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Les représentations sociales

Sous la direction de
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Sociologie
d'aujourd'hui

puf

8. The representation of the body and its transformations*

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'At all times and in all places it has been man who has contrived to transform his body into a product of its own techniques and representations.' This lapidary sentence from an anthropologist, C. Lévi-Strauss, which introduces us to the study of the first sociologist to be interested in the body, M. Mauss (1950), points to the psychology of representations as being a privileged subject matter. For there is no doubt that it is in regard to the body that the study of representations most easily illustrates its character as social science, as claimed even here by R. Farr and S. Moscovici. This is so for two reasons: (a) research trends relating to the body which are current in the human sciences and (b) the special character of the body, being at one and the same time a private and a public object, the representations of which are closely linked with the psychological, social and cultural realms.

The study of the body and its representation

The coincidence appears striking, indeed, between the approach to the body in terms of 'social representation' and the perspective which has gradually emerged in the social sciences since Mauss emphasised the importance of social apprenticeship in the behaviour patterns related to the body. As M. Douglas (1975) reminds us, Mauss saw that: 'the study of bodily techniques would have to take place within a study of symbolic systems'.

Over the last ten years, which have been marked by a flowering of work on the body, reference to the notion of representation has been becoming more and more insistent. Some researchers, along with J. Blacking (1977), point to the 'need to study the biological and affective foundation of our construction of reality'. Others treat the functions and

*Translated by Leighton Hodson

related to it, as so many instances where one may read or visions or man and of the world, expressions of a social make-believe, of a symbolic order and of a group identity (F. Loux and J. P. Peter, 1976). In all cases, whether implicitly or explicitly, we find the notion of social representation. And when the eye of the sociologist, of the ethnologist, of the historian either of ideas or of medicine surveys the representations concealed in habits to do with hygiene, food and sexuality, in techniques of breeding or maintenance, in scientific and lay forms of knowledge, its method of proceeding links up with that of the psycho-sociologist.

The representations thus apprehended are considered as the psycho-sociologist sees them: either as latent models referring to common systems of thought and value and assuring the coherence of the attitudes and behaviour within a given social regime, F. Loux (1977 and 1979); or as acts of social significance anchoring 'the most fundamental structures of the group in the basic experiences of the body', P. Bourdieu (1980); or as categories creating by analogy social and bodily experience since 'the social body constrains the way the physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of the society', M. Douglas (1975). Such a convergence shows how relevant is the study of social representations to the social field in general. Dealing with the body, a reality which is both social and subjective, the approach of social representations must be developed along original lines (or perspectives) which we will delineate.

The succession of studies we have just mentioned highlights the social status of the body from two points of view: that of its determination and that of its inclusion in the debates which enliven the cultural scene. They show that the experiences, practices and physical states to which representations are linked are dependent upon regulations and social apprenticeships. They reveal also the way in which the body falls under the ever increasing sway of institutions of control in the medical, sexual, sporting domains etc. (Voltan, 1974; Brohn, 1975; Besin and Pollack, 1977; Bernard, 1978), and becomes thereby a subject of debate for anti-establishment and innovatory movements (from sexual liberation to ecology). Thus one can see models of thinking, alongside models of behaviour, altering ways of thinking about, and of experiencing, the body.

On this count, the body appears as a privileged subject for research on social representations, in that it enables us to rediscover the social deep within the individual. It also has something in common with objects

cognitive systems whose content and organisation vary according to different social groups. Here we have in mind researches which have taken as their subject: a scientific theory for example, psychoanalysis, S. Moscovici (1961/76); social roles for example, woman or the child, P. and M.-J. Chombart de Lauwe (1963 and 1971); socio-biological values for example, health and illness, C. Herzlich (1969); a collective good for example, culture, R. Kaës (1968). These are just so many socially significant objects around which gather the claims of conflicting ideas and values. They are institutionalised objects to which individuals have access only along socially approved channels and which they acquire through social communication (through the diffusion of information concerning models either of behaviour or socially codified practices). The incidence of these social phenomena will be all the more evident in the case of the representation of the body, in so far as this is captured, with peculiar acuteness - because people are today more open to contributions from other civilisations, from psychoanalysis, from techniques of physical training (bio-energy, primal scream) - in the mobility of ideas and fashions. The representation of the body has a certain historicity as an object of both thought and practice.

But the body has also a 'private', subjective, status which will lead those who study its representation to come to terms with the interaction of the social and of the individual at another level. Several elements contribute to this 'private' status of the body as an object of representation. In this paper, on the one hand, the analysis of the representation bears particularly strongly on the bio-physiological functions, of which Kaës here demonstrates the importance, alongside the socio-cultural analysis (see ch. 15). On the other hand, clinical psychologists like P. Schilder (1971) and F. Ganthet (1961), have shown how the 'body schema' and the 'body image', which are spatial representations of one's own body with a physiological basis and a libidinal structure, are able to account for bodily actions and the relationships which the subject maintains with himself, with others and with the world at large. This schema, which itself is partially dependent on the affective and interpersonal history of the subject cannot fail to appear again, at least as a residual trace or state of influence, in the mental re-construction of an object such as the body, which is rooted in subjective experience. Finally, it is enough to consider the role of immediate, concrete, experience. This is something which is recognised by all those doing research on social representations. A good example is

child's construction of economic reality. It follows that, however socially conditioned bodily experience and knowledge may be, they cannot fail, in the representation, to become part of a properly subjective universal discourse which will come to modify the meaning and the content of what has been acquired socially.

