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In Defense of a Complex Notion of Subject in Organizational Studies

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Abstract

This essay reflects on the need to expand the complexity of the notion of subject in the critical approaches used in organizational studies and to contribute with a new perspective on the human attribute in collective issues based on a new concept: the concrete procedural subject. The human and social sciences are faced with the challenge of delimiting their object of study (human beings in their manifestations) without excluding the biological, social, historical, and psychological dimensions that are inherent to them, thus avoiding reductionism. It is believed that this complex perspective is relevant to analyses of socio-organizational spaces since we take the subject as a fundamental analytical unit to understand organizational dynamics. Organizations emerge from the interrelationships between subjects, expanding, structuring, and institutionalizing themselves. Therefore, the subject and organization are inseparable, and dichotomies must be avoided in favor of knowledge production in organizational studies and other correlated areas. Based on a critical analysis and adopting a multifaceted and plural approach, with contributions from psychoanalysis, sociohistorical psychology, and post-structuralism, all of which address the complexity of the human being, this essay presents a notion of subject that is contradictory and fluid, which are the marks of its procedurality in contemporary times and the foundation for understanding the complex socio-organizational dynamic and its phenomena.

Keywords: subject; subjective constitution; complexity; organizational studies.

Introduction

Presenting an idea or notion of the human attribute (whether as a subject, individual, social actor, or many other possibilities) is one of the primary tasks of human science researchers, as it enables dialogicity for the academic community when reading and criticizing in the investigative process. As for the structure and theoretical framework, this essay introduces a combination of contemporary views on subject and subjectivity arising from classical areas such as philosophy, psychology, and social sciences. It adopts these disciplines as tools for answering the central question proposed herein, which is to reflect on the characteristic complexity of the human attribute in its various manifestations, as a way to contribute to the expansion of perspectives and resulting interdisciplinary dialog in organizational studies, according to a new concept called the concrete procedural subject. It is assumed that this stance will help in the search for possible answers to the complex questions arising in organizations, especially within the scope of topics such as human behavior in organizations, practices of socialization and production of meanings, the construction of social representations in organizations, symbolic dynamics, forms of violence, hate speech and intolerance in work organizations, discrimination and oppression at work, and strategies for the empowerment of social minorities, among others. Indeed, it is necessary to adopt more comprehensive perspectives to understand such phenomena, considering that the existing theories and perspectives tend to be exhausted due to the complexity of the object. In other words, when we adopt such complex facts and manifestations as study objects in organizational studies, it becomes even more crucial to incorporate interdisciplinarity and promote the dialogue between different areas of knowledge.

Nevertheless, proposing concepts is not a simple task and requires caution. First, it is important to historicize the meanings attributed to a given conception in the fields that use it, to understand the existing interpretive possibilities according to a certain bias, especially when it comes to criticism. Then, a logical sense of the term has to be established considering its uses and meanings in different fields by gathering information that can meet the investigative needs concerning the objects of study to which the research and the knowledge production are dedicated.

Based on the notion of concrete procedural subject, we intend to bring together different perspectives that can be synthesized in the form of a critical and more comprehensive notion about human beings in their manifestations. Likewise, this can bring about new analytical possibilities regarding the phenomena inherent to the organizational dynamics, given the level of abstraction that we have witnessed throughout the history of the various disciplines, in the case of the aforementioned object of analysis. As for the formulation of academic concepts and constructs, it is worth mentioning that the more abstract an idea is in relation to its factual correspondent (in the case of this work, the notion of the human being), the greater the chances of indiscriminate/limited uses regarding what one hopes to understand or explain about reality as a scientific practice. Even so, it is necessary to confront the challenge of revising and reformulating concepts according to scientific demands and needs, which become more complex as the parameters, references, and theoretical constructs become less elucidative, in the case of the “complexification” of the phenomena studied in a given area of knowledge.

Therefore, concepts involve the degrees of theorization/abstraction necessary to develop expressions capable of containing, in a synthesized and abstract way, a theory about a

concrete phenomenon. Concepts are generalizing enough to assume a meaning that goes beyond the isolated fact and emerges from a process of abstraction and aggregation. The concept allows a concrete fact to be apprehended and understood before acting on it. (Matitz & Vizeu, 2012, p. 585)

For the concept proposed here to gain relevance and legitimacy in its uses without neglecting the historical and social dimension of the areas in which it emerges (and this includes the intentionality of rupture concerning the hegemonic senses, crystallized primarily based on the appropriation of concepts in everyday life and common sense), we seek to establish a dialogue between a number of perspectives focused on the complexity of human beings in their relational and multiple dimensions. Among them, sociohistorical, psychoanalytical, and post-structuralist conceptions stand out, to establish a broader notion of subject to find comprehension strategies that are also broadened in terms of the connection between the subject and the socio-organizational dynamics, which inter-infiltrate and inter-influence each other. The intention is not to combine arguments to promote a forced expansion of man's condition in organizational practices. Instead, it is about trying to find arguments that are already validated from some theoretical perspectives that have broken with the hegemonic notion of subject, characterized by its individuality, essentiality, rationality, and centralization – a concept commonly present in functionalist perspectives, for instance – in order to apprehend its complexity in the present day.

This may cause discomfort among readers since we have become accustomed to occupying pre-established places, which serve as a reference for how we think about ourselves and the world around us. In this essay, discontinuity, contradiction, dialogicity, and dialectics are paramount, given the nature of the investigative problem. This is why we have chosen the authors and theories presented in this paper: from the sociohistorical approach, we demarcate the concrete dimension of the being that goes beyond general and universal abstractions about the human attribute as an object of study since it is constituted in its exchanges and concrete metabolizations with its environment; from psychoanalysis, we extract considerations about the unconscious, as an instance that influences how subjects are willing to operate in their context, considering the drive and libido that guide their desire(s); and, finally, post-structuralism contributes the notion that subjects are established as something that “comes to be” in their relationships, influenced by the possible meanings that qualify them discursively and that render them fluid, perennial, and mutable.

For this reason, we believe that calling this analysis proposal and its theoretical-methodological framework a “critique” is pertinent. It is important to realize that the authors and scholars that serve as the foundation for this essay encompass perspectives influenced by historical materialism, the contributions of the Frankfurt School, as well as the propositions of phenomenology and post-structuralism, which also highlights the interpretational and post-modernist character of this framework. In this sense, criticism and interpretationism can be situated in the same context, given the subjectivist perspective that such approaches have incorporated into organizational studies (Burrell & Morgan, 2005). Moreover, what we refer to as a “critique” is an analysis perspective that seeks to combine interests that are both practical and emancipatory, that is, interests that help promote possible changes, focused on equity and social commitment (Paes de Paula, 2008; Mozzato & Grzybovski, 2013).

Regarding the connection between the approaches that ground this essay, this is guided by the annotations by Paes de Paula (2015), which suggest that we overcome Kuhn's (2011) paradigmatic incommensurability, which is present in the model proposed by Burrell and Morgan (2005) in organizational studies. Influenced by the Habermasian logic of cognitive interests in knowledge production (Habermas, 1982), the author suggests that the circle of epistemological matrices is a way to obtain a guiding framework for organizational studies, defending the thesis of cognitive incompleteness and suggesting that sociological and organizational knowledge stems from constant epistemological reconstructions (Paes de Paula, 2015).

The author also explains that it is possible to create new approaches since the epistemological matrices encompass sociological approaches, which, in turn, produce theories and methodologies. If each of them is addressed separately, conflicts and incommunicability will emerge. For Paes de Paula, this incommunicability is not insurmountable since the sociological approaches skewing towards a certain epistemological matrix produce theories and methodologies that move around the circle and enter the scope of other epistemological matrices. In short: Paes de Paula (2015) argues that ideal research in organizational studies should comprise the three cognitive interests – technical, practical, and emancipatory – not to break with the marks and specificities of each approach, but to awaken scientists to the idea that each one of them has limitations. This happens due to the complexity of the objects of study in human and social sciences so that it is often necessary to delve into and dialogue with new possibilities regarding the construction of the knowledge (Paes de Paula, 2015).

We undertake the effort to carry out epistemological intersections by adopting the subjectivist perspective as an elementary point in analyzing socio-organizational dynamics, although there is disagreement between theories, as will be presented below. We are also interested in the “need to consider an alternative to instrumental rationality in organizational studies in favor of exercising the individual's citizenship as a social actor, endowed with an active role, but not as an object of science and the world” (Mozzato & Grzybovski, 2013, p. 504).

