WHERE DOES THE BODY END?

Materialities in Anthropology
HPAN6009/HPAN5009

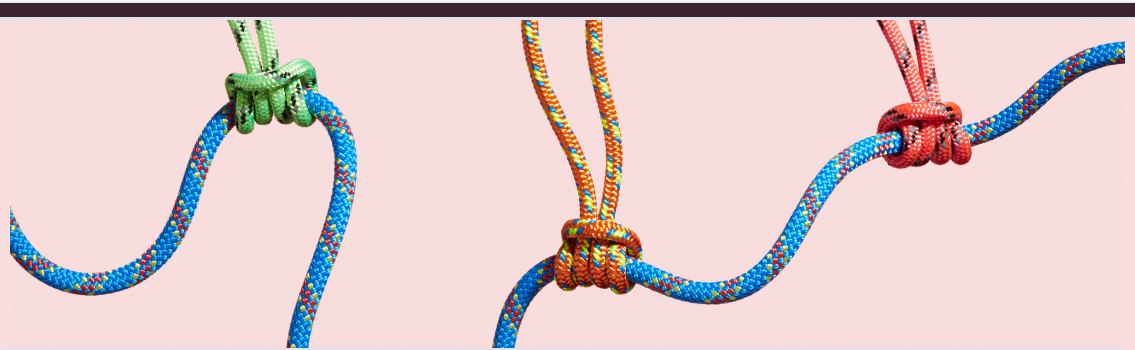
Jane Bremer.





Exercise

Finger Spinning



…an “ongoing phenomenological intertwining between brains, bodies, and things[1].”



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Do you think it’s possible for the human body to intertwine with something else and assimilate that item into a part of the body?

[1] Is it “me” or is it “mine”?The Mycenaean sword as a body-part 1. (n.d.). [online] Available at: http://cogprints.org/6432/1/Malafouris.ch12.PastBodies.pdf [Accessed 27 Jan. 2022].

