

## Solid, metaphorical, present and distant: the social framework of the body

By Andrea Dettano y Aldana Boragnio

What is the body? Where is the body? Whose body is it? How are bodies shown or hidden? These and other questions lead us to reflect on a state of affairs often given as natural, proper and unique but whose constitution, construction and becoming can only be thought of in relation to others and by others.

This issue 34 of RELACES, which we present with great joy, invites us - article after article - to a reflection on bodies, understanding that “the body is at the same time the most solid, elusive, illusory, concrete thing, metaphorical, always present and always distant: a place, an instrument, an environment, a singularity and a multiplicity” (Turner, 1989: 33). And it is, in view of this, that its study represents great challenges.

Modern sociology founded its bases on the rejection of positivism and, therefore, biologicism. Furthermore, it delimited its field to social interactions, arguing that these cannot be explained or reduced to biological or physiological causes (Turner, 1989). In this way, our discipline has omitted that “the body constitutes the most individual and at the same time the most social, both internal and external, exposed to all kinds of social determinants, which dialectically establishes a relationship between organism, nature and culture, constituting itself as this way in the fuzzy and confused limit between both, as the most cultural of nature and the most natural of culture” (Vergara, 2011: 142).

Along similar lines, Sánchez Aguirre (2014) points out the separation between nature and culture as a habit of thought and division that affects the ways of observing and explaining the world. This division demarcates that everything that is part of the social and cultural world, everything that can be learned is alien and contrary to nature. Therefore, what is presented as natural - the author also remarks - is endowed with an innate, pure character and not subject to modifications.

But today it becomes central to understand these divisions and go back on them in order to

tension them, flex them to finally disarm them, since there is no possible separation. Human beings live from nature, but this does not refer to a mere extractive and consumer use; instead of that, based on their work, human beings modify and appropriate nature in such a way that it becomes a social product. In this sense, nature is nothing other than its body, “with which it must remain in a continuous process, in order not to perish” (Marx, 1844: 112).

Understanding then, the human condition as bodily existence (Le Breton, 2007), asking ourselves about the place of the body is asking about the material conditions of existence and, at the same time, through it, since these conditions are housed, mark and configure the body. From this “brand” or plot that is no more - or less - than the social made body, we understand the latter from three registers:

An individual body that refers to the phylogenetic logic, to the articulation between the organic and the environment; a subjective body that is configured by self-reflection, in the sense of the ‘I’ as a center of gravity through which multiple subjectivities are woven and pass; and, finally, a social body that is (in principle) the social made body (*sensu* Bourdieu) (Scribano, 2007: 125).

Understanding the body from these analytical distinctions that occur in an inter-crossed and superimposed way, makes it possible to think of the connections and interrelationships of the body as a given state of affairs. In this way, the subject and its material conditions of existence are interconnected in a dialectical tension with the result of feeling-in-a-body.

The body is “above all a system of localization and circulation of tensions” (Melucci, 2016: 44). Given this, and as Turner (1989: 26) points out, every society faces four tasks: “the reproduction of populations in time, the regulation of bodies in space, the restraint

of the 'interior' body by way of the disciplines and the representation of the external body in the social space".

Thus, a geometry of bodies in the social space is the product and producer of the ways in which a society organizes the distribution of nutrients and energies, as central processes for readiness to action. In this sense, what happens to bodies -as we will see in this issue- is subject to social determinants and therefore, they consolidate observation spaces where social sciences must make room to understand them in their connection with the environment and brain/nutrients/energy interactions, as well as the processes of social construction of bodies and emotions.

What is briefly mentioned in this presentation, about the separations, splits, which only impede our understanding of what constitutes us as social beings, should only encourage us towards the blurring of dichotomous views and thoughts and the adjustment of our analytical lenses, which in the current context become highly relevant. Thus, health, medical health, economics, state interventions, proximity and distances that are recalculated between bodies as a way of being with others, are lines within a complex and interrelated plot.

The present issue of RELACES allows us to approach the body from its multiplicity. From surgical interventions, to sports performances, through the ways in which bodies learn to be in space as they pass through different institutions and in different life periods, to the ways of being mutually involved in the form of altruism. It is in this journey and in these contributions that another impossible separation appears, the place of emotions and how the different ways of being in spaces are consolidating states of feeling.

In this way, the journey begins with the article by **Liuba Kogan Cogan**, entitled "**The body as enemy: fat women, slenderness ideal and gastric sleeve surgery**". In it, the narratives of women who have undergone gastric sleeve surgery are analyzed, highlighting the relationship they have developed with their fat or excessive bodies, based on assessing what the author depicts as the "tyranny of the tiny". This tyranny operates as a guideline that organizes their (minimal) food intake modes after surgery, considering that it is the way to combat and forget the burden generated by the constant control of their appetite to eat.