Faria (2009) also explains the confusions regarding critical approaches in organizational studies, by dividing the proposals for critical studies into four major areas, namely (a) Frankfurtian critical theory, based on social studies that follow the guidelines of Frankfurt School theorists and their respective generations of authors; (b) critical theory in organizational studies, based on Marxism and focused on the centrality of work in organizational processes, in addition to interfaces with areas such as Frankfurtian studies, sociohistorical psychology, critical psychosociology, and analyses regarding the state, power, and social classes (called “political economy of power in organizational studies” by the author); (c) critical management studies, based on studies conducted mainly by Alvesson, Deetz, and Willmott; and, finally, (d) critical analysis in organizational studies, grounded on studies conducted based on dimensions that are neither Marxist nor Frankfurtian, such as Foucault's post-structuralism, Lyotard's postmodernism, Lourau and Lapassade's institutional analysis, Bourdieu's symbolism, Castoriadis' imaginary, and Morin's theory of complexity, among others.

According to the framework of Faria (2009), the analysis perspective of this essay establishes an intersection between what the author considers to be a “Critical Theory in Organizational Studies” and a “Critical Analysis in Organizational Studies” through the way it epistemologically seeks to reflect the relationships between subjects in organizational spaces, from a dialectical and

procedural perspective (considering Marxian sociohistorical bases, Freudian contributions, and Foucauldian and Butlerian post-structuralist bases, for example). The intention is to broaden the conceptions of the studied reality (the subject and his/her subjective constitution process) so as to contribute to the development of studies, especially those conducted nationally.

Apparently, a theory that ends up in itself is not capable of awakening new analytical possibilities, nor does it respond satisfactorily to the demands of contemporaneity since the objects of studies become historically complex. This, in turn, assigns temporality to theories, despite the sacralization often perceived by authors and researchers (and that we intend to avoid herein). Indeed, this essay is a form of interdisciplinary effort, allocating theoretical and methodological perspectives that can complement each other due to the complexity required by the studied reality – man in his manifestations in organizational spaces – and, perhaps, lead to the emergence of new possibilities for analysis and knowledge production that go beyond the theoretical and paradigmatic boundaries established in organizational studies, as pointed out by Paes de Paula (2015).

To this end, we perform a hermeneutic analysis grounded on the ideas of theorists who have focused on the complexity of human beings in their manifestations, in their fields of activity and research in human and social sciences. Indeed, these authors have approached them as a concrete entity (the biological dimension), influenced (but not necessarily determined) by socio-environmental and cultural aspects (the sociological dimension), in constant interaction with their context and with the other subjects at a given time and space (the historical-social dimension), and acting according to their references of themselves and the world (the psychological dimension, comprising consciousness and the unconscious). Therefore, understanding the subject in organizational practices would imply analyzing it based on visible and tangible aspects (physical characteristics, behaviors, and cognition, for example) in addition to other ones that are not easily apprehensible due to their intangibility (such as affection, emotion, desires, and fantasies, for example). We must consider it as something that is a constituent and constituted in its metabolizations with the world, in a dialectical and procedural movement, without excluding the components that assign to it individuality (that which is its own and idiosyncratic) and collective marks (those which are shared and symbolized as part of something bigger). Finally, we must consider the subject as a form of historicity (formed from its historical-social experiences) and as something to become, as a possibility of constant change in its process of self-constitution and self-care.

The risks of such a task are well-known given the multitude of interpretive possibilities about the human attribute in collective spaces. Therefore, this essay does not aim to neglect the innumerable theoretical perspectives that exist. On the contrary, based on a didactic proposal, we aim to list some propositions that may bring about new interpretive possibilities. Indeed, we believe that this is the key contribution of this paper to organizational studies; when embracing a complex notion of subject, we reorient the forms of analysis and interpretation of equally complex themes adopted in research on Brazilian organizational studies, as previously mentioned. Moreover, it should be noted that the choice of the approaches adopted here sought to establish a possible dialogue, considering in the notion of criticism some potentially common aspects to the various critical approaches in organizational studies (both national and international), in particular: (a) regarding historicity and proceduralism as elementary traits in the constitution of subjects and organizations; (b) regarding the possibilities of evidencing the power relations in the exchanges

established between the subjects, given the actions performed by ideologies and by the instrumental rationality in administration; (c) cultivating an interest in the development of knowledge and practices aimed at social change, while considering the practices of oppression at work through the idea of performance and productivity in the organizational sphere (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Fournier & Grey, 2000; Adler, 2002; Grey, 2005; Paes de Paula, 2008; Faria, 2009).

What is understood as subject, anyway?

The notion of human adopted in this essay refers to the notion of **subject** and not to other denotations that may seem synonymous. In other words: it is understood here that the idea of **individual**, for example, which is highly praised by the modern bourgeois context, contains in itself a uniqueness, originality, or particularity of being. However, this notion is not consistent with what we seek to clarify in its constitution process with, by, and for the Other in socialization processes. The idea of an individual in their omnipotence does not serve as a basis for thinking about the complexity of a constitution inscribed in multidirectionalities and polyphonies present in time and space, history, and culture. Due to its atomistic character, the notion of individual does not help us clarify the interrelationships between beings and their context.

The notion of **social actor** seems to partially neglect important constitutive dimensions of being that are not situated in the field of perception and rationality, although its relevance is considered when establishing the dimension of generativity and the domain of practices by conscience in social relations, as can be seen from the placements of symbolic interactionism (Goffman, 2011; 2014), cognitivist structuralism (Giddens, 2003; Bourdieu, 2006; 2011) and institutional theory (Clegg, 1989; 1992; Hardy & Maguire, 2008; Lawrence, 2008; Scott, 2008), among other strands. Indeed, they do so by situating man at the forefront of a Cartesian perspective, based on his thinking, thus removing the complex character we aim to achieve herein.

In the scope of this work, it is appropriate to consider human beings as subjects, as we understand that they act in a domain of practices and experiences (as in the universe of consciousness, self-control, and grammatical syntax, they are the enunciation agents, when the linguistic dimension is considered). However, they also constitute **beings**, contradictory and concomitantly, insofar as they submit to the historical-cultural framework that precedes them for the construction of a view of themselves and the world, in addition to their own instances and those to which they may have to subject (such as in the domain of drives and devices, of the possibilities of **becoming** in relationships). Based on the notion of subject (one of the central arguments of this essay), a dialectical and procedural dimension can be expressed to avoid the reductionisms and simplifications that have so markedly been associated with the human idea of the being in the various humanities disciplines, which is why clarification is crucial in order to avoid misunderstandings and perceptions truncated by the polyphonic character that the term has historically incorporated.

According to this notion of human beings as subjects, fundamental relevance and centrality in discussions about practices and processes in social organizations are attributed to them. Likewise, such practices and processes are perceived as an expression of the subject's actions and, at the same time, are also reversed as the locus of the subjective constitution and the very configuration of the being. Therefore, understanding the complexity inherent to organizational practices and the

phenomena that are expressed within organizations also depends on how it is possible, in the scope of the subject and its subjective constitution, to apprehend meanings that undo the limitations arising from the dichotomies and divisions between the individual and social spheres. Therefore, the argument defended herein is based on a reflection on the possibilities of expanding the complexity that is typical of subjects.

In this sense, complex thinking aspires to multidimensional knowledge. However, he knows from the beginning that complete knowledge is impossible: one of the axioms of complexity is the impossibility of omniscience, even in theory. He makes Adorno's words his own: "Totality is untruth." It implies the recognition of a principle of incompleteness and uncertainty. Nevertheless, its principle also bears the recognition of ties between the entities that our thinking must necessarily distinguish but not isolate from one another. (Morin, 2011, p. 07)

The following chapters present a reflection on subjects along with some considerations in human and social sciences by important contemporary authors who sought to dimension subjects and the subjective constitution beyond the Cartesian perspective, adopting the work of Kant (1724 – 1804), Karl Marx (1818 – 1883), Nietzsche (1844 – 1900), Husserl (1859 – 1938), Freud (1856 – 1939) and other modern thinkers as significant references to engage in more daring, complex, and controversial analyses of the human being and its subjectivity. The idea of a desensitized and decentralized subject becomes a point of analysis in this work, avoiding apriorism and transcendence by linking it – as a process of constituting itself – to the social-historical dimension, as well as the linguistic dimension and, also, the drive one.

To de-center the subject is precisely to deny a transcendental or metaphysical essence that defines it; it is to remove it from its central and privileged position in the genesis of a linear and teleological history; it is to deny the existence of a reconciling origin and a redemptive end; it is to be suspicious of anthropologizing philosophies, which evoke the unity and universality of the epistemological figure of man in modern thought; it is, finally, to move towards a *historicized ontology*. (Pereira, 2014, p. 55)

However, when trying to de-center and de-essentialize the subject by denying and avoiding frameworks and explanatory models, do we not incur the risk of contradictorily proposing a subject model? It is believed that we do, because a critical approach eventually enters the dimension of instrumentality and technicality, which it itself turns against itself in the effort to serve its emancipatory and enlightening proposal. In other words: a critique sets out to provide contributions that can be applied to change and transformation, which, in turn, comprise some type of instrumentality (Paes de Paula, 2015). Therefore, based on the premises of de-centering and de-essentialization, this essay does not aim to prevent the possibility of building any form of knowledge about the human being; that is, this essay does not aim to foster an absolute relativism in which nothing can be proposed and shared about the subject. This paper proposes to outline the notions of procedurality, historicity, complexity, possibility, and ephemerality concerning universal and fixed

ideas about the subject, even though these ideas have been regarded as universal or as the most relevant references at some point in history. We believe that the centralizing and essentializing notions of the human being prevent us from advancing in the construction of knowledge about complex phenomena, which is a contemporary time requirement. Therefore, this work presents a conception that goes beyond what has already been proposed.