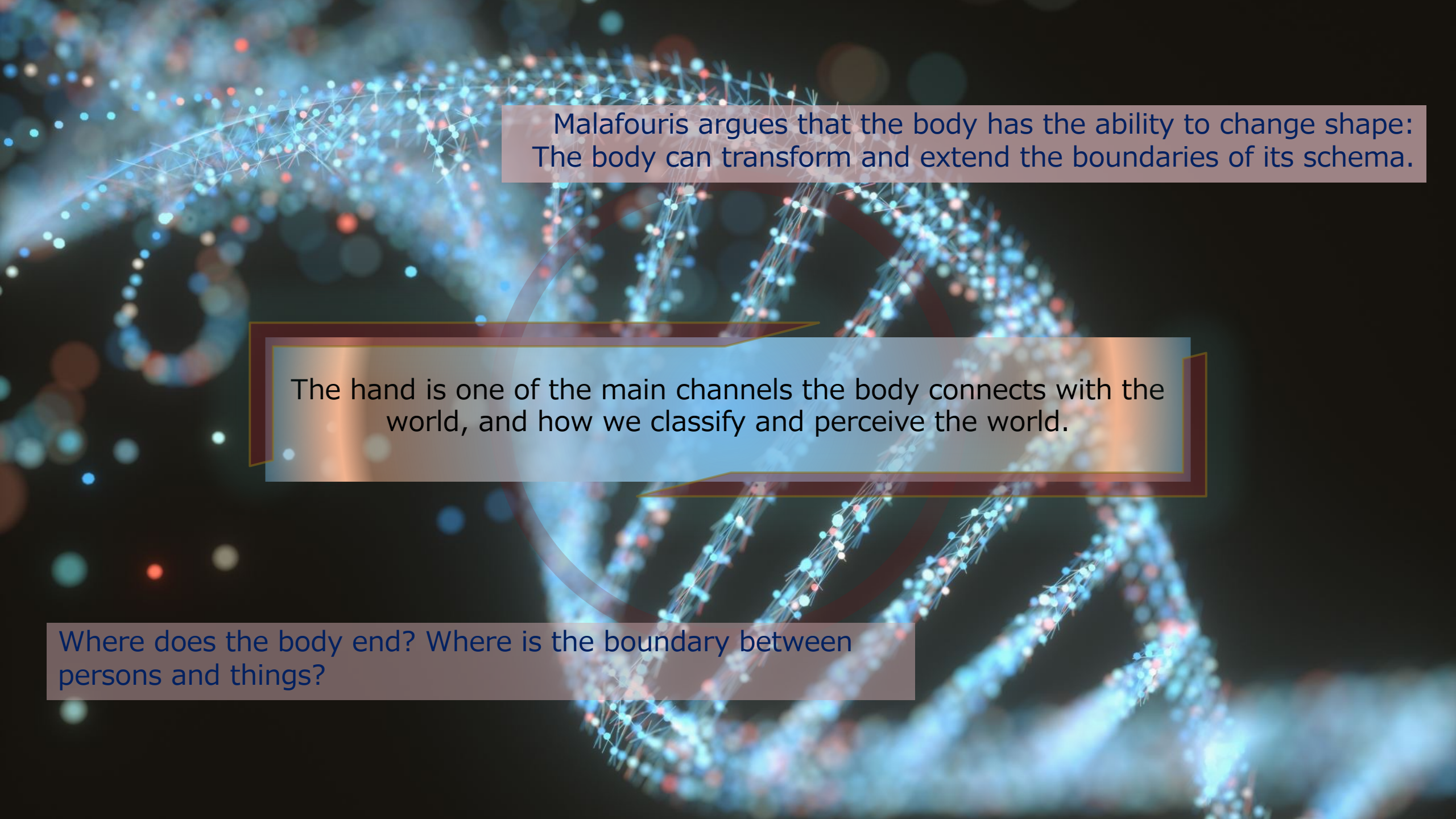
Coming in from an archaeological perspective

Concentrates on the relationship between the Mycenaean body and the Mycanaean sword (based on funerary assemblage during the Mycanaean time)



