

Editorial:

Body as a Performing Experiment: Steps Towards Practical Knowledge as a Philosophical Issue

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This thematic dossier contains a selection of lectures given by teaching participants at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj during the Blended Intensive Program “Practical Knowledge in Philosophy: Affectivity, Skills, and Knowing-How,” which took place in April and May 2023 and 2024.

The program aimed to highlight a kind of philosophy that, beyond its theoretical impulses, is born out of the need to respond to immediate problems before reflecting on complex structures of reality; it prefers to describe concrete relations to things and everyday activities before theorizing about the validity of some universal laws. Practical knowledge is nonetheless a type of knowledge that can account for its foundation and relate to theoretical discourse. But at its core, practical knowledge remains a mystery of the body situated in the world. The irreducibility of practical knowledge situates the agent in the world, illuminating its embodied dimensions and coordinates. Understanding practical knowledge requires combining different approaches: phenomenological, analytical, and historical-philosophical.

The first paper, entitled “Saying Farewell to the Body and its Comeback. Cartesian Dualism in the *Discourse* and the *Meditationes* together with a Sketch of a Phenomenological Continuation of the Body-Soul Problem” (**Alina Noveanu**) outlines a historical-philosophical incursion into the problem of the distinction between body and soul as it unfolds in the philosophies of Descartes and of those philosophers who recovered the Cartesian idea of *evidence as bodily lived truth*, as Schopenhauer and the phenomenologists. The emphasis is nevertheless not oriented towards the dualism of substance on which the *Meditations* and the *Discourse* have to insist to provide an argument for the immortality of the soul, but on the ontological meaning of epistemic investigations for Descartes as standing in a Platonic (and mathematic) tradition.

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Giuliana Gregorio focuses in her paper “*gnóthi seautón/epiméleia heautoú*: Michel Foucault and the Two Paths of Western Thought” on an apparent opposition that Foucault strongly represents when he assumes a radical change in philosophical attitude between the Ancient (Socratic) quest for wisdom linked to the (ethical) imperative of caring for one’s soul and the Cartesian reduction of this extensive understanding to an epistemological point of view. Concerning the dialogues *Alcibiades*, *Laches*, and *Apology*, the Socratic coherence between speech, thinking, and a philosophical life becomes evident, as well as the spiritual dimension that Foucault sees as an alternative discourse to the strictly philosophical (gnoseological) approach in Descartes’ *Meditations*. Still, as Gregorio shows, starting with the *Sixth Meditation* another possible way for an interpretation of Descartes’ philosophical intentions is possible. In the *Meditations*, one cannot ignore the dimension of practical exercise, which is also a central focus in the *Passions*, showing that Descartes was no stranger to philosophy’s existential meaning and practical dimension.

Cristina Venda explores the relationship between affectivity and imagination and the interplay between the dimensions of the voluntary and the involuntary as they appear throughout the work of Ricœur, but with focus on his *Lectures on Imagination 1975/2024*. Venda begins by reconstructing Ricœur’s phenomenological inquiry into the will and his rejection of naturalism, highlighting his focus on the affective dynamics between the body and the world. In his comprehensive project of recovery of the Cogito, rationality and affectivity are not opposed, but, as Venda argues with Ricœur, they are essentially connected. In this context, imagination plays an important part, as it does not consist in the pale residues of an encounter with reality but, as she quotes from the *Lectures...*, “an intention towards an affective-kinesthetic presence that is embodied in it”. The paper emphasizes the continuum between affectivity and imagination and the mediating part of the body in internalizing the experience of the world to value it properly and act on it.

In her contribution, **Elena Theodoropoulou** gives an account of her project “Philosophical Objects” in which she explores new possibilities of encountering and expressing under the premise that a Philosophical Object is any concept that a philosopher creates or elaborates in a deliberate philosophical way. The objects are considered as *unfinished areas of experimenting* regardless of the distinction of an inside - outside, a never-ending process, a performance requesting the interaction of a comprehensively involved performing subject beyond his intentional conscience. In this context, Theodoropoulou aims to rethink the role and means of philosophy itself, of the philosopher and his methods. By questioning “philosophical objects,” the project does not pursue the reinforcement of a particular philosophical tradition or idea (although there is an unmistakable link to phenomenology and structuralism); instead, it targets becoming “a vehicle of philosophical thought” and thus represents a “movement of practical philosophy.”