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## **GENDER ISSUES FROM AN ONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SCOPE OF EDUCATION**

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**Abstract:** The present work is a summary of a concluded master's thesis research whose general objective was to understand gender relations from the formation of the human race and its possible implications for the scope of education. In a bibliographical study based on historical-dialectical materialism, we seek to understand gender issues through an ontological approach. We found that the total overcoming of the gender condition in contemporary times will only be possible in a new form of sociability. However, school education is an important element for social transformation and a space to discuss gender, so that boys and girls understand each other in the context of this society. For this, it is pointed out that school education has as a theoretical basis the concept of the human gender itself, because only by understanding oneself as a participant in this is it possible to analyze and criticize the conditions of inequality, oppression, patterns and stereotypes between men and women.

**Keywords:** Gender issues. Schooling. Ontology.

## INTRODUCTION

This work is a summary of a master's thesis research completed, carried out by the Graduate Program in Education - PPGE of the Universidade do Extremo Sul Catarinense - UNESC, which has as the theme gender issues from the formation of the human race and its possible implications for the scope of school education. The investigative process of the research was concerned at first with situating the gender debate related to education by checking existing studies in Brazilian literature, taking Louro (2003, 2008, 2018) as a representative, in addition to relying on other authors such as Scott (1995). Thus, reflecting on his ideas and together with an analysis on the constitution of the school institution in Soares (2001) as a production

of the need to prepare the workforce for capitalist society, that is, as a mechanism of social control, promoting the dissemination of habits, interests and moral values, disciplining subjects according to the interests of the class in power, allowed us to verify that the school not only contributes to the formation of gender identity, but reproduces what social relations in a more general way establish in relation to gender issues. Considering this analysis, we emphasize that the change in the condition of gender relations in contemporary times is linked to the current form of sociability. Therefore, we perceive the need to deepen the explanation of gender in the constitution of the role of each one in the contemporary social division, questioning the structural social elements.

From these observations, we propose to reflect on how the genesis and development of the contemporary condition of gender relations occurs, resorting to an ontological basis, from the formation of the human being itself, understanding other social dimensions that intersect this phenomenon, such as school education, that guarantee and lead to the development of the relationship between genders. Faced with this, the general objective of the research was established: to understand gender from the formation of the human race and its possible implications for the scope of education. Outlining two specific objectives: to appropriate an understanding of gender issues that is based on the formation of the human race and to indicate subsidies for the debate of gender issues in contemporary times in the educational field.

Once the research theme is situated, its methodology will be presented and in the next sections the main moments that interrelated make up the investigative movement of the research that refer to the moment of understanding gender relations from their belonging to the human race and the period

in which we return to what we can indicate as implications for the treatment of the gender issue at school.

## **METHODOLOGY**

We assume historical-dialectical materialism as the theoretical-methodological basis of the research, since the intention is to manifest the essence of the phenomenon of gender issues, coherent explanations - which is not immediately accessible to individuals - carrying out a decomposition of reality, making known its structure, its laws – the “thing in itself”, which until then is only manifested by a phenomenon (KOSIK, 1995). For this, the Historical-Cultural Theory appears as an investigative method, approaching the phenomenon through a historical analysis, encompassing the process of its development in all its phases and transformations (CEDRO; NASCIMENTO, 2017).

Characterized as a bibliographical study, we established three fundamental elements that, articulated, presented themselves as a reference for the study of the texts: 1) the constitution of the human being by his vital activity (work) using authors such as Lukács (2013), Marx and Engels (2007); 2) the division of labor as a locus to understand the organization of work in Lukács (2013); 3) gender relations from the social organization of work in Davis (2016) and Federici (2017). And we seek in Mézáros (2005) his conception of education, contributing to infer implications of the debate on gender issues and school education.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FORMATION OF THE HUMAN RACE**

At first, we seek to understand the genesis of the human being, explaining its development in the movement of transformation from one level of being to another, to the social being. We evidence, from Lukács (2013),

work as a decisive category to understand this development, the author places in work the character of a link of the humanization of the being, of the transition to the social being, affirming that it is essentially the interrelationship between the being human and nature, which appears primarily to human beings as a means of satisfying their needs. In addition, he points out the teleological character of the work, as the only fact where a conscious process can be demonstrated in its development, preceded by purpose, as a real moment of material reality. From this point of view, we can only talk about the formation of the human race when we conceive that its genesis is based on work, that is, on the continuous realization of teleological pores. Understanding that in addition to other categories that are decisive for the development of human beings – such as, for example, language –, work gains a privileged place in the process of understanding the formation of the human gender, because through it it is possible to go beyond simple adaptation to the environment.

