

COLOMBETTI, Giovanna. *The Feeling Body*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2014. xviii + 270 pp. Cloth, \$42.00—It is tempting to locate our thoughts and feelings strictly inside our brains (as opposed to, say, the whole body or outside the body altogether). Many succumb to temptation and even identify people with their brains. But a growing number of cognitive scientists and philosophers dissent. Their research programs take as their starting point alternative hypotheses that locate cognition, perception, and feeling within the human body as a whole.

Colombetti takes these programs one step further. The central thesis her book develops, explores, and defends is that affect is *pervasive*—throughout the human body, and throughout living things in general. This is the sort of thesis one might expect a writer to propose only to—through a series of qualifications—eventually deny. Colombetti is not in that business. She means what she says here, and her thesis is as bold as it sounds. It implies, for example, that even single-celled organisms enjoy affect appropriate to their lowly station; as she puts it, “Life is thus always ‘minded’ or ‘mindful,’ and the richer a living form, the richer its mind.”

The reader may be startled to learn that all living things have minds; indeed, this is just the sort of thesis that garners incredulous stares. Interestingly, Colombetti does not address this kind of worry head-on. But she does give the ingredients to cook up a reply. It would go as follows. The mind is constitutively affective. Affectivity is a lack of indifference and a sensibility or interest for one’s existence. And even the simplest living things “have a capacity to be sensitive to what matters to them” because they have a (possibly nonconscious) “perspective or point of view from which the world acquires meaning.” These capacities and perspectives are, in turn, a matter of an organism’s propensity toward self-organization and the ability to generate and maintain structured order. Organisms engage with their environments and their own parts in complex, purposeful, and patterned ways. These dynamical patterns of self-organization sometimes suffice for emotion, but in all cases suffice for sense-making and affect. And so, all living things have minds.

Emotions, then, are not the only kind of affect, on Colombetti’s view. But they are an important one. Accordingly, she spends a fair chunk of the book working through, developing, and, where appropriate, criticizing extant accounts of emotions from cognitive science. Colombetti argues that there need be no palette of “basic emotions” out of which others are built, that emotions are best construed as dynamical patterns, and that the body enters into emotion experience, though not always as its intentional object.

The book concludes with chapters on “neurophenomenology” (a hybrid research program integrating third-person and first-person methods) and on the mechanisms by which we understand others and their mental states.

Colombetti attempts to situate her approach historically along a number of dimensions. Whether she succeeds is in part a matter of taste. We are treated, for example, to an exegesis of Spinoza on *conatus* and Heidegger on *Dasein*. But the exegesis does not go deep, and one is left with little sense of whether or why Spinoza and Heidegger were correct in their views on these topics.

This is a thought-provoking book. It raises at least as many questions as it proposes to settle. For example: suppose Colombetti is right and that all living things enjoy some degree of affectivity. What (if any) normative consequences follow? How does the enactive approach impinge on debates in animal or environmental ethics? And what are the consequences of Colombetti’s enactive approach for the metaphysics and philosophy of mind? Do they bear on debates about pan-psychism and the ubiquity of mind it alleges? And do they support any precise view about how we relate to our bodies, whether by identity, parthood, constitution, or something else besides? These are interesting questions. Researchers swimming in Colombetti’s wake will, no doubt, take them up and find them fruitful.—Andrew M. Bailey, *Yale-NUS College*