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enso-maesthetics—emerging shapes

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enso-maesthetics—emerging shapes

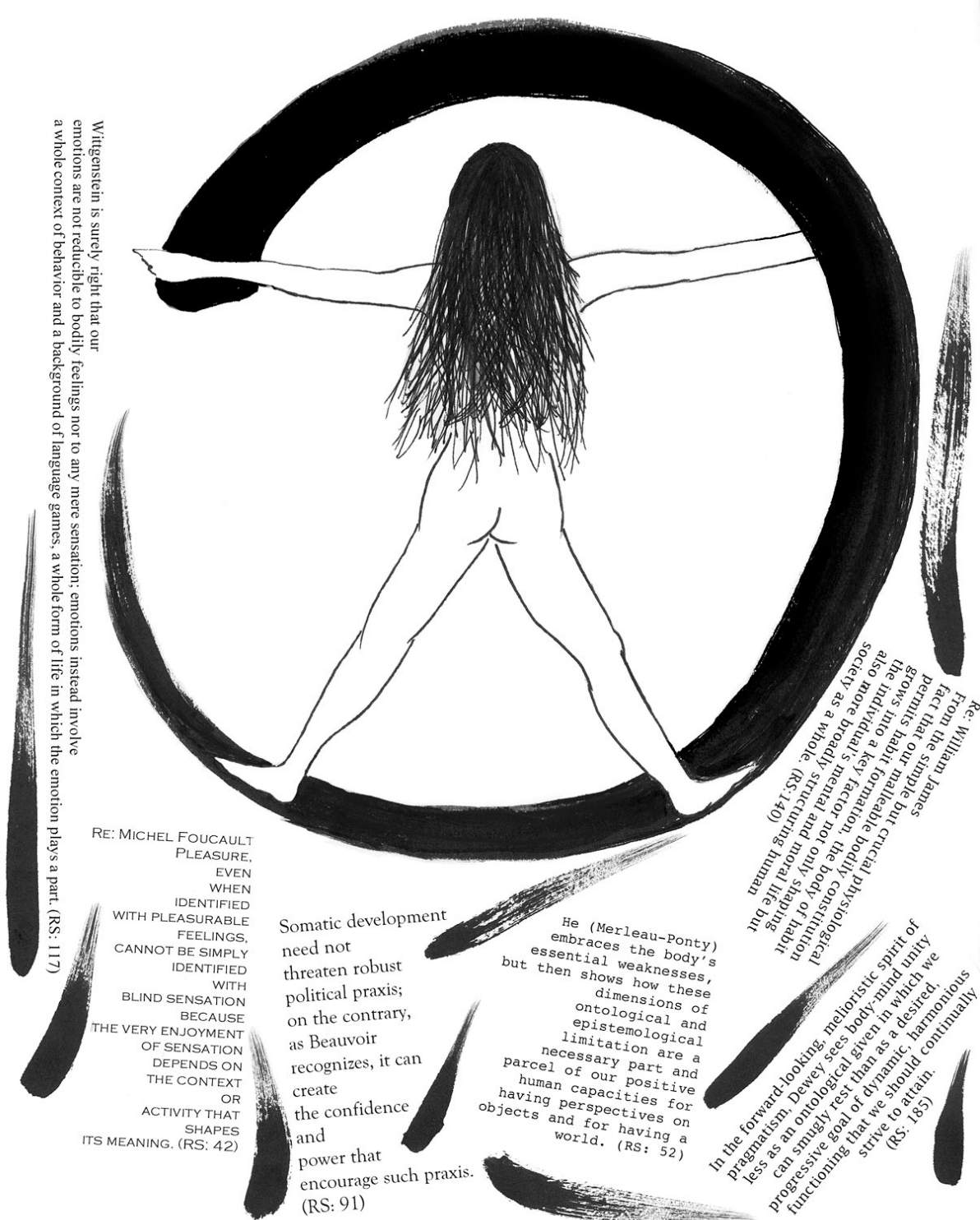
Tomie Hahn

Imagine several paradoxes before you,
folded neatly inside of each other, creating nested puzzles.
When asked to respond to Richard Shusterman's book *Body Consciousness*,
I thought—this will be interesting. But here sits paradox 1: Shusterman's book is already
a response
to six theorists.
Folded inside paradox 1,
I find paradox 2:
(theoretical) writings about the body can miss or leave out
the actual body, or the lived experience. Yet,
Shusterman's embedded thread on somaesthetics
on
practice
process
praxis
 awareness
 makes sense.
so
I set out to read *Body Consciousness*.
And each time I read I also ground ink, sat, and moved a brush
or quill across paper
 as practice.
Enso, a Zen practice of creating a circular form – representing more than I can utter here:
the universe, enlightenment, spirit...

but these words alone reveal nothing
about *enso*,
about cultivating awareness.

I embodied the readings. Amusing how my brush strokes changed with each passage, I thought.
Since words can not possibly reveal
my response
to his response to
these six theorists' responses to the body, or,
express my experiences reading about
the body, while inside of a body, I offer this graphic paradox.

Lost? allow me to unfold the practice with a few riddles:
a Zen *enso* encircles a person, black ink starkly
holding relationships of reflexivity, body, and self, six theorists,
playing with the Vitruvian “man” but reversed
though
still
 a circle
the ink, a practice on practice. an experience.
can we ponder how these quotes relate? how are they placed on the page? or the
spacing of words, or strokes. can you find
movement?
yourself?
I could go on, but I will let you play...



Wittgenstein is surely right that our emotions are not reducible to bodily feelings nor to any mere sensation; emotions instead involve a whole context of behavior and a background of language games, a whole form of life in which the emotion plays a part. (RS: 117)

RE: MICHEL FOUCAULT
 PLEASURE,
 EVEN
 WHEN
 IDENTIFIED
 WITH PLEASURABLE
 FEELINGS,
 CANNOT BE SIMPLY
 IDENTIFIED
 WITH
 BLIND SENSATION
 BECAUSE
 THE VERY ENJOYMENT
 OF SENSATION
 DEPENDS ON
 THE CONTEXT
 OR
 ACTIVITY THAT
 SHAPES
 ITS MEANING. (RS: 42)

Somatic development
 need not
 threaten robust
 political praxis;
 on the contrary,
 as Beauvoir
 recognizes, it can
 create
 the confidence
 and
 power that
 encourage such praxis.
 (RS: 91)

He (Merleau-Ponty)
 embraces the body's
 essential weaknesses,
 but then shows how these
 dimensions of
 ontological and
 epistemological
 limitation are a
 necessary part and
 parcel of our positive
 human capacities for
 having perspectives on
 objects and for having a
 world. (RS: 52)

In the forward-looking, melioristic spirit of
 pragmatism, Dewey sees body-mind unity
 less as an ontological given in which we
 can snugly rest than as a desired,
 progressive goal of dynamic, harmonious
 functioning that we should continually
 strive to attain.
 (RS: 185)

Re: William James
 From the simple but crucial physiological
 fact that our malleable but crucial physiological
 permits habit formation, the body of habit
 grows into a key factor in the body of habit
 also more broadly structural and moral life but
 society as a whole. (RS: 140)

Tomie Hahn 2008

About the Author

Tomie Hahn is a performer and ethnomusicologist. Her research spans a wide range of topics including: Japanese traditional performing arts, Monster Truck rallies, issues of identity and creative expression of multiracial individuals, and gestural control and extended human/computer interface in the performing arts. Her book, *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance* (Wesleyan University Press) was awarded the Alan P. Merriam Prize in 2008. She is an Associate Professor in the Arts Department at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. <http://www.arts.rpi.edu/tomie/>