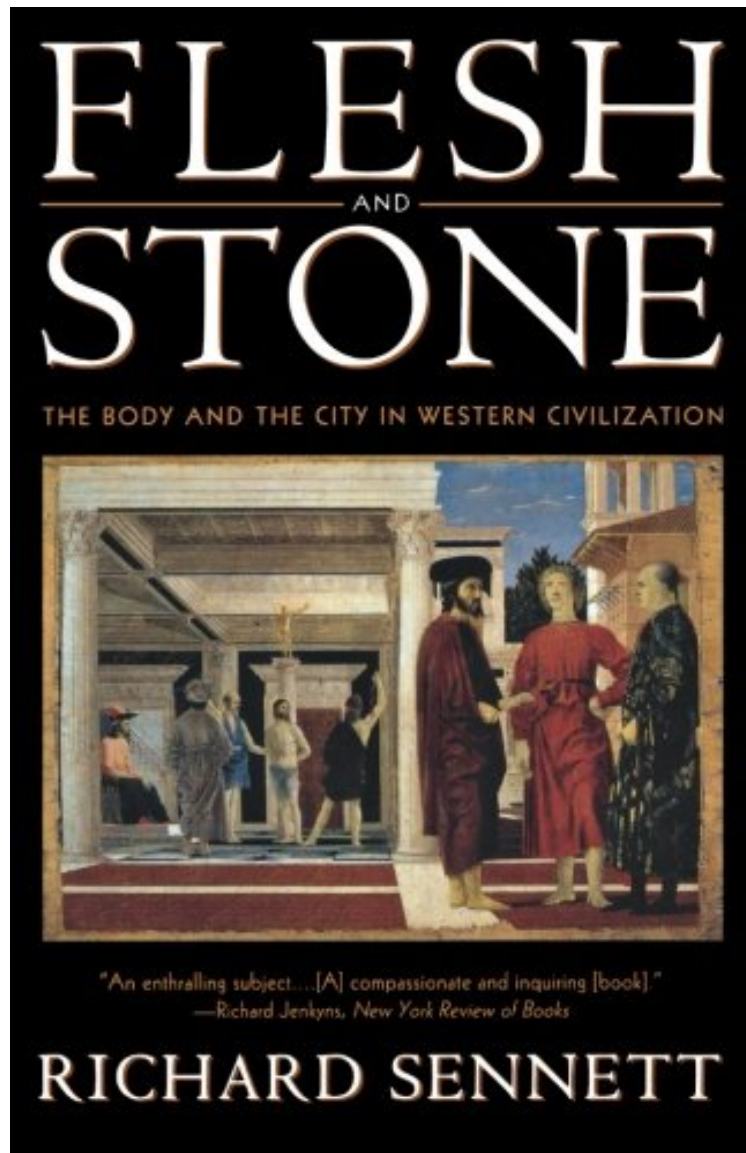


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Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization

Richard Sennett

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#582072 in Books Richard Sennett 1996-03-17 1996-03-17 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.30 x .80 x 6.20l, 1.34 #File Name: 0393313913432 pages Flesh and Stone The Body and the City in Western Civilization | File size: 58.Mb

Richard Sennett : Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Bodies in MotionBy PanopticonmanRichard Sennett, a colleague

