

Editorial

The volume entitled *BODY STORIES* presents various aspects of corporeality in bioethical and philosophical discourses as well as in artistic projects. The goal of this volume is to build a platform for an interdisciplinary debate on the dimensions of the body understood as a cultural phenomenon of the 21st century. By presenting this volume to readers, we also aim to cross the boundaries of various disciplines of humanities. By pointing out its multidimensional character, we wish to provide a forum for mutual inspirations.

One of the themes analyzed by the authors centers around the dilemmas of bioart studied from philosophical, bioethical and artistic perspectives. Kamil Gibas and Karolina Żyniewicz focus on bioart that uses biological human material in artistic projects. Referring to her own artistic projects and experiences, Żyniewicz implements the concept of liminality as an intellectual tool for grasping the meaning of bioart projects and for identifying the status of liminal beings. Liminal beings understood as non-human agents living in-between (between now and a future form of existence) can be regarded, she argues, as a kind of bridge that helps us, humans, comprehend our own liminal existence. By referring to the projects of Karolina Żyniewicz, Kamil Gibas underlines the interdisciplinary character of her works as balancing between bio-engineering, cultural studies and art. In his opinion, Żyniewicz' art is becoming the platform for an exchange of knowledge and experiences between bioethicists and artists. Gibas also points out a need for bioethical regulations that can be addressed by drawing the attention of bioethical regulatory bodies towards these new forms of bioart.

In her paper Ewelina Twardoch-Raś gives yet another voice to the debate on bioart concentrating on plant life and the use of plants in bioartistic projects. Twardoch-Raś highlights the invasiveness of the procedures employed in these projects in reference to the concepts of identity, ontological uniqueness and agency of non-human beings and plants in particular. She provides a detailed analysis of several artistic projects involving plant life to bring our attention to the multilayer character of the connection between human and non-human life.

The papers of the volume also undertake the issue of portraying corporeality and its influence on the way we perceive it, focusing on the influence of philosophical concepts of embodiment on the physiotherapist-patient relationship, on divergent corporeal forms and the perception of monstrosity in movies as well as on the visualizations of the body in its earliest stages. In her paper Alicja Długolecka presents an analysis of qualitative research in which she studied the patients' bodily awareness (in the project, entitled "Gratitude", she carried out with Tamara Pieńko). One part of the project was especially significant, since it involved the

artistic element of intimate photo sessions followed by in-depth interviews. She manages to distinguish various stages of experiencing corporeality, which the participants of the project underwent during the sessions, such as “giving meaning, analysis of body experiences in the course of life, body evaluation (primarily negative aspects) and, ultimately, openness and gratitude towards one’s corporeality”. Długołęcka formulates a hypothesis that phenomenological inquiry and the concepts of “carnal self” as well as “presence of the embodied” are adequate tools for the analyses of therapeutic interactions.

Yet another aspect of corporeality is undertaken by Małgorzata Bugaj who gives a study of *The Elephant Man* by David Lynch (1980) concentrating on corporeal anxieties, the grotesque and the concept of monstrosity. In her meticulous analysis of the film scenes, she refers to the concept of monstrosity as a social construction and points out that by questioning moral and aesthetic standards, divergent corporeal forms (such as carnival freaks) challenge the well-established categories of human and non-human. She investigates the ways divergent bodies have been portrayed in culture and in Lynch’s film in particular. She argues that Lynch’s focus on the characters is defined primarily through their divergent corporeality. Her comparative analyses of the film scenes presenting Merrick’s body as an exhibit reveals a certain parallel existing between a discourse of sensational entertainment (carnival freak show) and a scientific discourse (medical specimen).

The paper by Matylda Szewczyk also examines the issue of visual representations of the body, focusing on its earliest stages, namely the images of prenatal development as presented by Ernst Haeckel (a 19th-century biologist and philosopher) and Lennart Nilsson (a 20th-century photographer). By comparing the works of Haeckel and Nilsson, she proves that despite many differences (in time frames, professions, media), their approaches to portraying the embryo and fetus seem strangely similar. Szewczyk describes how their visual series meet the criterion of the modern cult of scientific visibility. She shows how both authors place the human embryo as a central element of their reflection on reality and grant it a certain normative value surpassing objective biological and medical perspectives. Szewczyk argues that the images, immensely popular in their respective-times, were also subjected to fierce criticism with regard to both the methods and aims of their creation, which places them in the very centre of the discussion about representation in general and “scientific” representation in particular. She also notes that the work of Haeckel and Nilsson has had significant cultural, political and social consequences, and as such it has had an impact on the way we perceive embryos and pregnancy even today.

The main part of this volume evolved from the papers given at the conference BETWEEN THEORY AND ART: PHILOSOPHICAL AND BIOETHICAL PROBLEMS OF CORPOREALITY AND ITS AUDIOVISUAL REPRESENTATIONS (Między teorią a sztuką: filozoficzno-bioetyczna problematyka cielesności i jej audiowizualne reprezentacje) that was organized at the Medical University of Łódź, Poland 1-2 March 2019 as an effect of an interdisciplinary project entitled DIMENSIONS OF THE BODY: BETWEEN BIOETHICS AND FILM¹.

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