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THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION INSIDE THE CITY

Abstract

The urbanization of the world has placed the whole world, in its diversity, more within the realm of the city. Having acknowledged the need to recognize this diversity, the recent debate over the importance, content, political, economic, social and cultural role of the notion of recognition has crystallized around a double challenge: either as a problem of the material redistribution of goods by all subjects (Fraser), or as the active respect for particular identities of sociocultural minorities (Taylor). However, the intensification of the phenomenon of human mobility has created a third invisible social subject in the public space: those excluded from stable and rewarding social relationships such as the homeless, the undocumented or the unemployed. These three types of collective subjects have different objectives and social bases, and the public space is today the scene of multiple «struggles for recognition» (Honneth), respectively, economic struggle, identity struggle and struggle for relationship (Renault). We intend to analyse these three social movements within the dynamics of coexistence in the city and the impacts that they exert

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on it, and critically reflect on whether and how they contribute to the construction of the common good, viewed from the perspective of «common purposes» (Taylor) and «societal goals» (Honneth).

Key-words: Recognition; Common purposes; Societal goals.

Luta por reconhecimento no interior da cidade
Resumo
A urbanização do mundo fez com que o mundo todo, na sua diversidade, esteja agora contido na cidade. Havendo necessidade de reconhecer essa diversidade, o debate nas últimas décadas sobre a importância, o conteúdo e a função política, económica, social e cultural da noção de «reconhecimento» cristalizou-se em torno de um duplo desafio: ora como problema de redistribuição material de bens por todos os sujeitos (N. Fraser) ora como respeito ativo pelas identidades socioculturais minoritárias (Ch. Taylor). No entanto, a intensificação do fenómeno da mobilidade humana fez emergir um terceiro sujeito social invisível no espaço público: os excluídos das relações sociais estáveis e gratificantes como os sem-abrigo, os indocumentados ou os desempregados. Constatando-se que estes três tipos de sujeitos coletivos têm objetivos e bases sociais diferenciados, o espaço público é, hoje, palco de múltiplas «lutas por reconhecimento» (A. Honneth), respetivamente, luta económica, luta identitária e luta por relação (A. Renault). Propomo-nos analisar estes três movimentos sociais no interior das dinâmicas de convivência na cidade e os impactos que sobre ela exercem e refletir criticamente se e como contribuem para a construção do bem comum, perspetivado este na ótica de «propósitos comuns» (Ch. Taylor) e «objetivos sociais» (A. Honneth).

Palavras-chave: Reconhecimento; Propósitos comuns; Objetivos sociais.

1. The urbanization of the world and recognition of difference

Historically, one of the principal means for the edification of cities consisted in the possibility that, in being protected by walls, it could delimitate us from them, order from barbarism, friend from enemy. The «urbanization of the world»[1] that occurred in the past one hundred years has inverted this millenary trend: the whole world in its diversity is now contained within the city. Migrants and outsiders converged to the city, and in its streets we find roaming strangers mingling with friends. The public space is elevated to a symbol of urban life into which the strangers and the anonymous now con-

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[1] Augé, Marc, *Pour une anthropologie de la mobilité*, Manuels Payot, Paris 2009.

60

Filosofia. Revista da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 34 (2017) 59-70

verge. The public space is, henceforth, ambivalent: simultaneously a place for risk and synonymous with the vulnerability of the urban condition, as well as a laboratory for learning to live within the difference.

Quoting Z. Bauman, «to live in the city means to live in company, in the company of strangers»[2]. Living together in the city means that one has to organize the relations of proximity-distance that one wishes to cultivate, and that polarity is measured, above all, through a psychosocial and cultural construction[3]. The city is therefore bound to draw certain physical and symbolical boundaries between people. As Marc Augé warns, these sociocultural dynamics often become hostage to certain abscesses of territorial or ideological fixation expressed in the traditional spatial division: «with the emergence of a human world which is, in a conscious way, at the same extension of the whole planet, it's like if we felt the need to organize ourselves, going back to the old spatial divisions (boundaries, cultures, identities) that up until now were always an active source of confrontation and violence»[4].

