

Elias' Bodies: the conception of body and education from three works of Norbert Elias

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ABSTRACT – Elias' Bodies: the conception of body and education from three works of Norbert Elias¹. Discussions on the body and its interconnection with education and civilization made evident the need to explore some elements exposed by Elias in three texts: *The Civilizing of Parents* (1998); *On Human Beings and Their Emotions: A Process-Sociological Essay* (1991); and, *The Loneliness of the Dying* (1985). From that emerges the question of this study: how can the relation between body, education and civilization be addressed from the perspective appointed by Elias? The three works show a civilizing nexus from childhood until elderliness, in a continuous form that complements itself. The body should not be address as an isolated phenomenon, but like bodies that are constructed and complemented throughout the individual's life – individuals inserted into society.

Keywords: Education. Body. Civilization. Individual and Society.

RESUMO – Os Corpos de Elias: a concepção de corpo e educação a partir de três trabalhos de Norbert Elias. As discussões sobre o corpo e a sua interconexão com a educação e a civilização fez transparecer a necessidade de explorar alguns elementos expostos por Elias, em três textos: *Civilização dos Pais* (2012); *Sobre os Seres Humanos e em suas Emoções: um ensaio na perspectiva da sociologia dos processos* (2009); e *La Soledad de los Moribundos* (1989). Daí a pergunta deste estudo: como tratar a relação entre corpo, educação e civilização a partir da perspectiva colocada por Elias? Os três trabalhos apresentam um nexu civilizatório que parte da infância até a velhice, em uma forma contínua e que se complementa. Não se deve tratar o corpo como um fenômeno isolado, mas como corpos que são construídos e complementados durante toda a vida do(s) indivíduo(s) – indivíduos inseridos numa sociedade.

Palavras-chave: Educação. Corpo. Civilização. Indivíduo e Sociedade.

Introduction

The relation between body, education and civilization gives rise to a series of interrogations, or rather, of worries that can bring new movements to think the man. After all, the concern with education composes, in the human history, a relevant aspect of a civilizing project of any society. On the other hand, the idea of body, for its topicality and relevance, is another expression of this process that, in the western societies, is also expressed by means of a standard of specific conducts and in the form of manifestation of feelings that, increasingly, move from a control exerted by a third party and becomes, thorough several aspects, self-controlled.

Therefore, starting to argue on the question of body and education thinking from the civilization concept coined by Norbert Elias, with the purpose of removing elements that allow us to observe how education and body are approached in the idea that Elias develops on the civilizing processes, is a necessary action. It is worth stressing that the topics *body and education*, in their more *formal and pedagogical* senses, did not compose the range of core concerns on which Elias discussed throughout his work. Thus, in the general intention that encourages us, thinking on the topic from the identification of where and how it is possible to recognize the idea of education and body in the civilizing processes theory is an element to be pursued in this study. This does not mean that we do not perceive other focuses that participate of Elias observations in these same texts, but it only means that the centrality of the analysis concerning the body tries to emphasize the increasing concern in the scope of education with this aspect, which along several decades was approached as being a lesser fact in the specter of the pedagogical concerns². And this is so in spite of the dense works of Vygotsky and Meleau-Ponty who, in a certain way, inaugurate the studies on body in the contemporaneity, and of studies as Le Breton's concerning the sociology of the body, that is even closer to the approach here pursued. Considering this, it must be observed and highlighted the still recent, although significant, approach on the body made by authors like Carmem Soares and Petrucia Nóbrega, in Brazil.

Regarding the approach centered on Norbert Elias' studies, that I intend to introduce, more general aspects like the process of individualization, interdependence and others are only announced here, but are essential to understand the sociology of the processes, in the forms placed by Elias. Therefore, not emphasizing these concepts does not mean that they are not being observed and considered, but only that, in the scope of our discussions here, in part, the yield room to the search of an understanding and situation of the body in the focus of our analysis.

It is in the sense of a control accomplished through third parties, converted into several aspects in self-control – foundation of the idea of process – that the direction here assigned to the term civilization is marked. And, therefore, in a general way, civilization is based on the balance of the human conduct and on the control of the passions and

feelings proceeding from the functional differentiation and interdependence. Thus, it should be asked: where we can perceive and highlight these elements of social and individual control that allow us to understand education and body in the process of civilization experienced in the West?

