

strations in opposition to the ruling BJP's Citizen's Amendment Act were a series of innovative nonviolent actions that showed that these protestors should be seen as "the true inheritors of the nationalist project and the protectors of the Constitution" (p. 300).

A second part of the legacy is the memorialization of Gandhi, attempts at remembering and unremembering. As we have already seen, Lal writes that the many statues of Gandhi that dot the country "may be designed, in fact, to make one forget as much as remember" (2), while Ramaswamy describes the "mini-industry" that emerged around Gandhi's personal belongings ("companionable objects") as they found their way into museum collections (148–162). She also examines how contemporary artists have responded to the legacy of Gandhi, contributing to a melancholic, aesthetic afterlife. Her conclusion is worth quoting:

Herein lay the dilemma of a man who aspired to become zero. He was, instead, transformed into Mahatma, and frozen and petrified in and by objects that he spent a lifetime trying to jettison. These objects in turn have come to serve as proxy for his presence, in fact to the point of quite displacing him as a man and as a leader of a vast movement ... Ironically, but inevitably, as an excess of memory and over-remembering set in around such objects, a veritable 'empire of forgetting' takes hold around Mahatma's disobedient words and deeds, deemed too uncomfortable and inconvenient for moderns for whom life is anything but aspiring to become zero" (173).

This excellent book is an academically satisfying work. Each author throws new light on the career and work of Gandhi. But even more significantly, the authors successfully highlight the meaning of Gandhi today. Collectively, the essays show that Gandhi's example is a thorn in the side of right-wing ethno-nationalists, especially in his home territory of South Asia. His critique of 'modern civilization' in its current techno-feudal incarnation, seems more poignant than ever. His pointing to a spiritual lacuna at the centre of modern civilization seems relevant in the age of Big Data and Big Tech. Thus, Gandhi's example remains the primary inspiration for nonviolent campaigns of resistance the world over, from demonstrations and encampments against genocide in Palestine to the Global School Strike for Climate, from the marches of Blacks Lives Matter to the flash actions of Extinction Rebellion. Wherever the aim is nonviolent resistance and disobedience, whenever the aim is to provoke and unsettle, to disrupt the consensus and dismantle the pretensions and interrupt the narratives of imperialism, there we find the example of Gandhi at work. This book succeeds in showing that the complex meaning of Gandhi is alive in the age of post-truth politics.

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FOUCAULT'S AESTHETICS OF EXISTENCE AND SHUSTERMAN'S SOMAESTHETICS: ETHICS, POLITICS, AND THE ART OF LIVING. By V. Antoniol and S. Marino (Eds.), London & New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024. 208 pp.

With its nine papers, this volume constitutes the most thorough comparative study of Michel Foucault's and Richard Shusterman's views on the aesthetic and political significance of the body. For both thinkers, the challenge lies in rediscovering the subjective resources capable of initiating a process of self-transformation that is not merely intellectual, but also embodied, extra-cognitive, and rooted in the sensory and performative potential of the body. The detailed introduction by the editors, Valentina Antoniol and Stefano Marino, maps the paths through which these philosophers, though from different starting points and perspectives, converge on a similar conception of the body as the medium and stake of an ethical-political practice.

Foucault's trajectory in this regard is well known: having spent the 1970s analyzing power, disciplinary techniques that constrain the body, and biopolitical strategies that can either optimize or annihilate it, in the early 1980s he turned his attention to a genealogy of Western subjectivity. This new focus, spanning from Greek antiquity to early Christianity, examined autonomous practices of self-formation. The culmination of this line of inquiry appears in his course *The Courage of Truth*, which is largely devoted to the theme of cynical life and the cynics' capacity to make their bodies an expression of another, beautiful way of life – one in which the body serves as the sensuous foundation of ethical constitution, capable of being revived in our present.

While deeply influenced by Foucault, Shusterman grounds his theory in John Dewey's pragmatism. Rejecting any reduction of experience to its cognitive dimension, he introduces the concept of the *soma* to emphasize the body's dual status – as both a physical object in the world and the sentient subject of experience. Somaesthetics emerges thus as an interdisciplinary field that bridges bodily awareness, skilled performance, and self-cultivation. At the same time, it is a philosophical practice that explores how the body shapes our experiences, actions, and ways of living with others – and, in turn, how cultural, social, and technological forces condition our perception and transformation of the body as the sensitive core of subjectivity.

One notable merit of this volume is that it highlights the groundlessness of the alleged depoliticization of Foucault's thought in the 1980s, dismantling the stereotype of a philosopher who, after the *gauchistes* excesses of the previous decade, retreated into individualism or even advocated neoliberalism. The first paper, authored by Philippe Sabot, focuses on this matter through an analysis of Foucault remarks on dandyism. It demonstrates, on the one hand, that it cannot be reduced to an aesthetic retreat, as Sartre claimed in his work on Baudelaire, but should instead be understood as a way of engaging with reality that carries immediate political implications. On the other hand, Sabot shows how this transhistorical attitude finds an embodiment in anarchism – particularly in the individualist and iconoclastic anarchism of Max Stirner.

