



# BODY AS A DISCOURSE NEGOTIATION

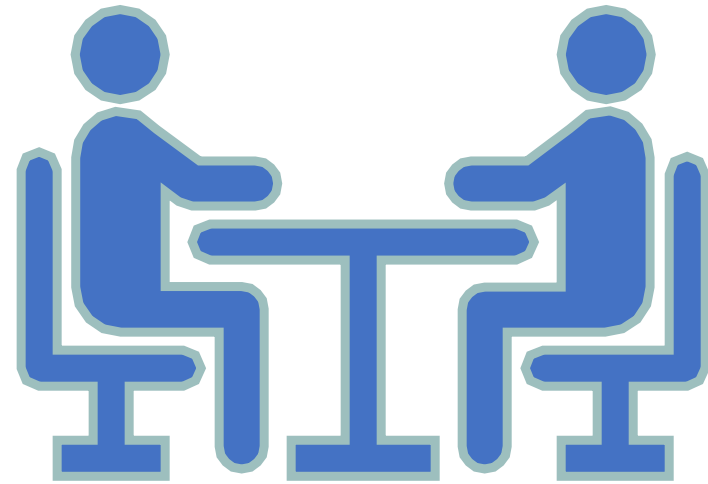
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Body, Health and Society

# OUTLINE

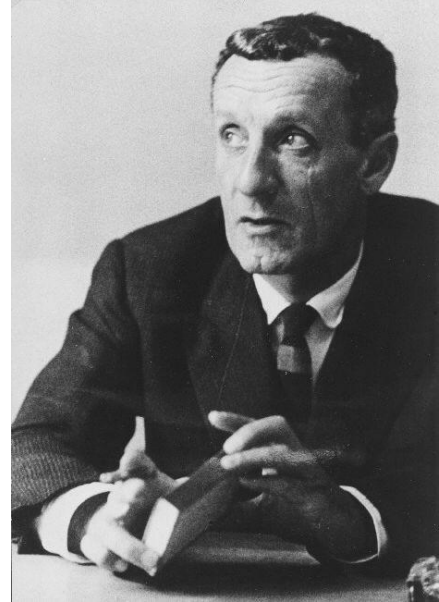
- revision
- reading reflections
- scientific discourse – culture – gender stereotypes
- discussion

INTRODUCTORY  
DISCUSSION:  
REVISION



# EMBODIMENT: MERLEAU-PONTY VS. BOURDIEU

(CSORDAS 2015)



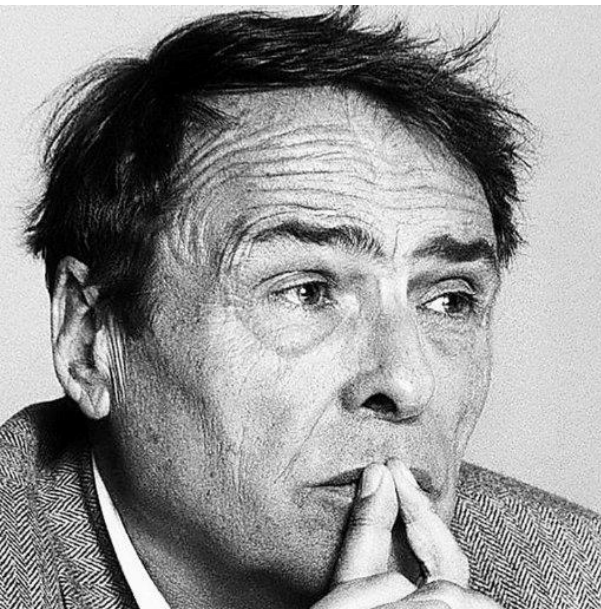
## *Preobjective*

„Anterior to conventional means of expression, which reveal my thoughts to others only because already, for both myself and them, meanings are provided for each sign, and which in this sense do not give rise to genuine communication at all, we must ... recognize a **primary process of signification in which the thing expressed does not exist apart from the expression**, and in which the signs themselves **induce their significance externally** .... This incarnate significance is the central phenomenon of which body and mind, sign and significance are abstract moments.“ [Merleau-Ponty 1962:166]

