

# **BODY AS A DISCOURSE NEGOTIATION**

Body, Health and Society

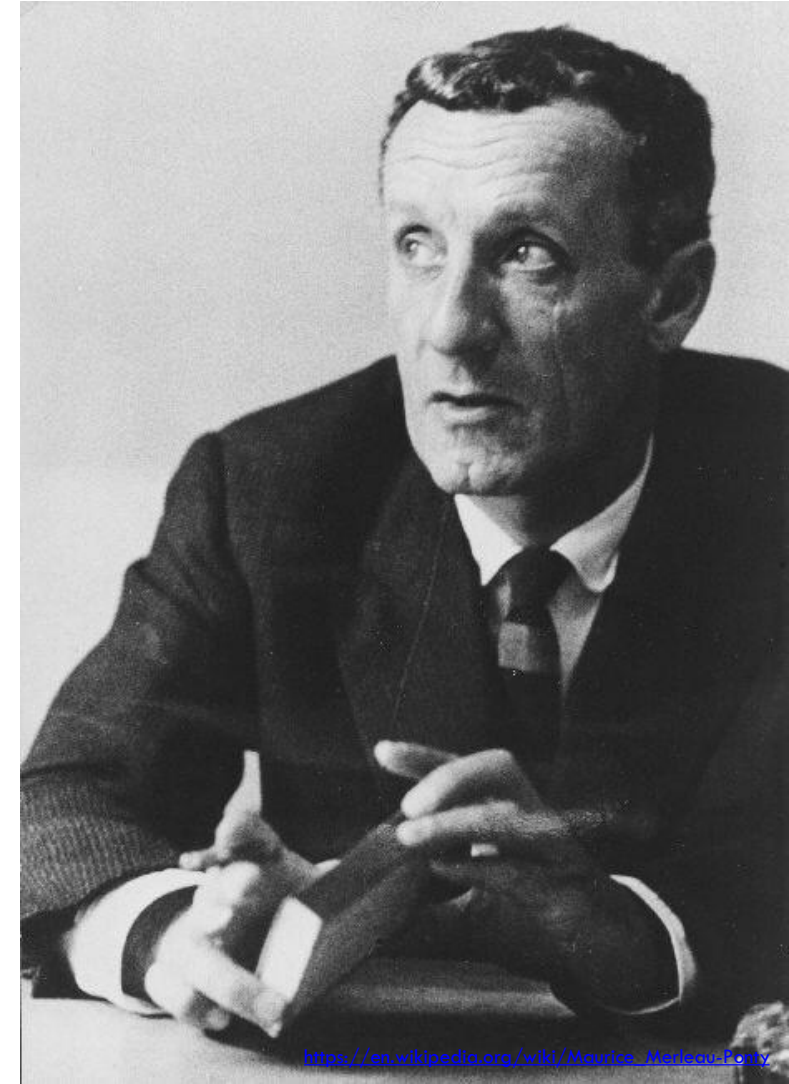


# OUTLINE

- revision
- reading reflections
- scientific discourse – culture – gender stereotypes
- discussion

# REVISING MERLEAU-PONTY APPROACH TO BODY

- Body
- Subject
- Object
- World
- Perception
- Movement
- Habit
- Meaning



# UNDERSTANDING THE MAIN CATEGORIES:

## READING DISCUSSION

- **Body**
  - Is I.
  - A mediator of the world.
  - Grouping of lived-through meaning.
- **Subject**
  - I am (acting and perceiving) body.
- **World**
  - Our way of using the body (perceiving + moving).
  - Objects existence conditioned by our body.
- **Perception**
  - Bodily way of being in the world, meaning creation.
- **Movement**
  - Bodily way of being in the world, meaning creation.
- **Habit**
  - Process of grasping meaning performed by the body.
- **Meaning**
  - An act of thought?
  - Created by the way, we relate to smth through our body.

# INTRODUCTION P. 139

A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is to am at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made upon it independently of any representation. Motility, then, is not as it were a handmaid of consciousness, transporting the body to that point in space of which we have formed a representation beforehand. In order that we may be able to move out body towards an object, the object must first exist for it, our body must not belong to the realm of the „in-itself“. Objects no longer exist for the arm of the apraxic and this is what causes it to remain immobile. Cases of pure apraxia in which the perception of the space remains unaffected, in which even the „intellectual notion of the gesture to be made: does not appear to be obscured, and yet in which the patient cannot copy a triangle; cases of constructive apraxia, in which the subject shows no gnostic disturbance except as regards the localization of stimuli on his body and yet is incapable of copying a cross, a v or o, all prove that the body has its world and that objects or space may be present to our knowledge but not to our body.