On the other side, the transformations that occurred in the past decades in all spheres of public, private and even intimate life have configured a true paradigm change in the sociability relations that weave the links that feed the reasons of life in common, especially in the city. We were faced with a crisis of the social bond that reached its climax with the «individualized individual», using the term by François de Singly[5] and which has evolved in two distinct stages: in a first modernity, the socio-historical struggles have allowed for the generation of a emancipatory process of the individual - understood as distancing from its origins - , by affirming the equality of all members of a given society; the second modernity, resulting from a progressive complexification of the constitutive dimensions of the identity, has clearly invested in a personal differentiation of the subject in the public space, with the nature of the social links now emerging as if weaved by the plurality of the difference. The crisis of the social bond results, in great measure, from this complexification of the identities, raising the tension within the public space to a new contemporary challenge that can be formulated in the following way: how to articulate the guarantees of justice and social equality with the intersubjective

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[2] Bauman, Zygmunt, *Confiança e Medo na Cidade*, Relógio d'Água Editores, Lisboa 2004, p. 71.

[3] Cf. Hall, Edward T., *The Hidden Dimension*, Garden City, N.Y Doubleday 1966.

[4] Augé, *Pour une anthropologie de la mobilité*, op. cit., p. 14.

[5] Singly, François de, «L'Explosion du lien social», in *Laços Familiares e Sociais*, Psico&Soma, Viseu 2011, pp. 59-68.

recognition that will highlight the singularity of each individual?

The idea of singularity applied to this context is the one espoused by F. Guattari: «singularity is [above all] an existential concept; identity, on the other hand, is a referential concept, from a circumstance of reality to reference frameworks, frameworks which can be imaginary»[6]. Therefore, while identity here refers to an «awareness» [*Erkennen*] of the Other in the sense used by Axel Honneth[7], the singularity aggregates the personalizing elements of the subject and configures an approximation to the conditions of a possibility for recognition [*Anerkennen*], also in the sense employed by A. Honneth.

2. Political responses in the face of diversity

To face the emergence of the Other diverse in the interior of the cities, the political debates and the social movements of the past decades brought about the concept of «recognition» in many of its dimensions: from the multicultural to feminism and the rights of minorities, the same normative idea is underlying - the individuals and social groups wish to see their difference recognized and respected. The experiences of disrespect for people and groups in the public space have been provoking a reflection on the anthropological meanings of the ongoing social changes inside western societies as well as the aspiration of seeing their difference legally recognized in the relations of reciprocal recognition. These phenomena of disrespect alert us to the urgent need of affirming that the moral quality of the social relations cannot be measured by the distributive material justice alone but must integrate, in a decisive way, the conceptions about how the subjects will constitute, relate, reconfigure and recognize themselves and the others, in their personal and group identity within the public space.

The socio-political framing of this phenomenon makes us realise that, if modern societies of the 20th century faced the challenge of articulating the exercise of the citizens public liberties with the reduction of inequalities, in the past few decades, and due to the ongoing sociocultural mutations, this aspiration has been identified with the need to regulate/promote diversity; diversity here understood as both an active respect for particular sociocultural identi-

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[6] Guattari, Felix - Rolnik, Suely, *Micropolítica: cartografias do desejo*, Vozes, Petrópolis 1986, p. 68.

[7] Honneth, Axel, *Unsichtbarkeit. Stationen einer Theorie der Intersubjektivität*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 2003.

62

Filosofia. Revista da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 34 (2017) 59-70

ties, and also a problem of moral and material exclusion of certain subject(s) from the public space. And if the ideas of liberty and equality plunge their roots in the Age of Enlightenment, the awareness of diversity has been taking place at the cost of a latent conflict emerging from the claims of persons and groups in the public space, with considerable ethical repercussions and of anthropological outlines that lack an adequate problematization, but is already object of treatment in the context of Political Philosophy, through Rawls' *Theory of Justice* and Habermas' *Deliberative Democracy*, and of Social Philosophy, through the proposals of Honneth's *Critical Theory of the Struggle for Recognition*, or the *Recognition Policy* postulated by Taylor.