## *Habitus*

„a **collection of practices**, defining it as a **system of perduring dispositions** which is the **unconscious, collectively inculcated principle for the generation and structuring of practices** and representations“ [Bourdieu 1977:72]

„universalizing mediation which **causes an individual agent's practices**, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, **to be none the less "sensible" and "reasonable."** That part of practices which remains obscure in the eyes of their own producers is the aspect by which they are **objectively adjusted to other practices and to the structures of which the principle of their production is itself a product.**“ [Bourdieu 1977:79]



MERLEAU-PONTY 1962:139

A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is to aim 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“.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How is Csordas' s approach different from the approach of Douglas and Mauss, Goffman, Bourdieu or Foucault?

- Symbolic body/social body; body techniques; normative of social situation; habitus-field; docile bodies...

Can you think about more examples of this theory application?

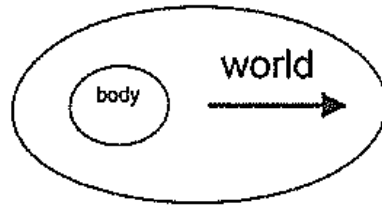
- In relation to ageing, gender, illness, eating, health, death.

# AGENCY BOURDIEU VS. MERLEAU - PONTY

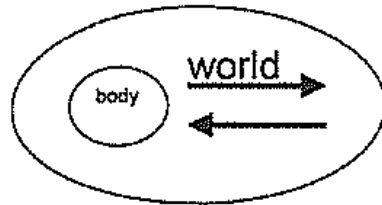
(CSORDAS 2015)

- Boulder
- Taste
  - Food
  - Physical activities

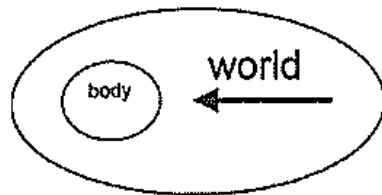
Figure 1. Elementary Structures of Agency in the Relation between Body and World



- Merleau-Ponty
  - locus: existence
  - mode: intentionality
  - vector: being-toward-the world



- Bourdieu
  - locus: habitus
  - mode: practice
  - vector: reciprocity of body-world



- Foucault
  - locus: power relations
  - mode: discourse
  - vector: world-upon-body

# 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





# **BODY AS A DISCOURSE**

# THE STORY

NUKLEUS MEDICAL MEDIA, EDUCATIONAL ANIMATION OF THE PROCES OF FERTILIZATION

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

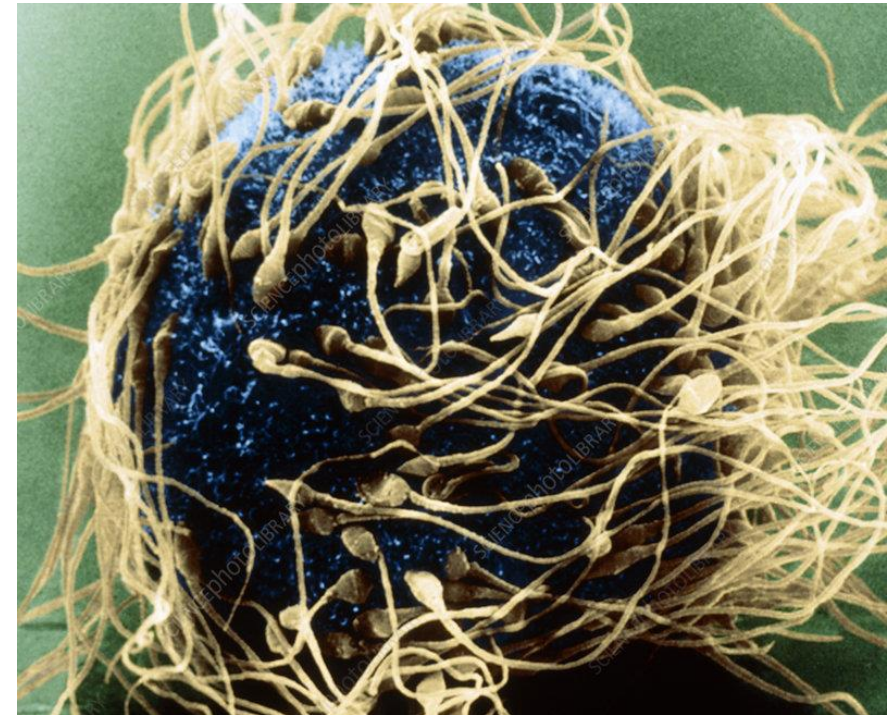
- Pay attention to the gender stereotypes, mentioned in the video.
- Make notes.