With the development of this activity and, with the consequent broadening of awareness, work relationships are established that have not always remained the same, that is, work, from the beginning, in essence, has the possibility of producing more than what is expected. necessary for the reproduction of the one who made it, and therefore it is the foundation for the ever-increasing complexification of the social being. The division of labor appears as one of the most important moments in which the social being becomes more complex, giving rise to new needs and problems whose emergence is at work, but which cannot be resolved directly by it. Even so, its resolution is indispensable for the reproduction of the social being. As a result, as a result of individual teleological acts, adequate relationships and institutions

are aimed at addressing such issues, hence the birth of other spheres of activity, such as science, art, politics, education, etc. (TONET, 2005).

In this context, we believe that it is in the process of making the social being more complex that we can understand social relations, among them gender issues, that is, we see work as a fundamental element of the human being, however the issue of social relations - among them, that of gender - does not derive directly or only from work, but from the forms of social organization for carrying out work. Thus, we analyze the development of gender relations anchored in the development process of this activity, that is, we analyze the relationship between men and women from the primitive forms of society, in the conditions of production and reproduction of human life from the wild state, passing through the primitive period, until the arrival of capitalism, periods that coincide, more or less, with the progress obtained in the production of the means of existence.

We emphasize that the relations between men and women intersect the development of the means of production and reproduction of life, reaching the capitalist society. However, this relationship cannot be understood only by the division of labor, salary, exchange of goods, etc., but consider other elements that unfold during the formation of the social structure, such as, for example, the organization of the family, a relevant part of the social regime of peoples since primitive times, that is, as one of the assumptions of all human existence, which since its inception intervenes in the historical progress of human beings, it is also within the family that relations between men and women appear determined by society from the most primitive forms (MARX, 2007).

## **GENDER ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES**

In the wild state, cooperation between individuals was essential and, therefore, community life was the only way to survive, which is why the division of labor in this period was eminently technical and collective and procreation, the reproduction of individuals appears as something important for survival, and that is why women's lives need to be more protected and the task of taking care of children was as collective as any other, not least because in addition to the responsibility for group tasks being based on the principle of collectivity, there was, in that period, group marriage, the most primitive form of family, in which entire groups of men and entire groups of women belonged to each other, at that moment there was nothing similar to the figure of the father and mother that we see today.

Thus, we perceive the relationship of men and women based on the conditions of the communist domestic economy, that is, the woman was protected by the fact of being the progenitor of the children, who in the future would contribute to the survival of the group. Thus, men were responsible for the most dangerous tasks, such as hunting, while taking care of the home was the responsibility of women; however, these were considered as necessary as the search for food, which men took care of. Allowing us to verify that in this period there was no relationship of domination-subordination between men and women, but an egalitarian relationship with regard to the means of production and reproduction of life.

The period of barbarism is marked by the discovery of the seed and with it agriculture, in this context, individuals began to produce more than necessary to survive, which generated a process of accumulation and discovery of sources of

wealth hitherto unknown and created the basis for entirely different social relations, for the first time, maintained a regular exchange of products allowing the social division of labor (ENGELS, 1974). From this context, a new relationship between men and women appears, in the beginning this new wealth was common property, however, according to the technical division of labor, in which the man is responsible for bringing food to the home, the herd, that now constituted a new source of food, became his competence, so now man becomes the owner of the new source of food, cattle and instruments; the woman, in turn, is the owner of household utensils and her children. Each one ruling his domain. "All the surplus now left by production belonged to man; the woman had a share in consumption, but not in ownership." (ENGELS, 1974, p. 182). Furthermore, as this productivity was discovered and explored, procreation gained an important meaning, but in a different way from that which prevailed in the primitive community, on the principle of survival. Now the reproduction of new individuals meant more labor to work with and implied the accumulation of greater wealth. Thus, the need arises for the father to certify the son's affiliation in order to later be the heir to these riches. With this, the idea of modifying the established order of inheritance was born, since until then women had exclusive and privileged rights over the offspring of their children. It was necessary to abolish female affiliation and maternal hereditary rights, and for that, a new organization in the family community was enough, where the conjugal union by pairs was consolidated, with a specific bond between a man and a woman. This way, men not only have dominion over the means of production for subsistence, but also have power and control over the reproduction of the workforce, giving rise to the embryo of the patriarchal family.

Returning to the further development of society, the introduction of metals with other crafts gave variety to production, in which they brought progress to society, making large-scale agriculture possible. In the face of this progress, slavery became a job to earn a living, defining mainly black people as property, men and women seen as profitable work units.

Most of the slaves worked in the fields, including the women, who did both agricultural and domestic work in the owner's house. From an early age, boys and girls were in charge of working, cutting cane, collecting cotton, preparing the soil, etc. However, observes Federici (2017), based on the assumption that in this period the authority of the masters prevailed, who declared themselves in possession of people and all aspects of their lives, from work to marriage and sexual conduct, the relationship The social situation of slave women was different, as they also suffered oppression in different ways.