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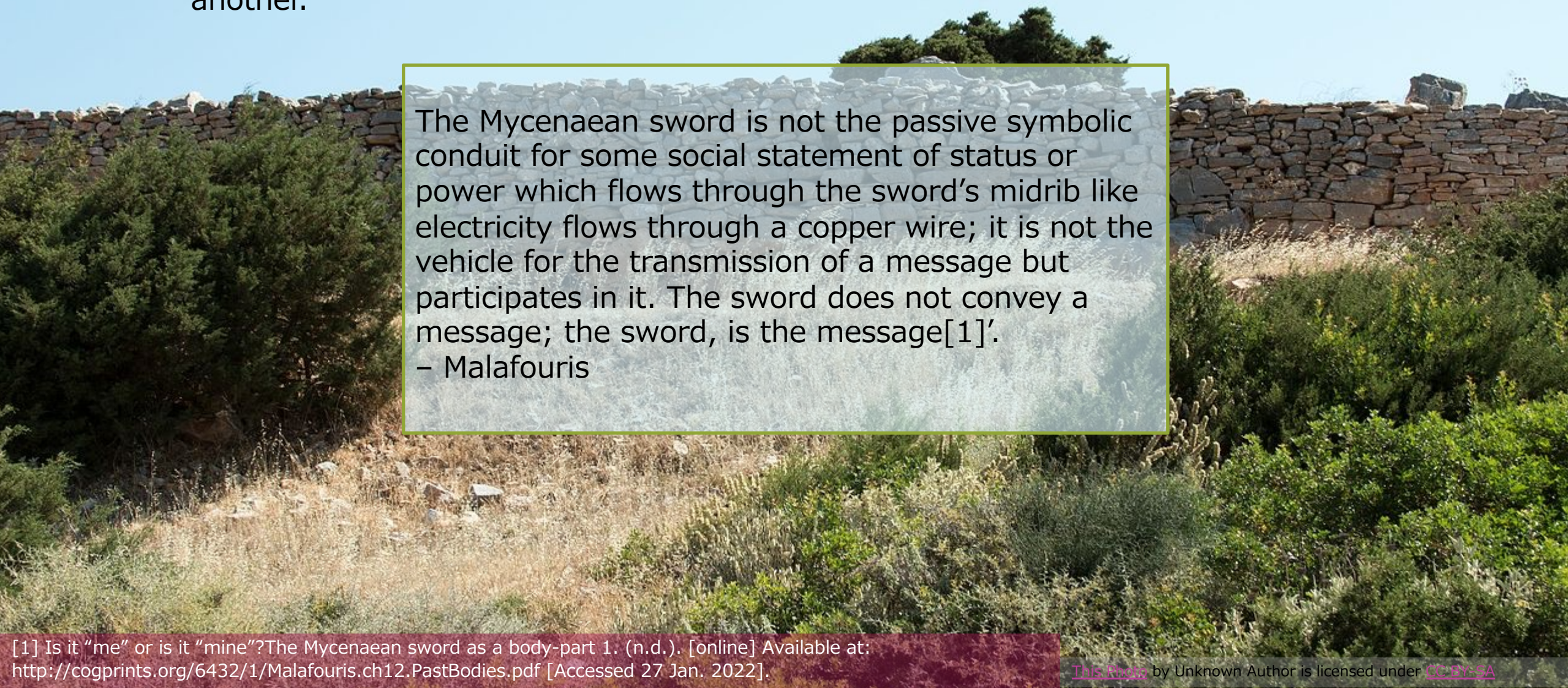
Malafouris argues that the body has the ability to change shape: The body can transform and extend the boundaries of its schema.

The hand is one of the main channels the body connects with the world, and how we classify and perceive the world.

Where does the body end? Where is the boundary between persons and things?

‘The Mycenaean sword is full of intentions, urging the hand that grasp it or the eye that is staring at it to act in some way or another.

The Mycenaean sword is not the passive symbolic conduit for some social statement of status or power which flows through the sword’s midrib like electricity flows through a copper wire; it is not the vehicle for the transmission of a message but participates in it. The sword does not convey a message; the sword, is the message[1]’.
– Malafouris



[1] Is it “me” or is it “mine”?The Mycenaean sword as a body-part 1. (n.d.). [online] Available at: http://cogprints.org/6432/1/Malafouris.ch12.PastBodies.pdf [Accessed 27 Jan. 2022].

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Examples of boundaries from Creative Entanglements by Ingold



…is the vaulting path of the sun, the course of the changing moon, the wandering glitter of the stars, the year's seasons and their changes, the lights and dusk of the day, the gloom and glow of the night, the clemency and inclemency of the weather, the drifting clouds and blue depth of the ether[1].
-Heidegger 1971:149

…'mountains and clouds, fires and sunsets, pebbles and stars[2]'.
- Gibson 1978: 66

[1], [2] Ingold, T. (2010). *Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials*. [online] Available at: https://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/id/eprint/1306/1/0510_creative_entanglements.pdf.

Boundary Artefacts

The examples Malafouris gives as separate boundaries of mind/body/world divides:

- Between the sacred and the mundane
- Between male and female
- Between memory and oblivion
- Between life and death
- Between the realms of persons and things, the human and the non human[1].



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?

What do you consider could be a boundary artefact?

[1] Is it “me” or is it “mine”?The Mycenaean sword as a body-part 1. (n.d.). [online] Available at: http://cogprints.org/6432/1/Malafouris.ch12.PastBodies.pdf [Accessed 27 Jan. 2022].

Items that link the human schema to the material world?