# SOME IMPORTANT QUOTES

„139: body inhabits space and time

144: habit – neither a form of knowledge, nor involuntary action; it is the body which understands in the acquisition of habit

145: body a mediator of a world

146: body is essentially expressive space; the body is our general medium for having a world

150: I am not in front of my body, I am in it, or rather – I am it

151: our body is comparable to a work of art (poem)

152: habit enables us to understand a general synthesis of our own body; habit is both, motor and perceptual, because it lies between explicit perception and actual movement

153: every perceptual habit is a motor habit and here, equally the process of grasping a meaning is performed by the body; our body is not an object for „I think“ it is a grouping of lived-through meanings“

# CONCLUSION P. 147

The Cogito was the coming to self-awareness of this inner core. But all meaning was *ipso facto* conceived as an act of thought, as the work of a pure I, and although for the variety of experience, for the element of senselessness in it, for the contingency of contents. Bodily experience forces us to acknowledge an imposition of meaning which is not the work of a universal constituting consciousness, a meaning which clings to certain contents. My body is that meaning core which behaves like a general function, and which nevertheless exists, and is susceptible to disease. In it we learn to know that union of essence and existence which we shall find again in perception generally, and which we shall then have to describe more carefully.



# **BODY AS A DISCOURSE**



# THE STORY

NUKLEUS MEDICAL MEDIA, EDUCATIONAL ANIMATION OF THE PROCES OF FERTILIZATION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OvgQW6FG4>

- Pay attention to the gender stereotypes, mentioned in the video.
- Make notes.

# REVISION

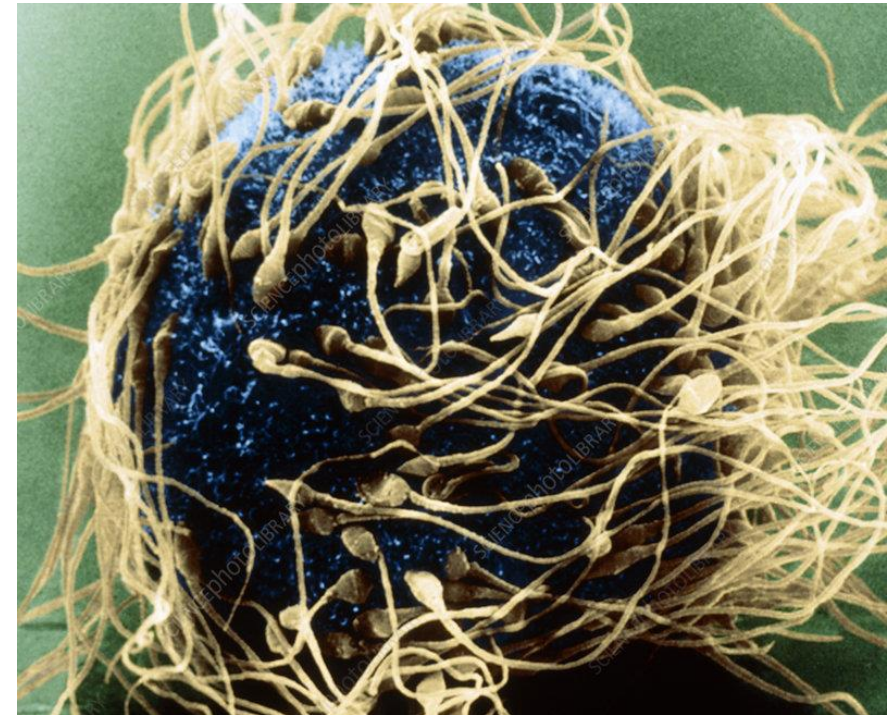
- embodiment vs. symbolic body/social body; body techniques; normative of social situation; habitus-field; docile bodies...
  - body – a locus of symbolism and mean of expression
  - body – locus of culturally patterned behaviour
  - body – the product and mean of participation in social situation
  - body – the main locus of social practice: product and generative principle of social organization
  - body – the locus and mean of power relations reproduction

# MARTIN: THE EGG AND THE SPERM

- How were the texts for reading?

## Situating the reading

- time
- space
- field
- methodology
- What is the text about?
- What is the main argument?
- Questions (smth. not clear)/ Comments (smth. not agreed with)?
  - √
  - +
  - -
  - ?