Revisiting theoretical productions about the subject in organizational studies

Throughout the development of human sciences, the various disciplines of the field have sought to delimit the notion of subject, to establish cohesive and precise knowledge, normalized according to the paradigms in force in each context, thus specifying different aspects of human beings in their various manifestations.

In organizational studies, some works are crucial references to understand, along with administrative theories, to what extent the notions of the human attribute are present – even if indirectly – in the proposed theorizations. Evidently, the search throughout history for the various possible meanings of human beings in organizations is outside the scope of this essay. Thus, we have chosen to highlight authors who have directly contributed to developing this topic in their work, especially in the Brazilian context of organizational studies.

Fernando Prestes Motta and Alberto Guerreiro Ramos clarify that some models or notions about man are motivated by changes that reorganize and reorient knowledge practices and production in organizations. In classical approaches, for instance, a centralized, rational, predictable, and calculating notion of subject prevailed – the *homo economicus* (Motta & Vasconcelos, 2008) – focused on productive and efficient work insofar as he could satisfy his material interests and according to the idea of accumulation and consumption, an idea that strongly distinguished that historical period (which ran from the early 20th century to the 1940s). Thus, it was possible to think about administering the human component in organizations while considering the management interests concerning employees. However, there were discrepancies between what was perceived as predictable and controlled and the phenomena emerging from the real analysis of labor in the production chain (Ramos, 1984). Much of the functionalist perspective still adopts the classical perspective as a framework. This, in turn, limits the development of practices that promote the coalition between the workers' interests and management, for instance. This, in turn, causes the area to be discredited (as can be seen in the criticism and clashes in the field of human resources administration, HRA, although this field has constantly reviewed its perspectives on human beings and labor relations).

As a result of the development of the School of Human Relations and, later, of the behavioral approach in administration, this notion derived from social Darwinism shifted to the idea of a subject also oriented to the affective and social dimension, focused on the establishment of bonds and group strategies that could ensure a certain degree of security and acceptance in work practices. Indeed, this was defined as *homo socialis* (Motta & Vasconcelos, 2008). In turn, the behavioral approach is established based on the support of diverse psychological theories that are not always confluent in terms of epistemology, since experimental and functionalist theoretical perspectives (behaviorism and cognitivism) and phenomenological ones (Gestalt and humanism) are present.

This process incorporates an expanded concept of subject into organizational theories: the *complex man*, according to Motta and Vasconcelos (2008), or the *parenthetical man*, according to Ramos (1984). According to this model, man is biopsychosocial and guided by environment and social aspects, but also by volitions and other forms of producing meaning, himself and the world, at work and in organizations. It is worth mentioning that this broader perspective is closely related to the emerging socio-cultural changes that occurred from the second half of the 20th century onwards, in the post-war context and amid a process of productive restructuring, including the development of American psychological science, focused on pragmatism, according to Farr (1998).

The parenthetical man is able to grade the flow of his daily life to examine and evaluate it as a spectator. He can withdraw from familiar environments. He deliberately tries to break through his roots; he is a stranger in his own social environment to maximize his understanding of life. Therefore, the parenthetical attitude is defined by the individuals' psychological capacity of detaching from their internal and external world. The parenthetical men thrive when the period of social ingenuity is over. (Ramos, 1984, p.08)

The complexification of the notion of human in Guerreiro Ramos' perspective advances the development of administrative systems and theories. However, it is possible to identify contradictions in human resource practices, given the difficulty of external control over what is inherent to beings. It seems that the greater the complexity of a notion of man, the more complex and refined the strategies of mastery through the psyche become, as evidenced by the works of Tragtenberg (2005) and Pagès et al. (2008) in their critical analyses of HRA. In other words: insofar as the critical perspective seeks to broaden views regarding the naturalization of administrative practice (especially when dealing with the human in organizations), the pragmatic and functionalist bases are also specified in the development of management strategies that can ensure productivity and profitability.

This is something we should pay attention to: we must watch our intentionality closely when theorizing or conducting research, and its uses in everyday practices in organizational contexts, while sustaining reflexivity and criticism. This may explain why the field of organizational studies, following Ramos, Tragtenberg, and Motta, has sought to maintain the interdisciplinary dialogue as well as the commitment to the pragmatism of management practices, as can be seen more recently in the debates on HRA. It is worth mentioning the contributions of authors such as Peci (2003), Godoi (2005), Faria and Meneghetti (2007), Faria & Schmitt (2007), Souza, Machado and Bianco (2008), Paes de Paula and Maranhão (2009), Carrieri *et al.* (2010), Mozzato and Grzybovski (2013), Souza, Souza and Silva (2013), Paes and Dellagnelo (2015) and Souza (2017), among other scholars of the Brazilian organizational studies, as a way of encompassing the complexity of the human attribute in organizational practices, and attributing greater complexity, systematization, and scientificity to administrative practices.

This essay pursues the same goal: to establish a dialogue with other fields of knowledge to maintain rigor in analyzing socio-organizational dynamics, considering subjects and their expressions as an inherent and inseparable part. We must once again resort to psychology and its contributions, as did the authors mentioned here in the field of organizational studies, but now

considering other theoretical currents, in addition to the experimental and phenomenological assumptions that are milestones of North American pragmatism (Farr, 1998).

The constitution of the subject according to psychological perspectives: overcoming dichotomies with a sociohistorical approach

In the case of psychology, its historical development calls our attention, since this field has adopted man, his mental processes, his behavior, and all his characteristic manifestations as objects of study, to produce knowledge that is valid and legitimate without incurring disorderly or historically irrelevant annotations, despite simplification and reductionism. Since psychology was institutionalized by Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) in Leipzig, Germany, in 1879, the problematization raised by the researcher was evident, as to how psychological science could develop, given the complexity of the object(s) it intended to address. Etymologically, the term *psyché* refers to the soul, which is way too abstract and incomprehensible to be approached by a scientific field then shaped by positivism and Cartesian logic. Therefore, it was necessary to assign concreteness to the soul, to what is peculiar to human beings, especially in the sense of being able to adapt the object (subject) of study to the experimental and utilitarian methods that marked the late 19th century.

Aware of the complexity addressed by psychological science, Wundt proposed the establishment of psychology as a natural science (*Naturwissenschaft*), focused on the processes of the mind, built using experimental methods and explanatory models based on a naturalistic and biological perspective that emphasized the individual; and psychology as a social and human science (*Geisteswissenschaft*, or the “science of the spirit”) focused on collective phenomena, such as social representations, values, and culture, among others, since it was impossible to understand them in isolation and without their particular methodology, given the limitations of the experimental model (Farr, 1998). A division concerning human beings has been established, and they are now approached either according to their objective, natural aspect, or their subjective and social aspect.

During the 20th century, psychological schools were formed and developed based on these two pillars, often without establishing a dialogue between the perspectives that focused on the palpable, visible, and explicit aspects of man, and those focused on his aspects, which were latent, invisible, and obscure. The consequence of this clash was the emergence of multiple conceptions of subject and subjectivity, which divided man (Lane & Codo, 2012; Bock, Gonçalves & Furtado, 2015) as an object of study so that it could adapt to the methods chosen as infallible instruments in the construction of scientific “truths,” with the consequent loss of the complexity that characterizes the subject in its entirety.

When the problematizations about the subject turned to the social component – as in the case of the establishment of shared standards of conduct, the creation of moral values, linguistic aspects, and forms of violence, among others – a dichotomy was established, which ended up reducing not only the human being, but also the psychosocial aspects themselves taken as an object of scientific study. Would the causality of social phenomena be located in the subject? Or would it be located in the social context, understood as the facts and institutionality that precedes man and, therefore, serve as a framework? In an attempt to overcome this dichotomy, some theoretical strands sought to apprehend several constitutive facets of the subject, approaching it based on its contradictory but fundamental aspects.

Once again, we clarify that a theoretical essay cannot revisit the various schools and psychological theories. However, we can highlight some psychological perspectives that broke with the hegemonic Cartesian notion, present particularly in the experimental and pragmatic approaches to psychology, and which sought, in some way, to overcome the historical dichotomy mentioned by Farr (1998), Lane and Codo (2012) and Bock, Gonçalves and Furtado (2015) in their works.

González Rey (2005, p. 73) explains that “the epistemological conditions for the development of subjectivity in psychology stem from the rupture that the appropriation of dialectic by psychologists represented.” This, in turn, derived from the Russian Revolution in a historical context that encompassed the works of Rubinstein and Vygotsky, which were significantly influenced by Marxism principles.