The simultaneously 'social' and 'private' nature of the body makes us face up to three recurrent and interrelated questions which are at the heart of the present debate on social representations:

- 1 the relationship between social and individual representations referred to in other chapters in this volume (see I. Deutscher, M. Farr, S. Milgram)
- 2 the relationship between representation and behaviour (see J. C. Abric, J. P. Codol, F. Fransella, J. Jaspars and C. Fraser)
- 3 the relationship between social representation and individual and social change (see M.-J. Chombart de Lauwe, R. Kaës, S. Moscovici). This overlaps with the, to date, little-studied problem of changes in systems of representations.

The investigations we have conducted on the social representation of the body are based on these questions. We now present some aspects and conclusions of our studies.

The representation of the body and cultural change

In wondering about how the body is understood, constructed and lived within the world of discourse and practice in our society, this study of social representation is concerned with how the body presents itself to social subjects. Meaning, by social representation, a form of knowledge, a cognitive elaboration which social subjects, defined by their group membership, effect under the influence of social forms of thought and collective norms concerning behaviour, by integrating the facts of their practical routines and their immediate experience. We were seeking to find out how the socially regulated relationship towards that social and private object, which is the body, is expressed and organised at the level of perception, of lived experience, of knowledge and of moral declarations.

Our exploratory study had a two-fold aim:

- (i) to identify the mental categories, the cognitive and normative models which control lived experience and our knowledge of, and uses for, the body;

social groups and according to the state of social, cultural and economic circumstances in France.

This latter perspective is inspired by the theoretical reflections which Moscovici outlined when he was opening up this field of research on social representations (1961/76). He stressed, at that time, how important it was to treat representations as 'modalities of knowledge' and 'systems in the course of development'. Foreseeing, with his hypothesis of cognitive polyphasic, the possibility of a 'dynamic coexistence of distinct ways of knowing, corresponding to definite relations between man and his milieu', he was blazing the trail to an approach to the study of changes in the system of representation which took account of such social situations' as 'the movement of events and of interactional and cultural factors'. This view has hardly been exploited up to now in empirical research. The study of man's relationship to his body in both its social and historical aspects, of which we here present but a glimpse, was the stage for an approach of this type.

This approach has been conducted in two phases with a view to comparing both diachronically and synchronically, the representations and positions relating to the body. The first study was based on a parallel consideration of two sets of depth interviews conducted at an interval of fifteen years; a second study aimed to isolate, by statistical analysis, the systems of representation of various groups (Jodelet and Moscovici, 1975; Jodelet, Ohana *et al.*, 1980). It is the results of the diachronic study which are more fully presented here; it constitutes a true 'natural experiment' which allows us to locate, in the representations of the body, transformations due to cultural changes.

In the course of the last couple of decades, such changes have been numerous and important, as much in the medical and health spheres as in the spheres of leisure activities, consumption, physical exercise and sport and also, as previously indicated, in the realm of ideas. They are, moreover, very noticeable for the public, who can note their effects in the most common aspects of social life and exchange. The following brief indications, drawn from the statistical enquiry, bear this out. Thus people find that the treatment of the body in the media has changed in the last fifteen years; it is spoken about more frequently and in different ways (74% of replies). Whereas in the past the language of the mass media appears to have been equally characterised by moral meanings and restrictions (58% of replies), and by limitations on information or by the occlusion of certain aspects of the body (49% of replies), it seems, at

freedom, less hypocrisy, fewer taboos (55% of replies) than by any improvement in the information presented (only 37% of replies).

The accent, therefore, is on the change in approach to the body and its liberation. The view is the same when we consider social discourse. For 86 per cent of the people questioned the way in which the body is talked about has changed in the course of fifteen years. People talk amongst themselves in a franker, more open, way (60% of replies); certain prohibitions bearing on aspects of bodily life are fast disappearing. This is particularly obvious in the case of sexuality, if we are to accept the comments of 35 per cent of the subjects who see this as a consequence of the evolution in customs and ideas. Changes in private habits are also striking. Whereas 61 per cent of the people questioned had never discussed their bodies with their parents, 9% per cent of them stated that they discussed them with their own children, or intended to do so when they had children. It is obviously in matters of sexuality that prohibitions are being lifted, thus bringing about a veritable revolution in customs, if we go by the practice of nudity: 74 per cent of our subjects had not seen either of their parents naked; 80 per cent of them, however, are prepared to appear in the nude before their own children.

These few data are sufficient to highlight the social repercussions of this cultural change in one's relationship to one's body. They also highlight its meaning - a sense of liberation. This liberation has an impact on how people talk about, live with and think of their bodies. This finding emerges from a comparison over time (an interval of fifteen years) of the discourses we held on the body.

The cultural change in one's relationship to one's body has a direct bearing on how the body is represented. How our subjects express themselves, how they structure the field of their representation and organise their subjective bodily experiences, and how they choose the mental and normative categories which make up their conceptions of their bodies are all modified by this cultural change as we shall demonstrate when we have isolated the dimensions of an approach to the body which structures the field of the representation.

The development of the discourse and the structuring of the representational field

Besides a classic content analysis, the interviews were also subjected to an analysis which distinguished the different types of information on the

defining information, not by its special content but by the source from which it comes, has several advantages: (i) it sheds light on how representations are established and organised; (ii) it subordinates the content of statements to the processes by which they are elaborated and (iii) it brings out the structure of the discourse.⁴ This approach was inspired by Moscovici's model for the dimensional analysis of representations and by my own analysis of the 'elements' of the representation, which I developed on the occasion of my research into the social representation of mental illness (1983). In this way four approaches to the study of the body have been distinguished which, based on different fields of reference - two subjective and two social - lead to the following modes of knowledge.

