

A

A SOLUTION THROUGH PRAXIS?

REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE IVORY TOWER METAPHOR AND THE INDISSOCIABILITY BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE IN ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES

VALDERÍ DE CASTRO ALCÂNTARA

Master's Degree in Business Administration from the Department of Business Administration and Economy at the Universidade Federal de Lavras (UFLA).

Doctorate student in Business Administration from the Graduate Program in Business Administration at the Universidade Federal de Lavras.

Rua Barbosa Lima, Centro, Lavras – MG – Brasil – CEP 37200-000

E-mail: valderidecastroalcantara@gmail.com

JOSIEL LOPES VALADARES

Doctor in Business Administration from the Department of Business Administration and Economy at the Universidade Federal de Lavras (UFLA).

Assistant professor for the Department of Administration and Accounting at the Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV).

Rua da Mantiqueira, ap. 601, João Braz, Viçosa – MG – Brasil – CEP 36570-000

E-mail: adm_josiel@yahoo.com.br

ALEX DOS SANTOS MACEDO

Master's Degree in Business Administration from the Department of Business Administration and Economy at the Universidade Federal de Lavras (UFLA).

Doctorate student in Business Administration from the Department of Administration and Accounting at the Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV).

Avenida Peter Henry Rolfs, s/n, Campus Universitário, Viçosa – MG – Brasil – CEP 36570-000

E-mail: alex.macedo@ufv.br

MÔNICA CARVALHO ALVES CAPPELLE

Doctor in Business Administration from the Graduate and Research Centre in Administration at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG).

Assistant professor for the Department of Administration and Economy at the Universidade Federal de Lavras (UFLA).

Campus Universitário, s/n, DAE, sala B104, Lavras – MG – Brasil – CEP 37200-000

E-mail: edmo@dae.ufla.br

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The aim of the current study is to use the Ivory Tower metaphor to discuss and question the false dichotomy between theory and practice, as well as the insufficient pragmatic and performative solution towards the market logic, and to problematize the concept of praxis as a possibility through critical approaches.

Originality/gap/relevance/implications: 1. the Ivory Tower demonstrates the existence of a gap in the relation between theory and practice; 2. the essay is conducted according to critical approaches; 3. the Critical Theory has the potential to deconstruct the assigned and socially constructed meanings of the Ivory Tower.

Key methodological aspects: This is a theoretical essay that dialectically explores the Ivory Tower metaphor.

Summary of key results: 1. the organizational science linked to the instrumental logic makes no place for praxis; 2. the Traditional Theory does not allow thinking about the relation between theory and practice through praxis, because it polarizes such categories and gives primacy to practice by demanding performance and productivity from theory; 3. based on the Ivory Tower metaphor, it is necessary to make criticisms for the sake of praxis and not for the sake of the practice understood just as technical and instrumental utility.

Key considerations/conclusions: We pursuit solutions to remove the dichotomies that take the dialectical nature away from reality; it is necessary (re)constructing new ways to get in and out of the tower on behalf of emancipation, in the permanent and inseparable relation between theory and practice.

KEYWORDS

Praxis. Theory and practice. Ivory Tower. Knowledge. Criticism.

1 INTRODUCTION

The attacks on the World Trade Center, in 2001, shook the world and, mainly, the United States. The Twin Towers represented the grandeur of an invincible nation that saw itself frightened before the event. According to Wallerstein (2002, p. 27): “[...] The Twin Towers are also a metaphor for the attack on America. They were built with great engineering skills. They were supposed to be impervious to every conceivable kind of accidental or deliberate destruction”. On the other hand, the Babel tower was built to reach the sky and we – the mankind – were sentenced not to understand the different languages due to our bold and daring attempt. Thus, since we speak different languages, understanding becomes something far from being achieved (Burrell, 1999; Bertero, Caldas, & Wood, 1999). However, several (metaphorical and concrete) towers still endure, and the Ivory Tower remains monolithic, despite the attempts to deconstruct it.

We believe that the Ivory Tower refers to a (socially constructed) metaphor used to accuse science, mainly the organizational science, of keeping itself away from the everyday life, from the practical, real and concrete things. In addition, the tower would represent a space visited by noble people, who are supported by its protection and comfort and who produce knowledge in a pure and neutral way. Therefore, the ‘tower’ also relates to the myth of the scientific neutrality and knowledge production (Ratner, 2001) and to its monopoly by the universities (Buckley, 2012). Although there are other possibilities, our discussion assumes these meanings, which emerge from the everyday life, as well as from academic debates carried out in several knowledge fields. Throughout the current study, we will express to what extent these meanings provide a critical discussion and to what extent they are ideologically used to delegitimize the important role played by theory in organizational studies (accusations based on the Traditional Theory).

It is worth highlighting that the organizational studies conducted in Brazil sometimes mention the Ivory Tower based on some of the abovementioned meanings: when it is used in accusations about the enclosure and the removal from political life (cf. Paes de Paula, Maranhão, & Barros, 2009); in the criticism to the academy and to “[...] its aseptic and polished debates, such as that about the Ivory Tower, which does not get contaminated with the ills of the world” (Miszczky & Andrade, 2005b, p. 224); and in the criticism to productivism and to the work carried out within national Ivory Towers (Bertero, Alcadipani, Cabral, Faria, & Rossini, 2013).

Therefore, the current study uses such metaphor to discuss the relation between theory and practice and to question the place of praxis. With respect to the relation between theory and practice, the Ivory Tower metaphor separates

theory, which is held at the top of the tower, from practice, which happens in the real world – below the tower. Consequently, according to such dichotomized viewpoint, theory relates to thinking and practice relates to the real world (Marsden & Townley, 2001). Thus, the aim of the current study is to use the Ivory Tower metaphor to discuss and question the dichotomy between theory and practice, as well as the insufficient pragmatic and performative solution towards the market logic, and to problematize the concept of praxis as a possibility through critical approaches.

In analytical terms, we believe that metaphors have been used in different ways in organizational studies, since the seminal work by Morgan (1996). They allow (re)thinking, reflecting about and analyzing organizational relations or phenomena. It is worth emphasizing that the Ivory Tower used as metaphor is an old label (Goodman, 1968 as cited in Misoczky, 2009); however, using it in the current study helps emphasizing the discussions about theory, practice and praxis.