Overcoming these dichotomies and shifting to a view of man allowed overcoming the idea of a human nature inherent to the individual. In fact, that shift constituted a very important transformation regarding a view of man that generally supported all previous psychology. This transformation facilitated a representation of the psyche as a subjective process, an instance in which the social and the biological did not disappear but occasionally entered the scope of a new qualitative system. Dialectics played a decisive role in the success of these changes in the representation of man and their psyche. (González Rey, 2005, p. 77)

Based on the influence of Karl Marx’s dialectical method (1818-1883), the sociohistorical perspective proposed by LS Vygotsky (1896-1934) brings about a discussion about how subjects are simultaneously products and producers of their social context because, despite the skills and attributes deriving from their genetic inheritance, it is in the relationship with other subjects that the conditions of activation and manifestation of such potentialities are created, based on exchanges and interaction. In this context, it is possible to highlight the symbolic dimension and language, which permeate shared and collective spaces (Vygotsky, 1991; 2007). Based on a cognitivist perspective, since the author intended to understand the development of higher mental functions (thought and language), Vygotsky attributed fundamental relevance to the social component for human development by pointing to the dimension of subjective construction as an event associated with historical and social aspects. Accordingly, two things coexist dialectically in the idea of subject, namely the concrete material dimension of man – represented by his body, phylogenetic traits, and influences – and his abstract symbolic dimension – that which is attributed to his ways of thinking, valuations, affections, cultural and ideational references, without excluding his constitutive subjectivity and objectivity. According to Figure 1, the subject is understood here as a process, not something hermetic and invariable; instead, it is something open to the variability of time and space, that is, to history and society, enclosed in a uniqueness that shapes it and enables it to exist in the world (Vygotsky, 2007).

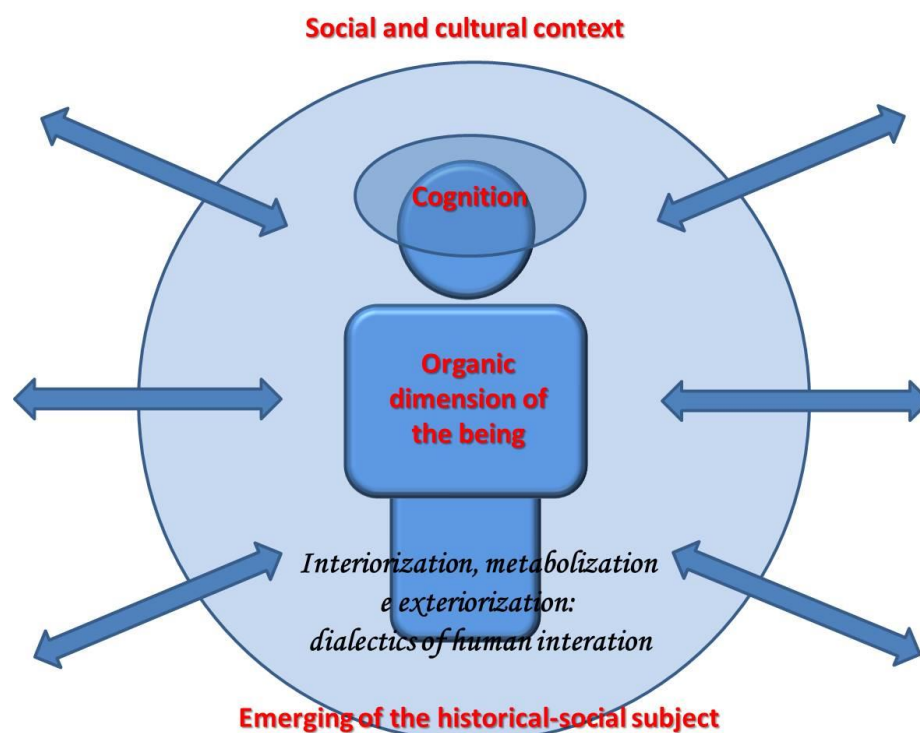


Figure 1. The notion of subject from a sociohistorical perspective

Source: Prepared by the authors.

By considering the subject as a process, we understand human beings beyond themselves and their bodily delimitations, since they are constituted as they absorb and apprehend the world that precedes them historically. Concomitantly, they process and decode it according to their potential and according to the resources available to them in the social space. These subjects clearly emerge from their actions and behavior, acting in and transforming the environment from which they extract the constitutive referential elements. This happens in a dialectical process that characterizes their being in a time and space, as forms of uniqueness and singularity (since each process is unique and unequivocal), and also as forms of human collectivity and gender (since these beings are constituted with, through and for others, that is, the social attribute).

Based on Vygotsky's sociohistorical perspective, González Rey (2005) points to the need to articulate the terms individual, history, society, and culture as an extension of the author's precepts, thus assigning a complex character to current psychology. The author defends a proposal to analyze subjectivity from a historical and cultural perspective:

The theory of subjectivity that I incorporate breaks with the representation that constrains subjectivity to the intrapsychic and is oriented towards a presentation of subjectivity that is always manifested in the dialectic between the social and the individual moment. Indeed, the latter is represented by a subject who is constantly involved in the process of their practices, reflections, and subjective meanings. The subject represents a moment of contradiction and confrontation not only against the social attribute but also

their subjective constitution that represents a moment that generates the meaning of their practices. (González Rey, 2005, p. 240)

The author emphasizes that the subject is understood based on their thinking, going beyond a mere cognitive function, but also constituted as a meaning process, endowed with emotional contents and meanings mediated by complex intentional and conscious designs, by which their subjective character does not deplete. He goes on to criticize some analytical perspectives that end up reducing subjects to their social relations without considering their generative and transformative dimension in the process of self-constitution by calling attention to the dangers of engaging in such proposals without due critical reflection, given their relevance in academic production. As a result of a vast review of authors and psychological schools that addressed subjectivity, González Rey (2005) seeks to point out some relevant concepts regarding the subjective dimension, as is the case with the idea of unconsciousness in psychoanalysis. However, the author aims to assign new connotations to them. For the author, consciousness and unconsciousness are two non-antagonistic moments of subjective experience since they are constituted within a new unity (a third element that unites them, that is, the subjective meanings).

To recognize an active subject is to recognize their capacity for conscious construction as a moment of their current processes of subjectification, which does not mean that they are adjusted to an exercise of reason. This happens, among other reasons, because departing from our understanding of human subjectivity, the consciousness constructions are meaning productions, not rational constructions. The exercise of consciousness by the subject is, in itself, a process of subjectification. Therefore, consciousness designates the subject's action within a represented space, susceptible to their intentionality and reflection; however, this does not mean that the meaning of these spaces is based on their representation or intention. (González Rey, 2005, p. 226)

The sociohistorical perspective and the historical-cultural approach assign to the notion of subject the complexity lost with reductionism and the dichotomies of other psychological and sociological aspects, which is why they are taken as references in this essay. Therefore, it is believed that the dialogue with other perspectives can create points of complexity and possible intersections with the notions already addressed in the studies of Vygotsky and González Rey, offering to the critical organizational studies the complexity and reflexivity that they propose (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Fournier & Grey, 2000; Paes de Paula, 2008; Faria, 2009).

Psychoanalysis and the subject

Psychoanalysis also contributed significantly to the notion of subject and subjectivity by expanding it beyond consciousness and rationality. As a matter of fact, this is why it must be addressed herein, in addition to including the dialectical and sociohistorical perspectives to achieve the subject's complexity. However, we acknowledge that this approach has been criticized by the authors presented here, especially González Rey, since it emphasizes a certain determinism to the human being, either based on the drive and their naturalistic character, as can be seen from Freud's

work, or the emphasis on language as a structuring component of the subject, as can be seen in Lacan's work. However, the proposals of scholars are contextualized in their time. Psychoanalysis, like other psychological schools, has evolved, and its supporters constantly seek to review concepts and applications to avoid the sacralization of theory, which represents a serious epistemological mistake.

Still within the scope of subjectivity, we believe, despite the controversy raised here, that the psychoanalytic observation of a subject's dimension that escapes rationality and the relevance of this discipline in the sciences, in general, are indeed pertinent, since in so many studies and academic references they have been able to help us understand the complexity of psychological and social phenomena. When establishing the existence of the *conscious-subconscious-unconscious* triad in the first topic of the constitution of the psychic apparatus, Freud (1940/2014) attributes to man an instance hitherto silenced by the centrality of reason as a bourgeois value in modernity. Indeed, this is why the author caused such an uproar in academic debates (and still does) due to the political and ideological dimensions also present in research practices.