1. The approaches based on the subjective fields of reference reflect the relationship which the subject has with his own body: (a) 'bodily experience' which includes all knowledge belonging to the domain of the direct experience of the body proper, by means of sensory or organic messages, somatic history and daily exercise. A person has some knowledge of his body by walking, by washing himself, by making love, by sunbathing, just as he feels it in pain, illness, emotion etc. This understanding can include experiences which are either imaginary or real, purely physical or psychological, belonging either to the present or to the past; (b) 'the relationship of the individual to his environment' emerges as the role a person gives his body, the place which he reserves for it in carrying out his daily life and the image of it which is reflected in those around him. The external world, in which the subject is situated, is the starting-point for the body poised as the instrument for action, or establishing a relationship, for confirming its social position etc.

2. The approaches based on a social frame of reference include knowledge conveyed by social communication, which may be either formal or informal: (a) the approach 'based on social interaction': the subject, in his approach to the body, makes appeal to facts which he gathered in the presence of a third party, or which he drew from his observations of others. Knowledge, transmitted by direct social communication (peers, specialists, doctors ...), serves to fill out, and to refine, the representations. Others, in their actual bodily presence, are equally a source of information if one observes their presentation, their expressivity etc.; (b) the 'notional and normative' approach: subjects will specify their knowledge of the body as a biological, cultural and social object, and determine their positions on the problems it raises by relying

on the education provided by the establishments and systems in which they are involved. First, there is the knowledge acquired through educational channels and the mass media, popular science etc. Secondly, there is the knowledge which they retain from carrying out their everyday, or professional, routines (the butcher's shop is frequently referred to by women to describe the workings of the body, just as men refer to cars). Lastly, there are all the points of view, principles and moral customs which subjects may borrow, knowingly or not, from the value and belief systems to which they subscribe, by virtue of their membership of particular social, religious or cultural groups.

The first two approaches are characterised by the involvement of the subject in his bodily experience; the last two presuppose a more distanced and abstract point of view. These approaches reproduce, at the level of the structure of the representational field, the duality of 'private body' and 'social body'. The comparison between them in table 1, which sets out the frequency of use of the different types of information in each of the interview samples,² shows that the discourses, for the most part, organise themselves around the first and the last approach. This dominance remains constant in time. In the two samples there seems to be little inclination to approach the body as the mediator of the relationship between the individual and the external world or as mediated by direct social observation and communication. And this is so to the benefit of approaches where individuals are personally situated, either in the uniqueness of a lived experience, of which their body is subject, or in the community of shared knowledge and rules, of which their body is object.

Liberty and involvement

However, beyond this general structure of the representational field the interviews are characterised from the one sample to the other by an evolution in mental attitude. A prime indicator of this phenomenon lies in the fluency of the discourses. For an identical number of words, the numerical importance of the references to the different categories of knowledge increases appreciably when one moves from the first to the second sample. The expression becomes freer and more committed. The statements are more varied, less redundant; the representation is richer and more subtly shaded in its dimensions. Fifteen years ago, subjects tended to focus on a limited number of themes and to reiterate their opinions. Now, however, the body presents itself as a more open, more

Table 1. Approaches to the body according to sex and sample

	Old sample			New sample		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Bodily experience	1414 (33%)	579 (29%)	835 (40%)	2269 (38%)	1098 (35%)	1271 (40)
Adjustment to the environment	475 (11%)	210 (10%)	265 (13%)	824 (13%)	400 (12%)	424 (13)
Social interactions	330 (8%)	181 (9%)	149 (7%)	669 (11%)	356 (11%)	313 (10)
Conceptual and normative approaches	1900 (46%)	1050 (52%)	850 (40%)	2419 (39%)	1255 (40%)	1164 (37)
Total number of mentions	4119 (100%)	2020 (100%)	2099 (100%)	6281 (100%)	3109 (100%)	3172 (100)

accession, use in experience, a more acute use of perception. Liberty and involvement are today the hallmarks of discourse on the body.

Another indicator of this phenomenon lies in the evolution of references to the different registers of information which emerges from table 1. Taken all in all, less importance is now attached to received opinion and custom. The approach to the body is, therefore, less abstract, and less distanced, than it used to be. The expressly socialised aspects of the body are blurred in the representation in favour of elements which reflect more directly the subject's own body. This shift of emphasis reflects subjects' personal involvement in their discourse. It also reveals the interplay between prohibitions and social models. One can hypothesise that, in the development of discourse, one is governed, either by the concern to be reticent about one's body or, on the contrary, by the need and the wish to talk about it. Choices relating to received opinion and custom would convey, therefore, the effect of a constraint, a holding back; those relating to the experience of one's own body would convey a greater acceptance of physical experience, and so a freer position. The anchorage in lived experience would imply likewise a harmonious, non-conflictual, relationship with one's own body; whereas recourse to a set of abstract formulations would be a way of enrolling one's body in the problematic issues of one's time and in the conflicts which result from them. These hypotheses are consonant with the statements made here by R. Kaës concerning the double analysis of representations. They enable us to indicate one of the loci in the representation where the effect of liberation comes into play: the opposition between 'private body' and 'social body'.

Male body/female body

Another point of change stands out if we consider, still with reference to table 1, how the male and the female discourse has evolved: that of the opposition: male body/female body. The impact of cultural change affects the outlook of each sex differently. Women who, in the past, had a more open relationship with their lived bodily experience than men, remain stable in their manner of approaching it today. On the other hand, the approach of men is shifting, with references to their own bodies more in evidence, balancing the net reduction in developments of an impersonal nature.

Other data, based on the comparison, subject by subject, of the

relationship between appeal to lived experience and abstract statements, corroborate the fact that the position of men approaches that of women in according a lesser place to abstraction and a greater place to the body proper. Thus it appears as if men, in the first sample, take refuge in the impersonal more than women do (significant at the 0.01 level). In the second sample this is the only category for which there is a marked scatter in the distribution of men's answers, and this mainly in the single domain of lived experience. Knowing that the increased dispersion signifies less agreement on the norm we may conclude that the current male discourse is marked by greater freedom. On the other hand, the analysis of the evolution of the discourse, according to the different phases of the interviews,³ or according to the increase in references to one single approach from one sample to another,⁴ reveals, in women, a tendency to relate more readily, today, to abstract developments, and to oscillate between lived experience and reflexive distancing. In this overlapping women reveal a body consciousness which is more vigorously invested with ideology. What does this mean?

