

Klaus Holzkamp & Ignacio Martín-Baró: Emancipatory practices for constructing a psychology against oppression

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to build a closer relationship between Klaus Holzkamp's Science of the Subject and Ignacio Martín-Baró's Liberation Psychology. The main goal is to build a psychology that aims at strengthening historical subjects to face life conditions under capitalism. Important theoretical concepts formulated by the two authors, such as the capacity for action, deideologization processes and horizon for liberation, constitute essential tools for the employment of psychology for the oppressed population.

Keywords

Klaus Holzkamp, Martín-Baró, Critical Psychology, oppression, Liberation Psychology

Introduction

Life under capitalism is constituted by a process of social organization based on what Marx called relations of production, which refers to those social relations that are established as a function of the production of life. The founding condition of creating life and livelihoods, as a way of relating to and in the world, is a human being who coexists with others. In this sense, the present social aspect of the human essence is evidenced by the necessity to make a life, or a living, for himself and for others. In a country like Brazil, the impact on this is felt in the

lives of the majority of people who sell their labor force or who are currently unemployed, eager to enter the market at any price and under any condition of work. Faria and Guzzo (2016) observed the presence of conformist attitudes and naturalization with life under capitalism among professors of a university institution that trains future professionals of Psychology, showing a reproduction of conforming standards. In this way, the cognitive foundations that underlie practices that naturalize human beings in the world of capital and that contribute very little to the formation of students, who integrate themselves into the labor market and transform work into merchandise, are reproduced.

To make it clear, especially to those who know Brazil only by the appeal of its natural strengths and beauties, it is important to have data that will reveal another face of this country, where inequality and exclusion remain determining elements in social and economic relations. This is necessary for the construction of a Psychology that could respond to this dimension and, in fact, would commit itself to coping with and overcoming these problems. The objective of this chapter, therefore, is to present some dimensions of Holzkamp's Science of the Subject and Martín-Baró's Liberation Psychology, which serve as grounds for a Psychology aimed at the strengthening of historical subjects in the face of the conditions of life under capitalism. It is a critical perspective in Psychology that aims to strengthen a science and a professional practice capable of contributing to changing reality.

Brazil, a characterization of indicators

In order to situate Brazil in the globalized and capitalist world, it is necessary to go beyond the framework presented by official discourses and statistics, which do not represent the reality of the daily life of the majority of people. Economic (GDP) and social development (HDI) indicators, for example, hide the inequalities, difficulties and daily suffering that a large part of the population encounter. We need to become aware of what goes unnoticed in everyday life in an effort to understand the game of economic power and the policies that define the direction and use of public resources.

In the document *Synthesis of Social Indicators – An Analysis of the Living Conditions of the Brazilian Population*, published by IBGE in 2015, several dimensions are reported in tables that indicate changes in recent years, based on consultation by domicile. It draws attention to the importance given especially to education as an essential instrument for full social insertion, promoting different health habits, salary levels, religious choices, opportunities for social mobility and political participation. Despite this, Brazil still has 17.4% of five-year-old

children who do not attend Early Childhood Education. While there has been an effort to make improvements in educational policies, the current government has dismantled all development planning for 20 proposed Education Goals in 2014 (MEC / SASE, 2014).

Social inequality, poverty and exploitation are still the main determinants of the daily life of the majority of the Brazilian population and Psychology needs to respond to these demands, especially its impacts on the formation of the subject and its psychosocial processes of development. Some indicators show that the national poverty rate – a percentage of the population living below the national poverty line – is still high and tends to increase in those years of crisis experienced in the country. The latest IBGE report on summaries of social indicators, published in 2015, has shown that the poverty rate has drastically reduced over the previous ten years. In 2014, it reached 7.3% of the population, representing a fall of almost 70% compared to 2004. Despite this drop, inequality remains high (GINI = 0.490) and the outlook is not good for the current crisis forecast in the country. In 2015, Brazil occupied the 79th ranking among 188 countries in relation to the HDI (Human Development Index) ranking, which takes into account indicators of education, income and health, but plunged 19 positions in the ranking corresponding to the difference between rich and poor.

