

EDITORIAL

Social Conflicts, Ideology, Culture, and Social Work

This is a historical moment of intensification of the class struggle, with expressive social conflicts, and a strong tendency towards world barbarism. This scenario is no different in Brazil, where it is possible to see regression in labor rights as capitalism expands the exploitation and alienation of work, and advances in the deterioration of labor and gains in social security. Against this backdrop, this second issue of *Revista Katálysis* in 2019 presents the intriguing theme *Social Conflicts, Ideology, Culture, and Social Work*.

When reflecting on the Brazilian society, immerse in the contradictory movement of the neoliberal capitalism, it is crucial to emphasize the power of ideology in shaping culture, concealing reality, and exposing social conflicts as an expression of class antagonisms.

The country has presented a high level of complexity and a wide range of regressive policies in the different fields of social life, which is demonstrated in two elements of its current historical dynamics. First, the profoundly violent processes, guided by the neoliberal ideology, disguised as “fighting” the violence itself, and “defending” moral principles of preserving family and society, under the hegemony of financial capital. Second, the processes of resistance as a historical category that is expressed by opposition movements and protest oppression, as a counterforce, as a reaction to subordination, exploitation, and humiliation posed by the capitalism that faces now a crisis observed worldwide.

These two processes are at the base of the current Brazilian context. They remind us of Rosa Luxemburg’s thought when, in the second phase of the imperialism’s apogee she expressed, in the same way as Marx, the challenges we would have to face in the future: socialism or barbarism. According to Mészáros (2001, p. 79), Marx placed the first version of this idea “within the ultimate historical horizon of the contradictions then unfolding.” For Marx, in an uncertain future, to save our existence, we would be forced to make certain choices regarding the societal order.

We understand that, at this very moment, we are living the future tendency that Marx and Luxemburg predicted. Therefore, our historical moment leaves no room for conciliatory choices if we are to confront the numerous world and national problems. The issues to be addressed are many, from chronic structural unemployment to international and national social, economic, political and military conflicts, which result from the incapacity of capitalism, in its historical phase of hegemonic imperialism, of offering solutions to the contradictions of the system. For Mészáros (2001, p. 80), “only a radical alternative to the established mode of controlling social metabolic reproduction can offer a way out of capital’s structural crisis,” i.e., a radical socialist mass movement to build a civilized future for humanity.

In this direction, ideology and culture have an active role in specific historical processes and are fundamental ontological categories intertwined with each other and connected to other categories that consolidate Gramsci’s theory on revolutionary historical processes.

According to Gramsci, ideology is a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, law, economic activity and in individual and collective manifestations (Gramsci, 1978, p. 16). Thus, ideology is a crucial part of the organization of social life, since it takes place concretely and historically, resulting from the movement of the social structure.



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For Gramsci (1999), this expression of ideology, as a conception of the world, is objectified to different degrees. He tries to demonstrate these degrees in his reflections on the process of elaborating a critical and coherent conception of the world. He establishes the relations among philosophy, common sense, and religion, and places these elements within this process.

As for philosophy, Gramsci (1978) points out the widespread prejudice that it is complicated and accessible only by a restricted category of scientists. Gramsci (1971) insists that such prejudice must be destroyed, because, “all men are ‘philosophers’” (p. 323), inasmuch as – even if unaware – the simplest manifestation of intellectual activity is contained a conception of the world, i.e., an implicit ideology.

For Gramsci, this philosophy has limits because it is spontaneous. On the other hand, it is accessible to everyone, and it is expressed in the

language itself, which is a totality of determined notions and concepts and not just of words grammatically devoid of content; . . . “common sense” and “good sense”; . . . popular religion and, therefore, also in the entire system of beliefs, superstitions, opinions, ways of seeing things and of acting, which are collectively bundled together under the name of “folklore.” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 323)

It is possible to evaluate the degrees of one’s ideological elaboration by how they manifest their conceptions of the world – when, according to Gramsci (1999), they are spontaneous. It is possible to point out to what group a person belongs based on the greater or lesser complexity observed in their conception of the world: if they belong to the man-in-the-mass or collective man. The degree of complexity in the conception of the world may reveal the tendency to one or another group, respectively.