One of the excerpts that expresses more appropriately the question of *being educated* in the process analyzed by Norbert Elias can be identified in the following text, what allows us to also make some approximations concerning the idea of body. In this text, much of what is said has a close relation with the issue of the movement, and can assign a notion of what is represented by the forms of organizations that we create and to which we submit ourselves. Elias says (1994a, p. 98):

There is no doubt that the behavioral control of this or that type exists in all human societies. But here, in several western societies, for several centuries this control is particularly intensive, complex and widespread; and the social control is more linked than ever to the self-control of the individual. In children, the instinctive, emotional and mental impulses, as well as the muscular movements and the behaviors to which all this impel them, still are completely non-separable. They act as they feel. They speak as they think. In the extent that they grow up, the elementary and spontaneous impulses, on one hand, and the motor discharge – the acts and behaviors resulting from these impulses –, on the other separate increasingly more. Opposite impulses, formed on the basis of individual experiences, are interposed between them. [...] A delicately weaved mesh of controls, that comprises in quite a uniform way not only some, but all the areas of the human existence, is established in the youth in this or that way, and sometimes in opposite ways, like a kind of immunization, through the example, the words and acts of the adults. And what was, initially, a social precept becomes, mainly by means of parents and teachers, a second nature of the individual, according to his particular experiences.

Thinking on these claims made by Elias is to reflect on the process of education itself to which all of us are submitted along our lives. It is to perceive that,

[...] as they advance, more and more in the activities that originally implied the entire person, with all limbs, are focused only in the eyes, even though, obviously, this excessive type of restriction can be compensated by activities like dance or sports [...] (Elias, 1994a, p. 100).

Therefore, “[...] the pleasures of the vision and the hearing become richer, more intense, subtler and more general. The ones from the limbs are increasingly more confined to some areas of life. We perceive a lot and we move little” (Elias, 1994a, p. 100).

Made this preamble, it is worth emphasizing that the purpose of this essay is to deepen the reflection on the body and its interconnec-

tion with the question of education and the idea of civilization in three texts written by Norbert Elias that approach, respectively, the view of the child throughout the civilizing process in the west; the human emotions; and the aging and death. They are: *The Civilizing of Parents* (1998) [*A Civilização dos Pais* (2012)]; *On Human Beings and Their Emotions: A Process-Sociological Essay* (1991) [*Sobre os Seres Humanos e suas Emoções: um ensaio sob a perspectiva da sociologia dos processos* (2009)]; and, *The Loneliness of the Dying* (1985) [*La Soledad de los Moribundos* (1989)]. From that arouses the question if this study: how can the relation between body, education and civilization be addressed from the perspective appointed by Elias? First, the texts present three distinct, but complementary moments of the relation between education and civilization, following the way previously announced and, in this sense, they are an entrance door to discuss the idea of body, considering the questions raised by the author. For such, it is interesting to notice another excerpt of the *A Sociedade dos Indivíduos* (1994) [*The Society of Individuals* (1991)], in which Elias (1994a, p. 103) says the following:

Considered as bodies, the individuals inserted for their whole life in closely united communities of kinship were and are so separate among themselves as the members of the complex national societies. What emerges in the latter are the isolation and the encapsulation of the individuals in their relations with the others (Elias, 1994a, p. 103).

This excerpt was the main key to start the understanding the idea of body that is not eminently related to an isolated instance or a specific phenomenon, as it seems to be part of many analyses nowadays. It considers the body as a fact that constructs by itself and, therefore, owner of a proper statute. In this sense, thinking with³ Elias showed a way, at least, *strange* of thinking the body already as, or only as fruit of relations. The above excerpt suggests that it was like this in the past and it is presented as a key for the analysis in the present. And it is in this way that I have been approaching the topic: as fruit of relations, the idea of body is not nor can be the same throughout the life of an individual and in the current stage of civilization, as well as in the process of formation of a nation. This is why the three works previously mentioned show a civilizational nexus from childhood to elderliness, in a continuum that complements itself. Thus, the body must not be addressed here as an isolated phenomenon, but as bodies that construct and complement themselves along the life of individuals inserted in a society.