In that period, according to Davis (20216), slave women were not oppressed within their own slave family. But, because they were subject to the absolute authority of the masters, to their wishes and needs, they suffered various forms of coercion, being victims of sexual abuse and other barbaric mistreatment by these masters and their overseers. Natural reproduction was seen as a method to replace the population of male and female slaves, so the reproductive capacity of women came to be seen with greater attention. This does not mean that they were valued, but that they were seen, in the eyes of their owners, only as an instrument to reproduce the slave labor force.

Contrary to the economic dominion exercised over the slave woman by the owner, within the slave family they were exalted, with no male dominance over the woman appearing. The woman, in addition to working in the fields with her husband, was

responsible for taking care of the house and was responsible for raising the children. This is because, as seen, they were subjected to sexual relations with their overseers and owners, not knowing the true identity of the father of their children. In the productive environment there was no gender distinction for the service, while in the slave domestic life a division of labor appeared, women cooked while men hunted, but without having this established as a rule, because many times the functions were also inverted when, for example, some women participated in hunting, but without generating hierarchy. The tasks of men and women had the same degree of importance within the slave family, they were equally necessary.

In any case, observes Davis (2016), the relationship between men and women in the period of slavery did not remain in social equality, as we found in primitive society. With the social division of labor, a hierarchical relationship prevailed between masters and slaves and between men and women. That is to say, although within the slave community the relationship between men and women was socially equal, women were repressed and inferiorized by masters for being women.

Although the establishment of women's inferiority began in the period of barbarism, a time when it became known for the emergence of agriculture as a leading activity, Davis (2016) states that the phenomenon of social roles is caused by the arrival of industrialization. Pondering, at first, the agrarian capitalist advance of the feudal era, Federici (2017) states that the privatization of land and the monetization of labor relations brought significant changes in the family and soon in the relationship between men and women.

In the pre-capitalist subsistence economy, there was a common use of agricultural fields among families, all production was for the

use of the members of the community itself. Therefore, there was no division between production and reproduction, all tasks within the communal family were important, as they contributed to the subsistence of the group. This moment of communal lands was especially important for women, because even though they did not have the right and social power over land – imposed by the division of labor as men's possession – they had access to production and consumption and were able to support themselves and their children, that is to say, were dependent on this communal situation. With the emergence of private ownership of land and monetary relations, women found it difficult to support themselves, as they no longer had direct access to land, who had it were men, often their husbands. One of the consequences is that women were confined to reproductive work, but this does not represent a positive situation, since in these new monetary relations only production for the market created value and, therefore, the reproduction of the worker began to be seen as something worthless, as it did not generate any profit, money for the survival of the family.

This confinement of women to reproductive work gained even greater determination as a social role established for women when control over reproduction became necessary due to the requirements for capitalist expansion, according to Federici (2017) the worsening of diseases and epidemics and the reluctance of poor at reproducing gave rise to a population crisis that undermined the capitalist economic advance, which required, to end this concern, adopting disciplinary methods with the purpose of regulating procreation, as well as building the new social role of women.

For the benefit of the government at that moment of capitalist ascension, concerned with reducing the costs it had for the assistance of children, who were often abandoned and

destined for “vagrancy” as a result of the uncontrollable increase in poverty, resulted in a great mobilization with the objective of confinement of women to reproductive work, to domestic work. Solution that replaced the state responsibility of caring for children, reducing government expenses and came to exist as an important element in the process of controlling society (DONZELOT, 1986).

To keep women confined to the service of reproduction of the workforce in the most subordinate way possible, an intense process of social degradation of women was necessary, with the cooperation of religion, erudite culture, etc. Slowly, the assumption was built that women must not work outside the home and the idea of marriage as a true career for a woman. In this sense, the woman became responsible for the “salvation” of the man, for raising the children, for the domestic environment, which must keep it as something attractive for the family to remain firm, this was the new social function of the woman task important to meet the needs of the State.

With the above, we realize that the figure of the female being was related to the reproductive function of women, as to the masculine productive social functions, established by the expanding economic interest. This order became important to maintain social dominance in the class, an order that was maintained by instilling in people’s minds the place of each one in the context of social relations. Relying on a positivist approach, the human being is explained by the biological limit, in which each individual receives the occupation according to their natural physical aptitudes. This way, we understand that the division of labor does not in itself guarantee understanding the size of the “root” that involves gender issues, but we place, in the social organization of work, a central importance in the constitution of these gender relations in contemporary times.