Brazilian psychology, ideological tool of capitalism

A brief summary of the history of Psychology in Brazil may point to the relationship between the regulation of the profession and the maintenance of order. The profession was regulated in 1962, the pre-dictatorship period during which popular movements organized for the conquest of rights in a popular government with libertarian horizons. The idea was that the profession of regulated psychology would ensure the psychotherapeutic care of those who were treated by Psychiatrists, as well as other areas such as education, focused primarily on teacher training and career guidance. With the military civilian dictatorship installed in 1964, the profession took on its current liberal characteristics with predominant training for clinical, individual and therapeutic care. Soares (2010) retraced the movement carried out by Psychology before it came to be considered an independent profession in Brazil as a science that had its genesis in the medical schools influenced by the European movements in the early nineteenth century. Brazilian psychology, therefore, constituted itself as a science and a profession with a colonized physiognomy, that during its current 55 years, and in the face of a social and economic conjuncture characteristic of a peripheral capitalist country, wouldn't much change its essence despite great

evolutions and significant advances in its practical insertion in the public policies, mainly of Health and Assistance.

Today, more critical analyses of this profession and its training at undergraduate and postgraduate levels present backing for policies aimed at meeting urgent and major social and educational demands, such as those presented by Borges-Andrade, Bastos, Andery, Guzzo and Trinity (2015). Despite the numbers that indicate an exponential increase of training courses and professionals throughout these years, the predominant profile is still that of the one that stops to attend disturbances in traditional fields of action, such as Health and Clinic spaces. Commitment to strengthening communities, organizations and social movements, and the advancement of working-class consciousness in the face of attacks on their rights and worsening living conditions is still a horizon to be achieved by the profession – which did not offer answers to address the social issue. The scientific development of Psychology is linked to the emergence and development of the bourgeoisie and, therefore, the choice and definition of the professional performance by traditional fields is determined by this condition.

Critical Psychology and Latin American experiences: proposals and dialogues

In the diversity of Psychology, Critical Psychology is, mainly, the recognition and exercise of an ethical position for the promotion of the well-being of people (Fox, Prilleltensky & Austin, 2009) or, more incisively, Critical psychologists are those who emphasize a critical position to hegemonic psychology and/or have a form of approach and practices that are critical in their ethos (Parker, 2015).

Critical Psychology is thus consolidated as an attempt to respond to certain problems posed by the subfield of Psychology in order to mobilize theoretical and methodological resources adapted to each specific problem (Parker, 2015). Initially, it is recognized that there is a profound problem in the way in which the relationships between the “within” of Psychology are separated from those seen as being “outside”. This separation leads to an extreme dehumanization of subjects – who are reduced to “object-beings” – capable of determining a false place of existence and a false understanding of supposed psychological processes (Parker, 2015, p. 3). On the one hand, when psychology reduces psychological phenomena exclusively to the individual level, this reduction is not only at the level of physiological functions but at the level of the social processes involved in everyday life. Thus, Critical Psychology refuses to adhere to the ways traditional psychologists defend their own specific domain of study. On the other hand, debates in sociology are seen as resources rather than a threat from a

neighboring discipline that offers a mistaken or only partially-correct understanding of societal phenomena (Parker, 2015, p. 5).

By focusing on the individual, rather than on a group or society as a whole, psychology not only overestimates individualistic values, hiding the actions of mutuality, it also legitimizes injustices. Thus, by adhering to institutional assumptions and alliances disproportionately, hegemonic psychology collaborates even more with the oppression of marginalized groups (Fox et al., 2009). In addition, Critical Psychology also seeks to combat the old belief that the work of psychologists is apolitical and dismantle the old excuse that they are just trying to “help people”.

Indeed, most really are trying to help people. The problem is that their work often embraces assumptions they haven't fully considered, so that the kind of help they offer disproportionately encourages people to adapt to difficult circumstances rather than challenge them. As a consequence, millions of people learn to see systemic problems as merely “individual.” (Fox, 2012, p. 14)

There is also, at the heart of this criticism, a rejection of the positivist foundations dominant in Psychology throughout its history. In this sense, the idea that a realistic science necessarily requires an experimental investigation and/or a quantitative analysis, is considered superficial and narrow. Qualitative methods, then, such as reflective or open interviews and action-participation research, have become a hallmark of critical work. However, while qualitative research remains the primary method of critical research, there is now a recognition that not all qualitative research advances on critical assumptions. There is, on the other hand, a similar awareness of the converse: despite the risk of reinforcing the underlying positivist framework, not all quantitative research prevents critical analysis. In this sense, the methodological division overlaps a political gap that has not yet been so well resolved and clarified (Fox, 2011, p. 14).

