

TECHNIQUES OF THE BODY: BODY AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL PHENOMENON

Body, Health and Society

CLASS OUTLINE

- Finishing the introduction
- Marcel Mauss
- Reading reflections
 - Exercise
- Discussion



BODY IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

(LOCK 1993)

Body as a medium of social interaction might seem a core of anthropological research

- 17th cent + * modern science
- Cartesian assumption – the world is made by the thinking nonmaterial element and by material substance, rationally accessible
- objective vs. subjective
- → body falls into the domain of natural sciences
- body = universal biological base for a cultural filling
- from 20th cent 70' - the interest from the area of social sciences
- decentralization of the physical body from the domain of natural science question of the assumption of western epistemology – a basic for a production of natural facts
- relativization of the dichotomies nature vs. culture, self vs. others, mind vs. body

STUDY OF THE BODY AND PRAXIS

SOACIAL CHANGES THAT HELP TO TURN TO BODY IN SOCIAL THEORY (FRASER, GRECO 2005:2)

- rise of „somatic society“ (Turner 1996: 6)
 - transition to post-industrial society
 - rise of opportunities for leisure
 - importance of consumption
 - erosion of „puritanical orthodoxy“ (Fraser, Greco 2005: 2)
 - legitimization of pleasure – bodily hedonism
- transformation of intimacy (Giddens 1991 a)
 - body as a vehicle of new emotional intensities in interpersonal interaction
- shift in demographic structure of western societies
- epidemiological shift
 - „no man`s land between health and disease“
 - still not possible curing conditions with life-threatening potential
 - illnesses integrated into patterns of work and leisure
 - living with illness makes body a problematic aspect of life
 - emphasis on prevention
 - the body no longer province of specialist
- development of biomedical technologies
 - limits of human body, personhood and identity

TECHNIQUES OF THE BODY READING:

MARCEL MAUSS

- How was the text for reading?

Situating the reading

- time
- space
- methodology
- mainstream? (p. 82 - 83)

- What is the text about?

- What is the main argument?

- Questions/ Comments?

MARCEL MAUSS (1872-1950)

- French sociologist and anthropologist
- regarded for a founder of French Social Anthropology
 - since 1901 École pratique des hautes études „history of religion and primitive nations“
 - founder of a French Sociologist Institute (1924) and Institute of Ethnology (1926)
 - since 1931 professor of sociology - College de France
 - published and leaded L'Année Sociologique
- background, work
 - Student of Durkheim, teacher of Lévi-Strauss
 - No own fieldwork – built on secondary data
 - **Through the description and classification diverse societies and definition of theirs structural similarities the aim was**
 - **TO UNDERSTAND THE GENERAL DIMENSION OF SOCIAL LIFE**
 - **The Gift** (Essai sur le don, 1924)



GUIDING QUESTIONS

MAUSS, MARCEL (2006) [1935]. TECHNIQUES OF THE BODY *IN TECHNIQUES, TECHNOLOGY AND CIVILIZATION BY NATHAN SCHLANGER*. PP. 77-96.

- What are techniques of the body?
- How they are acquired?
- Are all the ways of handling body techniques? Which are not and how are they acquired?
- Are they conscious / unconscious?
- What is habitus?

EXERCISE 1.

- techniques vs. tools (techniques vs. rites) (str. 82, 6-9)
- techniques as one type of action (str. 82, 6-9)
- techniques of body vs. other types of action (str. 83, 1)
- How people know, how to use their bodies? – how to be a good man (str. 83, 3; 85, 3.odst.)
- What is habitus? (80)
- How are body techniques transmitted? (83, 3.; 92, 3., 5.)
- What is „total man“? (77; 81, 3.; 83 – 2.)
- How is body an instrument? (83)
- Are body techniques conscious? (83, 4.; 93., 2-3.)



TECHNIQUES OF THE BODY

- techniques vs. tools (techniques vs. rites) (str. 82, 6-9)
- techniques as one type of action (str. 82, 6-9)
- techniques of body vs. other types of action (str. 83, 1)

- How people know, how to use their bodies? – how to be a good man (str. 83, 3; 85, 3.odst.)
- habitus (80)
 - social character of habitus
 - habit / acquired / ability
 - key in social action/ socially coded
- transmission
 - biggest influence – education = imitation (83, 3.; 92, 5.)
 - Of who? (92, 3.)



BODY ACCORDING TO MAUSS?

- „total man“ - connection of psychological, biological and social dimension of being
- = first and most natural instrument of a man
- conscious before unconscious
- social character of handling the body



HOMework FEEDBACK

- Formal side
 - Length
 - Name
 - Content structure
 - Sourcing
- Content side
 - What are guiding vs. discussion questions for?
 - What you do not have to write there

EXERCISE 2

1. Search for the technique of the body which was not mention in the text and which all of you have exercised in past 2 days.
2. Search for the technique of the body, which is specific to covid-19 pandemics.
3. Search for the technique of the body specific for the generation Z (people born between 1997 and 2012).
 - Explain how is it acquired? Who is the authority in this process?
 - Discuss the biological, psychological and social aspect of it.