and friend of Michel Foucault's, with whom he began working on the conception of this work back in the 70s, examines in *FLESH AND STONE* how ideas about the human body are reflected in the built environments of cities and the behaviors and perceptions of its citizens from ancient Athens to modern New York with stops along the way in Rome, Venice, Paris, and London. It's an extraordinarily rich work, deep in scope, scholarly erudition and insight. Particularly fascinating is the third section where Sennett makes the case that "A new master image of the body took form" through the discoveries William Harvey made about the circulation of the blood, that "Harvey launched a scientific revolution in the understanding of the body: its structure, its healthy state, and its relation to the soul" (page 255). Sennett notes that Harvey's discovery began a medical revolution, a "medical revolution [which] seemed to have substituted health for morality as a standard of human happiness among those social engineers by motion and circulation" (ibid). Adam Smith took Harvey's insight into the connection between freely circulating blood and health and used it to claim, according to Sennett, that the "free market of labor and goods operat[es] much like freely circulating blood within the body [and brought] similar life giving consequences" (page 256). Sennett goes on to say that a consequence of human mobility in the service of economic circulation promoting human beings increasingly desensitized to their environment, resulting in cities "which have succumbed to the dominant value of circulation" (page 256). (On this last point, I'm reminded of Robert Moses' destruction of the social fabric of neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens in order to move traffic around the New York metropolis.) The idea of freely circulating blood as promoter of good health was reflected then and now in urban designs where new "arteries" and "veins" were constructed for the free circulation of people and goods and waste, e.g., new boulevards, underground sewer systems, etc. Similarly, around the same time human skin was discovered to be instrumental in the circulation of air in the body. This resulted in more frequent bathing to open pores clogged with dirt, the loosening of clothing, and in terms of cities, the introduction of "lungs" in the form of parks and the paving and cleaning of city streets. Highly recommended. 16 of 17 people found the following review helpful. This will (may) change your view on the world.... By Randy For those who are interested and curious about where our modern habits attitudes about our bodies and its interactions in urban space this is the book for you. Easy to read, and informative, yet very poignant and it is a book that is able to be read on many different levels. Richard Sennett takes us from ancient Athens and its fixation with voice, logos, and democracy. Why sitting in the theatre is weakness and brings man to a passive posture. With pit-stops in Imperial Rome, Venice, Revolutionary Paris, and other cities, Sennett layers his logic and builds from the ground up a forceful argument to the reader. The last stop is modern New York City, a multi-cultural center full of dissonance and passivity. This chapter is especially powerful, because it strikes a chord in our psyche. Each chapter is a pit-stop in history displaying the condition of the flesh in response to the stone of the city. Sennett's thesis is that the continual acceleration of life due to, in part by forces of capitalism, have made man a passive player in life. He discusses this against the backdrop of christianity and its change and flux due to forces of the state and commerce. A very interesting thesis that forces you to challenge your beliefs in the world, and maybe your own religion. It may irk some that this book has such a Christian-oriented slant, but Sennett comes right out and states why he is doing it in the beginning. This book deals also with the philosophy of Phenomenology. Other readings by Howard Kunstler, Derrida and Heidegger are also recommended, but not necessary. Overall, a very superb book. 10 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Urbanity and urbanicity By Saul Bouschett If you have a worldview that has been forged and tempered in the fire of multi-directional, multi-disciplinary study, this book is not likely to shatter or alter it in any way, as the previous reviewer claims. It is a brief, pit-stoppy tour of some of the key cities of the West, coupled with sociological descriptions of people's behavior in them. The idea is that the conception of the body went hand-in-hand with the built environment, and vice versa. Chicken and the egg. The historical tour does have some profitable moments: The Greeks thought men were men by virtue of having more body heat and thus it was a manly thing to wear as little as possible and hang out in the front part of the house where it was drafty, while the womenfolk with smaller fires in their bellies huddled to warm themselves in the back. Harvey's discovery of blood circulation becomes a city planning concept in the 19th century and revolutionizes urban space as our forebears we know it. Etc. The really interesting thing here is the physiological model that always looms in the metaphor of city as body. The author, like many modern persons, gives you the impression that while the ancients had a great sense of space and community, they were off on their understanding of human physiology. If only he were more familiar with the theoretical foundation of Chinese medicine! Perhaps then he would not think that the Greeks were so entirely wrong in their conjectures, even if they did not formulate them so clearly. The entire thesis of the book builds up to the assertion that we moderns are lost and have no idea what makes for a great city, by which he means a gathering of spaces that reflect and "celebrates" (god, I hate that word used in that way!) a solid sense of community and belonging. But this conclusion is not surprising since the author's entire oeuvre for the past 30 years has been centered around the very same idea of modern alienation and its causes. So, read it for the tour, but don't base your own conclusions on Sennett's. The real value of the book lies in its introduction of topics that you'd do well to go research on your own elsewhere. Especially good for undergrads under a good teacher.