The Ivory Tower metaphor allows making critical analysis through a theoretical essay of dialectical nature (Meneghetti, 2011). The metaphor allows constructing an “essay as form” in order to “[...] make us think about a given thing” (Adorno, 1986, p. 179) beyond the traditional positivist science methods. Thus, the current essay is consistent with a proposal guided by criticism and, mainly, by critical theories. With respect to the place where we speak from, we believe in individuals able to achieve reflexivity and emancipation through praxis.

It is worth highlighting that the current study is structured in four sections, besides this introduction. Section 2 introduces the debate about the dichotomy between theory and practice. Section 3 approaches science and organizational science according to the Traditional and Critical Theory perspectives. Section 4 approaches praxis as a possible solution to the issue presented by the Ivory Tower. At the end, the final considerations reflect about the contributions, limitations and questionings of the current study.

2 AT THE IVORY TOWER: THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

The relation between theory and practice has already been and is still the subject of discussion about different forms of knowledge, namely, scientific, philosophical or common sense. Habermas (2013; 2014) pinpointed that the relation between theory and practice (and praxis) comprises topics such as the translation of theory into practice, the role played by university, the relation between

knowledge and interest, the politicization of science, among others. Habermas (2004, p. 314) stated that it was already significant in Greece and that “[...] the Platonic answer to the question of what practical philosophy can have is: Nothing is more practical than theory itself”. Vázquez (1977, p. 18) added “Aristotle shares Plato’s contempt for all material practical activity”. Subsequently, one of the biggest debates about the relation between theory, practice and praxis was provided by Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx, due to the great acceptance, criticism and re-readings of such authors.

With respect to organizational studies, Marsden and Townley (2001) discussed the existence of a dichotomous view, in which theory relates to thinking (reflection) and practice relates to the real world (action). The authors deconstructed such dichotomy and stated that the concrete (out there) is just established in relation to our mind and that “[...] most practices operationalize some theory, however implicit, vague and contradictory it may be”, and also that “[...] ‘practice’ is a theoretical construct, and theorization itself is a practice” (Marsden & Townley, 2001, p. 31).

According to the polarizing perspective, theory only makes sense, i.e., useful, if it is applied (Misoczky & Andrade, 2005b). Thus, theory is separated and dichotomized from practice, and vice versa. It becomes evident in studies about organizations, since it is observed that the

[...] divorce between organizational theory and practice is institutionalized in the division of labor between the two journals of the Academy of Management: *Academy of Management Journal* (practice) and *Academy of Management Review* (theory) (Marsden & Townley, 2001, p. 41).

It shows that theory and practice are separated even in the academic publishing media (Djaló & Procopiuck, 2010), a fact that legitimizes such separation and allows giving meanings to the Ivory Tower.

According to Nobre (2011, p. 7), the expression “the theory put into practice is another thing” is commonly used and, thus, practice would be the application of theory. Otherwise, theory is opposed to practice and, thus, there is difference between what things are and how things could be. According to this Traditional viewpoint, theory and practice have different logics and set a ‘gap between the two of them’ by eliminating the meaning of praxis from the relation between theory and practice.

The dichotomy presented so far between theory and practice is within the scope of the socially constructed meaning of Ivory Tower, which reveals two

extreme and polarizing approaches: the first one sustains the primacy of theory over practice – and leads directly to the idea of Ivory Tower, where in intellectuals, scientists, researchers and scholars from the organizations would stay away from the everyday reality. The second one refers to the primacy of practice over theory, thus resulting in the aversion to intellectualism. Some objectivist, positivist and pragmatist approaches stand out in the second possibility. In addition to the meaning of the expression ‘Ivory Tower’ presented above, it is possible to see the bias of debates when, by searching for a practical guidance for the theory and by accusing it of being distant, the solutions reinforce the marketing vision, i.e., the theory is a good theory only if it contributes (when applied) to the performance and efficiency of the economic system. Thus, the theory’s instrumentalization is just useful if it can be translated into technique. An example of it may be seen in Souza and Palma (2010), who contrasted the ‘Ivory Tower’ to the entrepreneurial university (which provides economic development). Therefore, the idea of ‘Ivory Tower’ ends up being used as a discursive element to delegitimize the theoretical production for the sake of entrepreneurial theories and universities.

According to Paes de Paula (2013), the false dichotomy between theory and practice is faced by Critical Theory. The Critical Theory (and critical perspectives from different actors and approaches) sees potentialities inscribed in the (current) reality, wherein what already is does not exhaust what can be (Santos, 2000). Breaking the dichotomy between theory and practice becomes feasible when one does not give up on knowing how things are or how things should (or could) be.

It turns out that, from the critical viewpoint, those that rigidly separate “how things are” from “how things should be” are only able to *partly* say how things are, because they are not able to see that “things as they should be” is also part of how things are; because they cannot see, in the current reality, the elements that *prevent* the full achievement of all their potentialities (Nobre, 2011, p. 10; emphasis as original).

This perspective highlights the role played by criticism in the constitutive relation between practice and theory. According to Nobre (2011, p. 12), the outcome of these debates is the sense that practice is not just the application of theory; “[...] practice is a time in the theory, and the results of the actions taken from theoretical predictions become, in turn, a new material to be prepared by theory, which, therefore, is also a necessary time in the practice”. Thus, initially, it is possible to observe that the Critical Theory has the potential to deconstruct the assigned and socially constructed meaning of the Ivory Tower.

The issue presented here is the discourse according to which the researcher or the academy should come down from the Ivory Tower and worry about practical things or things that work and are useful. Part of this discourse is intended to Critical Organizational Studies. This is the meaning of Ivory Tower used in the traditional theory and that seeks to delegitimize the theory, since it does not have immediate instrumental, technical or productive effect.

