

## 73 - CONFIGURATIONS OF THE BODY: SOME CONSIDERATION UNDER THE VIEW OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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### **Initial acknowledgement of the body - the first touch**

What is the body? Searching different authors, sources, prisms and views, we find some sketches that seek to reach a concept giving account of this interrogation. I dare say that in none of these sources that is possible, because they do not reach whole and they are fixed in only one facet.

Bringing up to surface everything we hear and read on the subject, we find from descriptions as "substance", "object", "depositary of the soul", "way of locomotion", among others.

Going further, we will look to approach a little more the main subject, starting at the social body of Maffesoli and forming a great basting with other authors of Social Sciences and the Physical Education in a dialogue free of repressions. We will, thus, transpose and interact the limits of the two areas, besides reflecting on the practices of professionals and the future professionals of these same areas.

It is important to clarify that we don't intend to answer the question but to foment some considerations that allow serving of support and contribution to the researches and interested in our object of study - the body.

### **Rescuing the description of the body**

The body has always been in evidence. Today, more than ever, we talk about the body that for so long indeed has been forbidden and damaged. Many people had lived all an existence not knowing that they had a body and, what is worse, not feeling this body. Or better, to the body it was allowed feelings, but only to feel pain, torture, punishment...

This debate becomes more incited from 1960, with reflections of Social and Human Sciences. In a greater scope of history, classic sociology was abstained from studying in depth the body, preferring to focus economic and social questions. Different it was the anthropology that contributed well more in this subject, always looking into the relations consisting in the group (Villaça, 1999).

Through history, we had some passages of this body. Different modifications had been established and had been materialized. For instance, the rescue made by anthropologist Suely Kofes (in Bruhns, 1989, p. 54) where she says:

Let us remember Foucault when it speaks of the body restrained in the previous centuries to century XIX, the body that was displayed to the sacrifice, until century XIX when the body becomes disciplined to be productive, hiding itself when condemned.

It is worthy to stand out that Foucault presented the body as an object of the power of politics, beyond its diverse manifestations and transformations: repression, sacrifice, discipline, capture, productivity, among others.

Sociologist Alberto Melucci refers that we descend from a culture in which the corporal dimension was relegated to marginal areas or was considered an instrument for the physical activity or the work (Melucci, 2004, p. 91). He also affirms that "Before a transcendent principle of holiness, the body did not pass of a falling, degraded nature that was opposed to the spirit" (Op. Cit., p. 92). Or either, what was presented was a religious vision that nailed the body as the sin's source, possession of the malignant, negative force, etc.

As for the body in relation to the work, along the centuries it was constantly explored and treated as a mere instrument. Currently, it is seen on a shortly different form, valuing more the intellectual activity and removing the imposed overload of long ago, even though we see both forms of thinking.

For much time the cartesian dualism was accepted, originated around century IV a.C., distinguishing the body in opposition to the soul. With this separation, the body ended up being denied and rejected, and used to the service of the reason.

Later, in old Greece, the body was exalted, valuing and viewed as a glorifying element, and also became a subject of interest to the State.

In the Middle Age, under strong influence of the Church, the body again passed to be restrained and to be divided: the good of the soul was above of the desires and pleasures of the flesh and, consequently, above the material aspects. To carry through the purification of this guilty and perverse body, it was stimulated punishment, afflicts it, the stoning and too much forms of physical torture.

When reaching the current historical moment, a diversity of ideas and position keeps being generated, favoring all this plurality of thoughts that we intend to rescue and to argue.

### **Characterizing this body**

According to Marcel Mauss (apud Bruhns, 1989), the body learns, and is each specific society, at its different historical moments and with its accumulated experience, that teaches the body. Or still, we have a history and culture that can be found expressed and reproduced by the body.

In the body of the individual it is expressed the existence and the group that it belongs. As already Pierre Clastres said, the societies without writing write in the body its law (Bruhns, 1989). That is, the body as place and time of the memory, where they are marked, registered printed and the characteristics, as for example, the ethos tribal with its marks and tattooings.

Beyond the intentional marks, there are many others that are registered in the body. A body that is not only a body, it is an interaction with the soul. We observe this in the individuals that seem to bear the world's burdens, deforming its bodies in virtue of the implied emotional weight. We see a body there violated, forcene, oppressed and restrained, at last, a body that suffers with the social pressures.