# 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)?
  - √
  - +
  - -
  - ?

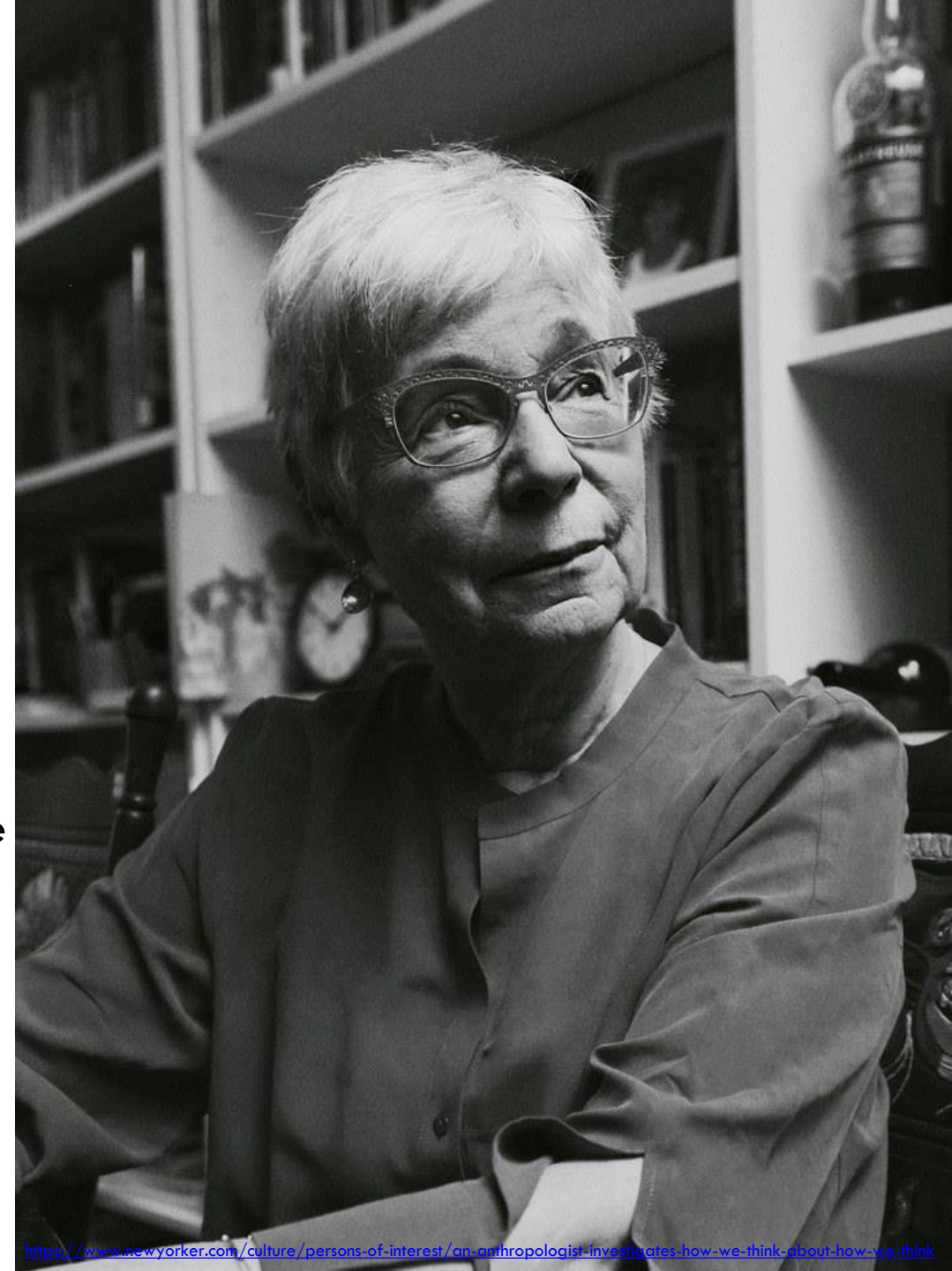


<https://www.sciencephoto.com/media/312601/view/sem-of-sperm-on-egg-during-fertilisation>

