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ARTICLE

Behind a Smokescreen: The Unity of Exploitation-Oppression and the Moralism of the Extreme Right in the Structural Crisis of Capital

Además de una cortina de humo: la unidad explotación-opresión y el moralismo de la extrema derecha en la crisis estructural del capital

Além de uma cortina de fumaça: unidade exploração-opressão e o moralismo da extrema direita na crise estrutural do capital

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Abstract

This essay articulates reflections on the structural issues of the capitalist mode of production and the contingent mediations of recent decades, demonstrating that the convergence between “(ultra)neoliberals” and neoconservatives/ reactionaries represents a political realisation of the unity of exploitation and oppression. Grounded in the debate on labour, social reproduction, and alienation in Marx and Lukács, we analyse the rise of the far right and demonstrate that the intensification of violence against historically oppressed subjects is not an exception but a necessity of the capitalist order. The particularity of this conjuncture, immersed in the structural crisis of capital, highlights the most imposing characteristics of the unity of exploitation and oppression. Understanding this dynamic reveals the urgent need for social struggles to reach the core of this structure, transcending the objectification of the exploitation of the working class and its subjectivation centred on the bourgeois ethos.

Keywords:
unity of
exploitation
and oppression;
bourgeois ethos;
ontology of social
being

Introduction

Este ensayo articula reflexiones sobre cuestiones estructurales del modo de producción capitalista y las mediaciones coyunturales de las últimas décadas, demostrando que el avance de la unidad entre “(ultra)neoliberales” y neoconservadores/reaccionarios es una realización política de la unidad explotación-opresión. Fundamentados en el debate sobre el trabajo, la reproducción social y la alienación en Marx y Lukács analizamos el avance de la extrema derecha y demostramos que la profundización de las violencias sobre los sujetos históricamente oprimidos no es una excepción, sino una necesidad del orden del capital. La particularidad de esta coyuntura, inmersa en la crisis estructural del capital, evidencia las características más imponentes de la unidad explotación-opresión. Comprender esta dinámica revela la urgente necesidad de que las luchas sociales alcancen el núcleo de esta estructura, superando la objetivación de la explotación de la clase trabajadora y su subjetivación centrada en el ethos burgués.

Palabras Clave:
unidad
explotación-
opresión;
ethos burgués;
ontología del ser
social



Introducción

The colonial roots and the metamorphosis of the processes of dependency promote a capitalist hegemony that exerts its repressive force on historically oppressed subjects and continues to guarantee the historical naturalisation of the politics of violence, imprisonment, pathologisation, moralisation and extermination of sectors of the working class in the most dehumanised dimensions of imperialist, racist and heteropatriarchal capitalism. These characteristics are sharpened, and their determinations are made explicit in the current conjuncture of capital in crisis. In this context, it is not uncommon to find reductionist analyses of the extreme right based on an anachronistic and romantic vision of bourgeois liberalism, suggesting a supposed incoherence with what is called an “(ultra)neoliberal” coalition with (neo)conservative and reactionary sectors. In these positions, some argue that the processes of exposure of intolerant and discriminatory racist, sexist, misogynist, lgbtphobic and xenophobic positions would be mere agitational tactics and moralistic propaganda to divert attention while deepening the exploitation of the labour force.

Whether in these superficial conclusions of a supposed “smokescreen” to cover up reality or in the already known capitulation of liberal sectors to the banners of struggle against oppression, an opaque character persists in the face of the essence of the exploitation-oppression unity and its expressions within politics. A profound analysis requires the recovery of the Marxist and Lukacsian debate on the ontology of social being, the basis of labour and its incidence in the complexes of social reproduction, understanding the exploitation-oppression unit in its historical materiality, where the processes of alienation feed back dialectically (Pinheiro, 2022).

This essay aims to demonstrate that the deepening of violence against historically oppressed subjects is not a conjunctural exception but that, in addition to having its principles present in the original conditions of capitalism (Marx, 2013), it is currently carried out in compliance with its structural mediations and determinations for the realisation of the general law of capitalist accumulation, with metamorphosed dynamics and with peculiar characteristics in the face of the current needs of the order of capital in its structural crisis (Mészáros, 2009).