The fact that the change in customs and ideas has a differential impact according to sex indicates that men and women are located in the field of quite specific social pressures from which they escape by different paths. If the evolution of male responses is evidence of a phenomenon of liberation in the relationship which they maintain with their own bodies, the free and candid relationship which women had, and preserve, in their lived experience, like their tendency to encompass conflicts of an ideological order, leads us to look elsewhere for the effects of social pressure. As the content of their discourse shows, women adhere to the claims of the feminist struggle which denounces their alienation and their reification. Liberation, for them, is less a question of lifting prohibitions than of emancipation in relation to an imposed condition. Thus, for women, it is the social definition of their status, and the equally constraining image of their bodies, against which they rebel ideologically. For men, it is the repression of lived experience, and a narcissistic relationship to their own bodies, from which they break free. The structure of the dialogues carries the traces of this situation and bears witness to it.

Body-object/body-machine

This dynamic of change between the sexes, brought about by the waning of a double standard, will be illuminated by the results of a word

association test on the word 'body' which was carried out on the occasion of the second series of interviews. The associations seem to be governed by a double process: evolution in regard to form but hysteresis and retentivity in regard to content.

Indeed, the associations aroused by the word 'body' are numerous and reveal a wide range of individual differences (Moscovici, 1976). If one refers to the laws of word association, one may detect there a sign of originality in the mental production; and a sign of liberation in relation to systems of norms and values, which ordinarily assure the stability of cultural frequencies in word association. In this respect, men show a greater verbal fluency and an idiosyncratic lexical range. With women the vocabulary is less rich and its frequency of use higher; this redundancy reveals a tendency to homogeneity. It all seems as if, for men, the liberation of thought took on a very individualistic form whilst for women it bore the mark of group solidarity. Is this the mark of a condition or of an ideological effect?

But the most instructive feature lies in the differences between the sexes in semantic content, the most striking aspect of which concerns the emphasis on anatomy and organic functions. Female associations yield a body 'cut up into small pieces' where anatomical elements are juxtaposed. The listing of them, which is fragmentary, does not concern the internal parts of the body, but elements which have either a connection with the outside, whether it be to do with contact or appearance (hands, eyes, face ...) or an erotic connotation (breast, mouth, flesh ...). Men approach the body as a 'functional whole': they produce associations which reflect images of material or functional wholes (cellular mass, cybernetic machine, official assembly ...); and are alone in mentioning the internal organs; they call to mind states of organic change with connotations of anxiety (death, accident, suffering ...). This is not the case with women, whose associations have a euphoric tone, which contrasts with those of men in associations relating to physical potential: where men say delicate, ephemeral, woman say life, procreation, robustness, energy.... These associations yield an implicit vision which is still lively in each sex, despite the denials of modernity, and one which opposes 'woman-object' and 'man-machine'. This opposition masks another: female vitalism and male anxiety. We shall come back to this. Another difference merits attention: that observed in the symbolic universe. Certain poetic reminiscences or phonetic associations denote a distancing with respect to the proposed stimulus. This type of usage is characteristic of men, as if, the body

Women do not escape by means of a play on words, but have a marked tendency to locate the body in a debate which is either psychological or moral.

Word associations appear to us to be quite expressive of the dynamics of change in the representation of the body which locate it, in a somewhat conflicting way, between the poles of tradition and of modernity. The contents of the associations reveal a traditional image of male and of female bodies; their form is indicative of the way in which men and women encompass modernity: on the private level and in freedom of expression in the former case, and by a communality of shared circumstances and ideological emancipation in the latter case.

The different indicators which we have just examined bear witness to the indirect and unconscious effects of cultural change on the structuring both of discourse and of the general features of the semantic field of the word 'body'. They indicate, each in their own way, but in a perfectly concordant manner, the points where the mobility of representations and the dynamics of their change are situated, as well as the stakes and conflicts: freedom, involvement, rehabilitation of one's own body in the face of social constraint, in the form of norms and ideology. We shall find other expressions of this mobility by exploring the two main approaches to the body. The limitations of this chapter do not allow us to tackle the whole of the field of the representation of the body.

The restoration of one's own body and the onrush of hedonism

The effects of the liberation movement will be felt directly in one's understanding of one's own body. The analysis reveals various modes of knowledge, recovering experiences of varying richness and importance: sensory information (sight, touch, other senses); movement, sporting activities; pleasurable bodily states (experience of well-being, sensual and sexual pleasure); inner awareness (consciousness of the body in general or of bodily functions); morbid bodily states (pain, discomfort, illness, deprivation); bodily changes (growth, biological evolution, sexual development); medical treatment and aftercare; contacts with the natural, material and social environments; bodily appearance (physique, dress, attractiveness); experiences of psychological origin (dreams, fantasies, emotions). These different elements of information constitute the 'lived experience', a special sector of the field of representation, the diachronic comparison of which can be seen in table 2.