Thus, by accusing the *Critical Management Studies* (CMS) of being too theoretical, Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman (2009) demand a certain type of performativity (critical performativity) from these studies and indicate that criticism should be rather constructive than negative: “[...] we argue that rather being an anti-performative enterprise, the critical management studies should be thought about as profoundly performative” (Spicer *et al.* 2009, p. 554). These criticisms go against the features of critical management studies presented by Fournier and Grey (2006), namely, performance denaturalization, reflexivity and untying – which are similar to those used by Alcadipani and Davel (2003). In short, Spicer *et al.* associate “[...] anti-performativity with the self-indulgence and convenience of intellectuals who do not reflect about their own position and would remain enclosed in their ‘Ivory Towers’, thus keeping themselves away from the political life” (Paes de Paula *et al.*, 2009, p. 398). Thus, the propositions by Spicer *et al.* (2009) are contradictory, after all, praxis would be abandoned on behalf of a managerial concept (Paes de Paula *et al.*, 2009).

According to our perspective, the solution Spicer *et al.* (2009) found to the Ivory Tower dilemma lies on pursuing a criticism linked to performativity in a performative position – therefore, ‘coming down’ from the Ivory Tower. We agree with Paes de Paula *et al.* (2009) that it would be a questionable committed managerialism; otherwise, we can consider that it would also be a domesticated criticism, as the criticism performed by the *Critical Management Studies* themselves regards to Misoczky and Andrade (2005a).

As for performativity, it is worth highlighting that the expression Ivory Tower appears in many publications, mainly in fields such as education, management and nursing (Bergman, 1986; Etzkowitz, Webster, Gebhardt, & Terra, 2000; Barnhardt, 2002; Link & Scott, 2005; Guenther & Wagner, 2008; Fritsch & Krabel, 2012). With respect to management, it is possible noticing that the Ivory Tower solutions are marked by the market logic, i.e., the Ivory Tower represents the university and the market approach, the descent. Therefore, the highlighted solutions are pragmatic/performative and marked by the Traditional Theory perspective. The role played by the university is often restricted to simply contribute to technological innovation, i.e., conveying the university knowledge to the market (specifically to companies) would be a way to come down from the Ivory Tower.

By stating that coming down from the Ivory Tower means going into the market (companies) and putting theory into practice, such solutions are dichotomized and present the prospect of a gap between theory and practice that needs to be overcome through instrumental and technical means. Thus, according to our analytical instrument (the Ivory Tower metaphor), the solution proposed by the critical performativity, as well as by several studies that make reference to the Ivory Tower, represents the descent towards practical, performative and pragmatic issues, which are usually linked to how knowledge may be used to help businesses grow. This is a clear view of the functional science wherein “[...] practice is the application of theory; it is using theory to manipulate objects (including objectified subjects). According to such science, theory just makes sense if it can be applied” (Misoczky & Andrade, 2005b, p. 237). Thus, the polarization remains, since there is no integration between what theory is and what practice is, and since practice is pursued over theory. Incidentally, these solutions are also not consistent with our proposition of praxis, which “[...] presupposes autonomy and cannot be thought according to the logic of means and ends, cause and effect, because it befits the technical and instrumental activities” (Paes de Paula, 2009b, p. 13). Habermas (2014, p. 149) has emphasized that “[...] the liberating power of reflection cannot be replaced by the expansion of technically usable knowledge”.

If, on the one hand, we highlight the practice (and the criticism to intellectualism), on the other hand, the relevance of the theory can be inferred from an interview conducted by *Der Spiegel*, with Theodor W. Adorno in 1969. Faced with the questioning of science in the Ivory Tower, Adorno states:

I have absolutely no fear of the expression Ivory Tower. This expression has seen better days, when it was used by Baudelaire. However, since you speak of Ivory Tower: I think that a theory is much more capable of leading to practical consequences because of its own objectivity than when it is beforehand subject to practice. The unhappy relation between theory and practice lies on the fact that the theory is currently subject to a practical pre-censorship (Adorno, 2003, p. 132).

Adorno clearly thinks that theory is able to lead to practical consequences (theory is already practice) and that there would be, as he expressed, some censorship in the sense that the intellectual would find himself driven to deliver results and actions that were considered concrete, i.e., the performativity required by an administered society. Meanwhile, according to Paes de Paula (2009a), it is necessary to overcome the idea of theory and practice as different fields – saying that theory shifted from practice, or vice versa, is wrong.

Briefly, the discussions raised so far indicate that the Ivory Tower metaphor presents paradoxical and extremely complex questions. How do we overcome dualities (if they exist)? By staying on the top of the tower? By coming down? Or the medium term? We believe that the solutions indicated by the Traditional Theory are partial, simplistic and make praxis unfeasible. As it was herein emphasized, coming down from the Ivory Tower cannot be the solution, because abandoning theorization (what should/could be) also precludes criticism and praxis. On the other hand, staying on top of the tower and away from the everyday life and from its social relations prevents us from knowing the reality (how things are) and also leads to aseptic researches about social and political issues (Misoczky & Andrade, 2005b). Thus, next section extends the debate and presents the Critical Theory (and critical approaches) as illuminating the relation between theory and practice. In order to do so, it also highlights some discussions about science and organizational science held with several critical actors from different epistemological matrices.

3 ORGANIZATIONAL SCIENCE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE AND CRITICISM

We focus our efforts on the Critical Theory due to its potential to overcome the theory and practice dichotomy. Firstly, it is important to emphasize that, in this study, the Critical Theory is understood, in a broad sense, as the Marxism field and, in the strict sense, according to the interpretation by Max Horkheimer (Nobre, 2011; Faria, 2009). We initially present discussions about the two possibilities presented herein. In order to do so, we do not limit ourselves to the Frankfurt School. Thus, we use an ecumenical perspective of Critical Theory and follow the concept by Domingues (2011). In addition, other important critical authors, as well as authors from other epistemological matrices, offer significant contributions and are referenced. It is also worth to highlight that criticism is not restricted to the Frankfurian Critical Theory or to Marxism and its variants; it is previous, as well as subsequent, to them (Paes de Paula, 2009a). Therefore, we warn our readers that the reference to several authors is not intended to a theoretical relativism or to an exaggerated eclecticism. It only intends to emphasize that criticism and praxis cannot be dogmatically based on a few absolute truths (Barreto & Paes de Paula, 2014) and that they can be developed through fallibilist awareness and self-criticism. However, it is necessary to be aware of the place of speech of each author in order to avoid the temptation to put several theories into the 'same basket' (cf. Faria, 2012).