It is from this isolation and encapsulation that we will try to approach the object of this essay. Perhaps this aspect is one of the most current problems in the context of education and that has deserved little or no attention. Isolated and encapsulated bodies as part of a general control of the affection. An increasingly expanded control, on one hand and, on the other, increasingly unconscious and as part of everyone's life.

Elias' bodies come from there: from the bodies that we are as we grow up and insert ourselves in the world, because,

[...] as this social shift continues, people are more and more urged to hide one from the other, or even from themselves. The corporal functions or the instinctive manifestations and desires before freely expressed, or that were only restrained out of fear from other people, in a way that normally they become unaware of them (Elias, 1994a, p. 103).

Elias' bodies are civilized by the presence of parents and teachers, by the presence of the other, by the expression of emotions and by the time of a life that faces death or the fear of dying. Let's address, then, what we call first body.

The First Body

In the sense of the process elaborated by Elias, the civilization is a *being* and, therefore, no human being is born *civilized*. And the understanding of what this is going to be along our lives depends of our opportunities and, more than that, of the social group that welcomes us and makes us participate of life in the relation with the world and the others. Therefore, when we are born we face, even without knowing it, a range of expectations that society and family members claim as desires. Childhood becomes, then, a space of projects and desires of those who preceded us and challenges for those who will come. But, as “[...] the social state of knowledge concerning the problems of childhood is quite fragmented still today” (Elias, 2012, p. 469), the first obstacle for the development of the individual emerges.

In *A Civilização dos Pais* (2012), Elias develops on the power relations between parents and children, the great imbalance of power between them, but also makes some observations on the school education and the transformations, in the scope of the family, and the control of actions relative to their body. Thus, he poses the question: how to help the children to live their individual civilizing process by means of which each one is transformed into an adult?

In the current world, what does it mean to be a child? Discovering the children, says Elias, means to handle their relative autonomy, as they are not merely little adults. They “[are] becoming adults, individually, by means of a civilizing process that varies according to the development state of the respective social models of civilization” (Elias, 2012, p. 469).

One of the core aspects of this context that Elias invites us to understand is in the fact of finding ourselves in a transition period:

[...] in which the older relations between parents and children, strictly authoritarian, and others more recent, more egalitarian, coexist and both the forms, frequently, are mixed within the same families. The transition from a more authoritarian father-children relation to a more egalitarian one generates, therefore, for both groups, a

series of specific problems and, in general, considerable insecurity (Elias, 2012, p. 471).

However, to understand this factor well, it is necessary to consider that the barrier of sensitivity of the ancient men was quite distinct from the current one, especially in relation to the use of physical violence. In those societies, the punishments and the measures taken to discipline the children were particularly severe, and the parents of the antiquity were much more influenced by what they themselves felt than by the intention of placing themselves in the place of the children.

In this sense, the individualization concept is for us a way of reasonable explanation to deal with the question of the child in the relation with parents and family members. This civilizing transformation of each individual, to which Elias calls individualization, is the key to think the variant of power between parents and children and the consequent modelling of children's desires and pulsions. Consequently, we can observe what the increasing separation of the bodies between parents and children meant and a correlated separation and diversification of the rooms of the houses. Therefore,

[...] the increasing sensitivity, the advance of the shame barriers concerning odors, in particular from the body, during the course of the civilizing process, deserved a more detailed investigation. The susceptibility of the situation of seeing a naked person decreased in our days. However, the susceptibility concerning the body odors of another person has been increasing. Just the fact of speaking of the subject raises distressing sensations. Consequently, industrial products emerge with the function of covering or refining the body odors. The unease manifested by the adults in front to the children, who cannot regulate the time nor the place to manage their bodily needs in the same way as the adults, plays a role that is not insignificant in the relation between parents and children (Elias, 2012, p. 480-481).

The creation of rooms in the houses, aimed to specific functions, is another sign of this self-regulation process that reaches the people in the individualization process. In this sense, Elias (2012, p. 482) tells us that "[...] the domestication of the natural needs that, in the more developed industrialized states, reached certainly at the extreme of the total isolation of the individuals to attend their needs certainly represents one side of a much wider civilizing spurt". On the other hand, this strong restriction to the physical contact and this isolation of the parents can be a type of preparation for the high degree of individualization that is expected from the adults in our society nowadays.