Table 2. The dimensions of bodily experience in the two examples

	Old sample			New sample		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Sensory information	132 (9%)	37 (6%)	95 (12%)	124 (5%)	72 (6%)	52 (4)
Movement	135 (10%)	57 (10%)	78 (9%)	217 (9%)	116 (10%)	101 (8)
Pleasurable bodily states	87 (6%)	44 (8%)	43 (5%)	358 (15%)	182 (16%)	176 (14)
Inner awareness	187 (13%)	81 (14%)	106 (12%)	124 (5%)	67 (6%)	57 (4)
Morbid bodily states	271 (19%)	148 (26%)	123 (14%)	340 (14%)	166 (15%)	174 (13)
Bodily changes	135 (9%)	46 (8%)	89 (11%)	287 (12%)	86 (8%)	201 (16)
Treatments and care	66 (5%)	31 (5%)	35 (4%)	114 (5%)	57 (5%)	57 (4)
Contact with the external world	41 (3%)	16 (3%)	25 (3%)	209 (9%)	90 (8%)	119 (9)
Bodily appearance	221 (16%)	60 (10%)	161 (19%)	326 (14%)	136 (12%)	190 (15)
External manifestations	29 (2%)	6 (1%)	23 (3%)	51 (2%)	25 (2%)	26 (2)
Imaginary experiences	74 (5%)	39 (7%)	35 (4%)	157 (7%)	76 (7%)	81 (6)
Emotional feelings	36 (3%)	14 (2%)	22 (2%)	62 (3%)	25 (2%)	37 (3)
Total number of mentions	1414 (100%)	579 (100%)	835 (100%)	2369 (100%)	1098 (100%)	1271 (10)

...the change which status out most clearly concerns the perception of bodily states. Whereas the taking into account of negative states, like grief, illness etc. was dominant in the first sample, which had little access to bodily pleasure or well-being, it is, on the contrary, to pleasurable states and sensations that subjects turn today when it is a question of knowing something about their own bodies. Certainly morbidity is far from being absent from their thoughts, but it is less vital, and this attitude goes along with a reduction in the attention paid to all those internal messages which were earlier of undoubted importance. Detachment with regard to the bodily interior is matched by an opening out to the external world with the taking into account of contacts with the environment, a mode of understanding the body which also involves sensuality, whether the sensation comes from contact with the natural elements or from the presence of other bodies.

It is as if modernity, over and above a greater liberty of expression, brought with it a change in the relationship to the body, which is now invested with sensuality. It does not seem that the effect of lifting prohibitions, now permitting the open expression of what previously was done without comment, could by itself explain either the onrush of the hedonistic, sensual and sexual dimension in its massive and systematic form or the fact that it operates at the expense of functional preoccupations and of the awareness of painful or morbid states. On the other hand, the thematic analysis of the interviews reveals a representation marked by the decline of the 'body considered as a biological organism', closed in on its functioning and its failings, and the rise of the 'body considered as the locus of pleasure', open to the world and to others. In the restoration which subjects are making of their lived experience, the dimension of pleasure invades the whole field of feeling: there is an extension of the palette of pleasurable sensations; a deployment of the milieu which both stimulates and reveals something of the body; at a sensory or active level there is the dominant role accorded to the human environment in the discovery of oneself. With the emergence of enjoyable awareness the reversal of positions in regard to inner awareness is accompanied by a change in the selection and interpretation of bodily messages. Gone is the so-called 'silence of health' and the one and only voice of illness; the sensations retained are no longer those strictly connected with organic functioning, but those which result from the multiple ways of living one's corporeity. One loses interest in the biological body searching through inner awareness for a sense of life, often associated with a sense of pleasure.

This analysis is confirmed by the replies to the questions in the statistical enquiry concerning the understanding of one's own body. Subjects had to indicate the four circumstances in which they were most aware of their bodies, making their choice from a list of twenty experiences referring respectively to morbid states (being ill, having a pain ...), functional states (digesting food, being out of breath ...), to forms of activity (making an effort, sport ...) and to sensual pleasure (making love, sunning oneself, eating well ...). Hedonism and activity won out over morbid and functional messages. Over the whole range of replies, categories of bodily awareness reflect in 45 per cent of cases the world of pleasure, in 22 per cent the world of action, in 20 per cent states of morbidity and in 12 per cent functional states.

Furthermore, the combination of the four replies given individually has permitted the establishment of a typology of lived bodily experience, which characterises each individual by the dominant category of his understanding of his own body. Two major types of approach emerge according to a dichotomy which opposes pleasure and activity to morbidity and functionality. This opposition may be interpreted, in the light of the preceding analyses, as an expression of the opposition between two modes of relating to the body; modern and free versus traditional and restrained. Within this dichotomy 56 per cent of subjects are included with a clear preference for the first approach (37% versus 19%). The remainder of the sample (44%) refer jointly to the two other approaches in their bodily awareness. One can see, therefore, that at the present time the lived experience of the body proper includes a marked preference for sensual and dynamic experiences. That this orientation should be dependent on cultural diffusion becomes evident if one considers the distribution of the types of lived experience, according to age and level of education, which mediates a greater or lesser familiarity with models of recent thinking. More of those under thirty-five years of age are of the hedonist/active type than are those over thirty-five. Those with higher education are distinguished by over-scoring on the pleasure and action categories, and by under-scoring on the morbid and functional categories, in comparison with those who have a lower level of education and who present the opposite tendency (X^2 (significant at the 0.001 level)). Thus the models of thought have succeeded in producing representations which, when collectively shared both in their categories and their content, will structure the representation and the experience that each one has of his own body.

Forming power/vital power

The cultural differentiation in the relationship men and women have towards their bodies is confirmed in the typology of lived experience: men are directed more towards a state of awareness which is organic in character, women towards one which is pleasurable in character, conveying thereby their greater freedom and the positive and vital tone of their lived experience already established at the level of word associations. However, they are far from excluding the morbid - functional dimension and if we return to the diachronic comparison of male and female positions (table 2), we notice that the two outlines converge today in their apprehension of negatively toned states. In fact, the content of the interviews makes it apparent that, in this case, the representations are modified by an experience which is organic in origin.