Exploitation-oppression unity as alienated complexity: Notes on the socio-metabolism of bourgeois inequalities

The prominence of far-right groups, political parties and leaders who articulate a moralistic, intolerant and authoritarian discourse with an agenda of economic austerity is a phenomenon in the field of politics that expresses the complexification of the process of exploitation of labour power in the current state of globalisation of capital.

If appearance and essence do not coincide, searching for the ontology of expressions of prejudice and discrimination requires an analysis of the basis and social function of the bourgeois ethos. The political and economic complexity of the current conjuncture imposes on us the reflection on the challenges of the working class, seeking its totality, thinking about the impacts, mediations and determinations realised in the particularities of dependent capitalism. Understanding this dynamic reveals the need for social struggles to reach the core of this structure, overcoming the objectification of working-class exploitation and its subjectivation centred on the bourgeois ethos.

In contrast to the fragmented readings commonly present in theories committed to the naturalisation of liberalism, many Marxist elaborations, especially by women, Latin American and black anti-colonialist militants, have demonstrated such mediations over time. Demonstrating the historical foundation and material necessity of the exploitation-oppression unit for the order of capital is the basis for articulating the most consistent points of these analyses (Pinheiro, 2022). The expression of the foundation of alienation and its complexification in the history of capitalist society illuminates the core of the exploitation-oppression unit.

To understand what dehumanises us, unveiling the radical nature of what makes us human is necessary. That said, denaturalising social inequalities implies demonstrating exploitation-oppression unity by first highlighting the determinations that make human beings social beings, with labour as their founding category. This theoretical construct, presupposed by Marx and Engels, crosses several subjects of the Marxist tradition and has its most profound form in the mature work of Lukács (2018), developing the mediations and definitive determinations of this condition.



The construct developed by Marx and Engels² in their search for the core of bourgeois society and its possibilities of overcoming it laid the basis of the theoretical groundwork for the dimension of the ontology of social being. In his critical dialogue with Hegelian dialectics, the young Marx absorbed the contradictory dynamics of the movement of the real, putting it into materiality. Engels, by pointing out the critical and materialist grafts of classical political economy, turned analyses of the ontological priority of labour into an understanding of humanisation.

Lukács' intellectual enterprise resulted in a profound critique of neopositivism and existentialism, including analysis and dialogue with Hartmann and the contradictory processes of Hegelian ontology, to developing his argument on Marxian foundations, concentrating his focus on labour as a foundational category and elaborating decisive reflections on social reproduction, ideology and alienation (Lukács, 2018).

Such a synthesis provides an analysis capable of demonstrating the unprecedented character of the social being. The theoretical journey around the original search of the human being, avoiding sterile philosophical abstractions, reflects the historical and social essence with the clear objective of thinking societies, particularly the structural problems of the sociability of capital.

Lukács, therefore, develops formulations on the objectivities and subjectivities alienated by the logic of private ownership of the means of production and the centrality of the exploitation of labour power. By detailing the internal nexuses of the processes of human praxis in their various historical particularities, to uncover the most complex form of alienation in the sociability of capital, the author establishes a lens on the mediations of the capitalist totality in its structural basis and everyday life.

In this sense, we discover that just as labour is the founding category of social being, alienation is the ontological category of the exploitation-oppression unit, underlining that while the former is the constitutive source of the social potentiality to create the new, for the humanisation of the world and human diversity, alienation is the postulate for the de-affectation of being, the cosification, the dehumanised humanity and the social production of inequalities and their naturalisation (Pinheiro, 2022).

²In addition to the mature reflections on concrete and abstract labour in *Capital* (2013), this debate runs through Marxist formulations throughout his intellectual career, being essential to rescue the assumptions and constructions contained in texts such as *The Jewish Question* (2010a), and the debate on political emancipation and human emancipation, in addition to the reflections on ideology, alienation and questions of method in the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts* (2010b), in *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels, 2007), in the *Prologue to the Critique of Political Economy* and in the solid analyses developed in the *Grundrisse* (2011) on the questions of the individual and social reproduction, as well as the unity of production-circulation-consumption. In Engels, texts such as *The Role of Labour in the Transformation of the Ape into Man* (2004) and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (2006).