Critical Psychology in Latin America has a singular importance, considering that this continent still lives with marks of the process of colonization not yet overcome which are also revealed in the science and professional practice consolidated during the history of its constitution (Guzzo, 2015). Gradually, Latin American authors started presenting ideas and foundations for a psychology committed to the population of Central and South America, making evident the need to reveal the issues and challenges of Psychology with the reality of the Latin American population. Gonzalez Rey, for example, in 2009, discussed the critical moments of the development of Psychology in Latin America. According to this author, the history of Psychology is often presented with a focus centered on facts, people and

moments, focused on a region or country without taking into account movements of Psychology, or in which Psychology participated, present in these geographical spaces. According to this author, at the end of the 1970s and during the 1980s psychologists from different Latin American countries were integrated to rescue the critical perspective in Latin America, in the sense of breaking with the mimicry of dominant theories. Still, according to Gonzalez Rey, some movements were pioneers in the critique of Psychology, as was the case of the critique of Psychoanalysis by Argentine authors such as Enrique Pichon Riviere and José Bleger, of Social Psychology by Silvia Lane in Brazil and Ignacio Martín-Baró in El Salvador and Community Psychology by Maritza Montero in Venezuela. Many psychologists have participated in this process of constructing an anti-hegemonic psychology in different fields of action and theoretical and methodological approaches. Among them, pioneers and others who continue to strengthen this critical movement, are: Ignacio Martín-Baró from El Salvador, Maritza Montero from Venezuela, Bernardo Jiménez, Jorge Mario Flores and David Pavón Cuellar from Mexico, Sílvia Lane from Brazil, Fernando Gonzalez Rey and Albertina Mitjans from Cuba and Brazil, Ignacio Dobles from Costa Rica, Irma Serrano from Puerto Rico and Tod Sloan from the United States. Many other professionals and researchers of Latin American Psychology have drawn attention to the need to break this science and practice of its North American and European roots. In the book edited by Parker (2015), *Handbook of Critical Psychology*, it is possible to discern the movements that have impacted on solving the crisis in hegemonic Psychology in favor of another Psychology committed to the demands of reality and the Latin American peoples.

In the context of the critical Latin American experiences in Psychology, we will highlight the Liberation Psychology of Ignacio Martín-Baró Psychology and the recent dialogue with German Critical Psychology, mainly in the ideas proposed by Klaus Holzkamp and his collaborators.

Liberation Psychology

The Psychology of Liberation comprises the set of Psychologies emerging as a paradigmatic response to the crisis of Psychology in Latin America, mainly related to the reality of violence and war in El Salvador (Martín-Baró, 1996). The crisis in psychology in the period between the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s of the last century was a phenomenon that was widespread in Europe and the United States and also affected Latin America. The reality on this continent, during that time, was marked by underdevelopment, social inequality, violence, poverty, exploitation, repression and a kind of modern neocolonialism. These conditions

derived from the process of instituting military coups, culminating in dictatorships overthrowing democratically elected governments that did not conform to Washington dictates. These military coups financed by the United States, in what was called Operation Condor, drew the scene of Cold War dispute, whose main American goal was to bar the advance of egalitarian and humanized governments.

El Salvador in the 1980s – the scene and time of Liberation Psychology's emergence – is the site of a violent civil war between the state apparatus commanded by local and military elites versus popular insurgent groups that were organized in the Frente Revolucionaria Democrática (FRD) and the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN), the latter which had strong support from sectors of the Catholic Church – more precisely those involved with the Liberation Theology movement (Boff, 1985). In this context, in response to the production of suffering derived from these conditions and with the desire for liberation of them, is the political-intellectual production of Martín-Baró, synthesized in what he called the Psychology of Liberation (Martín-Baró, 2011).

The Psychology of Liberation, as a science derived from some principles of Liberation Theology, is also defined by its opting for the interest of poor people. However, it is a Psychology that places itself at the opposite pole of power in the dynamics of the class struggle, a place that hegemonic psychology has traditionally never posed. On the contrary, Psychology, since its birth and throughout its history, has always constituted itself as a tool of capitalist domination. Thus, the Psychology of Liberation sought to shake up the structures of power historically instituted and, above all, to revolutionize them (Osorio, 2011).

For this, Martín-Baró points to awareness as what to do about the Latin American psychologist who commits himself to the liberation of the oppressed peoples. Martín-Baró (1990b) proposes that Psychology helps people overcome the conditions of oppression and fatalism, towards personal and social liberation. This liberation necessarily announces the indispensability of resistance to the structures of power (Prilleltensky, 2003). Thus, the process of becoming conscious, referred to by Paulo Freire as awareness, assumes a central role in the proposal of Martín-Baró about psychological science. He says:

Consciousness is not simply the private sphere of subjective knowledge and feeling of individuals, but above all, that sphere where each person finds the reflected impact of his being and his doing in society, where he assumes and elaborates a knowledge about himself and about the reality that allows you to be someone, have a personal and social identity. Consciousness is knowledge, or not knowing about oneself, about one's

own world and about others, a praxical knowledge rather than a mental one, since it is inscribed in the adequacy to the objective realities of all behavior... (Martin-Baró, 1996, p. 14)

It is understood that the process of awareness does not imply a mere change of opinion about something or only a subjective change (understood in an internalist way), but a change of the subjects in their modes of relation with the world and with other people, assuming a non-alienated social identity that allows people to be actors in their lives and stories.