There is a change in the meaning conferred on morbid states which follows a trend which goes in somewhat opposite directions for each sex. In the first sample men, who worry more than women over their inner bodies, showed rather hypochondriacal preoccupations. In the second sample, their morbid attention is attenuated, but it is focused on a new pole of concern with the fear of deprivation experiences covering the loss of such attributes as hair, teeth, organs, limbs. With women the awareness of morbid states remains stable but, with time, attention is displaced more towards pathology. Whilst pathology increased sharply in importance, loss and symptomatic states, like pain, decreased as important topics of concern. Is it not possible to see, in this two-fold movement, an effect of the change in customs and norms not only on perceptual categories, but also on the expression of fantasies? Fear of castration is more openly felt in men, whilst in women the affirmation of a less restrained body, which is more active both physically and in professional life, causes the emergence of anxiety in the face of threats to bodily function. The importance conferred on various morbid states, besides corresponding to a fact of current experience, may convey either a manner of perceiving the body which is socially approved (e.g. sobriety of dress in the Judaeo-Christian tradition; or sobriety of thought as the only legitimate form of knowledge ensuing from the prohibitions on pleasures of self-attention, among others) or the expression of certain anxiety states related to the body. The evolution of representations shows that what morbidity loses in normative weight, it gains in expressive value.

This expressive value is under-pinned by basic experiences linked to

the status of each sex and to their role in the processes of production and reproduction. As proof, the following data from the statistical analysis can be cited: when subjects are asked if they happen to feel their bodies as a brake, or as an obstacle, the men, for whom this is the case, mention essentially obstacles to the achievement of physical, intellectual and work tasks; women point to restraints related to illness or states of discomfort or blocks of a psychological nature (χ^2 significant at 0.001 level). Once again we find here the counterpart of the two visions of the body of which we previously caught a glimpse, especially in the word association test. On the one hand there is the male pattern of 'body-machine', an instrument subject to norms of output and a working model which encounters within itself limits to the demands of efficiency. On the other hand, there is the vitality, expressed by women in the euphoric vein of plenitude and fecundity, of an organism whose strength is intrinsically limitless but which is also vulnerable by dint of external events. Now these same subjects, when invited to say what they fear most for their own bodies, specify, in the case of men, the loss of organs and assaults on the integrity of the body; in the case of women, handicaps and restrictions of capacity bringing with them a complete bodily impotence (χ^2 significant at the 0.01 level). The connection between bodily 'brakes' and organic anxieties shows quite clearly that anguish hinges in men on the necessities of a working activism; in women on the preservation of a vital potentiality. And what is at stake, in this organisation of the representations, are the respective statuses of the productive body. These statuses are socially and sexually different for each sex. Here we have the example of a process by which the elaboration of representations and the meanings with which their categories are charged setting in motion the interplay between imagination and social and vital functions or practices. In other words, it concerns the entanglement between the subjective and the social in the elaboration of the representation, which was a problem that we evoked at the beginning of this chapter.

Social models and organic conceptions

This is an entanglement which may favour an upheaval in individual experience under the influence of social changes. A striking illustration of this is provided by the change in conceptions of pregnancy and childbirth which is a consequence of the gradual change in beliefs and mental attitudes, as much in politics as in medical practices. The

meaning of words, just as the meaning of... and psychological repercussions, is transformed with the introduction of new values. Our study of changes over time took place at two key moments in the history of female sexuality in France: the introduction of painless childbirth for the first phase, the campaign for the voluntary termination of pregnancy for the second phase. A comparison between the contents of the two dialogues reveals the effect of the corresponding ideas and practices. In the first sample, women stressed the importance of pregnancy represented as the execution of a major biological function, lived through in shame because it bore the sign of sexuality and distorted the appearance of the body. As for childbirth nothing was said about it directly. On the other hand, all subjects, including the men, spoke of the technique of painless childbirth as a scientific achievement which permitted an escape from the religious curse of suffering and as a victory for knowledge and voluntary control over the body.

This perspective is turned on its head in the second sample. It is childbirth, in fact, which is put forward as a revealing act in which a specific power is made evident. The importance accorded to abortion as a female campaign and act of choice, the development of gentle techniques centring on the pregnant woman during labour, have directed attention more to the fact of birth than to that of pregnancy. Pregnancy, however, is depicted as a happy physical condition, desirable because desired, there for all to see. Through both pregnancy and childbirth, a uniquely feminine power is confirmed in relation to a sexuality which is free of all guilt. Yet, at the same time, no one any longer seeks either to assume or to avoid the pain, which is stigmatised as both natural and medical 'violence' against the body, justifying the application of external means to alleviate it. 'I would never have forgiven my child for having suffered in bringing it into the world', said a young interviewee who had chosen to give birth after spinal injection in spite of the risks of which she was fully aware. We have come a long way from: 'In pain shalt thou bring forth children.' We are here pinpointing the effect of social changes on the active and mental relationship to a major biological fact. With the weakening of Christian morality, the affirmation of feminine power in the choice and act of childbearing, and the reintegration of sexuality and pain, the framework of traditional thought is burst asunder. Old categories take on another meaning and are re-organised in accordance with a viewpoint which profoundly modifies both lived experience and conduct. This demonstrates, furthermore, the circular nature of the relationship which exists between representation and behaviour.

thinking of the body as vehicle of sexual and genital functions socially created character as an object, not only at the level of the explicit discourse, but also on a more or less unconscious level in how they approach their own bodies. Hence the outline of their representation will differ from that of men. Such is the case for the importance accorded to sensory information and physical appearance through the play of normative and ideological pressures. Let us return to table 2: the sensory data show an overall fall which can be explained by the drop in the number of references recorded by women whereas with men, the references, whilst remaining constant when expressed as a fraction, actually double numerically. This is evidence of a profound change in attitude. All the women in the first sample took cognisance of their bodies through vision, either directly or through a mirror. No more than half of them proceed in this way in the second sample. The comparable figures for men are three-quarters in the second sample compared to half in the first sample. Moreover, the men include all sensory messages within their field of awareness: these include skin and touch sensations, as with women, but also, in a more marked way than women do, sensations of taste, of smell and of hearing. Do women forbid themselves a sensory relationship with their bodies so as not to risk presenting themselves to men and others as objects whilst, in their freedom, they discover a new richness in lived experience? This is a hypothesis which is confirmed by the replies concerning physical appearance which are outwardly similar: a lesser overall importance which can be particularly ascribed to a drop in the declared interest of women whilst men, on the other hand, were decidedly more numerous in allowing themselves to take into account their appearance in terms of physique, dress and aesthetics. A similar tendency can be found in regard to bodily treatment and care: feminine replies remain constant but male interest increases in questions of body care to the detriment of medical treatments and care.