Delving deeper into the productive and reproductive dimensions of alienation we see its historical particularities up to its most mature, sophisticated and complex form in capitalist sociability, materialising radically different contradictions, qualitatively more dehumanised relations, socially existing in the conjunction of the relations of production and the complexes of reproduction.

The understanding of the objectification of social class antagonism goes hand in hand with the naturalisation of a bourgeois social ethos that universalises a model of human being, namely the man who owns the means of production, white, European, heterosexual, family-oriented, potentially productive subject, defender of formal and abstract reason, Judeo-Christian values and individualism.

This moral, aesthetic and ideological abstraction is not a mere instrumental invention but a social construction that dehumanises working-class people daily, institutionally and structurally. It is a construction realised in the racist and heteropatriarchal historical process of the development of the structural conditions of class society, which forged its colonial and imperialist basis.

As the set of forms and means of exploitation of the working class becomes more complex and reaches its most acute manifestations in the territories of dependent capitalism, the framework of the bourgeois ethos is the value reference for society as a collectivity, being also the reference for the valuation of individuals in everyday life.

In this process, the interpersonal and subjective consequences are the apparent aspects of a fundamental process of devaluing the value of the labour-power of the oppressed subjects. After all, the measure of value imposed on the labour time socially necessary to produce the commodity labour power cuts across all complexes of social reproduction, affecting the organisation of everyday life.

Thus, by a historical construction, women, black, indigenous, and LGBTQIAPN+ people in the working class have their humanity expropriated and experience a structure under the optics of the dehumanised humanity of the bourgeois ethos. Due to the ontological necessity of constant reinvestment of capital at the expense of variable capital, a fundamental dimension of the general law of capitalist accumulation, the construction of the commodity labour power in the different layers of the working class has in alienation, manifested in oppression, a relentless resource of this process.

The passage we present takes a deep and critical look at the exploitation-oppression unit in the capitalist social structure, analysing how alienation is manifested in multiple dimensions: colonial, gender and class, among others. We emphasise that the

“manufacture” of the commodity labour power in the various layers of social reproduction does not occur homogeneously. The production of a male, white, European labour force, for example, receives a higher “social burden” in terms of collective investment compared to a female and racialised labour force, especially in Latin America.

This inequality is deeply rooted in the multiple alienations described by Marx, Lukács and Fanon, which are expressed in the historical process of colonisation, patriarchy and racism. The alienation of labour, described by Marx (2013), is seen here in articulation with sexual alienation (Lukács, 2018) and colonial alienation (Fanon, 2008), evidencing how the process of production of the commodity labour power is intrinsically linked to relations of power and oppression.

To highlight the different and dialectically affirmed use values and exchange values in the sphere of bourgeois subjectivation, which the centrality of abstract labour in capitalism realises, is to identify a feedback dynamic in the cycle of extended social reproduction, which does not appear in the political sphere as an authoritarian exceptionality in times of crisis of capital. Rather, it is the demonstration of emblematic mediations of conservative liberal unity, which since colonialism and since its maturity in the nineteenth century, exposes the symbiotic character of the set of alienations experienced in bourgeois society. The apogee of capitalism in its structural crisis of recent decades, rather than reviving these processes, constitutes new determinants for the maintenance of this mode of production.

The unity of exploitation and oppression in the current barbarism

The Inequality Map 2022 (Chancel et al., 2021) shows that the wealthiest 10% of the world’s population captured 78% of the wealth produced. In contrast, the study points out that more than half of the world’s population gets only 2%. The researchers also showed that the African continent is the most unequal, as opposed to Europe, where the inequality index is the lowest. In Latin America, the wealthiest 10 per cent take 55 per cent of the wealth.

The transformations of capitalism, its capacity for reinvention in the face of crises and its pillars of hegemony generate tendencies to maintain its universality: the exploitation of labour power. Today, there is unrelenting evidence of the constant presence of oppression in the deepening and maintenance of alienated sociability and the process of the destruction of capital.

The need to maintain the general law of accumulation, and its irremediable pillar of expanding profits, points to alternatives for deepening exploitation through the organic composition of capital, sophisticating the productive process in times of high technology by strengthening the destructive character of the globalised environment and the need for states to assume their most apparent tasks of coercion and consensus in order to maintain bourgeois hegemony.