In psychoanalysis, the notion of subject emerges from the psychic apparatus and the drive field, which are inseparable dimensions. The subject is then approached as the **subject of the unconscious**, a psychic instance that precedes consciousness itself, and even directs it, based on the material inscribed in it through the repression of the object-cause of desire (in the case of neurosis). From a Freudian psychoanalytic perspective, the human being is characterized by a structural void, as they can never be complete at any moment of their existence. The desire emerges from this void, which mobilizes and directs the human towards the **Other**, to the social attribute, to find ways to remedy such emptiness. In this process, as the object of desire is lost and no longer found because it is associated with an original and illusory satisfaction, the object representation occurs in the symbolic sphere (the social component), so that the desire can be fulfilled, although it can never be completely satisfied. Therefore, the subjective constitution of man develops from the operationalization of the unconscious desire, detached from the **Self** (the consciousness), through the action of the drive and its addressments, that is, conservation, displacement, and anguish (Torezan & Aguiar, 2011).

Although the proposals of the various authors who make up the psychoanalytical schools are far from uniform, some points of convergence must be highlighted. For instance, for Lacan (1996), dealing with the subject also implies dealing with the unconscious base that mobilizes man. The author adopts certain reservations about the sometimes naturalistic character that Freudian proposals brought about by situating sexuality and drives in the field of corporeality and human physiology. Although Freud also emphasized it, Lacan attributes greater centrality to language, especially regarding the possible access to unconscious content. However, the first goes so far as to state that unconsciousness is structured like a language. According to the Lacanian perspective, the desire arises from the void originating from the narcissistic imaginary production of the being's omnipotence in childhood, so that the processes that identify this production cannot be experienced. This is how this void becomes the organizing principle of the relationships that subjects establish with their social context (Paes & Borges, 2016). As a result of this addressment, the desire arises as a **desire for the Other**. We must understand the ambiguity enclosed in this proposition, represented by the desire of the **Other as the Self's object of desire**, as a form of fulfillment (even if circumstantial) of the void; and by the desire of the **Other as the Self's prescriber**, through the

internalization of what others place as their desire so that the self can respond to it, by turning itself into something lovable, recognized and existing (in the social context).

We have here a precise perspective of psychoanalysis, be it Freudian or Lacanian. However, it focuses on the analysis of unconscious processes and considers the subject's inscription in fundamental socialization processes, avoiding, contrary to what many critics in the area think, the dichotomy between the subjective dimension and the collectivity, since subjects emerge from their relationship with the Other through language, as they build their subjectivity.

Therefore, in psychoanalysis, the subject can only become a being that, as a human specimen, faces the mandatory and non-eventual vicissitude of entering a social order from the family or its social and legal substitutes (that is, the social institutions caring for abandoned children, such as orphanages, etc.). Without this, not only will they not become human, but they will not remain alive because the human species, in phylogenetic terms, is not enough to make its specimens into a human being, and this argument gives meaning to the word *humanization*. In other words, deprived of their family and social order, human beings will die. (Elia, 2010, p. 39)

It is worth mentioning that desire and guilt (resulting from prohibition on desire by a moral assumption) are founding elements of being, operationalized based on the subject's immersion in a symbolic universe structured by language and in the social context, *a priori*. Thinking about the constitution of the subject of the unconscious requires this process to incorporate the material and symbolic dimensions, since, as a language, it chains signifiers (the foundations of the linguistic sign) and meanings (fillings and *corpus* of the sign), which become evident in the discursive order from which the subject of the enunciation emerges, the Self of reason and conscience, that is, the one who thinks, arms itself, and poses an obstacle to the Self to which desire is linked. The famous phrase of Lacan (1996, p. 521) derives from this premise, which subverts the Cartesian perspective: "I think where I am not; therefore I am where I do not think." Along these lines, the psychoanalyst's task would be to bring to the surface the Self silenced by the subject of the enunciation, which is why free association has become, even in Freudian proposals, the method of analytical practice *par excellence*.

Psychoanalysis expands the subject's perspective by realizing that the unconscious dimension and consciousness coexist (Freud, 1940/2014). It is also worth pointing out the relevance of an imaginary dimension, where the images of a Self to be constituted are inscribed, but which (at first) does not know its object of desire (the Other). In the imaginary dimension, the subjects create a representation of themselves in two ways: the first as an ideal Self, mobilized by primary narcissism, whose feeling of omnipotence renders it inseparable from the Other, in the form of a specular and pre-oedipal self-image, yet unable to achieve unattainable self-satisfaction; the second, as an Ideal of Self, now accompanied by the introjection of the Other's desires, which direct subjects to become lovable to respond to the demands placed on them while having the void as their organizing principle. The following diagram summarizes the general ideas on the subject in psychoanalysis and shows the considerations that can connect the psychoanalytic theory with the other arguments in defense of the subject's complexity, which is the objective of this essay.

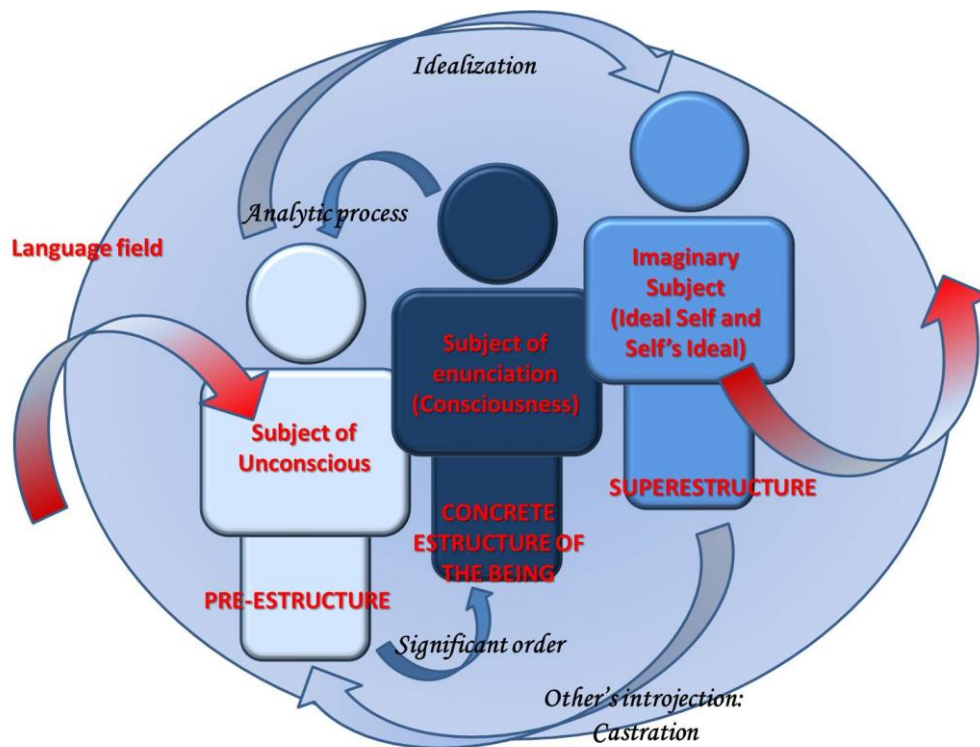


Figure 2. The concept of subject from a psychoanalytic perspective

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The figure suggests that the subject is constituted; that is, there is a dynamic and procedural perspective at play, which is elicited when the subject's being enters the language domain. Thus, the unconscious is structured from a chain of signifiers that, through its order, allows the production of meanings that mobilize subjects in their conscious dimension. The unconscious would be represented as a structure that precedes consciousness (corresponding to the symbolic dimension in Lacan), and the concrete and rational being, taken by its structural, concrete, material, and explicit dimensions. However, the subject of the conscious is the subject of enunciation, a function that situates itself discursively, operationalized by the unconscious and the imaginary dimension, in which the desire that mobilizes the void is inscribed.

From the subject's identification of itself with the mirror image (ideal Self), in an imaginary dimension that is also not consciously accessible – which is understood here as a superstructure, in an allusion to the ideological and alienating perspective according to Marx – the subject experiences the void, which at a second moment becomes a guiding element of the subject towards the Other, as a way of responding to the void. Hence the introjection of the Other's desire as a way of making oneself lovable, that is, into an object of desire for the Other as well (the ideal Self). This introjection by the Other castrates the Self, operating as a barrier to the illusion of omnipotence arising from primary narcissism. This incites subjects to go on an incessant search for possibilities of satisfying their desire when encountering the world (the Other of language).

Finally, analysis opens up the possibility of focusing on the unconscious dimension as a way to bring about what is unspoken and unknown by the subject of enunciation (the consciousness), orienting subjects towards self-knowledge and to strategies that can cope with their cause of desire (Freud, 1910/1996). For psychoanalysis, culture does not fall within the scope of eliminating the symptom (regardless of whatever discomfort it may bring) but as a strategy of leading subjects to their foundation: their cause of desire and the possible meanings arising from it. Once an understanding of the unconscious content becomes eligible, it is up to subjects to respond to what causes discomfort, whether through acceptance, denial, repression, rationalization, sublimation, or other mechanisms that can help them eliminate their symptom.