3. A Justice crisis and the recognition challenge

Yet, political philosophy in the past decades has known substantial changes since the times in which a social democratic conception of political life was still prevalent in Europe, and in the Anglo-Saxon world John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* was being developed. Though different, a common utopia bounded these political theories: that it was paramount to eliminate the social inequalities resulting from the economic differences between members of the same society to achieve social peace. The unifying idea was that of Justice. That perspective began to change in the late 1980's with the resurgence of the economic-financial sphere and its progressive deregulation, corresponding this dynamic to a phase of expansion of the individualist autonomy of the modern subject[8].

This change can be translated into a new political ideal: replacing the elimination of inequalities, as an economic struggle, efforts are undertaken towards an identity struggle. The central categories of this new vision are no longer the equitable distribution or the equality of goods, rather dignity and respect. Nancy Fraser[9] describes this transition with the movement from the idea of «redistribution» [connected to the idea of justice and the distribution of goods that will guarantee freedom] to that of «recognition» [defines the conditions of a just society through the goal of recognizing the dignity and integrity of the individual]. Seen in a positive light, this change could mean

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[8] Cfr. Honneth, Axel - Fraser, Nancy, *Umverteilung oder Anerkennung?*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2003.

[9] Fraser, Nancy, «From redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of justice in a 'post-socialist' age», New *Left Review*, I/212, (July-August 1995).

an increase in the citizens' moral sensibility: aware of the political value of the experience of social or cultural contempt, the recognition of the dignity and singularity of persons or groups constitutes a key element of the new concept of justice.

4. The mobility that forces exclusion challenges the current recognition models

The intensification of the phenomenon of human mobility led to the emergence of a third invisible social subject in the public space: the excluded from stable and gratifying social and political relations as the homeless, the undocumented or the unemployed. Trying to understand this phenomenon, G. Simmel[10] said, more than a century ago, that mobility constitutes a powerful element for the social, cultural and spatial (re)organization of the city and those who inhabit it, electing the figure of the stranger/foreigner as the positively destabilizing element of the instituted territorial-symbolical order. His presence has the ability to redefine proximity and distance relations by means of the social interactions that he triggers, either reconnecting people through gestures of hospitality, decentration and empathy, or promoting closure by way of the rejection or the animosity that he experiences. The stranger/foreigner redefines the 'in' and the 'out'...

The keyword to interpret the progressive «urbanization of the world» of which the city was an object can be that of exclusion in all its extension - a wide category to signify the social process of redefinition and reconstruction of dynamics of access, belonging or absence to given goods and social circles. Knowing that our societies are experiencing phenomena of «desocialization»[11], in which cultural categories replace social categories, the phenomenon of social subjectivation is further highlighted. Faced with the logic of exclusion, there's a growing importance of the analysis of the mechanisms of integration, of social reconstruction, the imagining of new forms of solidarity.

So, the various social movements that came into being and which occupy the city's public space pursue different objectives in their claims for recogni-

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[10] Simmel, Georg, «Digressions sur l´étranger», In *L´école de Chicago*, Aubier, Paris 1990, pp. 53-59.

[11] Touraine, Alain, *Un Nouveau Paradigme*, Fayard, Paris 2005.

tion and, consequently, shape a distinct definition of Justice. Given that there are, at least, three types of collective subjects in the city that have differentiated goals and social bases, the public space is, nowadays, a stage for multiple «struggles for recognition»[12], namely, socioeconomic struggle, identity struggle and struggle for relation. While Nancy Fraser[13] identifies the first two types of social struggle, Emmanuel Renault[14] adds the third group. In a nutshell, the authors regard socioeconomic struggle as that which is carried out by social movements that have as support base certain social classes and whose main objective is to reach a fairer distribution of goods through work and salary. The identity struggle, in turn, is embodied by status groups, for instance, cultural minorities, that aim for a recognition of their identity difference or that struggle against a negative identity; finally, the third movement is not indexed to a fixed social base - represented here by groups as the homeless, the undocumented, refugee-immigrants or unemployed -has as its objective the inclusion of its members in stable and gratifying social and political relations. While the motivation of the two first movements - socioeconomic struggle and identity struggle - has in its inception incapacitating social relations that deprive them of the desired recognition, the third type of movement is literally excluded from relation and the social bond:

> Les deux premiers types de mouvements sociaux se développent à partir de situations qui se caractérisent par des relations sociales dévalorisantes, et c'est en ce sens qu'elles ont le déni de reconnaissance pour origine et la reconnaissance pour objectif. Le troisième type de mouvement social se développe à partir de situations qui excluent les individus des relations sociales valorisantes ou dévalorisantes, et c'est donc en un sens différent qu'elles ont le déni de reconnaissance pour origine et la reconnaissance pour objectif. Mais, dans tous les cas la composante normative de leurs motivations est liée à la reconnaissance, et cette simple remarque suffit à légitimer une approche générale des composantes normatives de mouvements sociaux dans le cadre d'une théorie de la reconnaissances[15].

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[12] Honneth, Axel, *Kampf um Anerkennung. Zurmoralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1994.

[13] Cf. Fraser, Nancy, «Penser la justice sociale, entre distribution et reconnaissance égalitaire», in *Politique et société*, 17 (1998) 3-36.

[14] Renault, Emmanuel, *L'expérience de l'injustice. Reconnaissance et clinique de l'injustice,* Éd. La Découverte, Paris 2004.

[15] Renault, *L'expérience de l'injustice.*, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

It is in this context that the normative dimension of their motivations must be articulated with recognition, and that simple observation is enough to legitimize an approach of a normative and moral nature to the social movements in the city in the context of the recognition theories.

5. Charles Taylor's *common purposes* and Axel Honneth's *societal goals*

Briefly, one can say that the appearance of this third social movement - the without relation - triggers a crisis in Charles Taylor's «common purposes» and Axel Honneth's «societal goals» conceptions.

To put it succinctly, for Taylor, the claims that the different groups wish to see their difference recognized as collective rights within democratic societies must be preceded by a critical revision of the relation between common good and the subject's self-realization. Based on the position that defends the human being as historically and culturally situated, inserted, therefore, in a relational and dialogical network inside a community of belonging, he advocates that recognition comes from a common action and from a collective agent, and not from the atomistic adding up of individual actions. Common action and simple intersubjective relation are not confused:

> In other words, the very definition of a republican regime as classically understood requires an ontology different from atomism, falling outside atomism-infected common sense. It requires that we probe the relations of identity and community, and distinguish the different possibilities, in particular the possible place of we-identities as against merely convergent I-identities, and the consequent role of common as against convergent goods. If we abstract from all this, then we are in danger of losing the distinction between collective instrumentality and common action (...)[16].

This proposal for common action is anchored in two of the author's conceptual pillars, namely, the ontological category of «shared meanings» and the meaning of «common good», which consists precisely in the identification of its citizens around «common purposes». The dignity of the citizen-subject

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[16] Taylor, Charles, *Philosophical Arguments*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1995 [trad. em port. *Argumentos Filosóficos*, Loyola, São Paulo 2000, p. 192].

66

Filosofia. Revista da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 34 (2017) 59-70

stems from the fact that he exercises citizenship together with the others[17].

One asks: in what measure can people and unorganized groups, without social or cultural bases, exercise their citizenship?

On the other hand, for Honneth «'prestige' or 'standing' signifies the degree of social recognition the individual earns for his or her form of self-realisation by contributing, to a certain extent, to the practical realisation of society's abstractly defined goals»[18].