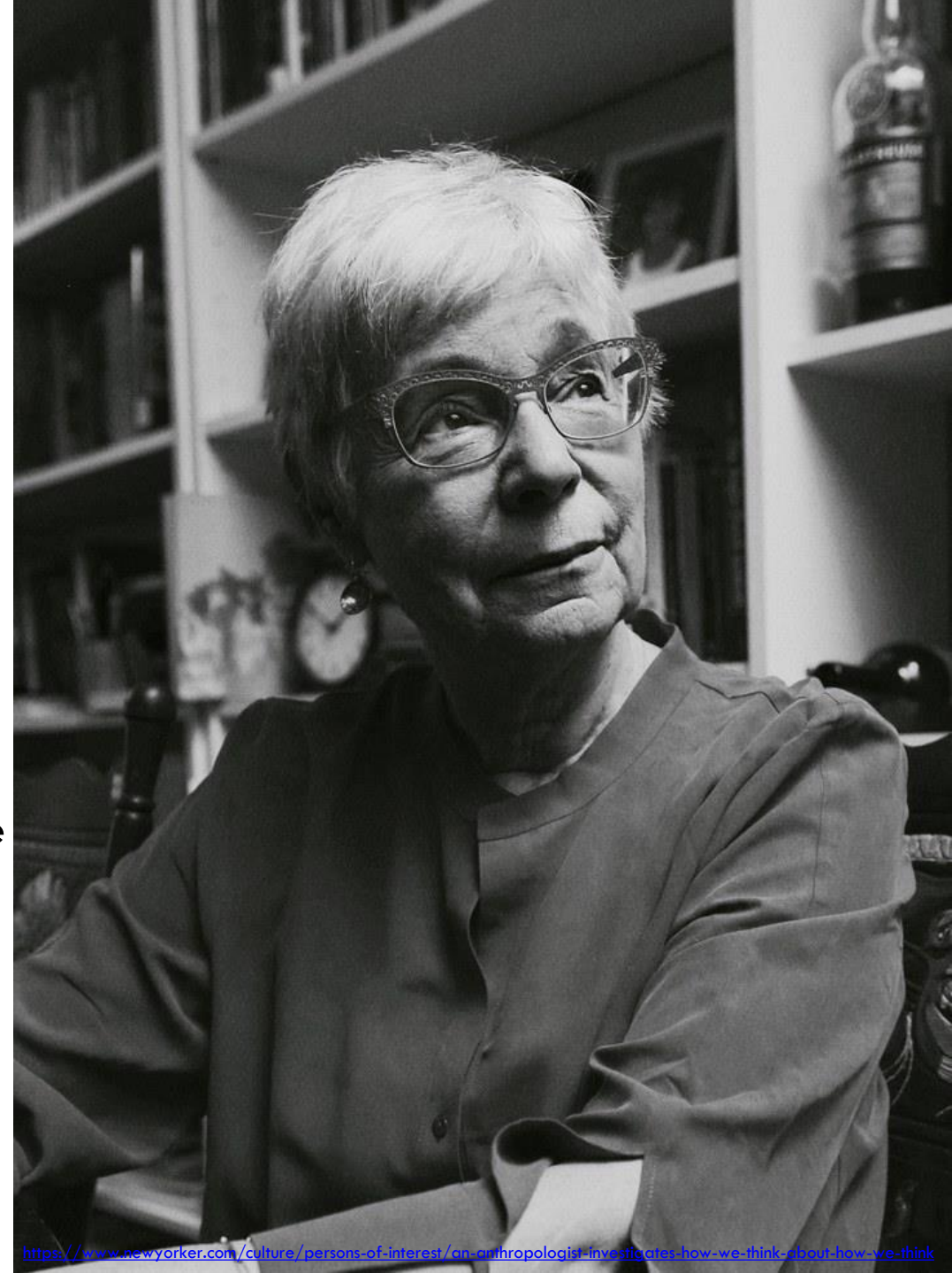


<https://www.sciencephoto.com/media/312601/view/sem-of-sperm-on-egg-during-fertilisation>

# EMILY MARTIN

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily\\_Martin\\_\(anthropologist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily_Martin_(anthropologist))

- \* 1944
- **US sinologist, anthropologist, feminist**
- professor of socio-cultural anthropology at New York University
- argues that current scientific literature is gender-biased, and that such bias has become entrenched in our language
- **Work**
  - Martin, E. (1987) *The Woman in the Body*.
  - Martin, E. (1991) *The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles*.



# EGG AND SPERM: THE SCIENTIFIC FAIRY TALE

FIND GENDER SPECIFIC WORDS/ PHRASES RELATED TO:

- female cycle – menstruation (417-418)
- spermatogenesis (418, 2)
- ovulation (418, 3)
- female reproductive organs (419, 1)
- oogenesis (419, 2)
  
- alternatives suggested? (419, 2, 4)
- argument (420, 1)

# NEW RESEARCH, OLD IMAGERY

- new research (420, 3)
  
- new imagery
  - Egg zona (421, 4; 422, 1)
  - Sperm-egg connection (422, 2)
  - Again (423, 3)
  - Alternative suggestion?



