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PRESENTATION

FAR BEYOND THE GREAT MISERY

Editorial n.2 of 2023 - Inter-Ação

In November 1989, Michel Rocard, then Prime Minister in the government of François Mitterrand (1981-1995), said that France could no longer "receive all the misery of the world"¹. There were strong political tensions in the political debates on the reception of immigrants in the country. A few years after this speech, in 1993, Bourdieu, a sociologist still little known to the general public, stated that "France has become a constellation of closed microcosms, in which everyone ruminates on their misery. It was in this context that, in March 1993, "(...) a few weeks before the French legislative elections, *La Misère du monde* was published, a collective undertaking explicitly conceived by Bourdieu as an intervention in the political field" (CHAMPAGNE, 2017, p. 271). This book of almost a thousand pages, continues the author, containing more than 60 interviews conducted in environments where suffering prevails, proposes to give a voice to those who are not heard in the public space, to those who are portrayed through the diffuse filter of the media or statistical surveys. These interviews reveal the social suffering generated by neoliberalism, often unheard and invisible to political leaders.

The work has an unusual format, developed by a team of (23) sociologists based on interviews conducted between 1989 and 1992, with a spectacular variety of points of view. This collective research aimed to uncover the characters' experiences in situations that are often obscure or ambiguous in social space, situated in symbolically dominated positions within a prestigious and privileged social world.

A sociological exercise with several voices, the collection reveals to the general reading public the consequences of the retreat of state social interventions and the weakening of public services. The analysis focuses on the trajectories of socially situated agents and their multiple, differentiated, and cumulative forms of social suffering, adopting a vision that is opposed to the great mass of sociological and political discourses that, since the 1980s, have lent themselves to celebrating, at the university, in the media and books, the advent of the Subject, the Actor, the Individual, the Middle Class and the Market (LAVAL, 2021, p.29).

Bourdieu dedicates himself to unveiling not only the "misery of condition" resulting from lack of resources and material poverty (the great misery) but above all what he considers to be a contemporary form of social misery: the "misery of position," which manifests itself, for example, when someone occupies dominant positions in universes of greater social prestige. The misery of position, as opposed to the misery of condition, refers to the more subtle violence produced by school judgments, by the impositions of the labor market or housing, or even by the cunning aggressions of professional life, especially in the extremely competitive spaces that characterize the current state of capitalism.

As Bourdieu teaches us in the Post-scriptum of this book, to understand the great violence - the murders, robberies, and rapes that are so visible in the media - it is necessary to understand the invisible suffering, the "small" violence that takes place in the family, at school, in the world of work. Through active listening, the researchers propose to conduct an "assisted social analysis" by encouraging reflection on the social causes of suffering.

In this way, the book brings to light the social suffering that flourishes with the gradual dismantling of the state and the various forms of fragility that develop, as thousands of studies in the social sciences have shown. From the studies of Paul Lazarsfeld, Marie Jahoda, and Hans Zeisel (1981) in "The Unemployed of Marienthal" [our translation] (Austria), in which there is a detailed description of the more subjective effects of the deindustrialization of the 1930s, Robert Castel's studies on the metamorphoses of the "social question" in Europe, in which it argues that the growth of informal and precarious work is at the origin of the experience of "disaffiliation", isolation, loss of social cohesion and "anomie" as proposed by Durkheim.

For Bourdieu, the undertaking required to produce *The Misery of the World* presented the challenge of leaving his laboratory: "I am leaving the ivory tower to defend the ivory tower," he declared, to argue that science can help politicians understand social suffering. In this way, the book presents itself as a kind of scientific intervention in politics as well as a new form of militancy equipped with the tools of sociology. Bourdieu consolidates himself as a figure of the public intellectual, firmly convinced of his duty to intervene in the political field in the name of the autonomy of the scientific field and its specific values.

The *Misery of the World* also marked a real methodological break in French sociology and, in particular, in its author's epistemological approach, proposing an authentic conversion of the sociological perspective. In spite of its unprecedented nature, the work reflects a hard perspective that Bourdieu holds dear and has pursued throughout his sociological work: the search for, and the reconstitution of, the unity between theoretical and empirical research. The author and his collaborators use a methodology in which the testimonies are obtained through a relatively free dialogue with the interviewer, the result of a kind of "contract of trust" - or a kind of "sociology of proximity" - that brings out the space of points of view. These testimonies, which seem to focus on the everyday banalities of singular stories, reveal emotions that are often repressed and have a truly cathartic function.

In fact, the book marked a decisive stage in Pierre Bourdieu's political engagement, which became more evident in the 1990s. In *The Misery of the World*, Bourdieu explores the effects of the logic of domination on its agents by showing how the scientific and intellectual fields have been complicit in the reproduction of inequalities, and in this way he engages in political action, using the media and his academic fame to challenge the neoliberal project that promotes new forms of social misery. Bourdieu's critique of neoliberalism is thus not accidental. It is inscribed in the movement of his empirical research and the constitution of his conceptual apparatus, and it takes its specifically sociological form and content from him.