The psychoanalytic approach contributes significantly to the idea of complexity that characterizes the subjective constitution process and has been adopted as a reference by several authors in various fields. Among them, the Frankfurt School theorists stand out for employing psychoanalysis as a way of thinking of mechanisms for overcoming Enlightenment reason, characterized by instrumental and functionalist logic that masked relations of domination, as we can see in the work of Jürgen Habermas (1988) and his Theory of Communicative Action (focusing on the dynamics of transference and dialogicity for critical self-reflection, as proposed by the free association method).

The subject as understood by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler

The impact of psychoanalytic theory after Freud and Lacan also raised questions with theorists of the so-called post-structuralist movement, among them Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), and Felix Guattari (1930-1992). Post-structuralism is understood as a philosophical and epistemological stance contrary to structuralism, centered on deconstruction and the subjective and plural aspect of psychosocial phenomena. It was influenced by Nietzschean philosophy, and due to its interdisciplinary character, it is of great relevance to the notion of complexity associated with the notions of subject and subjective constitution addressed in this essay. If psychoanalysis has ontological intentions regarding explanations about the human, post-structuralism has teleological prerogatives. We believe that such a relationship can be established.

Foucault's work, for example, is based on the connection between power, knowledge, and ethics, as well as how these elements become bases for the constitution of subjects. His philosophy comprises three distinct periods: the Archeology, in the 1960s, when the author turned to the investigation of the constitution of knowledge in discursive practices; the Genealogy, in the 1970s, focused on the analysis of power intertwined in the social fabric; and the Ethics, in the 1980s, which analyzed power and knowledge relations in the constitution of the ethical subject (Martinez & Hack, 2010). These authors emphasize the relevance of understanding that the process of subjective constitution in Foucault involves three mechanisms, which can be identified in the analysis of the three periods mentioned above. The first would be objectification, in which the subject is taken as an object of knowledge to the extent that elements such as work, language, and daily life come to be analyzed. In other words, what gives people humanity is also what makes them question themselves as beings. In the works *History of Madness*, *The Order of Things*, and *The Birth of the*

Clinic, it is easy to identify the subject historically constructed as an object of knowledge (objectification).

The second mechanism would be individuation, which operates through the adaptation and normalization of the being in discursive and disciplinary practices, coercively and externally. Works such as *Discipline and Punish* and *Truth and Juridical Forms* are frameworks for thinking about subjective constitution based on individuation.

Therefore, the discourse promotes individuation through different mechanisms and practices, among which it is relevant to mention the exclusion practices (which suggest that the individual is built in order to appropriate the discourse); the ritualistic practices (the use of real discursive rituals present in gestures and places of truth); the exemption of discursive property (an enunciation is not a property, and, as the individual adapts to it, it can be used); and the law (which allows the constitution of subjects according to a certain prescriptive code that acts fundamentally by interdicting and adapting). Discipline, in turn, also becomes evident as an expressive mechanism of individuation, given that the body, time, space, and individual activity are constantly regulated and guided by a certain purpose through coercive and external mechanisms. (Martinez & Hack, 2010, p. 396)

The third and last process is subjectivation, which arises from the **fold**, which is a metaphor for the moment when subjects come to act upon themselves, transforming themselves and creating ethical and aesthetic ways of existence by internalizing the outside. From the idea of folding, defined as a curve derived from the force emanating from a subject towards to the world, and which comes to act on the subject from which it emanates, the power of the self is realized, and the being and its subjectivity are therefore constituted. We must point out that Foucault opens the discussion about the importance of not attributing essentiality to the subject; on the contrary, he prefers to fragment it, to decentralize the subject in relation to itself, as it is historically constituted. Indeed, we can also find here a temporal and procedural perspective, as in the other ones presented, but subjected to a constant “game of truths.”

[The subject] is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not above all or always identical to itself. You do not have towards yourself the same kind of relationships when you constitute yourself as a political subject who goes and votes or speaks up in a meeting, and when you try to fulfill your desires in a sexual relationship. Undoubtedly, there are relations and interferences between these different forms of subject; however, we are not in the presence of the same type of subject. In each case, we play, we establish with oneself some different forms of relationship. And it is precisely the historical constitution of these different forms of subject relating to games of truth that interests me. (Foucault, 2004, p. 275)

Thus, the subject assumes different **forms**, which vary according to such games of truth, through their self-practices and techniques amid an array of power relations, which prevents an idea of subject as a unique and identical form in itself.

The Foucauldian subject is unfinished par excellence. In this case, unfinished not just in the sense of something that has not yet been completed or fulfilled. In this case, its meaning embodies history: it is a constructed subject, a historical product, a sum of subjectivation processes. It is not an interrupted subject, as there is no primordial essence that has been misused; it is a present subject, it can fully become. They are plural, multiple, not an invariable substance-subject, as a historical product instead of an essentialist conception of subject. The promised subject is absent, the transcendental and universal subject – that is the Foucauldian refusal. (Sampaio, 2011, p. 226)

The idea of self-practices involves a constant exercise based on rationality or regularity (discursive and non-discursive), which organizes human life around ethics, knowledge, and power. This game highlights the subject's freedom, configured as they establish what is true to their being (through objectification, individuation, and subjectification). According to Foucault (1995), it is crucial to understand the questions and elements that make up this story of the subject's truth; that is, to understand the different ways in which the subject is configured in these relationships (of power and knowledge), and how human beings become subjects. We must highlight that for the author, freedom is a condition for the existence of power; that is, there is no opposition between power and freedom but a relationship of reciprocal incitation of forces. In other words: life in society implies living amid power relations, which can only be exercised over free subjects since freedom is a fundamental condition for political exercise.

The dimension of ethics stands out since, amid the games of truth, characterized by power relations, knowledge can be taken as an instrument of domination, pointing to a deviation from the subject's ethics. It is a differentiation between what power relations and states of domination would be, since the first term refers to the conception of practices in games (or strategies) between free subjects. In contrast, the second is coupled with the understanding that the subject is restricted by political powers that would not allow a reversal of the situation. However, breaking with the states of domination is possible, thanks to the exercise of resistance, along with the power of the institutions regarding the establishment of truths (forms of knowledge) about the subject, which can be reviewed by the possibilities of new rationalities, given the "self-care." Foucault emphasizes the subject's conscious dimension when mentioning care and self-practices as strategies to become active and transform oneself amid the "games of truth." When addressing themselves and also the socio-cultural context in which they are enrolled, subjects take forms (the subject as "**becoming**"). By doing so, they elaborate ways of being in the face of already established values, opening themselves up to the **instituting element**, generating new games of truth, reversing subjectivities (as if the subject were a mere product of the environment), and creating new subjectivities.

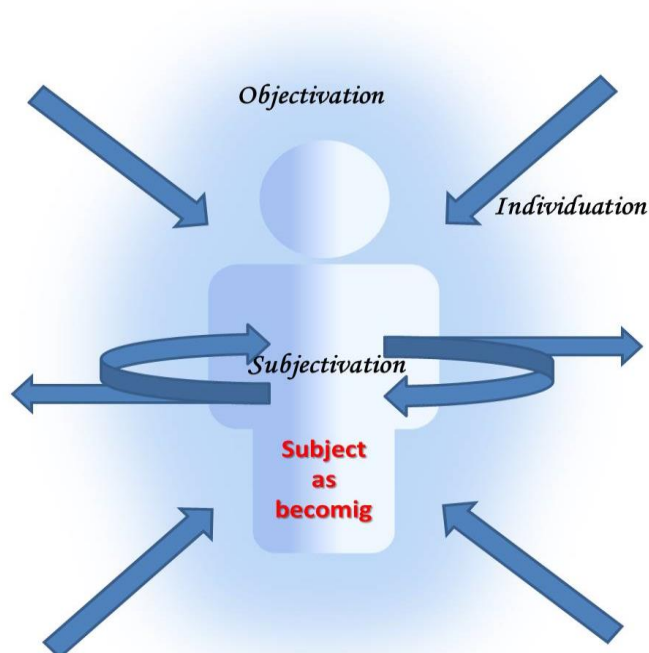


Figure 3. The concept of subject from a Foucauldian perspective

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The illustration tries to clarify that, according to Foucault's view, the subject is constituted assuming possible and variable forms since it is not a concrete substantiality. This process occurs amid "games of truth" that involve the processes of objectification (when the subject becomes an object of knowledge, through reflexivity and by constructing knowledge of itself and the world), of individuation (when the subject is subjected to the discipline and coercion of discursive practices to which it adapts to legitimize itself as a being in the social fabric) and subjectivation (when the subject exercises the "practice of self," since, when emanating strength from the outside, one folds, from an ethical and aesthetic ontological perspective). According to this view, the subject is becoming, and the subjective constitution depends on how the subject positions itself amid possible relationships with the power devices. Its materialization depends on how the knowledge, powers, and ethics that guide subjects in the social fabric are articulated.