According to Gramsci (1971, p. 324):

In acquiring one’s conception of the world one always belongs to a particular grouping which is that of all the social elements which share the same mode of thinking and acting. We are all conformists of some conformism or other, always man-in-the-mass or collective man. . . . When one’s conception of the world is not critical and coherent but disjointed and episodic, one belongs simultaneously to a multiplicity of mass human groups. The personality is strangely composite: it contains Stone Age elements and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history at the local level and intuitions of a future philosophy, which will be that of a human race united the world over. To criticise one’s own conception of the world means therefore to make it a coherent unity and to raise it to the level reached by the most advanced thought in the world.

The awareness of our historicity, its development phase, and its relation to other conceptions of the world, form necessary conditions for the constitution of a critical and coherent philosophy. The construction of this higher philosophy or the creation of a new culture means, in addition to a critical process and discoveries, the diffusion and socialization of truth to support the acts of the subaltern classes. The coordination element is of intellectual and moral order (Gramsci, 1978).

By placing the historical elements, philosophy, common sense, and religion in the process of elaborating a new conception of the world, Gramsci understands philosophy as an intellectual order, as well as being an instrument to criticize and overcome other elements. In this sense, philosophy coincides with good sense, which contrasts with common sense. However, recalling Gramsci’s (1971, p. 323) argument, “all men are ‘philosophers’” because in the most uncomplicated intellectual activity there is a conception of the world, it is essential to emphasize that the fundamental difference between these phenomena is the level of critical elaboration. Following Gramsci’s reasoning, both religion and common sense (which do not coincide, but the former is an element of the latter) express conceptions of the world, even if the subjects are not aware of what they express. In addition, Gramsci (1999), in the passage of *Cadernos do Cárcere* [Prison Notebooks] in which he reflects on the relation between ideology and philosophy, starts from the conception of religion as the conception of life and relates it to the set of ideologies.

For Gramsci, religion is a conception of the world (philosophy) with a corresponding moral (conduct), there can be no difference between religion and ideology and, ultimately, between ideology and philosophy, although a religion, a philosophy or an ideology, may all manifest historically as individual facts.

This analysis is applied to the relationship between philosophy and common sense, since both are conceptions of the world and both manifest as individual historical phenomena, mainly because of the difference of level of sophistication and criticality existing between them.

As a fragmentary conception, common sense manifests the coexistence of certain philosophies that are expressed in the contradiction between thinking and acting, i.e., there is a conception of the world that is expressed

through the intellectual fact, and another that is manifested in the effective action. This contradiction is surpassed with the elevation of common sense to the critical level, which happens, according to Gramsci (1999), through the day-to-day struggle of the subaltern classes, based on the problems they face. Thus, the subaltern classes may reach a higher and critical cultural level. The author goes further in his revolutionary project. It is not only an intellectual and moral reform of the culturally retrograde social strata but an educational project capable of removing the masses from passivity and building their hegemony and a new social order (Gramsci, 1999).

Therefore, if common sense is susceptible to transformation, criticizing and overcoming it through philosophy means to develop an educational and political process, having as reference a historical practice of the subaltern classes.

Thus, in Gramscian thought, the forms of thinking and acting occupy a decisive place in the subaltern classes' struggle to conquer hegemony, as well as being decisive in the role of the intellectuals and the party in the construction of a new culture.

The perspective about a new culture and the decisive role that Gramsci attributes to the intellectuals is addressed by Abreu (2002) in the work *Serviço Social e Organização da Cultura: perfis pedagógicos da prática profissional* [Social Work and Organization of Culture: Pedagogical Profiles of Professional Practice]. In her work inspired by Gramsci's thoughts, Abreu analyzes the relationship between social work and culture, in order to apprehend the tendencies of the educational function of the Social Worker in Brazilian society and the challenges of the construction of an emancipatory pedagogy.