According to Faria (2009, p. 421), the Critical Theory questions the separation between theory and practice as different times in knowledge construction, because “[...] in order to criticize how things are, one cannot show how they should be, but how they are likely to be from the contradictions found in the phenomena”. In addition, “what might be is not something inexorable; it is a dialectical tendency found in the practice that transforms the existing social relations” (Faria, 2009, p. 421). In other words, the critical diagnosis is applied for the benefit of latent emancipatory potentialities through critical weapons. According to the author, concepts such as contradiction, rationalities, social-historical context, empowerment and awareness are features of the Critical Theory. According to Paes de Paula (2008, p. 2), the aim of the Critical Theory “[...] is to promote reflexivity, as well as a new basis for praxis, in order to bring theory and practice together”.

The text *Traditional and Critical Theory*, by Max Horkheimer, was published in 1937 and is seminal in the (Frankfurtian) Critical Theory. According to Horkheimer (1975), the Traditional Theory reinforces the institutions already established and does not contribute to emancipation. Thus, such science naturalizes social constructs and perpetuates domination under the guise of neutrality. Several studies about it were performed under different perspectives in Brazil. Such studies criticized the organizational science, which naturalizes power relations and serves the capitalist model (Tragtenberg, 1974; Ramos, 1981; Tenório, 1998; Flores, 2007; Faria & Meneghetti, 2010).

With respect to the relation between theory and practice, the Traditional Theory does not allow establishing links with practice based on theory: “[...] the aim of the theory cannot be the action in any way, theory cannot have a practical purpose in the world” (Nobre, 2011, p. 37). On the other hand, the Critical Theory “[...] is not limited to describe the functioning of society; it has the aim to understand it in light of an emancipation, which is simultaneously possible and blocked by the logic of the prevailing social organization” (Nobre, 2003, p. 9). Thus, according to Horkheimer (1975), the knowledge of reality is already a moment of action.

In light of the foregoing, the Traditional Theory does not allow thinking about the relation between theory and practice through praxis, since it lingers on the polarization of such categories and on the importance of one over the other – it gives primacy to practice and demands theory to create something useful (Misoczky & Andrade, 2005b; Faria & Meneghetti, 2010; Nobre, 2011). According to Tenório (1998, p. 10), “[...] much of the current empirical social research, especially in the organizational management field, is closely linked to pragmatism, to the market success”.

The *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, by Adorno and Horkheimer (1985), presents science as an instrument of domination. Thus, the modern construction of the scientific thought ideology outlines a neutrality character (Faria & Mene-

ghetti, 2010). According to the traditional meaning, the Ivory Tower metaphor is a symbolic form, which ideologically keeps the science neutrality myth with its pure researchers. Japiassu (1977, p. 14) pointed out that “[...] the myth of pure science rests, first of all, on the principle according to which the pursuit of knowledge is a good thing in itself, which just relates to the scientific community and inherently has no moral or political significance”. Such idea provides the consolidation of technical education based on the instrumental reason that transforms the university environment in a space to create goods (Faria & Meneghetti, 2010). Consequently, the construction of the Ivory Tower as a social imaginary of the removal from practice may also be seen as an ideological construction.

Therefore, the Ivory Tower metaphor generates some questions: What is the role played by science? What is the role played by the knowledge about organizations? To whom it serves? What is the role played by the academic research carried out according to the traditional theory? Such discussions are especially relevant to the field of organizational studies: To whom we serve? We believe that it is necessary to break up with the idea that research is exempt from the power struggles in the scientific field, as well as from the interests of the researchers, i.e., the idea based on believing in the scientific neutrality myth (Japiassu, 1977; Misoczky & Andrade, 2005a). Thus, the Ivory Tower (herein used as a criticism instrument according to a critical perspective of praxis, and not of instrumental/performative activity) also imposes a (self)criticism that should be discussed, since taking these elements into consideration

[...] requires us to step down our ‘Ivory Tower’ of scientific neutrality, since scientists, like all other human beings, have their preferences, values and ideologies, which determine their behavior in real life systems, including the teaching and research profession (Ratner, 2001, p. 297).

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the organizational science linked to the instrumental logic makes no space for praxis – neither as theory, nor as practice. The next section explores what the positioning would be if we took the concept of praxis into consideration.

4 IN PURSUIT OF PRAXIS: (DE)CONSTRUCTING THE IVORY TOWER?

This section addresses how the concept of praxis is important, within a critical conception, to overcome the false theory-practice dichotomy. In the end of the

section, we indicate some ways researchers can direct their research. We initially point out that “[...] even though some languages, with their socio-cultural and historical particularities, do not distinguish practice from praxis, it is necessary to take into consideration the existence of important differences between these terms” (Martins, 2011, p. 535).

One of the most popular concepts comes from *Theses on Feuerbach*, in which Karl Marx refers to the action of man, who knowingly transforms reality (Vieira, 1996). According to Martins (2011, p. 536), Marx understands praxis as “[...] a theoretical and practical process by which man becomes able to overcome speculation [...] and carry out conscious projects in the world, since praxis is also action”. Vázquez (1977), in his turn, understands praxis as the activity of man transforming reality. The author also shows that praxis and practice are different things: “[...] All praxis is activity, but all activity is not praxis” (Vázquez, 1977, p. 185). He conceptually says that praxis is a “[...] human activity producing objects, although such activity is not designed with the strictly utilitarian character inferred from the practical meaning in the ordinary language” (Vázquez, 1977, p. 5). Therefore, it is worth emphasizing that not every theory (and praxis) has utilitarian practical application.

Thus, praxis allows abandoning the dichotomy between theory and practice in the context of organizational studies, and therefore, (re)(de)constructing the meanings of the Ivory Tower metaphor. After all, “the concept of praxis allows rethinking the relation between theory and practice. [...] Praxis is the activity through which theory is integrated with practice, by biting it, and practice educates and re-educates theory” (Konder, 2003, p. 167). Therefore, the understanding herein adopted of praxis meets the one adopted by Vázquez (1977) and Misoczky and Flores (2009), who differed it from the technical activity. Based on these concepts, we argue that the meaning of praxis does not just refer to action, but also to the possibility of establishing reflexivity. Thus, it relates to fundamental categories of the Critical Theory, namely, contradiction, dialectics and change, critical reason and imagination, emancipation, self-determination and utopia (Box, 2005). It also relates to discussions about hope, complaint and autonomy (Misoczky, Moraes, & Flores, 2009; Paes de Paula, 2009; Misoczky, 2010). These and other different perspectives and relations with praxis may be seen in Marx, Gramsci, Vázquez, Castoriadis, Freire and Dussel, among others. This study does not address the different concepts; thus, we resume the idea of the metaphor and the national organizational studies in order to assess the current researches/practices, which are still mostly attached to the Ivory Tower paradoxes.

