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THE INDIVIDUALIZA- TION OF THE SUBJECT IN POST-MODERNITY

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Abstract: This article is the presentation of a research project, in which it was intended to understand the process of individualization of the subject from modernity to postmodernity. It was desired to perceive, through the process of bibliographic research, based on *Bauman* (2001), *Beck* (1981) e *Nobert Elias* (1987), how the new social phenomena, such as globalization, the fragmented society and the individualistic subject, have imbricated in the configuration of the current sociocultural context. It is considered pertinent to address this topic due to its relevance in the modes of social relations in the current context. In a society based on the “I”, in the valorization of self-image and in the construction of fluid relationships, discussing the individualization of the subject becomes essential.

Keywords: Individualization; Society; Individual; Post-Modernity.

INTRODUCTION

The perception of the human being in the social context has changed with the advent of the current century and its new configurations, in which the historical subject re-signifies their relationships based on their interests. Relationships become more fluid and human beings interact with society based on their meanings, ideals and efforts.

Thus, these transformations that characterize the crisis of modernity and the construction of the moral subject make up the process of individualization of the postmodern subject. According to Guardini (2000 apud MÜHL, 2014), are characteristic of postmodernity: “nature as an inexhaustible source of goods, resting in itself; the subject as an autonomous being, capable of self-determination; and culture as the realization of the objective spirit of humanity, which, by creating its own norms, establishes the common and universal meaning of existence”.

I consider it important to etymologically distinguish three relevant constructs in this work, the first of which refers to the concept of individualization, because according to Westphal (2010) “individualization is understood, in the process of formation and social constitution, in which the individual is the central reference of actions in the social world”, thus, the individualization process refers to the individual’s perception of the social context in which he is inserted. On the other hand, “individualism” is characterized not as a process, but as a tendency of the individual to value his autonomy in the search for freedom and satisfaction. Finally, the term “individuation” describes the way in which a thing is identified as distinct from other things (cf. AUDI, 1999).

Understanding that the sociocultural changes of the subject refer to a process, I consider it pertinent to use the term “individualization” to refer to the perception of the social context in contemporary times from atomized individuals who build their relationships according to their ideals and interests.

The current historical period in which the society finds itself is the result of several discussions about its nomination. Nery and Vasconcellos (2012) point out that “some alternatives in the attempt to name our time are: “liquid modernity” (BAUMAN, 2001), “hypermodernity” (LIPOVETSKY, 2006), “high modernity” or “late modernity” (GIDDENS, 2006). 1990), and “second modernity” (BECK, 2003)”. Among the various ways of naming contemporaneity, I agree with the authors when they state that the term “postmodernity” (LYOTARD, 2000) is the most used among the writings and will be taken as a reference to classify contemporaneity and the relations of the subject. postmodern in this work.

Modernity was characterized by a process

of melting down old solids and building new ones, more consistent with what they believed to be the new truth, and consequently, more lasting (cf. BAUMAN, 2001). The human being is no longer dominated by nature, on the contrary, he realizes that he can dominate it according to his interests. This way, the modern subject, under the Enlightenment ideals, attends to rationalization and starts to use it as an instrument of domination not only of nature, but of being over the human. Rationality will enable human beings to develop science and also to master it, providing them with certainties that were previously deposited in religion and/or magic.

In this sense, driven by the ideals of revolution and progress, modernity attributed greater autonomy to the human, and made him “the only being capable of effecting the revolution necessary for effective progress” (OLIVEIRA, 2012, *author’s emphasis*). In addition, the subject perceives himself as the only one responsible for his actions and that, through reason, he must be able to transform nature and human relationships.

With the advent of the crisis of modernity, uncertainties act on the sociocultural scenario, affecting social relations and the way the subject perceives society. There is a new re-signification of its relationship with its context, and all the certainties built in modernity become fluid. From all these changes, society in its liquid state of modernity is characterized by the individualization of the postmodern subject.

Thus, modernity proposed a greater appreciation of the individual, who was gradually emancipated from institutions. As Bauman (2011) states, modernity in its liquid state presents individuals, that is, the human being as a singular being, increasingly distant from becoming citizens or members of the polis. Therefore, in agreement with Oliveira

(2012), I perceive that as a result of the individualization of the postmodern subject, the individual seeks to satisfy his needs in society and in the market, attenuating the senses of solidarity and otherness.