The *Misery of the World* is an emblematic portrait of the submission to profound changes in a society that is bowing to neoliberal economic models. Without pretending to be representative of the testimonies and without assuming the protagonism of the actors, the interviews shed light on conflicts that provoke sociological reflection: an unemployed worker represents the working class and its values that have been put in check; a school principal, a police officer or a social worker who work in disadvantaged neighborhoods with people in conditions of social vulnerability; or even the wife of a film director who supported her husband's career while neglecting her own. These testimonies illustrate the misery of position, the symbolic violence of those who occupy a dominant position in a dominant universe.

It is those responsible for the implementation of public policies, who are in direct contact with the population and the great poverty, who have to deal daily with the effects of precarious housing, employment contracts, the late entry of young people into the world of work, the place of religion as adherence to extreme ideologies, which

constitute and integrate the testimonies selected to make up the work. The use of long excerpts from the interviews, preceded by a prologue by the researcher, allows a fine and refined analysis of the social world, often supported by a relationship of trust between the interviewer and interviewee. From a methodological point of view, this book breaks new ground by emphasizing the inseparability of theory and method. For the author, it is only reflexivity that is synonymous with the method, but a reflexive reflexivity based on "work", on a sociological "eye" that makes it possible to perceive and control in the field, in the very conduct of the interview, the effects of the social structure in which it takes place. How can one claim to be a scientist of presuppositions without striving to be a scientist of one's presuppositions? Above all, by striving to make reflexive use of the knowledge acquired from the social sciences to control the effects of the research itself and to begin the questioning having already mastered the inevitable effects of the questions" (BOURDIEU, 1997, p. 694).

Thus, the social misery that Bourdieu examines is not limited to a "misery of condition" related to a lack of resources or material poverty. Rather, it reveals a more modern form of misery, less visible to the naked eye, the "misery of position. This is the one that undermines the legitimate aspirations of each individual to happiness and personal satisfaction by demanding that they submit to the constraints of what escapes them: the subliminal violence present in the judgments of the school market, the constraints imposed by the real estate market, the job market, and other insidious relationships that weigh on the dominated.

The term "misery" has covered this whole range of situations: extreme economic poverty, but also that which can be the cause of contempt ("misery of thought"), as well as that which arises from frustration or pettiness ("petty miseries"). The distinctions made between "misery of condition" (the poor) and "misery of position" (the socially disqualified) remain relevant, especially for studies of a society like Brazil's, historically marked by deep and crystallized social, economic, cultural, and educational inequalities. Since its publication in France, the book has had a considerable impact beyond the academic world, giving rise to various documentaries, television programs, and other cultural productions, as some of the interviews were presented as plays in France.

The situations described in *The Misery of the World* are a direct challenge to public policies since they are the result of growing social exclusion and the inadequacy of these policies or, more precisely, the "resignation of the state" in the form of state agents (policemen, nurses, teachers, principals, etc). In other words, the work promotes a socio analysis of the victims of various forms of social misery and a sociopolitics of public assistance. To understand the logic inherent in the causes of poverty, one must first consider the various dimensions that lead to it.

In this Dossier, we celebrate the 30th anniversary of this important work, which is still a neoliberal counter-example today. After three decades, policies adopted here and there in the fields of housing, public services, and education testify to the extent of economic rationality within a field of power. As a starting point for this dossier, we suggest reading the lecture Bourdieu gave on the occasion of the ceremony to receive the title of *Honoris Causa*, in the auditorium of the École des Hautes Etudes Commerciales de Paris (HEC). In this beautiful lecture, the author argues how sociology can contribute to democracy, beginning with a scathing critique of opinion polls conducted by "apparent sages of appearances". He argues that it is necessary to think about the technocratic error imposed by the state in the name of a limited and mutilated definition of the economy (BOURDIEU, 1995) and the demagogic error, even more dangerous and less visible, which consists of the subordination to the immediate social forces. In order to reflect on sociology's contribution to democracy, the author

rejects the two most common alternatives: the technocratic arrogance that seeks to make people happy without them or despite them, and the demagogic resignation that accepts demand as it is, manifested by the market research, ratings, or popularity quotas. These observations seem to us to be very pertinent in these times of cancellations and "tears" that are not only appearing in the general public and on social networks but also among scientists and within universities. More important than submitting to the demands of public opinion would be to work for the universalization of the economic and cultural conditions that allow access to it, which gives a decisive role in education, never neglected in Pierre Bourdieu's sociology. Far from being a condition for access to employment, it is a necessary condition for the real exercise of citizenship.