For Honneth, the subject is recognized in the third sphere and acquires social esteem when he contributes with his particularities for the common social objectives. However, Honneth has been alternating the terminology of its third sphere or recognition; if up until some years ago it oscillated between social esteem and solidarity, in more recent works it started using the term «differential performance» [*Leistung*][19], connected with market terminologies. This hasn't meant an abandonment of the concept of solidarity, on the author's part. As he states in reply to questions posed in the Potsdam seminaries in 2007, published in 2008, «[...] I wouldn't necessarily eliminate the concept of solidarity today to, inversely, use solely the concept of differentiated performance»[20]. And he explains that

> The mechanism for the production of solidarity has always, as much as possible, and also for complex modern societies, the idea of division of labour - and with the division of labour comes also the experientiality of the contribution of others towards an objective shared by us [...]. For me, it's in this way, in any case, that the connection between the principle of differentiated performance and the concept of solidarity happens[21].

Well, as Alain Caillé and Christian Lazzeri[22] remark, we are then faced with the important question of *value* as mediator between the individual and

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[17] Cfr. Pélabay, Janie, *Charles Taylor, penseur de la pluralité*, Les Presses de l'Université de Laval, Quebec 2001.

[18] Deranty, Jean-Philippe, *Beyond Communication. A Critical Study of Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2009, p. 126.

[19] Honneth - Fraser, *Umverteilung oder Anerkennung?*, op. cit.

[20] Honneth, Axel - Richter, Melvin, «Diskussion: wo bleibt die Solitarität – zum Status eines Leitbegriffskritischer Gesellschaftstheorie und dessen Ort in der Anerkennungtheorie von Axel Honneth», in *Axel Honneth, Gerechtigkeit und Gesellschaft. Potsdamer Seminar*, 2008, p. 56-57.

[21] Honneth - Richter, «Diskussion: wo bleibt die Solitarität», op. cit, p. 61.

[22] Caillé, Alain - Lazzeri, Christian (dir.), *La reconnaissance aujourd'hui*, CNRS Éditions, Paris 2009.

recognition. The «self-respect» and the «self-esteem» constitute, for these athors, the valorisation of different properties and qualities enjoyed by people in the political community.

On the one hand, «recognition-respect» is gained, either by the moral faculties of rationality and reason (Rawls), or by the capacity for argumentative inter-comprehension (Habermas), by the deliberative capacity (Pettit, Thomson, Gutman), by an attitude for autonomy (Honneth), or yet by the conditions for egalitarian participation granted to the citizens (Fraser) - all this in order to generate the 'socially visible', the ones who are entitled to have rights and be treated with the dignity associated with a person.

On the other hand, the «recognition-esteem» is, contrarily to the first, socially variable because it rests on performances, on the capacities and the performance of the individuals in competitive contexts. The multiplicity of those capacities, the adaptation to the environment and the adoption of specific procedures in distinctive contexts constitutes still an open discussion by the different authors (Bourdieu, Walzer, Honneth, Fraser).

Final notes

Of the three social movements present and active within the city, the two that fight for interests of a social-economic or cultural-identity nature, depart from a stable social base that authorizes, in the abstract plane of political theory, Charles Taylor to identify them «common purposes» and Honneth to call them «societal goal». However, the movement represented by disaggregated individuals without a fixed social base such as the homeless, undocumented, immigrant-refugee or unemployed, excluded from the relationship and the social bond, lack the fundamental legal-moral value: the dignity of the subject-citizen.

On the political level, only the citizen that constitutes a legal entity, by positive law, has the right to claim politically universal rights for themselves and for others, since this claim is based on the necessary and binding correlation between State - Nation- Citizen. With their citizenship suspended due to their lack of participation in a political community of their own - a condition for the possibility of claiming rights - they return to the prehistory of minimum human conditions. What the condition of the people of this third movement comes to denounce is that, to the juridical recognition of the person in the State sphere - and of their fundamental rights -, one should add the

ethical and solidary components coming from the other spheres of personal and social life, as Honneth defends. However, this recognition cannot be held hostage to performances [*Leistung*], capabilities and performance of individuals in competitive contexts. The principle of the ethical right of each person's status must precede the principle of political rights, allowing the universalism of the rights of the person to protect his dignity against all forms of disrespect or threats to his integrity and to promote their social inclusion.

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70

Filosofia. Revista da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 34 (2017) 59-70