The second article, written by **Paula Shabel**, is titled "**What is a house? Ethnography of emotions in the construction of knowledge in a squatter space**". There, the author investigates daily practices from the analysis of the emotionalities around objects and the

experiences linked to them. To do this, she worked with a group of families who live in a house taken in the center of the City of Buenos Aires, reconstructing the meanings that boys, girls and adults give to the very concept of a house taken and the practice of occupying a space. From an ethnography, it is possible to know the emotional experiences of the participants crossed in a divergent way by fear and joy.

**Jean Carlos Gonçalves and Mariana de Oliveira Felsky Mello**, in "**Body, performance and education: a study in dialogic perspective**", start from the Bakhtinian theory of dialogical discourses and from Schechner and Turner's performance studies to analyze the experience of students in the first year of primary school in Curitiba. The authors sought to understand the meanings that Physical Education classes acquire for children in their daily lives, emphasizing the performative statements that circulate around the body. Thus, analyzing the relationships between body, speech and performance, they conclude on the importance of reconfiguring the ways of working with the body in school, specifically in the disciplines that place the pedagogy of bodies as an epistemological basis.

In the fourth article, called "**From body as an object to the athletic body: notes on female soccer**", **Lílian Pereira da Silva and Maria Isabel Brandão de Souza Mendes** interpret the accounts of 15 soccer players from the Cruzeiro Futebol Clube, with whom they conducted semi-structured interviews. The authors identified various perceptions of the body, which take it as a tool, as a physical body and as an athletic body. From there, in a context where there are more and more women involved in sport, the sociocultural aspects and the socially disseminated discourses that configure the bodily aspects in women's football are put into question, in which a stereotypical view prevails on what is suitable for men and for women.

Fifth, **Gaston Julian Gil** in "**Autobiographies, outreach and self-help. The discourses of running in contemporary Argentina**", develops an analysis of the hegemonic discourses of running, placing special emphasis on the homologies that these keep with various products of the cultural industry, especially self-help literature. The author describes the research work where participation in races, observation of competitions and training were carried out, the activity of running itself and the ethnography of texts that have a wide circulation among runners, with the aim of highlighting the topics and enunciative strategies redolent of running, and of hybridity that postulates a defined set of ethical and aesthetic

precepts around the option to run as a lifestyle and as a therapy for happiness.

For their part, in sixth place, **Régia Oliveira and Cynthia Andersen Sarti** in **“Physical and Moral: The organic conception and the immature brain in the biomedical explanation of the adolescence”**, propose to reflect on the hegemony of biomedicine in the contemporary understanding of adolescence, discussing the centrality of the adolescent brain in biomedical considerations on behavioral issues considered normal during this life period. The paper is part of discussions whose objective was to investigate the relationship between the conception of adolescence and biomedical knowledge about the adolescent’s body and the health practices associated with it. To reach their objectives, the authors carried out the research in a specialized training and services center for adolescents in a public university, using observations of health practices and interviews with professionals, with training and performance referenced by biomedicine, involved in care.

In seventh place, the article by **Emiliana Mangone**, entitled **“Towards a New Configuration of the Ego/Alter Relationship: The Rediscovery of Altruism”**, takes a journey that allows us to reflect on the place that the concept of altruism has had in the social sciences, as well as the different conceptions of the subject that the human sciences in general have elaborated, endowing them with greater or lesser degrees of selfishness, altruism, goodness. In this sense, the author recovers how the social sciences did not discover altruism when Comte coined the term, understood as a powerful impulse for the intellectual and moral development of humanity. On the contrary, since ancient times, scholars have tried to explain (cause and effect) and understand the reasons why in certain situations some people behave positively towards others (altruistic behavior), while in similar situations they behave differently.

This issue ends with two reviews. The first is entitled **“The power of imagining others”** and is offered by **Margarita Camarena Luhrs** of the book by Scribano, A. and Korstanje, M. (2020) *Imagining the Alterity: The Position of the Other in the Classic Sociology and Anthropology*. The second is entitled **“Women for women, a critical look through the politics of sensitivities”** and is offered by **Guido Diligenti**, examining the book by D’hers, V. and Boragnio, A. (2020) *Sensibilities and femininities: women from a sociology of bodies/emotions*.

We thank the authors and all those who have sent us their manuscripts. We would like to remind you that we are permanently receiving submissions for publication.

Finally, we would like to restate that as from the 15th issue of RELACES we are publishing up to two articles in English per issue. As we have been stating for some time, all of RELACES’ editorial team and editorial council believe it is necessary to take each one of our articles as a node that allows us to continue in the path of dialogue and scientific/academic exchange as a social and political task in order to attain a freer and more autonomous society. Therefore, we would like to thank all those who see us as a vehicle to open the aforementioned dialogue.

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