That said, the objective of this work is to understand the process of individualization of the subject in contemporary times, based on the valorization of the “I” and the search for the autonomy of the post-modern subject.

In the first section, I intend to discuss new social phenomena (globalized world, fragmented society and the individualistic subject) and their influence on what can be characterized by postmodernity. In the following section, I try to understand how globalization, technological advents and individualism contribute to the construction of a new socio-historical scenario constrained by the autonomy of the human being regarding institutions and the place of the subject in an individualized society, in which, as stated Honorato (2004), “the individual not only can, but must be more autonomous and self-confident in the decision and freedom of choice offered by collective, social, group life or by the state”.

I consider it pertinent to address this topic due to the relevance it presents in social relations in the current context. In a society based on the ‘I’, on the valorization of self-image and on the construction of fluid relationships, discussing the individualization of the subject is essential. This process, which begins in modernity and is consolidated in contemporaneity, has made social relations more flexible, in which the human being is valued from the individual, unique, singular point of view. Therefore, it is their achievements, their “values, their feelings, imbricated in this whole process that builds a society of atomized individuals, in which the ‘we’ is demystified to meet the interests of the ‘I’.

This work is configured in a bibliographical research, carried out through the platforms Scielo and Pepsic (Electronic Journals in Psychology), in which the terms “individualization”, “individualism”, “society” and “postmodern subject” described the molds of this research. From the data collection carried out on digital platforms, it was possible to select academic articles that addressed the object of study in question.

Henceforth, the collection of bibliographic data made it possible to choose three authors, namely Bauman (2011); Beck, (1981); and Nobert Elias (1987), which guided the choice of data for this research, because despite discussing this phenomenon in the last century, with the exception of Bauman (2001), it maintains a perspective as current as in the time when such essays were redacted.

THE INDIVIDUALIZATION OF THE POST-MODERN SUBJECT IN FRONT OF NEW SOCIAL PHENOMENA

The new social phenomena that were established in the middle of the century XX and beginning of the century XXI they reconfigure the social context of contemporaneity. In a globalized world, where the local and the global coexist on a fine line, being individualistic and building small worlds of atomized individuals characterize the influence of these phenomena on postmodern social relations.

Globalization is accentuated in the current century, reconfiguring the forms of social interaction between individuals. Paraphrasing Mavezzi (1999), Nery and Vasconcellos (2012) state that “the most central aspect of globalization is the compression of space and time through the use of information technology, which makes it possible for the individual to be virtually present in different places and perform multiple tasks simultaneously”. This way, the fine line between the local and the global infers in human relationships, which

become increasingly fluid, opening spaces for successive stories that are opposed in a disjointed time.

Postmodernity is characterized by the loss of paradigms, and “a result of human disappointment with the institutions of the past” (cf. NERY; VASCONCELLOS, 2012), so that these changes have driven human beings to seek their autonomy. This “individualized” being needs to reassert itself as a subject, but without institutions and with unstable social standards, “his speech highlights the fragility of beliefs, the precariousness of values and the instability of the bonds of previous generations” (BENDASSOLLI, 2007 apud NERY) ; VASCONCELOS, 2012). In this sense, the postmodern western subject is faced with the need to build his own life.

In search of its autonomy, it faces uncertainty in the face of the ephemerality of ideals, in which individual freedoms are put in evidence. In this perspective, Bauman (2008) states that human problems today are constituted by the excess of possibilities and not by the imposed limits, since:

“It is not the crushing pressure of an ideal, which they cannot live up to, that plagues contemporary men and women, but the lack of ideals. In the past, the individual faced life based on his system of beliefs, traditions and values. He was able to see his own story inserted in an identity narrative superior to himself, of which he was sometimes the protagonist or sometimes supporting, but always included in the story. Religion, the State and the family were the main institutions that provided the individual with the condition to find his place and role in history and society. Postmodernity breaks ties with the State and traditions, leaving now a free being, but alone” (NERY; VASCONCELOS, 2012, author’s emphasis).

In this sense, the human being is faced with a spectrum of possibilities, and at the same time he feels lost for constituting himself alone. Human relationships are then projected

into a finite number of possibilities, because, helpless, the postmodern subject tends to dispose of his beliefs, values and ideals in himself. This portrait of the individual who by himself is able to build his trajectory and achieve his goals characterizes the social context of the “individualized” subject.