Another aspect in this chain is the emergency of taboo breaking with the significant breakdown of the walls imposed between the bodies. The corporal contact between mothers/fathers and children and the playing in the form of sports games of young parents and their children, which promote various physical contacts, made to appear a spurt of in-

formalization⁴ that points to a decline of many symbols of authority and respect which, in the past, confirmed the domination of the parents and today reinforce the effective enjoyment of more freedom for corporal manifestations on the part of the children.

The Second Body

The second body involves *Sobre os Seres Humanos e suas Emoções: um ensaio sob a perspectiva da sociologia dos processos* (2009). In it, the sharing between the human and the non-human is evidenced in the analysis, with prominence for the question of *coupling* between a biological process of maturation and a social process of learning. This functional relation that, when considering it as a relational question, will be possible to connect the human nature with the human society and this one with other aspects of the natural form, often seen as a second world existing in an isolated form. For Elias, this partition in the understanding of the human being is fruit of much confusion and deceits in the analysis of human emotions and of the learning in the human. He denounces that this dualism or isolationism between the human world and the nature or non-human does not allow us to offer reasonable explanations on the functional unification between human emotions and those of the non-human species, what leaves a gap in the link that connects the natural with what is considered non-natural. An instance of this is that “[...] the sociologists can see the body as a topic of interest. But the dominant practices of analytical ‘isolation’ make the body easily considered a topic of sociological research separate from the other topics, perhaps even as the topic of a certain specialty” (Elias, 2009, p. 21). This reinforces what we have been claiming as the core of the question of the treatment of the body as object of analysis in human sciences themselves, especially in the context of education.

To develop his argument, Elias points three hypotheses: the first one is that,

[...] as a species, human beings represent an unprecedented innovation and that the balance of force between the acquired and innate conducts took a new route. For the first time in the evolutive process, the aspects acquired from the orientation of the behavior became clear and unmistakably superior in relation to the innate aspects (Elias, 2009, p. 26).

The second one is: “Human beings not only can learn more than any another species, but they also must learn more” (Elias, 2009, p. 26); and the third hypothesis is that “[...] no emotion of an adult person is entirely innate, a model of reaction genetically settled. Just like the languages, the human emotions result from a fusion between innate and acquired processes” (Elias, 2009, p. 35) and is constituted of three components: “[...] a somatic, a behavioral and a component of feeling” (Elias, 2009, p. 37).

In the sequence of the analysis, it is interesting to observe the prominence that Elias gives to the question of the face and the smile. Again, a corporal component in the analysis of the emotions and the human civilization. A good strategy, according to Elias,

[...] to approach the problem of the human emotions and, indeed, the wider problem of the relations between the human being and the other species, is to look with closer attention to the human face. [...] The face is one of the main instruments to indicate the feelings with which the human beings are endowed by nature, that is, as a result of the evolutive process since, in the course of this evolution, the face also became a great instrument of communication (Elias, 2009, p. 40-41).

In this sense, a smile in the face, that also mixes innate and acquired aspects, who knows, says Elias (2009, p. 43), “[...] may be considered the register of an evolutive process which is unprecedented until now”. Here the analysis presents to us one of the most interesting challenges. When discussing the smile of the child, Elias shows us how much this component *denounces* or *announces* the innate and acquired properties of the people. Thus, it is possible to evidence that, “[...] as human beings age, the total innate form of a [baby] smile is greatly weakened, becoming much more malleable and modifying itself through the experiences previously experienced, as well as the immediate ones” (Elias, 2009, p. 44). Once again betting on this scale of relations between the biological and the social, between the innate and the acquired, under the *optics of the smile*, he points that:

[...] what it is presently the form of a child's smile, a smile that is totally innate, with a model that is completely rigid, spontaneous and closely linked to a specific situation, is a recent vestige of a way of smiling, and, therefore, of a way of intra-species communication that, in some previous stage, was a regular form of communication, not only of children as of adults as well. The innate smile of the baby, with its inflexible and rigid automatism, its strong link with specific situations is closely similar to the form of communication that is dominant in groups of animals. Its 'delicacy' resembles the transition of the domain from the innate to the acquired domain of the orientation of conduct (Elias, 2009, p. 45).