The following is an article by Charles Soulié, a sociology professor at the University of Paris 8, who brings to light his memories as a student researcher during the period in which he worked on the research that led to the book *The Misery of the World*. His testimony reflects a privileged point of view through the article ***The Misery of the World: Testimony of a Student Researcher***, in which he describes his beginnings as an apprentice sociologist. In this article, published in French and Portuguese, the author describes his academic journey and his gradual affiliation to the so-called "Bourdieu house", retracing a precious path through accounts - based on archives, notes in his field notebooks, etc. - of the initial project of this research and his experiences in the field. - of the initial project of this research and of the methodological turns that researchers in this field make and follow, in particular, the idea of the sociological interview as a "spiritual exercise". Finally, the article reflects on the division of labor within the "hierarchical collective" that surrounded Bourdieu, constituting a powerful account of the social history of the social sciences.

Next, we present the article by Graziela Serroni Perosa and Adriana Santiago Rosa Dantas, from the University of São Paulo, entitled ***Misery of condition and misery of position***. In it, the authors discuss some lessons from *The Misery of the World* (BOURDIEU, 1993) in the light of the results of a research interview with a Catholic priest, in which he discusses the participation of women in social movements for housing, education and health on the outskirts of a large Brazilian metropolis. Inspired by the suggestion of this dossier, the authors provide clues for thinking about class and gender conditions, especially for women from working-class groups. The identity of the informant has been concealed to favor a sociological analysis as an ideal type, as proposed by Max Weber. Through her case, we hope to contribute to the understanding of many other priests involved in the fight against poverty in Brazil and elsewhere. Finally, the results of the statistical survey on social pathologies in the metropolis of São Paulo, published in 2016, are added to the interview conducted in 2012. Thought relationally, the interview and the statistical study make it possible to extend the reflection on the condition of women in the light of the notions of the misery of condition and position..

Next is an article by Maria Amália de Almeida Cunha, Heli Sabino de Oliveira and Mércia Patrício Grigório Valério, from the Federal University of Minas Gerais, entitled ***A miséria do mundo and reflection on socio-spatial segregation: the struggle for the right to a place***. The following reflection illustrates the modes of social reproduction from a complementary point of view, located in another Brazilian metropolis, by discussing some processes of social and spatial segregation that have taken place in the city of Belo Horizonte-MG. To this end, we use as reference reports from professionals in the field of Youth and Adult Education (EJA) and testimonies from community leaders who raise their voices against discrimination based on address, a clear sign of

stigmatization that devalues the identity of the local inhabitants of certain neighborhoods in large Brazilian cities.

Still on the notion of "effects of place", the article *"Effects of place" on the future project of young people from Rocinha*, two researchers from Rio de Janeiro of the UFRJ, Rosângela Carrilo Moreno and Mariana Gomes Araújo, analyze the future perspective of young residents of Rocinha who have collectively engaged to produce an event that is present in many other peripheries of large Brazilian cities, the battle of rhymes, from the notion of place effects proposed by Bourdieu in "The Misery of the World". The article is based on field observations to identify the factors that interact in this particular socio-cultural scenario of an emblematic place in Rio de Janeiro, Rocinha. According to the results obtained, these young people project themselves as producers and artists of Hip Hop culture, refuting an expectation linked to success in school and resignation to jobs of low social prestige. This projection reflects the adjustment of their expectations in the face of social, economic, and school experiences.

Still, within the spectrum of "effects of place" developed by Bourdieu in his book *The Misery of the World*, we present the article by Alexandre Ramos de Azevedo and Hustana Maria Vargas, from the Fluminense Federal University, entitled *Effects of place on inequalities in access to higher education: the case of the state of Rio de Janeiro*. In this article, the authors reflect on the expansion of places in higher education in the 2000s and 2010s in Brazil, as a result of public policies to increase the net attendance rate (TFL), combined to reduce social and regional inequalities. Thus, exploring the concepts of "appropriated physical space" and "reified social space" addressed by Pierre Bourdieu (2003) in "Misery of the World", especially in the text "Effects of Place", we ask: has the expansion of places in the State of Rio de Janeiro achieved an expression of democratization, considering not only the distribution of access opportunities in the different geographical regions surrounding Rio de Janeiro but also the per capita household income profile of students?.

In the article *The excluded from the interior: what young people in a partial progression regime class make them think about schools in the periphery*, we are transported to a study carried out in the north of Brazil. The authors, Cláudia Regina Mota dos Santos and Marcia Machado de Lima, present the results of a study in the field of school education that analyzes the experiences of students in the last years of primary school, enrolled in partial progress classes, in a neighborhood considered vulnerable and at risk, in the east of Porto Velho, Rondônia, between 2019 and 2020. The aim is to discuss school processes that represent local materialities of the phenomenon discussed in "The Excluded of the Interior" by Pierre Bourdieu and Patrick Champagne, published in "The Misery of the World". The study identifies one of the ramifications of contemporary schools, as mentioned by the two sociologists 30 years ago.