The family, which in general, is the first human institution, already prepares the postmodern being to be an individual subject. This individual will be part of this institution, but he will be taught to leave it and build his life based on his own choices. Thus, it is your feelings, values, ideals and goals that will guide the segments of your life. It is a society that prepares the subject to always be I and to act in accordance with this imposed individuation.

Individualization also produces another effect that Bauman (2001) calls “fragmentation”, that is, the emergence of individuals whose human bonds, once segmented, constitute identities whose masks are successively used, and life history is represented by a series of episodes that last only in ephemeral memory. In other words, social bonds are constituted from a series of moments that last in the ephemeral memory of the individual, and identities are just constructs, in which the individual needs to build them in a way that adapts to the different contexts to which he is living. inserted.

Thus, the postmodern subject needs to adapt to work, family, educational institutions, and religious institutions, so that he appropriates masks that constitute his multiple identities. Society demands that this individualized subject behaves appropriately in each context, so that these multiple facets are naturalized in a process of fragmentation of affective bonds.

For Ulrich Beck (1986 apud WESTPHAL, 2010), reflexive modernity refers to the individualization process, whose phenomena

of modernity act on itself, becoming reflexive. This way, modernity for Beck unfolds in the scope of the processes of technological rationalization, in the organizational changes of work, in the alteration of the social character and in the biography of the subject, in the change of styles and ways of life, in the structures of power, in the forms of political domination and participation, in the conception of reality, and in the norms of scientific knowledge and production.

Faced with the new social transformations, modernity becomes the cause and consequence of the processes that imbricate social changes, in which the human being reconfigures the social structure from the advancement of technology and new social phenomena, characterized by thinking about society from its composition *sui generis*.

In view of this, the author talks about the risks and insecurities that an individualized society can cause, since another dimension of reflexive modernity is the emergence of social risks and insecurities, since with the advance of modernity, the internal structures of industrial society and the forms of conduct were dissolved. According to Westphal (2010), Beck formulates seven theses about the changes that have taken place within industrial society, and in one of his theses, the author states that:

The particularity of the advance of contemporary individualization lies in the liberation of class and the individual's family nucleus. *Each one individually becomes the viral reproduction unit of the social [...]* individuals are, both inside and outside the family, actors in their own guarantees of existence via the market, as well as in the planning and organization of their biographies. Individualization goes hand in hand with the trend towards institutionalization and standardization of living conditions. Free individuals become dependent on the labor market and, as a result, dependent on training/qualification,

supplies for consumption, socio-legal rules, road planning, the supply of consumer goods, possibilities and trends in science, mainly Medicine, Psychology and Pedagogy. In short, class and status liberation mean new dependencies, which are institutionalized and standardized (BECK, 1986 apud WESTPHAL, 2010, author's emphasis).

Therefore, the individualization of subjects is consolidated in the reproduction of the social so that each individual acts as a unit of the social, this implies the search for autonomy, since, alone, the human being needs to build his ideals and choices. The author also points to the dependence of institutions in this process, because, despite not being directly under the doctrine of institutions, individualization acts in the way in which the subject becomes dependent on the labor market and its qualification tools. This way, Beck understands this process as a new mode of social formation, so that it is possible to perceive a change in form or a change in the relationship between individual and society.

This new social conjuncture, which is based on the notion of a subject that constitutes itself autonomously and freely, allows the postmodern subject to constitute itself from its own segments, far from institutions. However, this idea of autonomy and freedom that postmodernity affects the modern subject is fluid, as a new social order is established and structured by class relations and under the ideals of the state. This way, the idea of individualization deprives itself of its first ideals and adapts itself to the respective social class or to the "Nation-State" that the subject belongs to, because "it is up to each individual to conform to the social types and models of conduct of their class or established norms, not to deviate from the norm, to acculturate" (cf. MÜHL, 2014).

THE WORLD IN TIMES OF INDIVIDUALISM, SMARTPHONES, SELFIES AND SOCIAL NETWORKS¹

With the advent of globalization and new technologies, the individual reconfigures the social, establishing ephemeral, indirect and transitive relationships. If modernity already proclaimed the idea of freedom of the subject, postmodernity reinforces these ideals with the rise of technological means of communication. This way, these ideals reinforce individualism, which is characterized by the valorization of individual autonomy in the search for freedom. The individualistic subject then seeks autonomy in their relationships and is equipped with the modern ideals of freedom that constitute individuals who live for their interests and needs.