Saying this, it should be concluded, with the author, that the innate emotional impulses are related to the acquired personal capacity of self-regulation by a self-control that is expressed in the movements of each person and that is a communicability factor increasingly present in the forms of expressing. In this sense, “[...] the emotions and the movements related to them have a function within the context of relationship between people and, in a wider sense, between a person and the nature” (Elias, 2009, p. 46). This is how the third body is announced, after all a civilizational course that marks the conduct of men, their fears and desires.

The Third Body

La Soledad de los Moribundos (1989)⁵ is a thought-provoking book, because it addresses topic that is present in life and surrounded by mystery, death, and because, in it, the theory of the civilizing process establishes a *dialogue* with a specific object in the long term – death –, reason why it creates a situation that almost makes us to palpate, to feel *with the touching*, the form of approach of the problems that Elias announces in many of his works. In this sense, it can be a synthesis of several other texts. It is though-provoking, also, because it seems that Elias speaks first of the death as part of a *meaning* of life and, in the end (appendix), he speaks like to himself and from himself, as, in various moments, he uses himself as a reference of what he wants to discuss. An example of this is the topic called *Envejecimiento y La Muerte: algunos sociological problems* (1989) [*Ageing and Dying: some sociological problems* (1985)], in which Elias begins by saying: “An experience I had in my younger days has taken on a certain significance for me, now that I am older” (Elias, 1989, p. 85).

Therefore, the text tries to present in a way for us to have more and better elements to think on Norbert Elias’ work, making some approximations with the analysis that we have been making, that is, with the idea of body as a process that is constructed along the life of the individual. The first element that Elias introduces to us in this text is not directly on the theory of the civilizing process, neither on Figurational Sociology, but on an attitude that, with the aid of these ways of intersection, we can take in face of aging and death, which is: “Finally, we can look death in the face as a fact of our own existence; we can adjust our lives, and particularly our behaviour towards other people, to the limited span of every life” (Elias, 1989, p. 7).

This is so because elderliness betrays – or brings – everything that the modern society does to hide or halt – the solitude, the odors, the fear of death, the fragile body and dependent again of the support, now not from the eldest anymore, but from the youngest and the specialists. In the mentioned quotation, there are some aspects that, throughout the text, are always recurrent points. Seeing death as a fact of existence itself means seeing it with less fantasy and less taboos,

As the management of human fears is one of the most important sources of the power of people over other people, a profusion of dominions have been established, and continue to maintain themselves, on this basis. With the particularly comprehensive spurt of individualization in recent times, personal and relatively private fantasies of immortality are emerging more frequently from the shell of the collective one and are moving into the foreground (Elias, 1989, p. 47).

This imaginary aspect and shrouded in an increasing web of taboos is a dear point for Elias throughout the analysis. In *A Sociedade dos Indivíduos* (1994), he also se returns to the role of fantasy as the keeper

of the supremacy of groups (Mennell, 1994). However, here, it matters to show that the fantasies on immortality that, in previous times, were predominantly collective, presently suffer a process of differentiation, in the sense of predominating a personal and comparatively private character. This is so because the *individual* fear of death, of the way how today it is presented to us, is followed by the idea that the old person is as a premonitory sign of our own death. This individual fear is also like the fear of a punishment imposed by a father, a payment for his sins. It can be seen here the whole explanatory genesis of the initial steps of man under the optics of the great western religions. For Elias, however, much of the intimate pain of each person could be mitigated if s/he could smooth or nullify the fantasies of repressed guilt.

It is this way that death, as well as other feelings and manifestations of animal nature of the human being, hides, increasingly, behind the curtains of the social life. An aspect, by the way, that Elias emphasizes and that bases the whole civilizing process in course, with an increasing predictability of the questions of the nature and a higher measure of foresight and control of the passions as a way also to conform the bodies.

The constant threat of a human group to another human group has been one of the reasons of the uncountable transformations through which our societies have been going in a long period. It is not aimlessly that, in a text of presentation of Elias' theory, Steffen Mennell calls the attention to the constant problem of violence as a relevant category. He argues that Elias alerts for the error of considering the *economic* function as if it were more *important* than the use and the fight against the use of violence (Elias, 1994b). By the way, in Elias' work, the understanding of the analysis done and the constant relation with the changes in the gradient of the *aggressive pulsion* is essential. In this context, he emphasizes that,

[...] just like all the other instincts, it [aggressiveness] is conditioned, even in visibly military actions, by the advanced state of functions division and by the resulting increase in the dependence of the individuals among themselves and in face of the technical apparatus (Elias, 1989, p. 12).