The Psychology of Liberation, therefore, poses as a scientific proposal that is emphatically critical to Psychology until then, based on mere experimental observation, on the control of variables, on individualism, on the subject's blame and on supposed scientific neutrality. But more than produce criticism of Psychology as a science, he also made notes and proposed actions against capitalist power structures, rejecting and fighting the different oppressions experienced in El Salvador, such as machismo, domestic violence, violence and psychosocial suffering derived from civil war, among others. After almost three decades since the assassination of Martín-Baró and his comrades of the UCA (Central American University José Simeón Canás), by the Salvadorean Army, the Psychology of Liberation lives on in Latin America, and every day is strengthened even more, and without abandoning the causes of those who mobilized. Martín-Baró, above all, proposed another way of sociability based on human dignity and equality between people (Oliveira, Guzzo, Tizzei & Neto, 2014).

The Marxist Psychology of Klaus Holzkamp

The crisis of Psychology was formalized at a time when, in the four corners of the world, movements broke out against oppression and exploitation in capitalism. This crisis led to a re-reading of the meaning of this science in the world. Thus, it was in Germany with Klaus Holzkamp and in other countries with researchers who questioned the role of Psychology as a tool of the dominant ideology (Parker, 2007).

From meetings, exchange of experiences and interlocutions between Critical psychologists from different countries in recent decades, Latin American psychologists secured greater access to the history and production of German Critical Psychology. Faced with this production, concepts such as “capacity for action” and “the point of view of the subject” informed research on the

possibilities of “human action” in capitalism, the possibilities of “emancipation” in the face of “oppression”.

German (or German / Scandinavian) Critical Psychology represents an attempt to rescue Psychology from itself, redefining it as a historically developed theory of subjects as social beings (based on the concept of the social nature of human existence) and rebuilding it as a Psychology about and for these subjects. The central message in Holzkamp’s (and his collaborators’) work is that traditional Psychology, by ignoring the capacity of human beings to transform their own conditions of existence, directly responds to the demands of relations of domination. It emerges in the context of the intellectual and political struggles at the Free University in ancient West Berlin during the 1960s and 1970s (Motzkau & Schraube, 2015) and has as its central figure Klaus Holzkamp. On the basis of historical and dialectical materialism or, to be more precise, the ideas developed by Marx’s social theory in Feuerbach’s Theses on subjectivity and human practices (thus coining a form of practical inquiry), as well as like the cultural-historical activity theory of Vygotsky and, above all, Leontiev, Holzkamp sought to redefine the field and forms of psychological research by criticizing, absorbing and reinventing aspects and presuppositions of phenomenology and psychoanalysis.

A scientific study of traditional psychology tends to expose an experimental subject, “who is treated as an abstract human individual, isolated ... exposed to the conditions of an environment which he himself has not produced, whose essential character and management are not transparent and that he accepts them as immutable and immovable” (Markard, 2016, p. 12). For the individual, however, as Holzkamp has formulated, there is a “double possibility”: on the one hand he can – in the case of a union with other individuals – extend or transform these possibilities into a “generalized capacity for action”; on the other hand, confronting the situation in a “restrictive way, may limit himself to using only the possibilities granted to him, reproducing the ways of thinking suggested in his immediate situation (behaving, for example, in a competitive way)” (Markard, 2016, p. 17). The conceptual pair “generalized ability vs. restrictive capacity for action” thus seeks to question from the point of view of each: “where, how, why, under what conditions or in what relations, in my attempts to face my life, attentive, at the same time, against my own interests in life-and of the rest?” Markard, 2016, p. 18). In other words,

In this restrictive capacity for action, control and domination over other people comes into play, instead of common control over our social conditions of life. For by accepting submission to domination and by wanting to participate in them in order to secure their own possibilities of life, this oppression is actively and automatically transmitted to other, even

more dependent people. This moment of control over others - I “save myself”, trying to control others. (Holzkamp, 2016, p. 75)

