

KEYNOTE

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*The Dys/Appearance of Material Bodies:
Entangled Emergences, Involved Reflexivities and the
Problem of the Habitus*

Body studies emerged during the 1980s alongside a concern to address residual categories within, and provide new physical understandings of, dominant conceptualizations of society and social action. In so doing, they opposed Cartesian ideas that we are homo clausus, sealed from external influences. Focusing instead on how forms of embodied permeability varied culturally and historically, they asked us to explore how bodies are turned into specific practices, by which type of external forces and what role, if any, the body has in structuring those forces that structure it. Notions of the habitus proved popular in addressing these issues, but were undermined by: 1) turns to the ›new materialism‹ involving novel understandings of the liveliness and entanglement of matter within and beyond the flesh, and

2) a ›new reflexivity‹ which insists on the inoperability of habitual orientations in global contexts marked by social instability, disintegration and discontinuity. This paper builds on and seeks to go beyond these developments by engaging with Latour's (2011) ›multi realist‹ recognition of the instauration of spheres of activity, which can shape decisively human experience in particular ways. It does this by exploring the making of the religious habitus as a means of differentiating the worldly from other-worldly, enframing the former in the latter, and transforming embodied human experience in ways that impart a particular materiality, reflexivity and directionality to life. In this context, religion and embodiment become central to social theory and to our understanding of the contemporary era.

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