Naturally, one of the focal points of this collection is the issue of gender. Arianna Sforzini, a scholar deeply engaged with Foucauldian reflections on corporeality, foregrounds the gendered body as a site of «fundamental ambiguity, suspended between processes of subjectivation and de-subjectivation» (p. 56), given its position between the capacity to act and the constraints of social norms. Her analysis underscores the dual character of gendered performativity as both intimately embodied and irreducibly collective. Supporting this ambivalence of gender as both a public and private matter, Barbara Formis' contribution focuses on a reformulation of the notion of consent based on the Greek concept of *charis*, while Leszek Koczanowicz analyzes the 2020 Women's Strike in Poland as a profound political and cultural response centered on bodily autonomy that requires the development of new practical tools drawn by Shusterman and Foucault. Alongside gender, the issue of race naturally emerges among the focal themes of a philosophy of the body. In his contribution, Chris Voparil examines one of the fundamental problems associated with white ignorance: if the ethical practices presented by Shusterman and Foucault require that the subject *recognizes* the problems associated with their behavior and *wants* to change it, white blindness to the oppressive characteristics of whiteness requires the development of a new mode of white subjectivation.

Moreover, several essays offer a systematic analysis of the two authors' philosophies. From this point of view, Shusterman's essay constitutes, as the editors of the volume note, «a sort of barycenter within the book» (p. 16). After tracing the path that led him to develop the notion of *soma* and *somaesthetics*, he compares his position with those of Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault. While Hadot is criticized for neglecting the bodily dimension of ancient philosophical practices, Shusterman distances himself from Foucault's radical conception of making one's life a work of art, instead adopting an ameliorative approach focused on daily self-improvement. Moreover, unlike Foucault, Shusterman focuses on the ordinary pleasures of the body rather than extreme or liminal experiences¹.

The three contributions by Daniele Lorenzini, Vincent M. Colapietro, and Martin Jay offer different perspectives on the political role of the body. Lorenzini shows how the activity of Cynic

philosophers stands out in Foucault's thinking precisely because of its public value as a bodily manifestation of truth and a denunciation of everything that is inessential in our behavior – thus overlapping with what Foucault calls a «historical ontology of ourselves». From a similar point of view, Colapietro redefines self-care as a historically situated and collective practice, where subjectivity is constituted through somatic, cultural, and relational pathways, without presupposing a solitary, sovereign subject. Finally, Jay proposes – against Shusterman's theory of *soma* – to maintain the duality between the lived body (*Leib*) and the physical body (*Körper*) in order to establish a new politics of life and vulnerable corporeality that rejects both the redemptive logic of sacrifice for a greater good and the biopolitical management of death.

As this brief overview shows, the volume opens rich and compelling directions for further inquiry. It not only presents fresh contributions to the often-saturated field of Foucault studies, but it also brings Shusterman's somaesthetics into productive dialogue with Foucauldian thought, showing how his pragmatist approach to embodied experience can enrich the political and ethical stakes of philosophical reflection on the body. Pushing the slogan «the personal is political» to its most radical expression, these studies focus on our physicality, our pleasures, and our capacity to act on ourselves and in the world, in the name of an autonomy that is not abstract but rooted in the very fibers and tissues of our being.

Notes

¹ Shusterman notes that Foucault paid little attention to the visual arts, especially painting (p. 132). However, I would argue the opposite: the introduction to *The Order of Things* on Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, the Tunisian lectures on Manet, and his analysis of Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* all suggest that painting played a significant role in his thought.

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SPEAKING WITH NATURE: THE ORIGINS OF INDIAN ENVIRONMENTALISM. By Ramachandra Guha. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2024, 407 pp.

Ramachandra Guha's *Speaking with Nature: The Origins of Indian Environmentalism* is an enlightening narrative of Indian Environmental thoughts, covering a span of one and a half centuries, beginning from the mid-nineteenth century to the last decade of the twentieth century. As a veteran historian and intellectual, Guha reflects upon the thoughts of Indian pioneer thinkers, through a series of essays, whose ideas anticipated the debates of modern environmentalism, pertaining to the past, present and future of human relations with the natural world. Guha aims to offer something distinguished that fills the void of Indian voices in the global environmental debates. In doing so, he challenges both neoliberal developmental ideas and the romanticisation of rudimentary practices, offering a distinct path of critical enquiry, ethical restraint, and a pluralistic approach.

Beginning with Introduction, the book points out that Indian environmentalism, unlike the West (whose environmentalism is rooted in elite aesthetic engagement of naturalist John Muir and wild-life biologist Aldo Leopold), has its basis in grassroot initiatives such as peasants' movement (like the Chipko), tribals' harmonious co-existence with nature, and women's struggles against exploitation of natural resources. Assimilating the key figures of Indian ecological thought like Radhakamal Mukerjee, J.C. Kumarappa, Mahatma Gandhi and others, Guha underlines how their philosophies and activism shaped an ethical and intellectual basis for environmental consciousness, thus invoking a new wave of Indian environmentalism centred around the provoked challenges of climate change.