The strengthening of an authoritarian, conservative, reactionary and proto-fascist political culture, Lowi (2019, pp. 1-2) synthesised:

Trump (US), Modi (India), Orbán (Hungary), Erdoğan (Turkey), ISIS (Islamic State), Duterte (Philippines), and now Bolsonaro (Brazil). In many other countries, we see governments aligned with this trend, although less defined: Russia (Putin), Israel (Netanyahu), Japan (Shinzo Abe), Austria, Poland, Burma, Colombia, etc. (...) In each country, this extreme right has its characteristics: in many countries (Europe, United States, India, Burma), the “enemy”, i.e. the scapegoat, is Muslims and immigrants; in certain Muslim-majority countries, it is religious minorities (Christians, Jews, Yazidis). In some cases, xenophobic nationalism and racism predominate; in others, religious fundamentalism or hatred of the left, feminism or homosexuals. Despite this diversity, there are some standard features in most, if not all of them: authoritarianism, all-embracing nationalism - “Deutschland über alles” and its local variants: “America First”, “Brazil above all”, etc. - religious or ethnic (racist) intolerance towards the “Other”, and the use of police/military violence as the only response to social problems and criminality.

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This authoritarian political culture, explicitly intolerant and committed to the interests of capital, is a globalised brand that has become more acute in recent years. The (ultra) neoliberal, moralistic and extremist right-wing sectors carry out a process of minimising the state for the rights of the working class, maximising a lens centred on the interests of capital, especially finance, for the repression of social struggles and the instrumentalisation of the state apparatus in favour of irrationalist, prejudiced and discriminatory discourses and practices.

The narrowing of the horizon of collective struggles allows the critical and opposition sectors to concentrate, for the most part, on the expansion of discourses centred on



inclusion via the market, on possibilist analyses and minimalist processes in the face of the situation naturalised by the manifestations of violence and the increase in inequalities. Superficial reformism is articulated with culturalist readings of the expressions of contemporary barbarism, in a political adherence to new discourses and reactive practices within the order, an action typical of an individualist, particularist and post-modern logic which

(...) operates by erasing the necessary clues to understand the contemporary world; at the same time, the supposed end of work and social classes erases the necessary reflection on the constitution of a historical subject capable of changing this society and pointing to a historical alternative. In the same way, the myth of the market economy and the liberal democratic state obscures the necessary paths for a political rupture that materialises this urgent and necessary societal change (Iasi, 2017, p.38). (Iasi, 2017, p.38).

In the Latin American particularity, the anti-emancipatory gap expresses all the mediations of the exploitation-oppression unity, tearing at the historical roots of the enslavement of the African peoples, the dilapidation of the territories and societies of the native peoples and the heteropatriarchal structuring that built a historical expropriation. This is fundamental for the maturation of bourgeois sociability, both in the appropriation of the means of production and in the appropriation of identities and the constitution of an alienated, universalising ethos centred on the “bourgeois human type”.

The context of the crisis of capital under these characteristics allows for the acceleration of the elements constituted in the articulation between regressive economic measures for the working class, conservative values and the weakening of democratic institutions.

The misery of reason (Coutinho, 2010) raises the most dehumanised dimension of ideological constructs to reproduce, under all the dimensions of bourgeois irrationalism, the promotion of any measure that keeps the social structure of exploitation in place, even in times of crisis.



In this sense, the “destruction of reason” is not the overcoming of bourgeois rationalism but its exhaustion in its supposedly civilising facet, being deepened in its most acute forms of alienation. Lukács (2010, p.68) synthesises theoretically that:

Irrationalism as a worldview fixes this emptying of the human soul of any social content, rigidly and exclusively contrasting it with the equally mystified emptying of the world of the intellect. Thus, irrationalism is not merely the philosophical expression of the barbarism that increasingly dominates man’s sentimental life but directly promotes it. Parallel to the decadence of capitalism and the aggravation of class struggles due to its crisis, irrationalism appeals – ever more intensely – to the worst human instincts, the reserves of animality and bestiality that necessarily accumulate in man under the capitalist regime. If the lying demagogic formulas of fascism, invoking the “blood of the earth”, could find such a rapid diffusion among the petty-bourgeois masses seduced by fascism, a great responsibility lies objectively with the philosophy and literature of decadence, which evoke these instincts. In most cases, they did not think that fascism would use them, and often even condemned them with indignation.