# 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 (486)
- spermatogenesis (486, 3 – 487, 1)
- ovulation (487, 2)
  
- female reproductive organs (487, 3)
- oogenesis (488, 2)
- alternatives suggested? (487, 4 – 488, 1)
  
- argument (491-492)

# NEW RESEARCH, OLD IMAGERY

- new research (492 - 498)
  
- new imagery
  - Egg zona
  - Sperm-egg connection
  - Alternative suggestion?



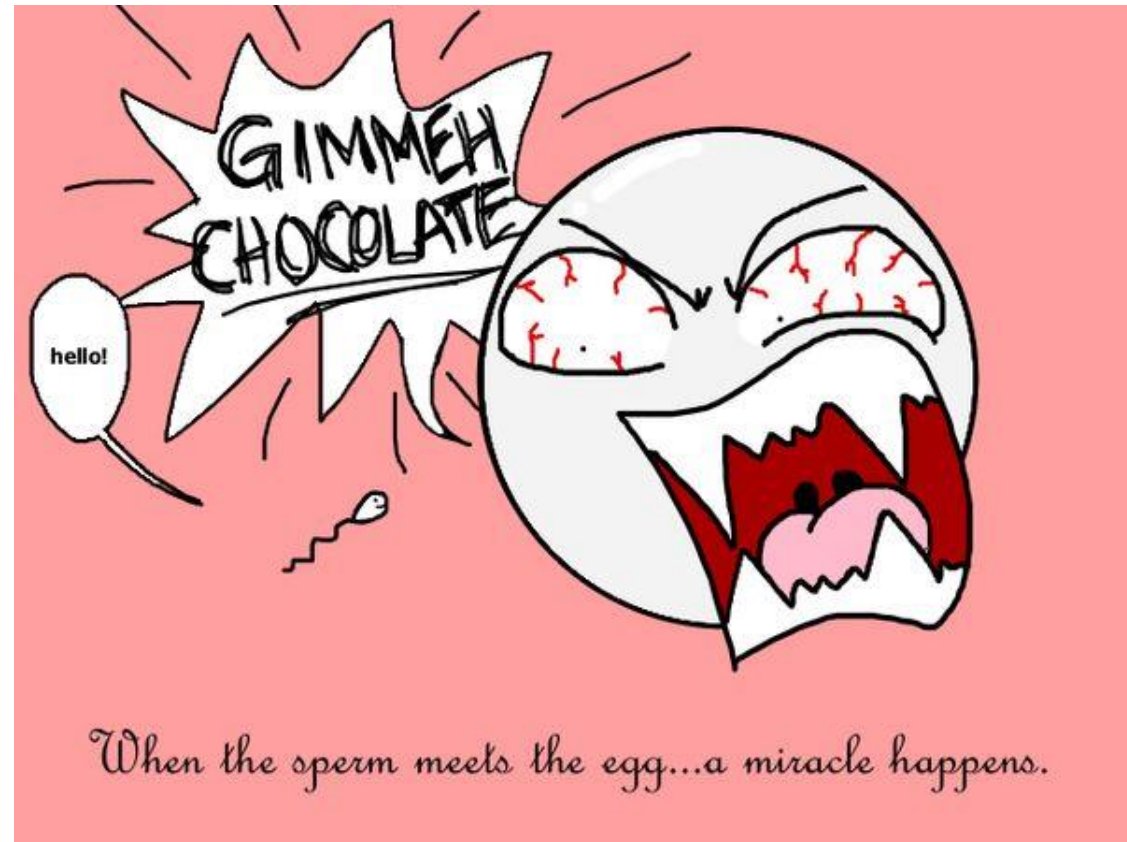
# MAIN ARGUMENT?

P. 500: 1-2

# 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.