It must be stressed that the control of this aggressiveness creates the possibility of having an increasing empathy among human beings that share rites and ideas and strengthen their bonds of reciprocity, because “[...] the ideas and rites in common unite men; distinct ideas and rites split the groups” (Elias, 1997)⁶ Indeed, what comes into play is a process of monopolization of the force that allows that increasingly more extensive groups are impelled to coexist in increasing mutual dependence. In this context, the way how they see extra-human natural forces change and, with a higher degree of requirement, rises the concern with the control on the relations between people and groups. This monopoly of violence allows the formation of steadier centers of

physical violence and an internal pacification that makes possible the unveiling and the differentiation of social life (Elias, 1989).

This sense of change makes that questions like death, for instance, still so loaded with fantasy-like explanations – but much more in past times – experience a change which is characteristic in these past four hundred or five hundred years, when compared with the Middle Age, argues Elias, when people spoke more often and more openly about death and dying, when the feeling of guilt and the fear of the punishment after death were official doctrine. In the current days, the fantasies have, increasingly, personal and private character, and the way of dealing with the elderly, the corpses and the sepultures have passed from the hands of the family members to the ones of specialists.

This distancing has created in the individuals a trend to be in the defensive and a type of embarrassment when they are faced with dying people and death. For Elias, we have not created effective means to deal, in an open and frank form, with the questions that elderliness and death present to us. As we did not create forms of identity or social behaviors corresponding to the critical situations that result in the destabilization of the self-control, like death, it seems that the increasing embarrassment in face of it favors the early isolation of dying people. The institutionalized hospital routines configure, socially, the situation of the end of the life.

The high degree of individualization is another important aspect in this context, as it is necessary to consider that:

The peculiarity in the way of dying as well in the idea of death in more developed societies cannot be understood without considering the powerful individualized impulse that begins in the Renaissance and that, with much variations, is prolonged until our times (Elias, 1994a, p. 109)⁷.

Again, this individualization, as a process, leads to the construction of relations that are distinguished by a general control of the affection, to denial and transformation of the instincts. In other words, what can be seen, on one hand, as the so-called increasing individualization process, on the other is conceived as a civilization process. And every society that heads in the direction of a high level of individualization makes possible the sprouting of specific forms of accomplishment and dissatisfaction. “Specific possibilities of happiness and contentment for the individuals and specific forms of unhappiness and discomfort that are not less proper of each society” (Elias, 1989, p. 66)⁸. It is not aimlessly that the sensation of feeling lonely and, effectively, being alone is a characteristic proper of the individuals who live in the differentiated societies of our times. This high degree of personal independence, this peculiar *solitude* of this type of society is presented as a necessary factor for its maintenance. In contrast, it presents *flaws* in aspects that are constituted as weak points of these societies. The isolation and the solitude of those who *still* did not die and idea itself of the death are only one of them.

Actually, what, in a more including context, defines this process of individualization is a specific direction of the process of social differentiation, the gradual division of functions and the growth of interdependence chains by means of which the impulses and the actions of the individuals are interconnected. These make each individual lonelier, but at the same time potentially interrelated.

Thus, following this development, while there is an increasing concern with elderliness, there is an increasing number of institutions that take care of the elderly in a more isolated way and distant way from the family circle. Then if, in the social life, in previous stages, people did not have opportunity, need nor capacity to be alone, today these long chains of action and the increasing division of functions open the way to a characteristic *individualization* that, in a certain way, impels the individuals to be seen differentiated from the other ones. And, even though they share certain aspects of the social life, they feel like an abyss between their *inner* part and the *external* society (Elias, 1989).

Finally, it is worth noticing, yet, a topic that the author traces alongside the individualization and is specific to understand aging and death nowadays. For him, it is the idea of sense and meaning of life, for those who are about to die and for those who come across with people in this situation. Perhaps, for this reason, "The fulfilment of meaning for an individual, as we have seen, is closely related to the meaning one has attained in the course of one's life for other people, whether through one's person, one's behaviour or one's work." (Elias, 1989, p. 83-84). This is one of the most uncomfortable and desired aspects for the life of the individuals in the present societies: the search for a meaning for life!