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The resurgence of conservative (and reactionary) thinking and practices in the world, in various spheres of social life, has called into question the gains of the working class and historically oppressed sectors. This process is evident in legal, material and symbolic losses and threatening theoretical and political achievements in broadening collective reflections on the fight against oppression and the strengthening of human rights.

Understanding this phenomenon in a broader perspective, Iasi (2017, p.380) points out that:

Conservatism cannot be understood by itself; it is an expression of something more profound that determines it. We are convinced that it is an expression of the class struggle, i.e. that it manifests in its appearance the dynamic of a struggle between antagonistic interests that make up bourgeois sociability. In this direction it is important that we begin by outlining the scenario in which conservatism presents itself.



Thus, conservatism reveals an abysmal ideological construct that promotes the permanence of that which is fundamental to maintain the hegemony of the daily privileges of certain sectors of society, i.e., “conservatism is, and always will be, an indispensable food for the reproduction of capital, and that is why it never leaves the scene. In other words, it is a central nourishment for the preservation of capitalist society and will always be at its disposal” (Boschetti, 2015, p.639).

This process is materialised in the social inequality enacted by poverty and unemployment, as well as violence, both structural, cultural and social, that affects historically oppressed subjects, such as women, black people, the LGBTQIPN+ population. This set of measures broadens the possibilities of deepening the exploitation of the labour force of these subjects, corroborating with the focus on surplus value and revitalising the tendencies of dependent capitalism and its configuration vis-à-vis the possibilities of productivity and labour relations.

Attacks on living, working and consumption conditions are not mere moralism or isolated events. The logic of attacking rights, the extension of a repressive perspective through the state and the fatalistic affirmation of the living conditions of the working class are functional elements of the tasks imposed to maintain bourgeois hegemony. Thus, on the political and ideological level, the struggle against oppressions is confronted with the strengthening of the most conservative sectors in the economic, moral and formal political spheres, which seek to undermine any attempt to overcome either the contemporary consequences or the most archaic oppressions.

Conservatism is not a cognitive or moral deviation, it is not the fruit of a bad education or of prejudices empty of meaning. Conservatism is one of the expressions of reified consciousness, in Lukács' terms, or of the so-called common sense, in Gramsci's words, that is, it is an expression of the immediate consciousness that prevails in a given society and that manifests, albeit in a disordered and strange way, the determining values that underlie the determining social relations. (Iasi, 2017, p.382).

In this way, the appeal of capital and the middle sectors to state administration through neoliberal, conservative and reactionary policies, attacking social rights and democratic freedoms, affects the daily lives of workers of particular colour, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, geographical origin and cultures. Articulating a reflection on the Brazilian and European conjuncture, Löwy (2015, pp. 662-663) affirms that:



What is comparable in the French and Brazilian extreme right are two themes of socio-cultural agitation of the most reactionary conservatism: I) Repressive ideology, the cult of police violence, the call to reinstate the death penalty; in Europe this is the case of the extreme right and, in Brazil, of the 'bancada de la bala', strongly represented in Congress. II) Intolerance towards sexual minorities, in particular homosexuals. This is an issue that has been agitated, with some success, by religious sectors of Catholic reference (Opus Dei, Civitas, etc.) in France and of Neo-Pentecostal Evangelical reference in Brazil.

It is not by chance that bourgeois ideology resorts to moralistic analyses to maintain profit rates and dampen the organisational process of popular resistance. Ideological decay and the exhaustion of possible manoeuvres within political emancipation meet with the limits of social struggles, circumscribed to immediate tactics and strategies hindered by the social order of capital.

In the context of the structural crisis of capital (Mészáros, 2009), the tendency towards the universalisation of fascist practices is consolidated in various territories. This reveals that the idea of an anti-democratic characteristic as an exception in capitalist society reproduces the dualistic view between democracy-dictatorship, coercion-consensus, when in reality, within history, the elastic process of political emancipation is articulated in a unity of opposites, in a continuity within discontinuity, and in a process of class pressure that stumbles against the structural limits of this society. The authoritarian dimension of the bourgeoisie is part of its political maturation derived from its consolidation with its project of society and its political hegemony.