The Foucauldian perspective influences many contemporary researchers, including Judith Butler (2008) and other queer theorists. These researchers seek to deconstruct the idea of a single and indivisible subject in favor of a non-natural, non-substantial, and significant subject, grounded in **performativity** in the socio-cultural context. Any proposal for the identity of the Self is built from the concomitant affirmation and denial of another, which, in turn, fragments subjects into multiple possibilities.

Butler (2017) contributes significantly to developing a subject's teleology beyond discussions about a self-referenced identity structure. Based on the reflections of Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, Lacan, and Foucault, the author makes very pertinent criticisms of the theories of these authors, articulating the unconsciousness, the power, the becoming, and the discursive practices that support the idea of performativity that she defends as an expression of the Self, especially in theories about the constitution and possibilities of gender on the agenda of contemporary debates on sexual identities, focusing on non-binary groups. Butler (2017) clarifies that the subject is a **becoming** in relationships characterized by micropolitics that have subjection as the basis for the subjective formation and, at the same time, threatens it with dissolution.

The idea of becoming, or coming to be in the discursive practices, put forward by Foucault as a way of deconstructing any naturalism or essentialism to the being of man, acquires further relevance, since, for Butler, there is only one way of thinking about the substantialization of the Self in power relations: by understanding how power is established and, concomitantly, enables the existence of the Self in the psyche. Departing from Freud's *The Ego and the Id, Totem and Taboo* and *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Butler (2017) considers that power is the condition for subjects to exist as agents, as beings of conscious, in an ambivalent and contradictory relationship. In the relationship between the subject and its desire – a term that implies a causality for the unconscious structure in psychoanalysis – the desire is taken as an effect, not a causality, signaling the performance complexity of the Self within the scope of the micropolitics that involves it.

Just as we previously stated that one's desire is the **desire of the Other** (and by doing so, we reveal an ambiguity), Butler seems to affirm, when arguing about gendered sexual identities, that through melancholy – a term she borrows from Freud and describes in a quite controversial way in the work *Gender problems* when addressing heterosexuality – it is only due to the recognition of subjection to the Other that we lack (as an effect, but which could be, as in psychoanalysis, as a cause, dialectically speaking) that one can become anything, that is, to substantiate oneself.

On the points of convergence between theoretical approaches: The Concrete Procedural Subject

As to the perspectives presented here, we can refer to some points of convergence to imagine a complexity specific to the subject, elaborated as a way to build new explanatory possibilities for complex phenomena. This perspective forces us to leave the comfort zone, to incur **against** a theoretical and argumentative coherence so widely defended in the scope of academic research, aiming to establish a compelling dialogue with theorizations that may seem too different, if not averse, especially for the conservative ones. However, maintaining a linear perspective of analysis can, at times, limit scientific production and the possibilities of innovating in the face of the demarcations of scientific areas, fields, and even paradigms. As proposed by Paes de Paula (2015), we argue that the sharing of conceptual and methodological perspectives in search of new formative and transformative knowledge in today's society becomes possible based on the intentionality or interest of a given scientific production. Among the points of convergence of the approaches presented here, it is worth specifying:

- the perspectives of analysis of the subject and the subjectivity emphasize that the human being is constituted procedurally and dynamically, instead of fixedly or immutably. There is no

essence that precedes existence and exchanges with the world, and it is this **procedurality** that marks the **substantiation and constitution of the subject**;

- the material (biological) and **concrete** dimension of human being is not denied, on the contrary: the human exists in time and space, as a biological structure, in opposition to vague, abstract and scarcely palpable notions when it comes to reality. But the concrete dimension must be evaluated according to the processes of possible meanings in the self's substantiation. Concreteness and procedurality, structure and superstructure, materiality and symbolism are **contradictory** and constitutive elements of the being, in a dialectical sense;

- the emergence of the **self** occurs in a decentralized and de-essentialized way, always concerning the **Other** that constitutes it; the self, therefore, is the ephemeral expression of being amid the (conscious and unconscious) possibilities of meaning in social relations;

- social, historical, and cultural elements are notoriously relevant for the subjective constitution process so that thinking about human beings from an essential point of view regardless of the context in which they are inserted sounds absurd and overly simplistic;

- antagonistic elements coexist in the subjective constitution process (such as interiority and exteriority, consciousness and unconsciousness, materiality and immateriality, singularity and collectivity, etc.), and this process presents itself as a **synthesis**, as it contains thesis and antithesis as constitutive parts;

- change is an always possible premise, depending on how the subject positions itself in relation to the different elements to which it is subjected in the course of its subjective constitution in social relations; and

- the subject is simultaneously subjected to the context and active concerning its process of subjective constitution and social transformation; it is a product and also the producer of itself and its trajectory.

We also identified points of disagreement among the authors presented here. Indeed, their foundations are rather specific given the elements they focus on when developing their works and the epistemologies they take as a basis. It is not a matter of asserting that Vygotsky, Freud, Lacan, Foucault, and Butler, for example, adopted a similar conception of subject, as this would be ridiculous. This essay intends to apprehend elements of the authors' works that can be combined, that is, aspects that are not exclusive in themselves but that can establish potential dialogues. These, in turn, point to a new notion of subject and subjectivity, marked by their complexity and irreducibility to the linearity and binarism that can affect scientific research of an experimental, Cartesian, and functionalist nature, whether in organizational studies or related areas. This paper does not present these authors' notions of human being, as in a merely bibliographic study, which is interpretative by itself. We start from these notions about the human to promote a new concept, in the expectation that it can reflect the complexity that the human being presents in its manifestations in actuality. Thus, a possible conception of the subject's complexity, illustrated in Figure 4, emerges from the convergence of the elements above.

This figure presents a combination of elements extracted from the theoretical perspectives previously presented, aiming to demonstrate the complexity of the subject presented in this essay, referred to as the **concrete procedural subject**. According to this perspective, the subject is

constituted (but not fixed, always moving towards the possibilities of its existence) concretely (since it is body and matter, endowed with visible elements to be signified and categorized), in a given time (history) and space (social context) when it enters the symbolic dimension of language and culture. From this moment on, the subject starts to attribute meaning to the world and to itself, as it creates counterpoints for its reflexivity and agency with, by and for the *Other* (which represents the antithesis that constitutes its being). The socio-cultural universe that surrounds it is not stagnant, but changeable and fluid, marked by the interaction of constant mobilizing forces that turn to the subject (the devices). As such, the subject seeks to position itself among them according to the possibilities available to it, especially within the scope of its consciousness, its manifest point of reference for itself and the world.

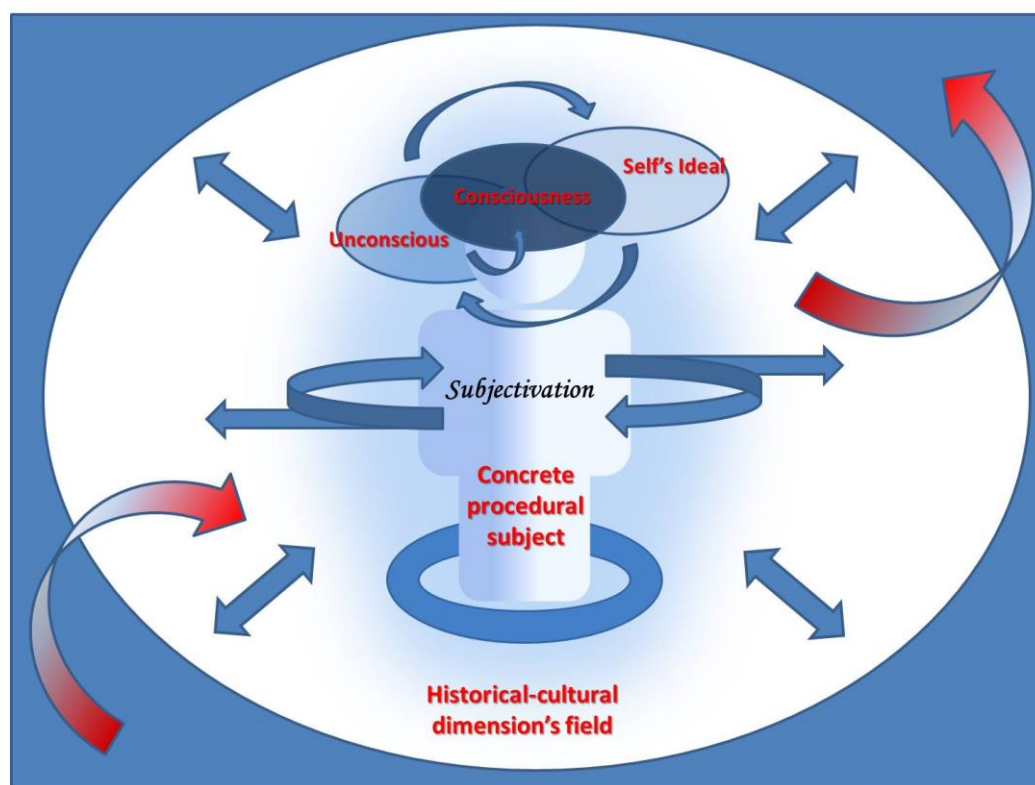


Figure 4. The concept of subject as defended in this essay: the Concrete Procedural Subject

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Consciousness (one of the reference points about oneself), in turn, is not complete, since it also submits itself to an unconscious and an imaginary dimension, through the significant order that is opened by the action of the latent content inscribed in the unconscious, and the illusion or distortion of concrete reality when it turns to the action of ideals in search of satisfying its desire, its structuring void. The creation of such an illusion, typical of the imaginary dimension, is aggravated when, amid discursive (and non-discursive) practices, devices for masking concreteness are engaged, creating states of domination that, in turn, justify the prevalence of values, norms, and

judgments that exclude or generate inequalities and inequity between social subjects (that is, between the Self and the Other). From self-knowledge and self-confrontation, it is up to the subject to gaze at itself and create strategies of resistance or defense mechanisms against the instituted oppression, given its generative character and transformative potential.