So far, we have seen that the Traditional Theory, according to the Ivory Tower perspective, dichotomizes theory and practice and just allows theory to make

sense if it can be applied. On the other hand, the Critical Theory denies the naturalized world (as the only world possible) in order to present the possibilities of emancipation. In other words, the possibility of finding a solution through praxis.

Therefore, theory and practice are inseparable and interdependent when both are developed in the pursuit of transformation and denaturalization of relations. Thus, praxis is not the mere application of a certain theory; it allows understanding the social relations within a given context according to how such context is and to how it can be presented. With respect to the academic research process, praxis allows the researcher to highlight the elements that inhibit human emancipation and makes it possible overcoming these obstacles (Misoczky & Andrade, 2005a).

This position requires the researcher to show engagement, as well as ideological, political and social positioning. However, using the words by Freire (2005), such positioning should be neither ‘blah blah blah’, nor activism disconnected from social theory. In addition, as we have already advocated for, the researches, as well as other actions performed by researchers, are political actions, in a broad sense, and comprise the collective life and its conflicts. Consequently, the solution to the tower issue is not simply coming down from it or abandoning the theory, which is necessary to criticism and praxis. It also involves taking an epistemological and ontological position in doing research, teaching and extension – i.e., overcoming the Traditional Science, the neutrality myth, and joining the ideological struggle that surrounds it.

We have previously said that, on one hand, the supremacy of this theory implies researchers to be averse to practice and attached to an Ivory Tower (one of metaphor meanings). On the other hand, the performativism and the predominance of the market logic may lead to the idea that the intellectual thinking and the theory are no longer important. Thus, coming down from the Ivory Tower cannot be the solution because abandoning theorization also prevents criticism and praxis, which depend on key categories, such as hope and utopia. On the other hand, staying on the top of the tower and away from the everyday life and from its social relations precludes the knowledge of reality and it is consistent with academic debates that have no social function – if we pursue action as praxis, it must be social and guided by emancipation.

Therefore, within the national organizational studies, this debate directly refers to issues related to the theory, practice, ideology and naive organizational science, once discussed in Brazil by authors such as Maurício Tragtenberg, Alberto Guerreiro Ramos and Prestes Motta. Motta (1990) argued that practice cannot be disconnected from theory. Tragtenberg (1974), in his turn, approached management as an ideology. Finally, Ramos (1981) showed that the current theory guided by the instrumental rationality and by the market logic is naive. According to

Faria (2009), the market develops its production based on a phenomenological perspective (critical phenomenology). According to the academic and political lives of these authors, it is possible to say that they broke the Ivory Tower dilemmas. Other authors, such as Caio Prado Júnior, Ruy Mauro Marini and Darcy Ribeiro also stand out in the Brazilian social theory context (Misoczky & Flores, 2009). It is also worth highlighting that, according to Paulo Freire's perspective in a different knowledge field, the dichotomies between action and reflection generate inauthentic ways to exist, to think (Freire, 2005) and to do research.

More recently, the organizational studies have highlighted a new generation of authors such as José Henrique de Faria, as acknowledged by Misoczky, Flores and Goulart (2015). It is also worth highlighting that researchers such as Maria Ceci Misoczky and Ana Paula Paes de Paula are important to this study due to their many contributions to critical organizational studies (it is necessary to clarify that the theoretical approaches by Faria, Misoczky and Paes de Paula have several differences; however, they are critical). Many other authors were quoted in this essay because they help to understand the importance of criticism and praxis – it is not our intention to list them. Such authors are referenced due to the great acknowledgement given to their contributions.

According to the epistemological and methodological perspective, it is possible to do researches such as participant observations, action-researches, ethnographies and many others (we do not seek to define them, just to exemplify them) as long as they are guided by the integration between theory and practice through praxis and aim at emancipation. It is worth to highlight research strategies such as the Critical Epistemology of the Concrete (Faria, 2014), the Freud-Frankfurtian Approach (Paes de Paula, 2013) and the Anti-Management Studies (Misoczky, Flores, & Goulart, 2015), since they meet our assumptions. In addition to the research, in everyday life, “[...] we can use our academic positions as a pulpit from which to engage campaigns in words and deeds against the corporate world's malfeasance” (Adler, 2002, p. 390) – the researcher may be involved in resistance theories and practices (Misoczky, Flores, & Böhm, 2008).

Finally, a performative and domesticated criticism does not allow us coming down from the Ivory Tower. If we do not think about the transforming action – the praxis – we will keep on having more or less legitimacy, inhabiting it, whether through the idealist or the performative bias. We believe that the Ivory Tower is not just for those who deviate from practice, it is also for those who deviate from the construction of the social reality, as well as from political and ideological issues. It is for those who deviate from becoming subjects who build (with autonomy, cf. Cornelius Castoriadis – Barreto & Paes de Paula, 2014) reality and share responsibility for it. After all, according to Voiron (2013), praxis allows to

see human beings as individuals who constitute the world and are constituted in their relations with it and with other individuals – knowing themselves as individuals.

We pursue solutions able to put aside the dichotomies that take the dialectical nature away from reality. After all, it is not the case to blow up the Ivory Tower (herein used as a synonym to theory, intellectual work), but to (re)construct new ways to get in and out of it on behalf of emancipation. Thus, it is worth highlighting the considerations by Wallerstein (2002), who addressed the Twin Towers as a metaphor:

Let me suggest another metaphor that comes from the Twin Towers. Towers that are destroyed can be rebuilt. But, will we rebuild them in the same way – with the same assurance that we are reaching for the stars and doing it right, with the same certainty that they will be seen as a beacon to the world? **Or, will we rebuild them in other ways, after careful reflection about what we really need and what is really possible for us, and really desirable for us?** (Wallerstein, 2002, p. 32; emphasis added).