And just as the change in values and knowledge, brought about by changes in social practice concerning the freedom of procreation, has modified the image of childbearing on the cognitive and experiential levels, so too change in the norms relating to female and male bodies affects, not only lived experience, but also knowledge. One finds, in fact, that the changes in the relationship to one's own body meet with an echo in the realm of scholarship. Anatomical physiological representations bear the mark, in their evolution, of the lack of interest in the biological as this is manifested in lived experience. They present, as table 3 shows, a more fragmented rather than a whole character, with the descriptive

Table 3. Elements of the anatomical-physiological representations

	Old sample			New sample		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
External anatomical parts	209 (59%)	92 (36%)	117 (42%)	252 (44%)	180 (49%)	72 (3)
Internal organs	203 (58%)	104 (40%)	99 (35%)	251 (44%)	150 (41%)	101 (4)
Systems	54 (16%)	30 (12%)	24 (8%)	35 (6%)	22 (6%)	13 (5)
Functions	72 (13%)	31 (12%)	41 (15%)	35 (6%)	16 (4%)	19 (7)
Total number of mentions	538 (100%)	257 (100%)	281 (100%)	573 (100%)	368 (100%)	205 (100%)

procedures. This is a general tendency which is strong today. As much as the decline of interest bearing on organic functioning these data show the gain in value of all aspects of corporeity, which is as wholly cathected in the realm of knowledge as it is in that of lived experience. But the most striking feature of these data resides in the fact that changes in the positions of men and women, in regard both to appearance and to functional anxiety, have an impact on the selection of the bodily elements from which each sex constructs its anatomical representation. The comparison of the two samples reveals that external parts of the anatomy are now more distinct in the masculine representations whilst, by contrast, women are more preoccupied than previously with the organic (X^2 significant at 0.001 level).

These changes in the structure of the anatomical images unconsciously reflect the re-organisation of the approach to the body in the two sexes. The new latitude allowed to men to interest themselves in their appearance directs attention towards the external body; the fading of the body-as-object in favour of the body-as-activity in women turns attention away from the external body to the internal. The cognitive image given by the first sample is matched by the traditional vision which the word associations convey; that of the second sample proposes a schema expressing both freedom and modernity which leaves its mark on bodily experience as a result of the change in norms and cultural values and in ideologies and social practices. These results lead one to think of the representation as a sedimentary phenomenon, the more or less conscious layers of which are displaced according to their own particular rhythms in a dynamic which has an antagonistic character, as S. Moscovici (1976) noted: 'Creativity and redundancy in representations explain both their great fluidity and their no less great inertia, antagonistic qualities to be sure, but an antagonism which is inevitable; it is on this basis that they are always being transformed whilst surviving quite well.'

The psy-body, locus of conflicts between the individual and society

A dynamic phenomenon functions also on what could be described as a horizontal plane, that is between the different representational fields constituted as a system. With the advent of a liberated body, normative constraint, which is less internalised, will be projected outwards and will be experienced in more acute form as societal oppression. This is what

reflects the approach to the body to the received ideas and norms transmitted by the formal channels of communication. The importance of the social, abandoned at the level of the body as it is experienced, reappears as aggression at the level of the body as it is thought. This reversal is brought about by a re-working of the informative facts which are used to decide and fix its points of view on the body; a re-working which leads to a change of frameworks and mental categories.

The conceptual and normative field is organised around three domains of reference relating to, respectively, a scientific, a speculative and a practical approach. The proportion of responses in each of these areas in the two samples (table 4) alone shows how the way of conceiving of the body has changed. With the reduction in importance of the sphere of the biological being confirmed, the body is more often approached in a psychological and social perspective, or even within the framework of moral and philosophical reflection (X^2 significant at 0.001 level). Less strongly defined by its organic materiality, the body changes nature: it becomes a 'natural symbol' to adopt a term used by M. Douglas (1975), expressive of the subject and engaged in the interplay between the social and the ideological. In order to think about the body an ever-increasing appeal is made to the human sciences: it is inserted in a network of determinations and meanings whereby it becomes a 'psychological locus' and more particularly a 'social object'. This is accompanied by change in the way in which the relationships between body and mind and between body and society are treated which we shall illustrate briefly, with the help of an analysis of a few of the themes appearing in the discourses.

In the first sample, the psychological approach, based on the dualism of body and mind, was characterised by a set of problems centred on the control of the body, ranging from the simple mental regulation of physiological mechanisms and of muscular and visceral functions, to the instrumental mastery of resources and organic capacities with a view to accomplishing the desires and intentions of the subject, and even to the domination of an animal nature by a voluntarist discipline.