For Mühl (2014), individualization is no longer a "given", a fact, to become a "task", so that individualization becomes the social structure of society as it is established. This way, being an individualist is acting in accordance with the molds of an individualized society, in which the achievement of becoming a subject is perceived with merit, honor. There is no longer a society based on we, but configured on the self, in which relationships become closer and the actions of the self are limited to their own interests.

I consider Habermas's discussion of individuality important, in which he states that "both individuation and socialization are processes mediated by language and resulting from social interaction" (MÜHL, 2014). Thus, language becomes the means by which the human being builds this new perspective for the social context, and it is through it that the subject is individualized and builds new aspects of social interaction.

However, the fact that the subject is constituted from an individualistic society

1. The title of this chapter was taken from an animation (cf. references of this work) which brings a critique about the advent of technology and its inference in social relations.

does not separate him from this social, on the contrary, according to Mead (1993),

“The formation of conscience and the development of the autonomy of individuals are associated with the internalization of the controlling instances of behavior that migrate from the outside to the inside. It is, initially, through the assimilation of the expectations that the reference persons have in relation to the individual that a guiding center capable of leading each individual to answer for their actions is constituted”.

Therefore, the subjectivity of the individual is constructed from their relationship with the other, mediated by language, as stated by Habermas, since “the elementary form of self-reference becomes possible through the interpretation of another participant in the interaction” (1990). apud MÜHL, (2014). Precisely in Mead (1993), I perceive that individuation occurs in a social context through the relationship of this individual with others, which he characterizes as a “triple relationship”.

In an individualized society, which was transformed from the relationship of this individualistic subject in relation to others, the advent of new forms of interaction between these atomized subjects is not abrupt. Social networks emerge as an alternative form of social interaction. The globalized world proposes the coexistence between the local and the global, in which relationships are established in milliseconds in all territories of the globe.

This process is characteristic of contemporary relationships, in which “individualization is a differentiating feature of the reflexive society, since, at no previous moment, did the individual have such a central role as in the second modernity. It does not derive, a priori, from a subjective decision, but from the dynamics that are socially established (cf. MÜHL, 2014).

The variety of options available and the need to make more choices in the face of this diversity of possibilities, “requires an active contribution from the individual in establishing their destiny” (MÜHL, 2014). The technological, globalized society, in which individuals interact through the “black screens” of their smartphones and display themselves through selfies, constitutes one of the processes of postmodern society. The range of possibilities available to this subject makes him, according to some sociological perspectives, individualistic, insofar as he must know how to choose, coordinate his actions and take responsibility for the choices made.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The process of individualization of the postmodern subject is permeated by factors that have altered the current configuration of the current sociocultural context. Relationships became more polished, fluid and ephemeral, and the individual became solely responsible for his choices, at least from an individual point of view.

I realize that the individualization of the subject is something that has been institutionalized to the contemporary individual. He not only can, but must define the course of his life. However, this segregates individuals who, by valuing the “I” and removing themselves from the “we”, lose the ideal of the collective, of sharing and building in a group.

However, the individual is not separated from society. By individualizing itself, society constructed an aspect of the historical subject belonging to post-modernity. This individual who, when disappointed with liberalist ideals and institutionalized dogmas, introspects his belief in the “I”, becomes an individual and believes that from his choices he will be able to be responsible for the segment of his life.

This ideal is institutionalized from the process that this individual must resort to the labor market to qualify and thus submit to the ideals of capital. He only exists and can only reassert himself as an individual when he is qualified, when he divests himself of being and appropriates himself in having. This way, I understand that the individualization of the subject is another construct that has adapted to the new demands of class society and the globalized world.

In view of what has been developed throughout this work, I propose the existence

of subsequent studies that prioritize the discussion of the effects of the pandemic on social relations and the massification of social networks as a phenomenon that promotes the grouping and emergence of social bubbles. thus, future studies are interested in the analysis of the relationship between individualization, the emergence of social bubbles, the empty nest phenomenon, and the existence of new informal work posts which promote subjects more distant from institutions and more attached to the ideals of the I.

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