‘a woman’s power of localization may extend to the feather in her hat[1].’
-Holmes

Gregory Bateson declared that ‘the mental world – the mind – the world of information processing – is not limited by the skin’ in a lecture delivered in 1970[2].
(Bateson 1973: 429).

Are there any items you feel have become a part of your body?

[1] Head, H. and Holmes, G. 1911-12 Sensory disturbances from cerebral lesions. *Brain* 34: 102-254
[2] Bateson, G. 1973. *Steps to an ecology of mind*. London: Granada

“After a large right hemisphere stroke, a 73-year-old woman, while showing no sign of being demented, exhibited a total unawareness of her severe left-arm paralysis and in fact repeatedly affirmed that the paralysed hand belonged to someone else. The peculiarity about this patient was that while she was able to see and describe the rings she had worn for years and was currently wearing on her left, now disowned hand, she resolutely denied their ownership. By contrast, she immediately recognized these rings as her own (and produced much veridical autobiographical information about them) when they were shifted to her right hand, or displayed in front of her.

Similarly, she promptly acknowledged ownership of other personal belongings that, in her previous experience, had not been ordinarily associated with the left hand (for example, a keyholder or a comb), even when she saw such objects in contact with that hand. Denial of ownership of the left-hand rings was thus conditional not only on their being seen on the disowned hand, but also on the existence of a previous systematic association between them and that hand. It was as if a conjoint visual representation of the left hand and its rings had been retained in her memory but expunged from her self awareness, implying that before the stroke the rings thus represented had become part of an extended, primarily visual body schema
(Berlucchi and Aglioti 1997: 561). “[1]

[1] Berlucchi, G. and Aglioti, S.A. 1997. The body in the brain: Neural bases of corporeal awareness. *Trends in Neurosciences*, 20: 560-564.

Conclusion and Critique

If the Mycenaean sword looks as if it is ‘alive’ this is because in this case the boundary between biology and culture as well as between mind and matter has been transgressed[1].

(a) physical bodies, rather than simply our ideas about bodies, are changing
(b) bodies do not change in isolation but in relation to the material reality they become attached in different historical contexts[2].

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[1], [2] Is it “me” or is it “mine”?The Mycenaean sword as a body-part 1. (n.d.). [online] Available at: http://cogprints.org/6432/1/Malafouris.ch12.PastBodies.pdf [Accessed 27 Jan. 2022].