Finally, this social position of women, coerced to the tasks of the domestic world as well as subjected to the task of reproducing the workforce to maintain the capitalist order, allowed us to verify gender as something much broader in which egalitarian relations are also verified (as in the case of primitive period), but as human beings become more complex with the development of social relations at work, human relations with each other also change qualitatively, and one of them is the relations between men and women, this way we can say that patriarchy is the regime that characterizes the current relationship between men and women, with a relationship of domination-exploitation of women by men. However, this does not mean that we can abandon the concept of gender, as we believe that only it allows us to find and explain, in the development of society, the roles assigned to men and women. (SAFFIOTI, 2004).

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SCOPE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION**

It was possible to verify the question of gender as belonging to the formation of the human gender, placing the construction of feminine and masculine roles in the organization of social and economic relations, which manifests itself in a hierarchical, unequal and oppressive way with the transformation of society to the of capitalist production. Consisting of the demands arising from the new social order, the gender relationship is established by the bourgeoisie as a necessary element of control, in an effort to form social standards of behavior and different treatment for men and women.

Reflecting on gender issues this way, if the gender issue is a need arising from capitalist production relations, we assume that education for each person must be different, according to their social function, such as,

for example, in the school environment, this can be demonstrated in Brazil, in 1827, with the creation of the school of first letters that represented the possibility of a formal education for women.

It implied understanding the existence, even in the 21st century, of schools divided by gender, such as Colégio do Bosque Mananciais in Curitiba, and it is necessary to understand the presence of gender distinction in the school interconnected with capitalist social and economic relations, since we assume that this separation between boys and girls at school happens because of the need that capitalist society has to reproduce social stereotypes in order to maintain the current class position. Using the biological principle, to which the religious principle is united – which inculcates a moral conception –, it leads to a necessary indoctrination for the reproduction of the current system. In this case, a doctrine about ideals of masculine and feminine.

We justified our statements, the reasons for the gender division in the educational field, analyzing the formation of the school institution itself based on the current form of sociability, noting in Soares (2001) the school as a production of the need to prepare the workforce for the capitalist society, that is, as a mechanism of social control, promoting the dissemination of habits, interests and moral values, disciplining subjects according to the interests of the class in power. Thus, it explains that education for men and women is different, because their functions are different and, in addition, the assigned roles have become important to maintain the order of capital and therefore education for each one must differ.

In this sense, it leads us to think that in order to change the condition of gender relations in contemporary society, it is necessary to change social institutions and

the production of humankind, which requires a radical transformation of the mode of production and reproduction of human life. As Mézáros (2005) explains, only by breaking the logic of capital is it possible to create a significantly different educational alternative, emphasizing the close relationship between educational processes and social processes of reproduction.

However, we could not fall into the error of exhausting human life by the social structure, which means that education is not only subject to the economic social order but has an important role in people's lives, for social change, that is, when it comes to of the radical transformation of society, it is important to form a revolutionary conscience and it is in this sense that education gains space.

[...] the role of education is paramount, both for the development of appropriate and adequate strategies to change the objective conditions of reproduction, and for the conscious self-change of individuals called upon to concretize the creation of a radically different metabolic social order. (MÉZÁROS, 2005, p. 65).

All this is important for us to understand that, although we believe that the total overcoming of gender issues can only happen with a radical change in the social structure, what underlies us is the idea that the history of humanity is a process of self-creation of the human being itself and, therefore, social change is possible and with it the transformation of gender relations. And for this, school education becomes, among other institutions, a possible space to act on the much-desired social equality of genders, looking for possible interventions, claims, allowing to discuss issues of gender, diversity, social standards, sexuality, etc. However, approaching gender issues through pedagogical strategies and actions that propose cooperation activities between boys and girls, to experience the behavior of the other is important, it generates



good interaction between boys and girls, acceptance of differences, getting used to each other. gradual with the presence of the other. However, as important as these actions are, they will only remedy the effects of the capitalist reproductive order in relation to genders, since the boy can even try an activity said to be like a girl, but by not discussing the meaning of this activity in the social structure, this activity continues to be thought of as “girlish”. It is necessary to clarify the basis on which such differences are established, that is, what these differences mean for society, making boys and girls understand each other in the historical context of that society.

human race. For this reason, we give as the main implication for the educational scope under gender issues the need to implement or reinforce an education based on principles of human gender.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

We consider that the total overcoming of the established order in relation to genders would be possible only with the radical transformation of the form of sociability. Thus, overcoming the condition of the roles assigned to men and women and, therefore, the difficulty of admitting those who do not fit these two so-called basic parameters, finds the possibility in a new education process.

However, we do not settle for this conclusion of education subject to the social structure, but we also consider it as an element, among others, important for the construction and development of society and therefore it can be a space to discuss the most diverse forms of subordination and unequal relations such as gender.

A discussion that explains to the new generations this gender condition in current society, demonstrating that it was not always like this and that puts them in perspective of overcoming the very condition of current sociability, is the guiding principle of educational actions that address the theme of gender relations. But effectively, this can only happen if the school is guided by an education based on the ontological principles of the

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