CLASSIFICATION

- gender
- age
- biographical list
 - Obstetrics
 - Infancy
 - Adolescence
 - Adult life
 - Sleep
 - Rest
 - Activities
 - Walking
 - Running
 - Dancing
 - Complex active techniques
 - Jumping
 - Climbing
 - Descent
 - Swimming
 - Forceful movements
 - Techniques of care for the body
 - Consumption techniques
 - Techniques of reproduction

APPLICATION

Marianne Wex

‘LET’S TAKE BACK OUR SPACE’

“Female” and “Male” Body Language as a Result of Patriarchal Structures



with 2037 photographs

In the second part of the book:

Man’s struggle against womanpower and the effects upon body language throughout the course of history.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



13



14

GENDERED WAYS OF SITTING?

Agnes



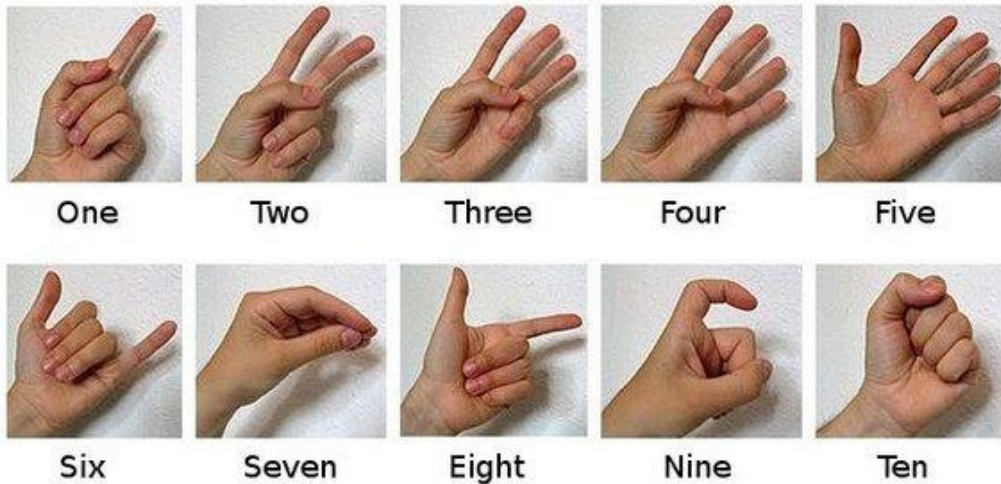
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Agnes

BEI IHNEN FÜR ALLE

CULTURALLY DIFFERENT COMMUNICATION?