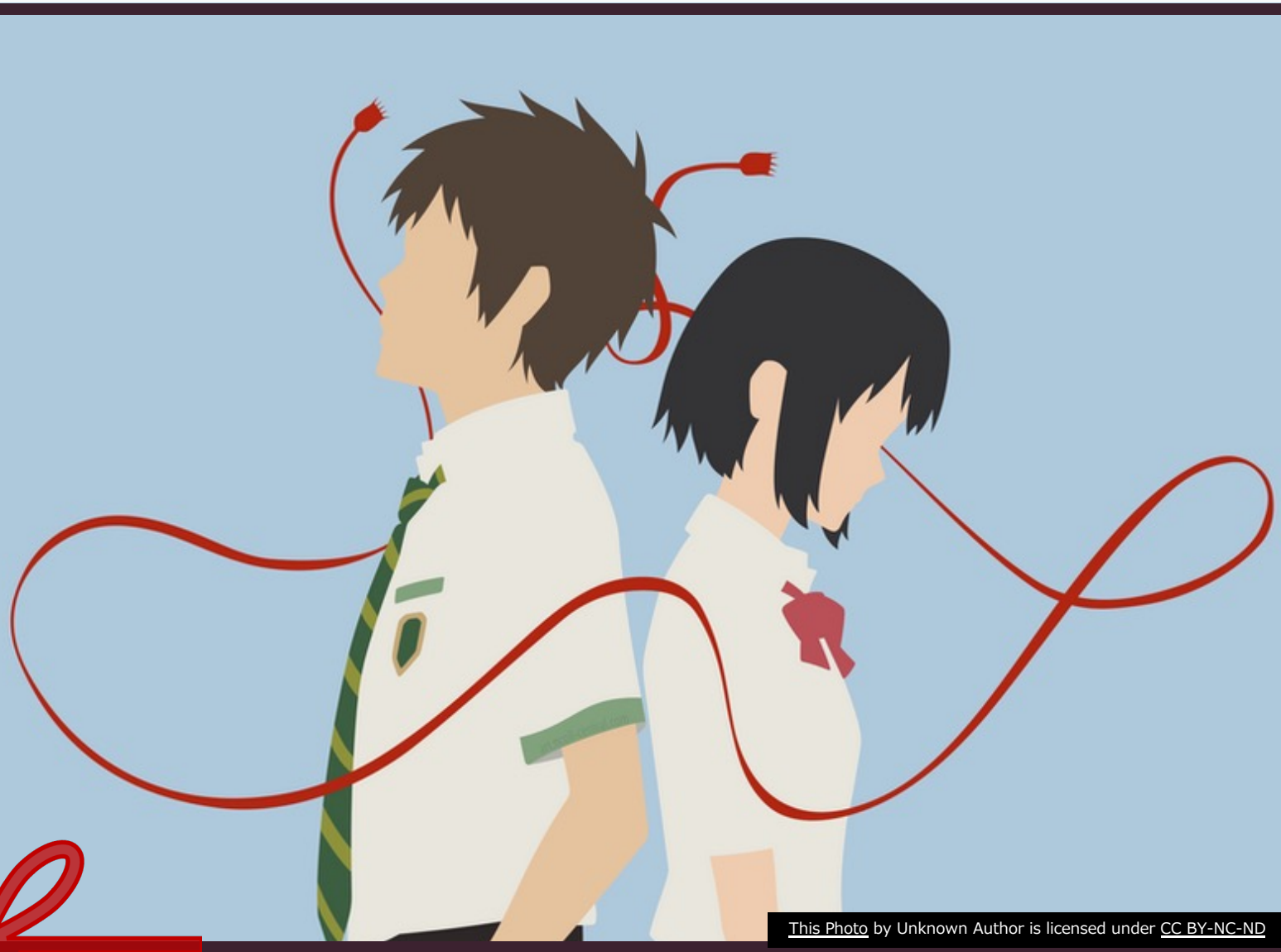
tOrange.biz

Tying thread is Musubi. Connecting people is Musubi. The flow of time is Musubi. These are all the god's power. So the braided cords that we make are the god's art and represent the flow of time itself. They converge and take shape. They twist, tangle, sometimes unravel, break, and then connect again. Musubi - knotting. That's time.

- Your Name (2016 Animation)



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Lost the Thread?





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- Many discussions and arguments about materiality weave in and out of each other like threads creating an ever-changing imagery of perception.

- Thread analogy is used in varying ways: threads as is, the threads of mycelium, the threads of a spider a web...

- Thinking of thread itself as the previous quote demonstrates, threads themselves can twist, tangle, sometimes unravel, break, and then connect again



Discussion

Is it possible for the human body as we know it to intertwine with material outside of the body?

Where do you think the body ends?

What do you consider could be a boundary artefact?

Any other thoughts or questions?

Reference List

Primary Resource

Is it “me” or is it “mine”?The Mycenaean sword as a body-part 1. (n.d.). [online] Available at: http://cogprints.org/6432/1/Malafouris.ch12.PastBodies.pdf [Accessed 27 Jan. 2022].

Secondary Resource(s)

Bateson, G. 1973. *Steps to an ecology of mind*. London: Granada.

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Hara, K. (n.d.). *Aspects of Shinto in Japanese Communication**. [online] Available at: https://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/05-Kazuya-Hara.pdf.

Head, H. and Holmes, G. 1911-12 Sensory disturbances from cerebral lesions. Brain 34: 102-254.

Film

Your Name. (2016). [Film] TOHO.