Classical fascism, as a radicalisation of bourgeois state power and a violent, explicit and overt alternative to the crises of capital of the time – the first decades of the twentieth century – was articulated by a historical necessity that lost hegemony to Keynesian-Fordism. This latent possibility never disappeared, nor did its ideological elements die out, nor did it prevent authoritarianism and aggressiveness towards the oppressed from remaining in democratic countries in the post-war period, reviving new manifestations of its principles after the neoliberal boom.

Contemporary proto-neo-fascism reveals important nuances that manifest the sharpening of the role of the state for capitalism, consolidating actions for the minimisation of rights and social policies and the maximisation of repression of collective resistance, as well as the structuring of capital's profit, whether through direct financing with public funds or as a structured basis for the expansion of absolute and relative surplus value.

The force-consensus binomial is present in everyday life. It manifests itself in authorised violence against difference and dissent. The tragic limited form of representative democracy and the distortions fostered by the media, religious fundamentalism and the market sustain a consciousness that legitimises oppressions, suppresses rights and destroys social policies.

When the conjuncture presents risks to bourgeois hegemony, the state adopts more far-reaching measures to maintain order. Thus, the state complex can overstep democratic boundaries, in an authoritarian trajectory already foreshadowed in the mid-nineteenth century in Louis Bonaparte's 18th Brumaire (Marx, 2011b), although attenuated by the class struggle in the post-war rise of the European welfare state in the twentieth century. In the current conjuncture, the defence and propagation of its autocratic character does not go through classical structures, but through contemporary mechanisms of hegemony such as the media, the internet and other everyday elements.

'The hypertrophy of the coercive apparatuses of the state is also part of the contemporary protection of Brazilian liberal democracy, with the intensification of coercive and repressive actions that take shape in the criminalisation of social movements (criminalisation of working class demonstrations and organisations through repression, arbitrary imprisonment of leaders, illegalisation of struggles)' (Duriguetto & Demier, 2017, p. 15).

This is not a return to the past, but a current necessity of capital. The state complex, far from being obsolete and much more strategic, builds its base on the ideological valorisation of the minimisation of social policies, the militarisation of life, the (neo-) conservative and reactionary proliferation as expressions of a project of survival of capital.

In this sense, since the crisis that began in the 1970s, the ideological character of neoliberalism has expanded, seeking to privilege the "culture of crisis" as a field of hegemonisation of the need to "reduce" the state; through regional particularities, dampening the organisational and reactive possibilities of the working class, promoting individualistic values and a violent social order. The contemporary capitalist state is consolidated in the dispute over the share of socially produced wealth, absorbed by the public purse for direct application to finance capital and the intensification of the exploitation of labour power.

The reproduction of diverse oppressions takes on a complex and capillary character that crosses from trivial aspects to the structural conditions of individuals' lives, materialising in different roles and different modes of relationship. It is not surprising that gender-sex and race-ethnicity divisions reveal important fissures within the same social classes, nor is it unknown that, even among the exploited and oppressed, discriminatory values and positions that reaffirm inequalities are reproduced.

Women workers, black workers, LGBTQIA+ people and migrants are at the forefront of the widening conditions of pauperisation of the class that lives from the sale of its labour power. This observation remains current, while there is also a progressive universalisation of precarious conditions of exploitation for all other wage-earning sectors, a common feature given the process of primitive accumulation of capital for those on the margins of the core countries of capitalism.

Rupturing margins forging seas: notes on social struggle and overcoming the dehumanised self

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In 1944, Friedrich Hayek wrote "The Road to Serfdom", where he already accused the deleterious results of state intervention in the world of capital, describing it as a threat to economic and political freedom, morally destroying any initiative of collective organisation that proposed the search for social rights. As well as being anti-revolutionary, Hayek, being a severe critic of reformism, conjured up his formulations full of reactionary adjectives in relation to the impoverished subjects and those who organised trade unions and party struggles.

In 1947, a period in which the welfare state in Europe was building its foundations, Hayek was trying to mature his ideas about the economy and its contemporary challenges by seeking allies who shared his ideals and principles. In this process, the liberals convened a meeting in Mont Pèlerin, Switzerland, which was attended by fierce critics of European interventionism and the American New Deal.