In the second sample, the dualist model is blurred in favour of a global perspective where the relationship between mind and body involves the adjustment of the individual to his environment. This is how interpretations in terms of psychosomatics become dominant, explaining physical metamorphoses and bodily reactions and changes as the expression of intra-psychic conflicts or as the consequence of the

Table 4. The dimensions of the conceptual and normative approaches in the two examples

	Old sample			New sample		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Biological sciences, medicine	877	475	402	567	316	251
Other natural sciences	61	46	15	44	32	12
Social sciences, psychology	369	209	160	947	435	512
Philosophy, cultural norms	311	168	150	518	278	240
Practical knowledge	282	159	123	343	194	149
Total number of mentions	1900	1050	850	2419	1255	1164
	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)

and the bodily leads to abandoning the question of the control and of the instrumentality of the body and to the recognition in the case of the latter of specific demands, needs and language. The spontaneous expression and satisfaction of these specific characteristics are hindered by the dictates, codes of conduct, conventional customs and formal regulations which determine the maximal use and functioning of the body. Finally, it is in terms of opposition and of demands that the body, now that it has become the vehicle of the psychological, is situated in regard to the social.

This is a point of view we meet again when we in fact approach the question of the relations between the body and society. The first sample of respondents thought of the social insertion of the body in terms of its being determined. They underlined its dependence on social regulations whether it was a matter of manners, or of eating habits, or of dress or of the control of sexuality and basic needs etc. Socialisation appeared, therefore, as the means whereby the animal body became human. Conformity with this social order was laid down as being a matter of course within a perspective of social integration. The only and rare cases where this ascendancy appeared to be harmful related to the imbuing of sexuality with guilt as a result of religious and educational taboos without this, however, calling into question, on other levels, the internalisation of social models experienced as necessities.

It is quite otherwise in the new sample of respondents for whom social adjustment becomes a major preoccupation. If, to believe what subjects say, moral prohibitions on sexuality no longer carry any weight, education and social codes and rituals, by way of contrast, are considered to be an obstacle to the freedom of life and of expression of the body. Incidentally, it is less the socialisation of the body that is attacked so much as its transformation into a social object, its standardisation in the consumer society and its direct involvement in social relations. People, especially women, fasten with disconcerting insistence on the ill effects of advertising and of fashion which impose models which one is forced to obey without any commitment. All this only reveals the significance of a feature of our age: the incessant hammering, through publicity, of male and female images which are uniform in their youth, vigour and beauty. Added to this is their denunciation of a system which, under the guise of a fallacious taking into account of the body, turns it, instead, into both the means, and the goal, of consumption. But here is something new – this taking up again

felt on the psychological and physical level, in so far as subjects are confronted by an equally frustrating alternative: either to yield to the pressures to be like everyone else, which permits a gain in seduction and security in interpersonal exchanges, but which persecutes the body and loses its identity in a world of objects; or else to reject this pressure, which allows one to dissociate the body from this world and allows its nature to be respected, but which lays one open to the risk of social and professional failure or of sexual and emotional isolation. Here are some other targets for criticism: the pressures of urban life and of industrial productivity which entail a body which is automatised and constrained, excluding the sensuous enjoyment of everyday life, and relegating pleasure to the sphere of sexuality alone 'so that society may continue'. There is no way of escape from this constraint and automation other than the flight towards nature, the hedonism of private life and relationships with others, nor is there any response other than violence.

These indications are corroborated by the statistical enquiry. The influence of modern life on the body is emphasised by 70 per cent of the people questioned. Of these, 63 per cent denounce the normative pressures which society inflicts on the life of the body through fashion, through the constraints of the social or work environment, rules of conduct and etiquette etc. And 40 per cent point to the pernicious consequential effects of the social context, together with the nervous and biological disorders which result from the way of life or from the unprovoked assaults of the environment and the contempt for bodily needs. And in evaluating work, around 52 per cent of the replies highlighted the fatigue and the physical ailments which result from it, 35 per cent of replies concern the unbalancing effects of work and 24 per cent the lack of availability of one's own body which results from it.

Towards the body-subject

Thus cultural diffusion, by making prominent the viewpoint developed by the psychological and the social sciences, provides new conceptual tools, new normative frameworks for thinking about the body, and changes the meaning of traditional categories and the hierarchy of values. This re-organisation occurs in direct contact with the facts of the everyday life of the individuals. It enables them to interpret their social experience and to locate themselves in the modern world. In this process

into question by the way in which society functions, it becomes the place where the conflicts between the individual and society are experienced and expressed.

This is a view which will be pushed to the limit by those who are most actively involved in the social movements leading towards a new conception of the body: militants from the movements for sexual liberation, proponents of a new politics of the body and those skilled in new bodily techniques. Their avant-garde practice leads them to sketch the image of a future body. This is an image of something uniquely material and impulsive; positively stated in opposition to the pressures of conformity; freed from the masks of a socialised exterior, defended in the uniqueness of its demands and of its bio-rhythms in the face of functional definitions, medical control and the constraints of industrial production. It is a somatic singularity with its own history and it possesses, by virtue of its symptoms, its reactions and its gestures, a power of language. This is a language which expresses personal identity and truth and gives access to new forms of communication between one body and another. In so far as the feeling of social oppression gains strength from the demand for freedom of desire and for individuality in bodily expression, and in so far as this opposition is conveyed at times in the form of violence, either suffered or repulsed, the body in its libertarian stance, and in its results, emerges as being endowed with the powers of social change.

Within the network of determinations, where the individual sees himself as trapped and dispossessed of his quality as subject, is there not, in the making of the body the centre of its own particularity, in endowing it with expressive powers, in granting to its revolts a power for effecting change, a sort of transfer, a delegating of subjectivity? The body has appeared on many occasions as a system of opposition. The opposition between female body/male body is levelling out. That between social body/private body is indistinct. The body-as-object is everywhere decried; it heralds the advent of the body-as-subject.

These indications prefigure the symbolic evolution of the body in modern consciousness. To trace this evolution was a logical conclusion to the study of a social representation which, as a social product, we have shown (i) that it has a profound influence on the relationship which an individual maintains with his own body at the level of lived experience and of conduct whilst (ii) at the same time, it bears the lineaments of social thought.