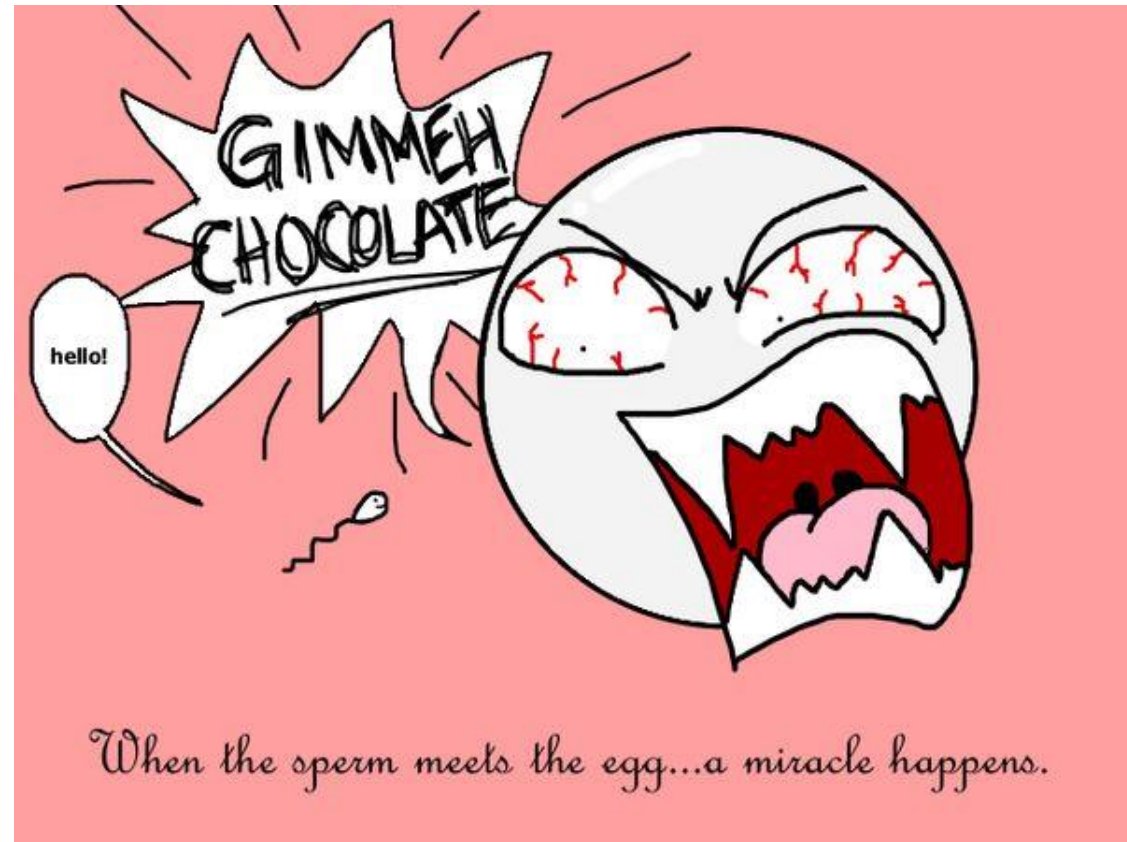
# MAIN ARGUMENT?

P.424: 2, 3

# READING REFLECTIONS

MARTIN, E. (1991) THE EGG AND THE SPERM: HOW SCIENCE HAS CONSTRUCTED A ROMANCE BASED ON STEREOTYPICAL MALE-FEMALE ROLES, *SIGNS* 16(3), PP 485-501.

- What is scientific imagery?
- What is a discourse in the case of Martin's approach?
- What is the relationship between cultural notions and scientific discourse as introduced by Martin?
- Is the scientific discourse of gender influenced/influencing the unequal distribution of power in society? How?
- How the nature-culture dichotomy in relation to body works in Martin's example?





# DISCUSSION

- Relation to the Douglas', Goffman's, Foucault's and phenomenological approach to the body?
- Other example of gender stereotypes reproduction in human biology?

# NEXT CLASS

## **Body as a locus of cultural resistance**

### **reading**

- Ong, Aihwa (1988): The Production of Possession: Spirits and the Multinational Corporation in Malaysia. *American Ethnologist* 15/1: 28-42

### **guiding questions**

- What is medicalization?
- How is spirit possession interpreted by:
  - Psychologists, medical doctors, managers (policy makers), anthropologists?
- What is the aim of these people in relation to spirit possessions under the study?
- How should be dealt with it according to these people?
- How the nature-culture relation could be interpreted on the basis of this study?
- What is the relation between body, culture, and power in the example described?

### **discussion questions**

- Relate the paper to the Douglas', Foucault's and Merleau-Ponty' approach to the body.
  - i.e. apply the theory of social body, docile bodies and embodiment on the example analyzed by Ong.