



The Body: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)

By Chris Shilling

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The Body: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions) By Chris Shilling

The human body is thought of conventionally as a biological entity, with its longevity, morbidity, size and even appearance determined by genetic factors immune to the influence of society or culture. Since the mid-1980s, however, there has been a rising awareness of how our bodies, and our perception of them, are influenced by the social, cultural and material contexts in which humans live.

Drawing on studies of sex and gender, education, governance, the economy, and religion, Chris Shilling demonstrates how our physical being allows us to affect the material and virtual world around us, yet also enables governments to shape and direct our thoughts and actions. Revealing how social relationships, cultural images, and technological and medical advances shape our perceptions and awareness, he exposes the limitations of traditional Western traditions of thought that elevate the mind over the body as that which defines us as human. Dealing with issues ranging from cosmetic and transplant surgery, the performance of gendered identities, the commodification of bodies and body parts, and the violent consequences of competing conceptions of the body as sacred, Shilling provides a compelling account of why body matters present contemporary societies with a series of urgent and inescapable challenges.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Chris Shilling is Professor of Sociology at the University of Kent. He has been a key figure in the development of 'body studies', and has written extensively on embodiment, body pedagogics, and sociological theory, in areas ranging from religion, to sport, education, gender, and work. His most recent books are *Sociology of the Sacred. Religion, Embodiment and Social*, with Philip A. Mellor (Sage Publishing Ltd, 2014), and *The Body and Social Theory*, 3rd Edition (Sage Publishing Ltd, 2012).

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