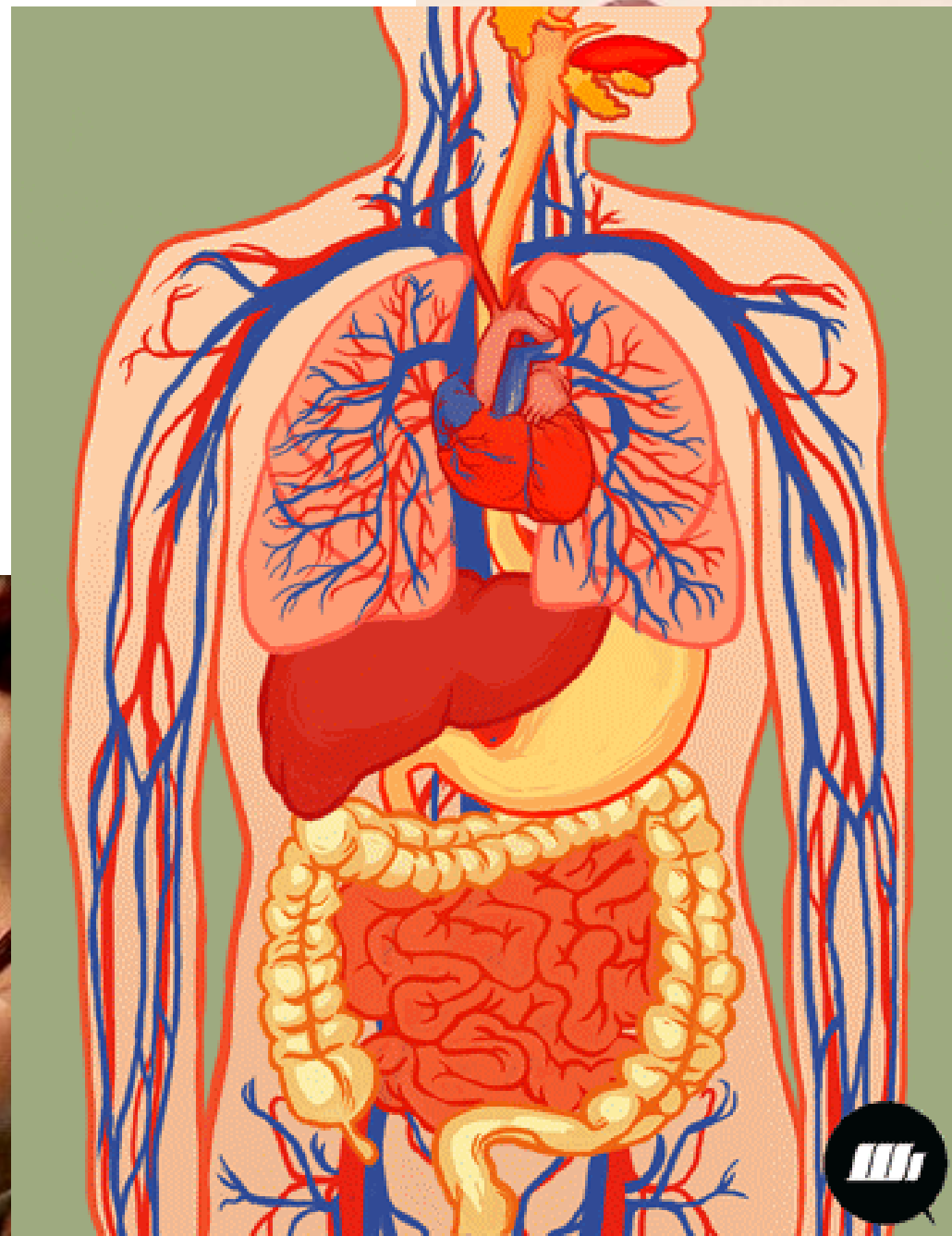
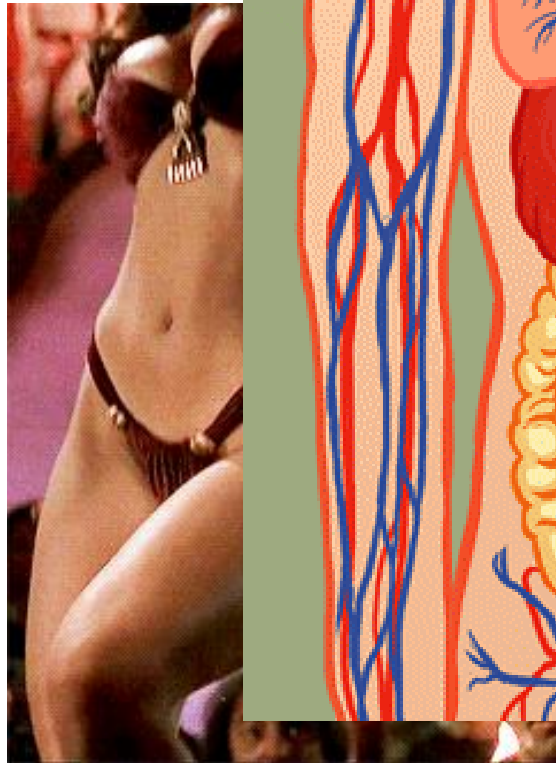
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORaBxH_MKQI



BODY CONSTRUCTED?

[HTTPS://GIPHY.COM/GIFS/MSP38BAPBHRIA](https://giphy.com/gifs/mSP38BAPBHRIA)

- sexy
- healthy
- masculine
- body



CRITIQUE

- Change?

- „There is any such thing as natural behaviour“?

→ • formulation which still draws a line between nature vs culture

- Maybe we do not assume anymore, that bodies are for sociality impenetrable, but to think they are social only is similarly extreme position.

- Meaning?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why are people handling their bodies the way they are?
- What is the relationship between individual bodies and the society?
- Can you think about a competing theory explaining this phenomenon?

NEXT CLASS

The two bodies

- **Compulsory reading**
 - Douglas, M. (2004) [1970]. The two bodies. In Douglas, M., *Natural symbols*, pp. 72-91. Taylor & Francis e-Library.
- **Guiding questions**
 - Which two bodies are at stake?
 - What is the relationship between them?
 - What kind of role plays symbols in this relationship?
 - What kind of role plays control in it?
 - What is the role of understanding and experience in this process?
 - What is the purity rule?
- **Discussion questions**
 - Can you think about more examples of these two bodies relationship expression?
 - In relation to gender, beauty, eating, illness, health, sexual behaviour, death?
 - What is the difference between the approaches to body-society relationships of Mauss and Douglas?

**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ATTENTION!**

[HTTPS://GIPHY.COM/GIFS/MSP38BAPBHRIA](https://giphy.com/gifs/mSP38BAPBHRIA)



LITERATURE

- Mauss, Marcel (2006) [1935]. Techniques of the body. *In Schlanger, N. ed. Marcel Mauss, Techniques, technology and civilization.* Berghahn Books, pp. 77-95.
- Kaščák, O., Obertová, Z. (2012). Školská etnografia tela, jej východiska, podoby a potenciály. *Český lid*, 99 (1), pp. 1-22.