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS OR 'NO PROBLEM SOLVED, NOT EVEN RAISED"?

Interestingly, whenever we think we have become enlightened about a certain topic, we find that no problem has been solved – alluding to the poetry by Andrade (2000) – and that, perhaps, very few have been raised. However, the metaphor was not used to make false syntheses, but to discuss the relation between theory and practice, as well as to discuss praxis under the perspective of the Ivory Tower metaphor. Somehow, it is like the metaphor would allow to introduce new elements in the discussion, which is very wide in the applied social sciences – using Adorno's term (1986), the metaphor allowed 'releasing the latent forces' of this debate.

It is worth emphasizing that the idea of praxis does not allow two dogmatisms. The first dogmatism lies on the construction of knowledge in a non-compromised way with cultural, political and social aspects. The second one concerns the discourse according to which the theory is unimportant simply because it is not practical, i.e., using the idea of the Ivory Tower as a discursive element to delegitimize the theoretical production by arguing that it is not productive. Therefore, based on the use of the Ivory Tower metaphor, criticism should be done on behalf

of praxis and not on behalf of a practice that is just understood as technical and instrumental utility. Thus, it is also worth emphasizing that, when faced with the use of the 'Ivory Tower', we need to situate ourselves (in terms of approaches, authors, themes, etc.) in order to understand the meaning and the purpose of using such expression, because, as it was highlighted previously, it can be used for the sake of a Critical approach that calls for reflexivity and praxis, as well as for the sake of a Traditional approach that demands efficiency and productivity.

We have highlighted the Critical Theory's potential to uncover the false dichotomy between theory and practice, which can be found in the Traditional Theory, as well as to move toward praxis as an important category of Critical Organizational Studies. Thus, we implicitly proposed that intellectuals/researchers should use praxis to break their silence about controversial topics (Novaes, 2006). The engagement this study refers to is not blind (the activism against which Freire (2005) talked about). It involves the positioning in the developed researches and in the relations with the different social subjects – theory and practice do not contradict each other and they should not be disconnected from praxis. Therefore, being an agent/subject of praxis, as a researcher, also means seeking to overcome the naivety of organizational theory, which relates to what works in practice, to the rationality that permeates and separates theory from practice or that approaches both of them for the sake of a utilitarian logic, since the naive science (traditional and normal) keeps the Ivory Tower monolithic.

The metaphor (as socially constructed meaning) allowed to present some meanings/senses – the others can be addressed and discussed in future studies. Thus, the Ivory Tower allowed thinking about the role played by theory, about the false dichotomy between theory and practice, about the praxis as synthesis element, and about the emancipatory impossibility of a pragmatic and performative solution directed to the market logic. The limitations of this study (Morgan, 1996) can be seen in the boundaries of the discussions focused on part of the Critical Theory and on some key authors of Organizational Studies conducted in Brazil (many other authors are also important). They also lie on the fact that other approaches also provide elements to integrate theory and practice. Thus, we expect that the focus given at the beginning of this study has defined the understanding of theory and practice, praxis, criticism and metaphor.

Finally, by going through such path proposed of a work built in an open and reflective way, it is possible to state that the freedom granted by metaphors and by the concept of theoretical essay was a challenging element. In addition, breaking up with the linearity of the traditional scientific construction demands effort and time. We hope we were not naive enough to use the Ivory Tower metaphor to create a map about the reality of the contemporary organizational studies, but to discuss them as a critical reflection possibility, as essay and praxis.

UMA SAÍDA PELA PRÁXIS? REFLEXÕES SOBRE A METÁFORA DA TORRE DE MARFIM E A INDISSOCIABILIDADE ENTRE A TEORIA E A PRÁTICA NOS ESTUDOS ORGANIZACIONAIS

RESUMO

Objetivo: Por meio da metáfora da Torre de Marfim buscamos discutir e questionar a falsa dicotomia entre a teoria e a prática, além da insuficiente saída pragmática e performática na direção da lógica do mercado para, no fim, problematizar o conceito de práxis como possibilidade mediante abordagens críticas.

Originalidade/lacuna/relevância/implicações: 1. a Torre de Marfim evidencia a existência de uma lacuna na relação teoria e prática; 2. o ensaio é realizado mediante abordagens críticas; 3. a Teoria Crítica representa um potencial para a desconstrução de sentidos atribuídos e socialmente construídos da Torre de Marfim.

Principais aspectos metodológicos: É um ensaio teórico que explora dialeticamente a metáfora da Torre de Marfim.

Síntese dos principais resultados: 1. a ciência organizacional vinculada à lógica instrumental não abre espaço para a práxis; 2. a Teoria Tradicional não nos possibilita pensar a relação entre teoria e prática mediante a práxis, pois ela se prende na polarização dessas categorias e confere primazia à prática demandando performance e produtividade da teoria; 3. é preciso que a crítica, a partir do uso da metáfora da Torre de Marfim seja feita em prol da práxis, e não em prol da prática entendida apenas como utilidade técnica e instrumental.

Principais considerações/conclusões: A busca que fazemos é por saídas que afastem as dicotomias que retiram da realidade sua natureza dialética; quanto a torre, temos que (re)construir novos caminhos para entrarmos e sairmos dela em prol da emancipação, na relação permanente e indissociável entre teoria e prática.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Práxis. Teoria e prática. Torre de Marfim. Conhecimento. Crítica.

¿UNA SALIDA POR LA PRAXIS? REFLEXIONES SOBRE LA METÁFORA DE LA TORRE DE MARFIL Y LA INDISOCIABILIDAD ENTRE TEORÍA Y PRÁCTICA EN LOS ESTUDIOS ORGANIZACIONALES

RESUMEN

Objetivo: A través de la metáfora de la Torre de Marfil intentamos discutir y cuestionar la falsa dicotomía entre la teoría y la práctica, además de la insuficiente salida pragmática y performativa en la dirección de la lógica del mercado, y al final problematizar el concepto de la praxis como una posibilidad delante los enfoques críticos.

