a substantial way, already fulfill this mission and what does it mean to use phenomenology as a research methodology? And, finally, how do the ways of the body attain significance for phenomenology itself as a philosophical project? In other words: how can we do a phenomenology which is not only a phenomenology of the body (of embodiment), but which is a phenomenology bodily informed? Do the facticities of birth, illness, sex, ageing, death, etc. inform the project of phenomenology itself, and, if so, in what ways? The conference is an attempt to dig deeper into these questions and connections.

Please send abstracts of 1-2 pages, maximum 500 words, to our conference secretary martin.gunnarson@sh.se before the 15 of January 2010. Presentations are scheduled for 30 minutes including discussion. Do not forget to list your name, address and affiliation at the top of the abstract. Letters of acceptance and conference program will be distributed in February.