The subject is a universe of **possibilities** (becoming), and its understanding requires a thorough analysis of its **being existing** (transience/performativity) in the world; that is, the constant ephemerality of its **being** (concreteness) in relation to the outside that surrounds it and which, dialectically and dialogically, forms and constitutes it. These notions of subject and subjective constitution combine perspectives that are not usually articulated in social science research but are possible.

From a dialectical perspective that is not an end in itself, since the human being is not emphasized as a synthesis at all, not as complementary constitutive antitheses, but ones that elicit and contribute to the fluidity and dynamics of the being existing in the world. Indeed, the discussion proposed here seeks to incorporate a further understanding into organizational practices, aiming to maintain the centrality of man in psychosocial processes without disregarding the relevance of the social attribute and history for the ways by which the human being is built, and constitutes the social fabric in which it is inserted, something paramount when dealing with organizations and their dynamics.

The Concrete Processual Subject: applications in analysis in organizational studies

We believe that the conception defended here can advance critical research and interventions in organizational studies, especially in the case of complex phenomena expressed in the socio-organizational dynamics, and that should no longer be reduced and simplified due to the limitations derived from the maintenance of theoretical and epistemological boundaries. Topics such as the forms of rationality in organizational practices, symbolic dynamics, inclusion practices, development and social empowerment in organizations, solidarity entrepreneurship, generational conflicts, racism, ethnocentrism, social inequalities, power relations, subjective constitution through work, gender relations, heteronormativity in organizational dynamics, satisfaction and motivation for work, among many others, are examples of research problematizations to which the concept of subject is crucial to make considerations that are also expanded about such phenomena, which go beyond an explanatory character, of cause-and-effect, as is commonly inferred from pragmatic and functionalist contributions.

As the subject, taken as concrete procedurality, is a unit of analysis by which such phenomena operate, questions about the articulation and interdependence of subjective and social dimensions emerge, reorienting approaches and perspectives in organizational studies. In other words: as a new conception of the subject is taken as an analytical unit for socio-organizational phenomena, theoretical and methodological perspectives and approaches are reoriented, reorganized, or reformulated according to the needs of society and the scientific community, concerning the complexity of the objects of studies, in addition to the usual reality frameworks based on established perspectives and approaches.

For example, in studies addressing the strategies of empowerment and visibility of social minorities in organizations, some analytical categories have proved paramount, particularly the category of **power**. However, it is not always possible to detect connections between the various conceptions of power arising from different approaches, incorporating a concept of subject that can bring about new interpretive and critical perspectives on the phenomenon and how it is expressed in the socio-organizational dynamics. For instance, if the complexity that characterizes the concrete procedural subject is understood as a unit of analysis, new considerations about the micropolitics established between subjects in the organizational dynamics become necessary to point out the emergence of the phenomenon, in addition to what has been described before in established categories. Therefore, new interpretive possibilities emerge along with new considerations on organizational phenomena, which can respond to the needs of the academic community in terms of the complexity of current works. Even in established fields, as is the case with studies on human behavior in organizations, for instance, a new concept of subject leads us towards different ways of interpreting and analyzing behavioral expressions, in terms of work motivation and satisfaction, forms of socialization, structuring and management of groups and work teams, changes in culture and the collective symbolic dimension, etc., since these studies are often based on the North American experimental behaviorist perspective, through the use of surveys and sensitization laboratories (Farr, 1998).

We reaffirm that the originality of the conceptual proposal lies precisely in affirming ontological and teleological oppositions when taking the human figure as an object of study in their practices in organizations. Consciousness and unconsciousness, concreteness and immateriality, historicity, referential structure, and possibility (becoming) are contradictory ideas defended by the authors that supported the proposed idea. These elements were presented in the previous sections, but they are not considered elementary parts of the notion of subject extracted from each theory directly and explicitly. Each author referenced in this work establishes a particular analytical bias, considering their fields of activity and research (Marxism, sociohistorical approach, psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, queer analytics). The idea of Concrete Processual Subject brings together the points of intersection between perspectives to point out the need for detailed views on contradictions that, from the central argument of this essay, appear to indicate possible paths for novel theoretical and methodological constructions regarding the organizational subject.

As Paes de Paula (2015) argues, we force the transition between epistemologies and approaches, according to the needs of the knowledge production about the object itself, avoiding addressing it according to established perspectives. From a new conception of the subject as an analytical unit, we can also review and reflect on the various conceptions of organization, in their structuring and dynamics, considering that, through the contradictions that mark the subject that serves as their base, organizations also present and express themselves as concrete, complex and contradictory procedural entities in their configuration. Following the considerations expressed in this essay, the second step will be to reflect on organizations and how they constitute a concrete procedural subject. For now, we have taken a single step towards the construction of this form of knowledge.

Final Remarks

We find it paramount to expand the notion of subject so that knowledge production in this area can generate profitable results for the emancipatory interests in which we believe (Paes de Paula, 2008; Mozzato & Grzybovski, 2013). This, in turn, can provide clarity and the production of meanings not only for researchers in a given field but also for possible interlocutors when sharing and appropriating knowledge as a resource for social change.

As to the diversity of approaches taken here as a reference, we must remember, once again, that we resort to some existing concepts in different areas of human and social sciences that broke with the perspective of essentiality, full rationality, and uniqueness of the subject, as happened in functionalism and according to the hegemonic Cartesian premise in modern times. From the possible dialogue between those approaches, we hope to contribute to their usual delimitations. That is, to the assumptions of historical materialism and the sociohistorical approach in psychology, we add the possibilities of not taking the elements of economic materiality as deterministic, considering the symbolic power that pervades the very constitution of subjects and the transits possible in their micropolitics of agency. To orthodox psychoanalysis, we add the need to consider the flexibility and fluidity of the subjects in their self-knowledge process – as Freud (1910/1996) himself proposed regarding the function of psychoanalysis – in response to the determinism of the unconscious elements, as defended by some authors and professionals of the area. To the post-structuralist approach, we add the consideration that the so-called “structural” elements in the genealogy of social subjects do not close the possibilities of constant re-signification amid the practices of freedom (reflective, subversive or not) and to the becoming that characterizes them amid discursive games, since there is no fixed or immutable structure or materiality.

Therefore, our conception, focused on interdisciplinarity and complexity, does not aim to counter the extremely valuable contributions of such approaches and establish a dialogue between the points that may offer expanded support regarding the subject in its socio-organizational exchanges. Nevertheless, we are still far from reaching one of the proposals intrinsic to all critical and politically oriented work: addressing the uses of our propositions and concepts in the everyday sphere so as to promote social change. This is a common challenge to epistemologies of a critical matrix and emancipatory interest when transposed to practical interest, an aspect previously discussed by Paes de Paula (2015). However, we believe that this essay opens the possibility of dialogue with other interlocutors who, aware of their condition and the dynamics established in socio-organizational games, can engage in individual and collective practices in favor of alleviating conflicts, asymmetries, power games, and so many other problems common to life in organizations. Likewise, science must not be an end in itself: it must expand its explanatory possibilities to establish a dialogue with other fields, especially the social praxis.

The notion of subject proposed here is the beginning of a long path to be developed into research and knowledge production practices in organizational studies. From the retrieval of classic notions in organizational studies to the psychological, sociological, and philosophical approaches mentioned herein, it is worth mentioning that every concept is a construct, an interpretative possibility of reality, and new theoretical and methodological proposals can emerge from them (Matitz & Vizeu, 2012). This essay initiates a dialogue between fields to provide the themes focused on psychosocial processes in organizations with significant elements to assist the policies and construction of organizational strategies according to the complexity perspective presented herein.

We hope that new discourses and organizational and corporate models will emerge and, with them, novel subjective constitutions, providing possibilities for renewal and positive changes to subjects and organizations, effectively focused on development and emancipation.

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