Originalidad/laguna/relevancia/implicaciones: 1. la Torre de Marfil demuestra la existencia de una lacuna en la relación teoría y práctica; 2. el ensayo se realiza mediante enfoques críticos; 3. la Teoría Crítica es un potencial para la deconstrucción de significados asignados y socialmente construidos de la Torre de Marfil.

Principales aspectos metodológicos: Se trata de un ensayo teórico que explora dialécticamente la metáfora de la Torre de Marfil.

Síntesis de los principales resultados: 1. la ciencia organizacional relacionada con la lógica instrumental no tiene espacio para la *praxis*; 2. La Teoría Tradicional no permite que pensemos la relación entre la teoría y la práctica mediante la *praxis*, ya que mantiene la polarización de estas categorías y provee primacía a la práctica exigiendo performance y productividad de la teoría; 3. es necesario que la crítica, a partir de la utilización de la metáfora de la Torre de Marfil, sea hecha en favor de la *praxis* y no por la práctica entendida sólo como herramienta técnica e instrumental.

Principales consideraciones/conclusiones: La búsqueda que hacemos es por salidas que alejan las dicotomías que quitan de la realidad su naturaleza dialéctica; en relación a la torre, tenemos que (re)construir nuevas formas de entrar y salir de ella en favor de la emancipación, en la relación permanente e inseparable entre teoría y práctica.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Praxis. Teoría y práctica. Torre de Marfil. Conocimiento. La crítica.

REFERENCES

- Adler, P. (2002). Critical in the name of whom and what? *Organization*, 9(3), 387-395.
- Adorno, T. W. (1986). O ensaio como forma. In T. W. Theodor. *Sociologia* (pp. 15-45). São Paulo: Ática.
- Adorno, T. W. (2003). A filosofia muda o mundo ao manter-se como teoria. *Lua Nova*, 60, 131-139.
- Adorno, T. W., & Horkheimer, M. (1985). *Dialética do Esclarecimento: fragmentos filosóficos*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar.
- Alcadipani, R., & Davel, E. (2003). Estudos críticos em administração: a produção científica brasileira nos anos 1990. *Revista de Administração de Empresas*, 43(4), 72-85.
- Andrade, C. D. (2000). *A rosa do povo* (21ª ed.). Rio de Janeiro: Record.
- Barreto, R. O., & Paes de Paula, A. P. (2014). “Rio da Vida Coletivo”: empoderamento, emancipação e práxis. *Revista de Administração Pública*, 48(1), 111-30.
- Barnhardt, R. (2002). Domestication of the Ivory Tower: Institutional adaptation to cultural distance. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 33(2), 238-249.
- Bergman, R. (1986). Nursing practice: Escaping from the Ivory Tower. *Nursing Times*, 82(41), 58-60.
- Bertero, C. O., Alcadipani, R., Cabral, S., Faria, A., & Rossoni, L. (2013). Os desafios da produção do conhecimento em administração no Brasil. *Cadernos EBAPE.BR*, 11(1), 181-196.
- Bertero, C. O., Caldas, M. P., & Wood, T., Jr. (1999). Produção científica em administração de empresas: provocações, insinuações e contribuições para um debate local. *Revista de Administração Contemporânea*, 3(1), 147-178.
- Box, R. C. (2005). *Critical social theory in public administration*. New York: M. E. Sharpe.
- Buckley, S. (2012). Higher education and knowledge sharing: from Ivory Tower to twenty-first century. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 49(3), 333-344.
- Burrell, G. (1999). Ciência normal, paradigmas, metáforas, discursos e genealogia da análise. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy & W. R. Nord (Orgs.). *Handbook de Estudos Organizacionais* (pp. 439-462). São Paulo: Atlas.
- Djaló, A. B., & Procopiuck, M. (2010). Teoria e prática na construção do conhecimento em administração. *Revista Eletrônica de Ciência Administrativa*, 9(1), 90-103.
- Domingues, J. M. (2011). Vicissitudes e limites da teoria crítica hoje. *Sociologia & Antropologia*, 1(1), 71-89.
- Etzkowitz, H., Webster, A., Gebhardt, C., & Terra, B. R. C. (2000). The future of the university and the university of the future: evolution of Ivory Tower to entrepreneurial paradigm. *Research Policy*, 29(2), 313-330.
- Faria, J. H. (2009). Consciência crítica com ciência idealista: paradoxos da redução sociológica na fenomenologia de Guerreiro Ramos. *Cadernos EBAPE.BR*, 7(3), 420-446.
- Faria, J. H. (2012). Dimensões da Matriz Epistemológica em Estudos em Administração: uma proposição. *Anais do Encontro da Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Administração*, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil, 36.
- Faria, J. H. (2014). A Epistemologia crítica do concreto e os momentos da pesquisa: uma proposição para os estudos organizacionais. *Anais do Encontro de Estudos Organizacionais da Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Administração*, Gramado, RS, Brasil, 8.