This vivid history of the city in Western civilization tells the story of urban life through bodily experience. *Flesh and*

Stone is the story of the deepest parts of life how women and men moved in public and private spaces, what they saw and heard, the smells that assailed them, where they ate, how they dressed, the mores of bathing and of making love all in the architecture of stone and space from ancient Athens to modern New York. Early in *Flesh and Stone*, Richard Sennett probes the ways in which the ancient Athenians experienced nakedness, and the relation of nakedness to the shape of the ancient city, its troubled politics, and the inequalities between men and women. The story then moves to Rome in the time of the Emperor Hadrian, exploring Roman beliefs in the geometrical perfection of the body. The second part of the book examines how Christian beliefs about the body related to the Christian city the Venetian ghetto, cloisters, and markets in Paris. The final part of *Flesh and Stone* deals with what happened to urban space as modern scientific understanding of the body cut free from pagan and Christian beliefs. *Flesh and Stone* makes sense of our constantly evolving urban living spaces, helping us to build a common home for the increased diversity of bodies that make up the modern city.

From Publishers Weekly Sennett (*The Fall of Public Man*) has produced an engrossing history of the city told through its people's movements: how they dressed, bathed and made love, where they ate, what they saw and heard. He first examines Athenians' celebration of nakedness and the Romans' use of geometrical images derived from the human body to impose order on their imperial realm. Next he brings us to the 13th-century Paris of Notre Dame Cathedral, where burgeoning enterprises challenged the Christian sense of place and community. A New York University sociologist, Sennett discusses the creation of Venice's Jewish ghetto in the 16th century, then links William Harvey's discoveries about blood circulation to individualized movement and bodily freedom in revolutionary 18th-century Paris. In the modern multicultural metropolis, he says the buildings contribute to a lack of emotional connection, as well as monotony and sensory deprivation. Sennett forces us to rethink architecture, social history and urban design and planning. Photos. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Sennett (sociology, NYU) has constructed a truly unique study of the human history of cities. He tackles the history of the development of the city in terms of the human body's function and perception. He describes the city's activities in the terminology of physiology (i.e., veins, arteries), in political terms (i.e., class, race), and through other labeling and divisive terms. His examination includes city plans, architectural design and public transportation, and the movement of peoples. Sennett's examples span the continuum of Western civilization. He explores the concept of the body in Athens, Rome, Paris, Venice, London, and New York. His prose is direct and accessible to even the most beginning student. However, his "body" metaphors at times stray from his purpose, diluting his otherwise fascinating presentation. Recommended for academic libraries and only larger public libraries. Jenny Presnell, Miami Univ. Libs., Oxford, Ohio Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist In such books as *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* (1990) and this highly original, multidisciplinary history, Sennett explores the link between perception of our physical self and the shape of our cities. He has selected six cities at significant points in their evolution, beginning with ancient Athens and the cult of nakedness. For the city's male citizens, exposure was proof of strength and power, and they displayed their bodies in public places notable for their openness and airiness. In Hadrian's Rome, on the other hand, the "visual order" of symmetrical design reassured a populace more attuned to the body's vulnerability to illness, age, and violence. Moving forward in time, Sennett analyzes shifting attitudes toward the body, spirituality, health, sexuality, politics, prejudice, and economics, uncovering rarely considered facts about life in the Jewish ghetto of Renaissance Venice, in Paris during its medieval and revolutionary eras, in Edwardian London, and in contemporary New York. In each setting, he demonstrates the ways in which increased medical and scientific knowledge influenced the structure of cities as well as the interface between church and state, body and soul. Donna Seaman