



Recovering the Body: A Philosophical Story

Carol Collier

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Following the metaphysical and epistemological threads that have led to our modern conception of the body as a machine, the book explores views of the body in the history of philosophy. Its central thesis is that the Cartesian paradigm, which has dominated the modern conception of the body (including the development and practice of medicine), offers an incomplete and even inaccurate picture. This picture has become a *reductio ad absurdum*, which, through such current trends as the practice of extreme body modification, and futuristic visions of downloading consciousness into machines, could lead to the disappearance of the biological body. Presenting Spinoza's philosophy of the body as the road not followed, the author asks what Spinoza would think of some of our contemporary body visions. It also looks to two more holistic approaches to the body that offer hope of recovering its true meaning: the practice of yoga and alternative medicine. The metaphysical analysis is accompanied throughout by a tripartite historical and epistemological analysis: the body as an obstacle to knowledge (exemplified by Plato and our modern-day futurists), the body as an object of knowledge (exemplified by Descartes and modern scientific medicine); and the body as a source of knowledge (exemplified by the Stoics, and the philosophy of yoga).



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