

Professor Aud Sissel Hoel, Norwegian University of Science and Technology:
“Bodies and Technologies as
Measures of Being”

07.09.2017 – 10.00-11.30

Langelandsgade 141, building 1586, room 114

This presentation expands on an idea in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's later thinking of the body as a standard or measurement, reworked as the “measuring body” (Hoel and Carusi 2017). In contrast to his earlier approach to embodied perception, which is characterized by its descending into incarnated meaning, Merleau-Ponty's later thinking emphasizes an expansive dynamic that does not stop at sensory perception but extends into and comprises intellectual life. The notion of the measuring body further accentuates this expansive dynamic, reconfiguring the perceiving body into a symbolically and technologically distributed measuring body. This implies granting a relative agency and autonomy to bodies and tools, whose “non-human” modes of operation serve to shift the interrogating capacities of the perceiving body in productive ways.

The presentation proceeds to discuss the way that these late developments in Merleau-Ponty's thinking resonate with current attempts to displace entrenched dualisms and offer alternative ontologies, including posthumanist and new materialist approaches such as Karen Barad's (Barad 2007). It concludes by reflecting on the implications of such an approach for developing an “onto-aesthetics” – an aesthetics that, by recognizing the ontological import of bodies and technologies (Hoel and van der Tuin 2013), is neither subject-oriented nor object-oriented. By conceiving bodies and technologies as “measures of being” (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 124), it starts more radically in the middle of things.

The lecture is organized by the junior research group Recalcitrant Aesthetics and is open to all.