Next, the article by Solange Aparecida de Oliveira Hoeller, from the Federal Institute of Santa Catarina, entitled *The misery of the world: situations of exclusion and discrimination in the memories of retired teachers from the state education network of Santa Catarina (Brazil)* examines situations of exclusion and discrimination in the memories of teachers who worked in the state education network of Santa Catarina (Brazil) and who retired between 2009 and 2013. The guiding question is how situations of exclusion and discrimination (race, sexual orientation, social origin, religion) have occurred in the educational context of Santa Catarina, using the memories of retired teachers as a perspective for analysis. This is a socio-historical-documentary study with a qualitative approach that mobilizes concepts and approaches from Pierre Bourdieu's *The Misery of the World*. The study contributes to the reconstruction of the teachers' trajectories, delineating situations of exclusion and discrimination experienced in school times and spaces.

Still on the subject of the precariousness of teaching, the authors Russel Teresinha Dutra da Rosa, Célia Elizabete Caregnato, and Renato Shimedzu Terra, from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, in their article *Female teachers's "misery of position" in the face of students's "misery of condition": labor trajectories in a precarized professional field*, analyze the trajectories of female teachers from a Bourdieusian perspective, understanding the little misery of position and how they experience their professional condition. The aim is to analyze the professional trajectories of two graduates in Biological Sciences from a public university in the south of the country to identify contextual variables, dispositions, and competencies. The method of sociological reconstruction of the careers is based on the in-depth interview. The analysis shows that the work is carried out uniquely, based on management tendencies and reciprocity in pedagogical relationships. The working conditions are precarious and the teachers are held responsible for their continuous training in the face of the dynamics of a field responsible for the inclusion of students living in great poverty.

Finally, the article entitled *Torn habitus in elite secondary schools* explores the concept of habitus and the situation of scholars from popular groups in elite schools, using conceptual tools provided by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. The author, Manuel Alejandro Giovine of the National University of Córdoba, starts from the debates surrounding the concept and tries to relate it to the incorporation of intersectionality. Based on fieldwork that sought to reconstruct the educational trajectories of 36 upper-class families over three generations, it was possible to access the meanings and representations of these families in the city of Córdoba, Argentina. In this article, the author focuses on analyzing the meanings experienced by two middle-class students who attended elite schools with scholarships. He discusses the marks left on their subjectivity by the daily experience of social distance and the daily confrontation between two habitus of different classes, which can have serious effects on the process of integration of these young people into the groups to which they belong.

The articles in this Dossier seek to demonstrate the vitality of this scholarly endeavor, which we believe is becoming increasingly relevant and urgent. After 30 years of publication, and in a different context, this work is a reminder of the importance of a collective effort in the face of the attacks of a state that in recent years has discredited not only science but also its role in providing minimum guarantees of protection to a population living on the margins of a minimal state: where social poverty reached a record high during the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching 64.6 million people in 2021, which means that in 2023 the country would have the sad statistic of 21.1 million Brazilians who are food insecure.

The book, which celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2023, still resonates with the necessary commitment of the intellectual, especially when it comes to the sociologist, whom Bourdieu willingly compares to a meteorologist whose duty it is to warn of the risks of a storm or an avalanche (LAVAL, 2021, p.175). Understanding and denouncing are also Bourdieu's justifications for this endeavor, which lies in the importance of making visible the suffering that is often invisible, of bringing to consciousness the mechanisms that make life sometimes painful, sometimes unbearable. It means choosing the path of not neutralizing suffering, of making contradictions visible as an instrument of defense.

Finally, our aim with this dossier has been to highlight some studies that can contribute to understanding the multiple effects of domination. This may allow us to mitigate the effects of domination by enabling those who suffer to discover that their suffering is due to social rather than personal causes, by revealing the origin of their suffering - often collectively hidden - and all its forms, from the most subtle and hidden

to the most obvious. In doing so, Bourdieu reminds us of the primary activity of the collective intellectual: to maintain, in a combative and uncompromising manner, a public commitment to the truth obtained through scientific research.

PhD, Maria Amália de Almeida Cunha (UFMG)

PhD, Graziela Serroni Perosa (USP)

PhD, Ione Ribeiro Valle (UFSC)

Goiânia/GO, august 2023.

NOTE

1 - Jean-Marie Durand, "30 ans, 30 œuvres "La Misère du monde" de Pierre Bourdieu". Available on: <https://www.lesinrocks.com/cheek/30-ans-30-oeuvres-la-misere-du-monde-de-pierre-bourdieu-45560-17-02-2016/#:~:text=Lorsque%20sort%20en%20février,toute%20la%20misère%20du%20monde.> Accessed on: July 17, 2023.

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