Abreu (2002) points out that Gramsci's view of culture is rooted in the organic relationship between structure and superstructure. The relationship is a mediation that establishes links between the economic, political, and ideological interests providing the educational discussion with an enriching theoretical-political-social consequence of the debate and social practices in the demystification of the dominant educational practice, and the construction of educational processes directed toward human emancipation.

On the educational function of the Social Worker, the work by Abreu (2002) shows different types of objectification using political-cultural strategies, through which Social Work is inserted in processes that form the culture, and ways of thinking and acting of a certain system of life. The author features these modalities as pedagogical profiles of the Social Workers' professional practice: pedagogy of help, emphasizing psychosocial processes and individualized help; pedagogy of participation, characterized by modernizing developmentalist strategies, supported by community development, as one of the approaches to traditional Social Work; and the emancipatory pedagogy that emerges within the framework of the Social Work Reconciliation Movement in Latin America in the 1960s and in Brazil in the mid-1970s as a resistance to the conservative project prevailing in the region in those times, preserving particularities in the different countries.

The reconciliation movement is considered a historical landmark of the profession, because of its critical and contentious nature based on Marxist analyses and interpretations, and due to what the movement represented regarding the formation of critical awareness and of a new culture of Social Workers in Latin America and Brazil.

In the context of deep and complex transformations and the advance of conservatism in the world since the end of the twentieth century, at the time when professional achievements reach theoretical and academic solidity, based on the thoughts of Marx and the Marxist tradition, a structural and conjunctural context is observed, where the country adopts the neoliberalism and the hegemonic movements related to social struggles change their focus. A large part of the movements that were focused on the construction of a new society, an alternative to capitalism, changed direction to focus on the resistance against neoliberalism. They concentrated on fighting for the few rights, conquered by workers in the class struggles, having the state as main target, due to its impetus to destroy the workers' conquests (Lopes, 2016, p. 243).

At the same time, there is an advance in the diffusion of the thought of the so-called postmodernity and the critique of Marx's thought and the Marxist tradition, considered surpassed by many intellectuals, both in academia and in politics.

However, the relevance of Marx's thought and the Marxist tradition is reaffirmed as a fundamental reference for a historical-critical analysis of the current phase of capitalism and its particularities in Latin America and Brazil.

In addition, the historical perspective of the emancipation of the subaltern classes remains alive and ongoing in the contradictory movement of the class struggle.

Therefore, the resistance in defense of the ethical and political professional project of the Social Work, guided by the perspective of the emancipation of the exploited and humiliated classes and of all humanity, is becoming a prominent necessity in Brazil (Lopes, 2016, p. 244).

In the context of the modern Brazilian society, shaped by social conflicts and expressions of the class struggles, a significant group of researchers connected with a diversity of problems arising from the current crisis of capitalism in the world – and reproduced in Brazil in recent years – share the results of their studies in

this issue of *Revista Katálysis*. The objects of the articles are characterized by organic complexes of these challenging problems, and by the center of theoretical categories inserted, predominantly, in the theoretical and methodological framework from Marx and the Marxist tradition, which are essential for the critical analysis of social reality as a historical totality. In addition, *Revista Katálysis* presents a review, as one of the building blocks of this issue.

The articles addressing organic complexes of concrete problems, expressions of the social question, are:

“Socio-Environmental Conflicts over Water in the Northeast of Brazil: Contemporary Expropriations and Social Struggles in Rural Areas,” in which the authors reflect on the subject, problematizing structural determinants such as agribusiness and its impacts on the rural population. The authors believe that the conflicts over water in the inner regions of the Brazilian Northeast cannot be addressed without considering the question of land ownership. They present an expanded notion of rural problems, including land, water, food crops, and mineral resources. For the authors, the conflicts over water are part of the movement of classes in the struggles around the appropriation of resources that are indispensable for class reproduction.