- Faria, J. H., & Meneghetti, F. K. (2010). (Sem) saber e (com) poder nos estudos organizacionais. *Cadernos EBAPE.BR*, 8(1), 38-52.
- Flores, R. K. (2007). Acerto de contas com a administração: uma reflexão a partir de Tragtenberg, Motta e Guerreiro Ramos. *Cadernos EBAPE.BR*, 5(4), 1-11.
- Fournier, V., & Grey C. (2006). Na hora da crítica: condições e perspectivas para estudos críticos de gestão. *Revista de Administração de Empresas*, 46(1), 71-86.
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogia do oprimido*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- Fritsch, M., & Krabel, S. (2012). Ready to leave the Ivory Tower? Academic scientists' appeal to work in the private sector. *Journal of Technology Transfer*, 37(3), 271-296.
- Goodman, N. (1968). *Languages of art: an approach to a theory of symbols*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co.
- Guenther, J., & Wagner, K. (2008). Getting out of the Ivory Tower – new perspectives on the entrepreneurial university. *European Journal of International Management*, 2(4), 400-417.
- Habermas, J. (2004). *Verdade e justificação: ensaios filosóficos*. São Paulo: Loyola.
- Habermas, J. (2013). *Teoria e práxis: estudos de filosofia social*. São Paulo: Editora Unesp.
- Habermas, J. (2014). *Técnica e ciência como "ideologia"*. São Paulo: Editora Unesp.
- Horkheimer, M. (1975). *Teoria tradicional e teoria crítica (Coleção Os pensadores)*. São Paulo: Abril Cultural.
- Japiassu, H. (1977). As máscaras da ciência. *Ciência da Informação*, 6(1), 13-15.
- Konder, L. (2003). Benjamin e o marxismo. *Alea*, 5(2), 165-174.
- Link, A. N., & Scott, J. T. (2005). Opening the Ivory Tower's door: An analysis of the determinants of the formation of US university spin-off companies. *Research Policy*, 34(7), 1106-1112.
- Marsden, R., & Townley, B. (2001). Introdução: A coruja de Minerva: reflexões sobre a teoria na prática. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy & W. R. Nord (Orgs.) *Handbook de Estudos Organizacionais* (pp. 31-56). São Paulo: Atlas.
- Martins, M. F. (2011). Práxis e "catarsis" como referências avaliativas das ações educacionais das ONG'S, dos sindicatos e dos partidos políticos. *Avaliação*, 16(3), 533-558.
- Meneghetti, F. K. (2011). Tréplica – O que é um ensaio-teórico? *Revista de Administração Contemporânea*, 15(2), 343-348.
- Misoczky, M. C. (2009). Abordagem de redes no estudo de movimentos sociais: entre o modelo e a metáfora. *Revista de Administração Pública*, 43(5), 1147-1180.
- Misoczky, M. (2010). Das práticas não-gerenciais de organizar à organização para a práxis da libertação. In M. C. Misoczky, R. Kruter & J. Moraes (Orgs.). *Organização e práxis libertadora*. Porto Alegre: Dacasa Editora.
- Misoczky, M. C., & Andrade, J. D. (2005a). Uma crítica à crítica domesticada nos estudos organizacionais. *Revista de Administração Contemporânea*, 9(1), 193-210.
- Misoczky, M. C., & Andrade, J. D. (2005b). Tréplica: quem tem medo do fazer acadêmico enquanto práxis. *Revista de Administração Contemporânea*, 9(1), 239-246.
- Misoczky, M. C., & Flores, R. K. (2009). A práxis-crítica na tradição do pensamento social brasileiro. *Cadernos EBAPE.BR*, 7(3), 516-524.
- Misoczky, M. C., Flores, R. K., & Böhm, S. (2008). A práxis da resistência e a hegemonia da organização. *Organizações & Sociedade*, 15(45), 181-193.

- Misoczky, M. C., Flores, R. K., Goulart, S. (2015). An anti-management statement in dialogue with critical Brazilian authors. *Revista de Administração de Empresas*, 55(2), 130-138.
- Misoczky, M. C., Moraes, J., & Flores, R. K. (2009). Bloch, Gramsci e Paulo Freire: referências fundamentais para os atos da denúncia e do anúncio. *Cadernos EBAPE.BR*, 7(3), 448-471.
- Morgan, G. (1996). *Imagens da organização*. São Paulo: Atlas.
- Motta, F. C. P. (1990). *Organização e poder: empresa, Estado e escola*. São Paulo: Atlas.
- Nobre, M. (2003). Apresentação. In A. Honneth. *Luta por reconhecimento: gramática moral dos conflitos sociais* (pp. 7-19). São Paulo: Editora 34.
- Nobre, M. (2011). *A teoria crítica* (3a ed.). Rio de Janeiro: Zahar.
- Novaes, A. (2006). *O silêncio dos intelectuais*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2006.
- Paes de Paula, A. P. (2008). *Teoria crítica nas organizações*. São Paulo: Thomson Learning.
- Paes de Paula, A. P. (2009a). Ser ou não ser, eis a questão: a crítica aprisionada na caverna de Platão. *Cadernos EBAPE.BR*, 7(3), 492-503.
- Paes de Paula, A. P. (2009b). "O que o handbook não diz": novas considerações sobre a Teoria Crítica e abordagens pós-modernas para estudos organizacionais. *Anais do Encontro da Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Administração*, São Paulo, SP, Brasil, 33.
- Paes de Paula, A. P. (2013). Abordagem Freud-Frankfurtiana, pesquisa-ação e socioanálise: uma proposta alternativa para os estudos organizacionais. *Cadernos EBAPE.BR*, 11(4), 520-542.
- Paes de Paula, A. P., Maranhão, C. M. S. A., & Barros, A. N. (2009). Pluralismo, pós-estruturalismo e "gerencialismo engajado": os limites do movimento. *Critical Management Studies. Cad. EBAPE.BR*, 7(3), 393-404.
- Ramos, A. G. (1981). *A nova ciência das organizações: uma reconceitualização da riqueza das nações*. Rio de Janeiro: FGV.
- Ratner, H. (2001). Population, technology and the University. In W. Bolle. *The University of the 21st Century* (pp. 296-299). São Paulo: Edusp.
- Santos, B. S. (2000). *A crítica da razão indolente: contra o desperdício da experiência*. São Paulo: Cortez.
- Souza, N. M. S. S., & Palma, M. A. M. (2010). Torre de Marfim ou Universidade Empreendedora: fatores críticos no processo de inovação no contexto universitário. *Revista Brasileira de Gestão e Desenvolvimento Regional*, 6(2), 130-156.
- Spicer, A., Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2009). Critical performativity: The unfinished business of critical management studies. *Human Relations*, 62(4), 536-561.
- Tenório, F. G. (1998). Gestão social: uma perspectiva conceitual. *Revista de Administração Pública*, 32(5), 7-23.
- Tragtenberg, M. (1974). *Burocracia e ideologia*. São Paulo: Ática.
- Vázquez, A. S. (1977). *Filosofia da práxis* (2a ed.). Rio de Janeiro: Editora Paz e Terra.
- Vieira, A. R. (1996). Pressupostos marxianos de filosofia: uma leitura das 11 Teses sobre Feuerbach. *Princípios*, 3(4), 27-50.
- Voirol, O. (2013). Praxis et organisation. *Communication*, 31(01). Retrieved November 9, 2016, from <http://communication.revues.org/3797>. DOI: 10.400/communication.3797.
- Wallerstein, I. (2002). Os Estados Unidos e o mundo: as Torres Gêmeas como metáfora. *Estudos Avançados*, 16(46), 9-36.