In our society we are always in a situation of conflicts. However with the rigid bodies, disciplined, as, for example, under the discipline of the work. However, at other moments we search a specific space to liberate these bodies, either leaving to dance, or going for the academy. After this again, we imprison...

### A body that is social

When we speak in a social body, we relate it to a body that represents trends of the society in which it is inserted, that suffers to interferences from all the types, a body that also loves, suffer, live... It is the addition of the body with the society and all the relations that is established to leave this structure.

As said previously, it was never talked about the body as nowadays, not to denying it but to affirm it. In this direction, after-modernity contributed for this exciting debate of ideas.

One of the icons of after-modernity, Michel Maffesoli mentions the social body, saying that the individual do not exist anymore, it is part of the others. For it, we have the atrophy of the individual culture when "the addition of the knowledge alone can be the expression of bodies, groups, and becomes thus collective knowledge and memory" (Maffesoli, 1997, p.197). In synthesis, the individual is substituted by the group.

Following this perspective, Maffesoli (1997, p.203) mentions that "the aesthetic one is a good anthropologic pointer of the community" and the citizen becomes an empty citizen. As example of these affirmations, we have the question of the tattooing, the forms of dressing, the impositions of the society in standards of aesthetic beauty and, the plastic surgery and all a infinity of methods for a visually better and more attractive body.

Sharing with this thought, we have Lipovetsky, that retakes the question of the narcissism as resulted of new social imaginary. The body is promoted the an object of cultivation. The author also questions, "Where starts or finishes the body? Its borders withdraw, become flowed..." (Lipovetsky, 1983, p.59). The body being cult object passes to be seen by some authors as a comparative degree to the religion: with its priests (reference models), temples (spaces where if it can mold the body - the academies) and adepts (all the legion of followers of the modismo of the cult to the body).

Villaça traces a comparative degree between the two authors, saying that:

If, for Maffesoli, the forms and images participate on the constitution of a tribal social body, Gilles Lipovetsky see the appearance, the empire of the ephemeral one and the fashion as elements of reinforcement of the personalization process... (Villaça, 1999, p.59).

Still according to author, the capitalist system strengthens the idea of more information, more power, more knowledge and more pleasure. Together with this, we have the medias strengthening the idea of a beautiful body, the importance cultured it to the body, and it pleasures. The body turned to be a merchandise and as well as the work, sells and all passes to be conducted by the same logic of the system. The idolatria of the body translates a species of alienation, a capture of the individual one for the society.

Santin affirms that, for Maffesoli "the State defends the individual against the social. It announces the end of the politician and proclaims the return of the time of the tribes ", this faced as communitarian life. For Santin, it is exactly "in these spaces opened for after-modernity that can be constructed alternative ways for the Physical Education", as seemed this disciplines being an educative action direction for the practical physics or sportive, without leaving the social commitments (Santin, 1995, p.18). Therefore, it possesses an important and decisive role in this new way that glimpses in front of us. We need to leave the ostracism.

Remembering what says the philosophy, "the body supports all social order, emerging of the social relations and not being able to be seen as an individual body that I construct without the look of the other" (Santin, 1995, p.41). In short, we need the other, we construct with the other and in the other.

According to Merleau-Ponty (apud Santin, 1995, p.41), "the body is expression and word. However we do not learn to read this body ". The necessary Physical Education to act in the direction of the corporal learnig, propitiating its proper construction. For this, if it makes necessary a bigger approach of the two areas - Social Sciences and Physical Education.

We cannot remain in inertia, observing what occurs, with such transformations galloping in front of us, without taking an attitude. It urges a taking of conscience and changes in the form of acting.

### Socializing this body - final remarks

Much we would have to speak on the body and the different bodies. But, we would lack time and space for this.

We found a varied number of authors, in different lines of thought that approach the subject. As said in the beginning of this article, there is a certain difficulty in integrating all the views regarding the body, and, therefore we present some facets about the author who served as conducting wire of this research.

What we perceive is that it has an explosion and avalanche of speeches on the body and practical corporal. Around in everything this, is the relations of being able of one given society and the individuals inserted in it. The social marks are firmed since birth and follow for the whole life.