The article “Socio-Environmental Conflicts in the Northeast of Brazil: A Topic of Interest for Social Work” evidences the significant growth in the conflicts in the region, as part of the expressions of the environmental question and its confrontation nowadays. The study highlights the land as one of the primary environmental resources in dispute by the political subjects involved in the conflicts, both the representatives of the capital, and workers.

The work “Processes of Removing Students that Occupied Schools in Paraná: The Bourgeois Ideology of the Judiciary and Police” problematizes the justifications declared by the state’s legal and police apparatus in the process of reintegration of the state schools of Paraná, which were occupied by high school students in 2016. The study highlights the ideological nature of the legal process of reintegration of possession, pointing to the inversion of the reality that the experts of the bourgeois state presented when using the very same arguments posed by the students, converting their struggles for the right to education in a police matter.

The article “Artistic Interventions in Portuguese Prisons: A Multidimensional Study on Dynamics and Impacts,” analyzes artistic and cultural projects implemented in prisons, selecting three types of impacts: interpersonal, intrapersonal, and in the projects’ relationship with the institution.

The study “The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Labor Rights in Brazil” provides a critical analysis of the current Brazilian context, showing that the worsening of the 2008 world capitalist crisis, which reached Brazil in 2011, led Brazilian bourgeoisie to renew its attack on labor rights. The article demonstrates that, unlike the official discourse promising more jobs, what happened was an increase of precarious work, unemployment, social inequalities, and persistence of the crisis, revealed by the very low economic growth in 2018.

The article “Precariousness and Interdisciplinarity in the Professional Activity of the Social Worker in the Public Sphere” is the result of an empirical research with Social Workers operating as managers in the areas of law, social work, and health, within social protection policies in the Federal District, Brazil. The results point to the precariousness of work in the context of neoliberalism, which produces work overload and stress in the professionals’ daily life. In addition, the study highlights conflicts between necessity and service delivery in the political-institutional environment.

The work “The Work of Elderly Caregivers from the Perspective of the Care Economy” addresses the work challenges of elderly caregivers, in particular, the perceptions of the professionals about their work. The research was guided by some areas that represent characteristics and challenges for the activity: the need to complement income; source of physical and psychological suffering; difficulty in adjusting intimacy relationships, affective involvement, and work remuneration. The results help to understand subjectivities around the activities of these professionals and point out interventions to qualify the work, offering better conditions to provide care.

The article “Sociability of Adolescents in Conflict with the Law in Uberlândia (MG) in 2017” seeks to understand the meanings attributed by the subjects to their social experiences. The case study at the Socio-Educational Center of Uberlândia allowed the confirmation of the hypothesis guiding the study, which stated that the sociability of the researched youth are permeated by expressions of the social question manifested in poverty, vulnerabilities, precarious insertion in the labor market, exclusion, and prejudice; for which violence and breaking the law have assumed the meaning of forms of resistance and survival. This is sociability designed by the metabolism of capital, in order to contribute to the reproduction and maintenance of this structure.

The work “The Socio-Environmental Issue: A Descriptive Study about the Theme in Latin American Seminars of Schools of Social Work” examines the concepts most used by authors studying the environmental question. The article also observes the predominant socio-environmental problems addressed and the fields of professional activities of the Social Worker. The results show the commitment of the profession to the formulation of an academic and political statement to confront the capitalist extractive logic in the region, especially in the rural and indigenous world.

The article “Professional Memory and Chilean Social Work: Human Rights and Civic-Military Dictatorship,” is part of an inter-university investigation. It contributes to rescuing the memory of the Chilean Social Work in the context of the military dictatorship from 1973 to 1990. It analyzes the participation of Social Workers in the process of protecting human rights in non-governmental organizations. The study takes into consideration the main contributions of the Social Workers’ performance for the professional development, observing the context of resistance, in a country in a permanent state of exception.