At that time, we have the cornerstone of neoliberalism: "The Mont Pèlerin Society", organised and dedicated, sought to argue and attack the defenders of Keynesianism, preparing the ground for the reproductive tasks of a capitalism in a more rigorous stage of its original principles, harsher and free of apparent rules, redirecting once again the state role towards individual interests, pushing the market for the resolution of what



was possible in the face of the inequality that is life in society (Pisón, 1998). For Hayek, the supposed egalitarianism produced by the welfare state would destroy the freedom of citizens and competition between markets, an essential factor for economic prosperity, and the struggle for equality, a violent artifice against human essence.

The antipathy of the “new liberals” to universal precepts of rights, including democratic freedoms as fundamental principles³, if these interfered with the expansion of profits, was a feature cushioned by the 1950s and 1960s, by the reformist conjuncture in part of Europe that drove the social state to its principles of progressive exhaustion in the last decades of the twentieth century. Increasingly, however, this ideological discourse, full of value judgements coupled to the aggressive economic project, would gain prominence in the regressivity of social rights, but also in its moral conduction that sought to dismantle any political construction centred on collective guidelines.

After decades of neoliberal deepening, Hayek’s theses are victorious for the hegemony of capital, but, besides being a defeat for humanity, they are also the end of the myth of the bourgeois individual as a romantic abstraction of being a promoter of freedom. The barbarisation of life in the capitalist world demonstrated that the false opposition between liberty and equality is empty of meaning, as the neoliberal project and its “(ultra) neoliberal” consistency, besides fulfilling its promise of not materialising the economic sin of equality, also promoted the distancing of freedom from the majority of human beings.

The moral burden of the formulators of neo-liberalism, which demonstrated its identity with conservatism, was a particular feature of an essence already revealed since the bourgeois reordering after the workers’ uprising in 1848 in Europe, in its Bonapartist construction in France in the 1850s and, above all, in the whole contradictory coexistence with slavery in the colonies of capitalism in the centuries of the development of the structures of capital. Today, the barbarism of capital proves once again that there is no freedom without equality, let alone diversity.

As we have shown, the deepening of alienation is a historical necessity of capital in contemporaneity. Its structural issues place a material abyss in the possibility of freedom of subjects, attacking even its formal abstraction in authoritarian times.

³ Democracy itself – as Hayek tirelessly explained – had never been a core value of neoliberalism. Freedom and democracy, Hayek explained, could easily become incompatible if the democratic majority decided to interfere with the unconditional rights of each economic agent to dispose of his income and property as he wished. In this sense, Friedman and Hayek could look with admiration at the Chilean experience, without any intellectual inconsistency or compromise with its principles” (Anderson, 1995, pp. 19-20).

The current crisis of capital has its structural character – in the terms of Mészáros (2009) – because the cycle of the expansion of capital is facing its productive and reproductive maturity, as evidenced in the globalisation of capital, in the high development of the productive forces and in the crumbling of the civilising legality of the classical bourgeois revolution. This imposes that the process of the expansion of profit rates is determinant in the exponential destructiveness of nature and in the decrease in the value of labour power on a global scale.

At the present stage, these determinations capitulate economic dependence and colonial roots to metamorphose capital-imperialism (Fontes, 2010) and direct the market and the state as imposing forces to guarantee the discipline of the exploited and oppressed, managing the obsolescence of the workforce, disciplining and penalising the working class and its subjects more distant from the bourgeois ethos. This task is put into practice while the public fund safeguards the mobility of financial capital for the management of the economic expressions of the crisis, taken on ever faster scales, demanding greater agility in state responses.

The indissolubilities of the unity of exploitation-oppression and social reproduction pose decisive challenges for social struggles in contemporary capitalism. The unmistakable subjective difficulties of an emancipatory consciousness of the working class contrast with the objective conditions of a high development of forces. Thus, while on the one hand there are the material conditions for the construction of an egalitarian production and socialisation of labour on the basis of a rupture of the mode of production and class sociability, on the other hand, processes of alienation are organised which run through the lives of individuals and groups who experience the harshness of capitalism and its destructive bias towards the realisation of barbarism.

