

Class gb

ASCETIC FASTING: NOTIONS OF THE BODY

Outline

- The ideal body and fasting
 - an early Christian quote
 - our cultural ideal: the supermodel
 - questions the ideals raise
- Notions of the body in antiquity
 - ethics and body management
 - the relation of food to fluid production and sexual desire
 - medical conceptions of the female body
 - the one-sex body

THE IDEAL BODY AND FASTING

The Ideal Body and Fasting

Pseudo-Athanasius, *De virginitate* 7 (300s CE)

Observe what fasting does: it heals diseases, dries up the bodily humors, casts out demons, chases away wicked thoughts, makes the mind clearer and the heart pure, sanctifies the body and places the person before the throne of God.... For fasting is the life of the angels, and the one who makes use of it has angelic rank.

The Ideal Body and Fasting

Our Cultural Ideal: The Supermodel



The Ideal Body and Fasting

Our Cultural Ideal: The Supermodel




Victoria's Secret was able to buy air time on *Dancing with the Stars* and *American Idol* in late April 2010 with the ad on the left, but Lane Bryant's ad on the right was not allowed to air in prime time by Fox or ABC. Lane Bryant cried discrimination; after all, the only difference was the size of the model (Ashley Graham on the right is a size 16).

A supporter of Lane Bryant posted this spoof of the Victoria's Secret ad campaign on YouTube (21 April 2010)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9oG4gINm4>

The Ideal Body and Fasting

Questions the Ideals Raise



Why is fasting an ideal?
Why is fasting an ideal more for women than men?

If our culture is so much more "liberated" than antiquity, why does this erasing of women persist?

Religious beliefs don't exist in isolation. They are shaped by (and shape) other cultural influences:

- Medical notions
- Philosophical practices and ideals
- Mass media and popular culture
- Historical circumstances

NOTIONS OF THE BODY IN ANTIQUITY

Notions of the Body in Antiquity

1. What relationship does ethics have to body management in Greco-Roman philosophy? (pp. 27-52)
2. How does food affect fluid production and sexual desire? (pp. 53-64)
3. What are some ancient medical conceptions of the female body, especially the relationship of the stomach to the uterus? (pp. 64-78)
4. What is the one-sex body? (Laquer's idea; start on p. 64)