In the article “Social Work and Management: Conflicting Opportunity,” the author problematizes the subjective construction of the relation between Social Work and social policy management on the part of workers that manage such policies. The author uses, as a reference, interviews conducted in research developed between 2016 and 2017. The results include a discourse of entrepreneurship inside Social Work, which recovered its university level in Chile in 2005. The discourse emphasizes the tradition of the profession of Social Work in the face of the entrepreneurial nature observed in the guidelines of the New Public Management (NPM), which implied in conflicts regarding culture and the professional. The analysis of the subjective conflictual relations instigates critical reflection and resistance toward social management discourses, whose logic converge to the market that fragments the field of Social Work in this century.

The studies that focus on theoretical categories are presented in the articles:

“Ideology and Alienation: A Necessary Relationship,” that analyzes, based on Lukács’ thought, the relationship between the categories ideology and alienation. The article attempts to show that the ideology’s most significant aspect is to exercise a function in human-social conflicts. The rationale discussed is that the ideology’s social function is the element that connects ideologies to other forms of alienation that have emerged since slavery. However, the study argues that it is in capitalism that these relationships are materialized.

“The Categories of Alienation and Fetishism in Marx’s Social Theory,” that starts from the assumption that the category of alienation acquires new determinations in Marx’s theory, which are organically linked to the capitalist mode of production and the consequent maturation of Marx’s critique of political economy. Such determinations materialize in the commodity fetishism, in the forms of the developed bourgeois sociability.

“In Marx’s Shoes: The Category of Alienation in Social Work,” analyzes the use of the category *alienation* in selected articles of the journals *Revista Katálisis* and *Serviço Social & Sociedade*, based on the following thematic relations used as mediation: politics/work/subjectivity/methodology. The results showed that the classic works based on Marx’s thought have a strong presence in the analyzed journals, being the most frequent works used as a reference.

“Marx and Labor Law: The Class Struggle, the Legal Arena, and the Revolution” examines the relationship between labor categories, class struggles, and the law, according to Marx. The study shows that, at the same time Marx considers the legal field as a stage of class conflict, he highlights the limitations of this field. In other words, the struggle to reduce working hours and the struggle for legal regulation are essential, but they are struggles as part of preparation for a revolutionary context, which would not be through the law, but through the transformation of the mode of production. In this sense, it is a matter of suppressing capitalist society, the law, and the very centrality of the work, the centrality of that production has in the life of people in bourgeois society.

“Lukács: The Turn of the 1930s and the Adoption of *Ontology* as an Expression of Marx’s Philosophy” presents the impact of the changes that occurred in Lukács’ thinking in the 1930s. The article explores Lukács’ intellectual itinerary and reasons for the Hungarian scholar to adopt the word ontology to express Marx’s substantial philosophy.

The review, one of the building blocks of this edition, refers to the work *O Poder do Lixo: Abordagens Antropológicas dos Resíduos Sólidos* [The Power of Waste: Anthropological Approaches to Solid Waste] published by the *Associação Brasileira de Antropologia* [Brazilian Association of Anthropology] (ABA). According to the reviewer, the main contribution of the work is the grouping of the studies in four approaches of Anthropology: symbolic; ecological; critical, and holistic. These approaches work as the framework to organize the several studies of the collection presented in the publication. The reviewer envisions, in the title of the work, the existence of several possible dialogues between anthropology and the treatment of solid waste. The reviewer declares to face a dense, deep, very informative work, that resumes debate on everyday matters, such as sustainability, while, at the same time, advancing the understanding of contemporary and future data.

This issue of *Revista Katálisis*, through the outstanding articles and review organized in three building blocks, denounces problems, expressions of the social question, arising from the class struggle. It also shows that there are alternative forms of confrontation and resistance to these problems, instrumentalizing – both theoretically and politically – the academic intellectuals, professionals, and militants, in order to contribute to building a new society, alternative to capitalism, for the emancipation of the subaltern classes and all humanity.

Franci Gomes Cardoso, São Luís, 26 February 2019.

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