If in “On the Jewish Question”, Marx (2010 a) presents us with the limits of the sphere of struggle in the field of political emancipation and the necessity of a rupture for an emancipatory process of all humanity, in the current societal stage and in the organisational conditions of the class with revolutionary potential, the question that intervenes revolves around the detours and supposed shortcuts of the social struggle against social rights and policies, in the losses and conquests, within the existing order.

In crises, and especially in structural crisis, the ideological flight of the bourgeoisie must necessarily land at the essential landing point of its essentially unequal and coexisting contradictions with authoritarianism and the barriers of human emancipation. Its



expansionist march widens the distance between the organicity of the diverse values of peoples and their complexity while universalising the dehumanised logic. It thus organises forms, means and contents for the expansion of exploitation and expropriation, marginalising what is not the norm under the universalism of the particularity of the bourgeois ethos.

Thus, within the social-liberal struggles and in the structuralist equivocations, the logic of protagonism is being produced, which stifles diversity and also allows the contradictions of its own processes to be overlooked. While reactionarism gains strength, liberal bets and postmodernism synthesise the ideological decadence of the bourgeoisie in its most acute expression in the field of politics, intertwined between the exploited and the oppressed.

Suppose, in today's society, alienation distances human beings from recognising the condition of other beings who experience different forms of oppression, appropriation, and exploitation. In that case, this is due to the extension of a structural formation based on the exploitation of the labour force, which stitches together relations, identities, bodies and subjectivities. If all this is enhanced by explicitly violent conjunctural political projects, such conditions are historically constructed. This is the logic that throws us into the pendulum limbo between bourgeois individualism and the fragmented (and ineffective) struggle of the universalised hegemonic being of this historical time characterised by the apogee of the bourgeois class.

Final considerations

The recognition of the unity of the diverse as a concrete dimension and the unveiling of different inequalities with a unitary connection are not merely interpretative tasks, but a fundamental condition for interested and intensified collective action in the social struggles of contemporary capitalism. Social struggle only makes sense if it is rooted in life, and theoretical discussion is only effective if it starts from reality to promote transformative action. Stifling reflection and the struggle against all forms of oppression under the excuse of the damage done by mechanistic, fragmented and instrumentalist positions is a theoretical, ethical and political mistake.

In the face of the exploitation-oppression unity, only a united struggle can overcome the complex alienated structure that suffocates humanity. With the smoke of the so-called

moralistic curtain widening in the present conjuncture, the form and the political content of the extreme right cannot be considered a mere tactical use of agitation and moralistic propaganda, after all the development of appropriation, in its original foundation and in its present and permanent realisation, make explicit an element of objectification of the alienation from the material conditions of life.

In this line, the universalisation, hegemonisation and complexification of this private logic takes over our objective relations and our subjective formation, objectifying everything, assuming an alienated (dehumanised/cosyphased) character and expressing values that are materialised in the field of interpersonal relations.

For all the theoretical determinations we have pointed out so far, it is clear that it is not the struggle of the working class that silences the need for the affirmation of diversity and the demands of the field of oppression, but the naturalisation of alienation at these levels of sociability, demeaning people, relations, bodies and identities, pushing an obtuse view of materiality and its complexity in the order of capital.

In the same vein, it is not identities and the affirmation of diversity that divide the world and social struggles; these are consequences of exploitation-oppression in its different stages. That is, it cannot be argued that feminism or anti-racism are structural dividers of the working class, but that the alienations manifested in racism, heteropatriarchy, masculinity, misogyny, and lgbtqiaphobia realise this dehumanisation.

If it is true that the liberal absorption of all these spaces of struggle functioned quite effectively in the last decades as spaces of immediate mobilisation, it is worth thinking about how we develop political mobilisation to overcome labour alienation, sexual alienation and colonial alienation, combating their expressions without losing sight of the radical rupture of their structures.

An emancipated society will not be formed by a set of accumulated, appropriated and compartmentalised rights for each group, but in a concreteness in which each diverse demand of the social being dispenses with the socially constructed condition for its effectiveness. Diversity and equality have ontological unity and will only be realised when we overcome the exploitation-oppression unity.



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