This is why a person feels truly lonely only when she perceives that, despite being alive, she does not mean anything else for those who surround her. Thus, there is no doubt that the tendency to the isolation, in the diversified societies of today, in the way we referred previously, is part of the personality of the individuals, in particular, of the elderly and the dying people.

To conclude, it should be noticed that, when Elias says that no human emotion is entirely innate, a genetic model previously settled, he is alerting us to the fact that the human characteristics are the result of a process of self-regulation placed by the collective life and that points constantly to the perception of itself. The awareness of what is allowed for us to know allows the man to identify (or not) himself with the other men, with the environment and himself as individual.

The focus that we tried to assign to the topic is justified because we understand that it is necessary to think the body in relation to education, considering the idea of process, and the fact that the most common treatment of the topic is not appropriate, in which the body is *isolated*, in a way to consider it as part solely of a human world, and it forgets the coupling – the process that connects human nature with human society – that is necessary to understand the phenomenon in the context of the inter-relations, or, in other words, in the context of the civilization processes. Elias' bodies unify in the idea of process, when these are con-

stituted by the interweaving of the relations formed between man and the non-human nature. The body, as a continuum that is built in the constant interdependence of man with nature, of man with other men, in a process that is renewed and makes it possible to think about the characteristic diversity of the human being.

For education, the challenge of the image of the man as a static being, an adult who was never a child; of the child who does not miss others to be able to be and the omission of processes in which each person is truly engaged seem to be factors that block the discussion and hinder seeing the topic as a possible link to surpass a dissociated view between man and nature and an isolated view in which he considers himself like a being separate from the others by quite solid walls. In this sense, and searching for other explanations, it becomes urgent to think this I that is duplicated or this double I that unifies in the complex interweaving of human nature and human society. Furthermore, it is never too late to learn that “[...] the relations are always changing, and the challenge is imposed each time, again and again. For the individuals, the need to work conscientiously in their mutual relations never ends” (Elias, 2012, p. 493).

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Notes

- 1 The German sociologist Norbert Elias was born in Breslau in 1897 e died in Amsterdam in 1990. He is the author of Works like *The Civilizing Process*, v. I and II and *The Court Society*. The multidisciplinary character of his studies mad of him an author that is increasingly accepted in fields beyond sociology and social sciences. For his processual approach on the relation between individual and society, he has been the target of increasing interest in studies related to education.
- 2 This claim is supported on my teaching experience in School Physical Education and, recently, in the courses offered on pedagogy and post-graduation in Education. There, in physical education, a denser discussion on the subject will emerge only along the 1990s and here, in pedagogy, the topic still is the object of little reading and discussion.
- 3 The term *with* is used because there is a desire of the author to emphasize the different form of Elias constructing his method of work. This is why it is thinking *with* him, because it is from the method that he constructs.
- 4 On this question of Informalization, I suggest the reading of the text by Cas Wouters (1998). In an excerpt, Wouters tells us that “When the dividing lines of the social and the psychic are open, and both the social groups and the psychic functions are being integrated in the interdependence networks in expansion, the informalization phase is open in the civilizing process. This phase if characterized by the emancipation of emotions and impulses which until now had been repressed, giving as a result a more reflexive and civilized self-regulation” (Wouters, 1998, p. 204).

- 5 Besides this topic, see excerpts in pages 85, 87 and 105.
- 6 To this respect, see the text *Violence and Civilization* (1988), and an excerpt of *The Society of Individuals in which*, when addressing the issue of violence, Elias says: "What we refer to as the 'economic' sphere of the interconnections – the sphere that today is often considered, generalizing from the structure of the initial phase of industrialization, as an isolated sphere of history and as its only propeller force, as the engine that sets in motion all the other spheres in the condition of 'superstructure' – depends on the monopoly of violence and only becomes possible with the increasing differentiation of the society, when more stable centers of physical violence and internal pacification are formed, which allow the emergence of economy as distinct sphere in the vast web of human actions" (Elias, 1994a, p. 42 and seq.), on the question of the monopolist mechanism, see *The Civilizing Process*.
- 7 See the item *the Individualisation in the Social Process*, p. 102-125.
- 8 In this part, Elias also speaks of what he calls homo clausus, as fruit of a philosophical tradition that addresses the individual as an isolated *nômoda*.

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