We look to collaborate launching some quarrels and considerations on the subject, recognizing the limitation of the conclusions. We desire to break here to new investigations and boarder sprout on the subject.

We expect to defy and to promote new reflections, on the part in such a way that social scientists, as much of the physical educators, in order to join still more the two areas of knowledge and to enrich the debate.

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**CONFIGURATIONS OF THE BODY: SOME CONSIDERATION UNDER THE VIEW OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
ABSTRACT**

Through this article, we will seek to carry through a research of the body as seen in Social Sciences and the Physical Education. We carry through a historical briefing of the body, showing its transformations at different moments. We search to characterize this body, exempting it of the cartesian thought that opposes it to the soul. Our main approach is based from the social body of Mafessoli, tacking with other authors of the related areas of the knowledge. For being a sufficiently complex subject and full of different approaches, we considered the presentation of some authors who contribute with its thoughts and foment the scientific curiosity of all the professionals of these fields of knowledge. Of this form, we expect to launch some quarrels on the subject, collaborating in the studies on this theme.

Keywords: Social Body, Sciences, Physical Education.

**CONFIGURATIONS DU CORPS: QUELQUES CONSIDÉRATIONS SOUS L'OPTIQUE DES SCIENCES SOCIALES**

**RÉSUMÉ**

À travers cet article, nous essayerons de réaliser un abord du corps vu selon les Sciences Sociales et l'Éducation Physique. Nous avons réalisé un bref historique du corps et ses transformations en différents moments. Nous avons cherché de caractériser ce corps, en le libérant de la pensée cartésienne que l'oppose à l'âme. Notre argument principal est basé à partir du corps social de Mafessoli, en référence à d'autres auteurs de ce domaine de la connaissance. Comme il s'agit d'un sujet beaucoup complexe et plein d'abords, nous nous sommes proposés à présenter quelques auteurs qui contribuent avec leurs pensées et fomentent la curiosité scientifique de tous les professionnels des ces camps du savoir. De cette façon, nous espérons lancer quelques discussions sur le sujet, en collaborant aux études à propos de la thématique.

Mots clé : Corps, Sciences Sociales, Éducation Physique.

**CONFIGURACIONES DEL CUERPO: ALGUNAS CONSIDERACIONES SOB LA MIRADA DE LAS CIENCIAS SOCIALES**

**RESUMEN**

A través del artículo, se busca realizar un abordaje del cuerpo mirado en las Ciencias Sociales y en la Educación Física. Realizamos un breve histórico del cuerpo, mostrando sus transformaciones en distintos momentos. Buscamos caracterizar el cuerpo, librándolo del pensamiento cartesiano que lo opone al alma. Nuestro enfoque principal basase a partir del cuerpo social de Mafessoli, hilvanando con otros autores de las referidas áreas del conocimiento. Por ser un asunto bastante complejo y repleto de abordajes, nos proponemos a presentar algunos autores que contribuyan con sus pensamientos y fomenten la curiosidad científica de todos los profesionales de las Ciencias Sociales y Educación Física. Así, esperamos lanzar algunas discusiones sobre el asunto, colaborando nos estudios sobre la temática.

Palabras-llave: Cuerpo, Ciencias Sociales, Educación Física.

**CONFIGURAÇÕES DO CORPO: ALGUMAS CONSIDERAÇÕES SOB O OLHAR DAS CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS  
RESUMO**

Através deste artigo, procuraremos realizar uma abordagem do corpo visto nas Ciências Sociais e na Educação Física. Realizamos um breve histórico do corpo, mostrando suas transformações em diferentes momentos. Buscamos caracterizar este corpo, livrando-o do pensamento cartesiano que o opõe à alma. Nosso enfoque principal está baseado a partir do corpo social de Mafessoli, alinhavando com outros autores das referidas áreas do conhecimento. Por ser um assunto bastante complexo e repleto de abordagens, nos propomos a apresentar alguns autores que contribuem com seus pensamentos e fomentem a curiosidade científica de todos os profissionais destes campos de saberes. Desta forma, esperamos lançar algumas discussões sobre o assunto, colaborando nos estudos sobre a temática.

Palavras-chave: Corpo, Ciências Sociais, Educação Física.