From the “subject’s point of view and its methodological implications, individuals do not represent “objects” of psychological research, but they are themselves in partnership with the researcher. The object of the research is the world as the subject experiences it – feeling, thinking and acting. “A research, from the point of view of the subject, includes the existence of a more symmetrical relationship and with the greatest possible equality of rights among its participants” (Holzkamp, 2016). Thus,

[...] our exposition reaches a point where the object of analysis acquires an explicitly “subject-scientific” character: since human consciousness as a “positioning itself in relation to” is always “first person”, here the object forces a treatment from the point of view of the subjects in question. (Holzkamp, 1983, p. 305)

Historical subjects and the role of psychology

Starting from the history of colonization and domination faced by Latin America, we raise the question of how the psychologist can act from a critical and liberating perspective, favoring the awareness and expansion of the capacity of action of the population that suffers from being on the sidelines of the power and of the material and cultural resources necessary for their subsistence.

According to Quijano (2005), Latin American countries have not yet become nation-states. In these countries, marked by the colonizer-colonized relationship, the homogenization proposed by the Eurocentric model as a condition for the democratization of society did not imply the “decolonization of social, political and cultural relations between races, or rather between groups and elements of European social existence and not Europeans” (p.135), but the exclusion of the majority of the population, i.e., native South-Americans, Afro-descendants and mestizos. In this way, the entire power structure is organized around the colonial axis and to the detriment of the interests of the majority.

In Brazil, as in other Latin American countries, after decades of military dictatorships, we live in a supposed democracy. However, under capitalism, democracy is deprived of the way it was born in Athens – by the involvement and participation of citizens, and is organized by representatives. According to Wood (2003), “the way representative democracy has developed has widened the gap between the people and their representatives and has become the antithesis of democracy: it is not the exercise of political power but the renunciation of this

power, its transference to others, its alienation” (p .189). As a consequence, Brazil is currently undergoing a serious political crisis, in view of the distancing of social control from the political class, the use of power to favor the interests of capitalist proprietors to the detriment of the needs of the population, and its aggravation from corruption scandals and misappropriation of public funds.

Given this scenario, the question we raise about the role of the psychologist cannot be answered from a hegemonic referential of Psychology. The authors presented in this text contributed, not only with an ethical horizon – the option for the popular majorities that suffer daily with the exclusion – but with a series of psychosocial foundations that point us ways. Martin-Baró (1990a, 1990b, 2015) presents a perspective that allows us to understand how this reality of exclusion is characterized as structural violence and what it means to grow and develop in the midst of a civil war situation. The fear and the threat of violence that lived the Salvadorans in the reality that based the writings of this author much resemble the reality of the Brazilian peripheries. Despite the fact that there is no declared war in Brazil, statistics on violence shows that over a period of four years (2008 to 2011), 206,005 people were murdered, while in the same period of time, the number of victims in the 12 largest conflicts in the world (countries such as Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, etc.), 169,574 people were killed (2004 to 2007) (Waiselfisz, 2013). If we take into account that this population is located in the Brazilian peripheries, and is mostly young and black, we have a picture that represents how these people are marked by constant threats and the contributions of Martin-Baró are important for understanding the impacts of these experiences on subjectivity.

In addition, Klaus Holzkamp and German Critical Psychology highlights the importance of building actions from the perspective of subjects (Holzkamp, 1983, 2016). This implies a decolonized and decolonizing action, as the knowledge and culture of the population with which we work becomes the foundation, and participation becomes a method for any action and referral of the problems that it experiences. From the concept of capacity for action, we can consider that all people have concrete possibilities of action, and can develop them in a restrictive or generalized way, as we explained in the previous topic. Faced with this, we return to the question of how Psychology can effectively build an action that is based on these foundations and within a liberating horizon.

We have sought this construction based on the daily work of Brazilian public schools (Moreira & Guzzo, 2014; Guzzo, Moreira, & Mezzalira, 2011; Sant'Ana, Costa, & Guzzo, 2008), considering that the school is one of the primary sites of development in the lives of children, and the public school is the place where about 80% of Brazilian children study (INEP, 2016). In Brazil schooling was universalized and inscribed as a right for every person only by the

Constitution of the United States of Brazil of 1934. The universalization of the right to school did not, however, amount to the universalization of education, so that even today the country suffers an “educational apartheid” based on the unequal treatment given to different social classes with regard to the quality of education. The private logic applied to the sphere of education through the process of commodification turns education into a mere product, reserving better quality to those who can afford to pay. Thus, educational assets are as unequally distributed as economic goods, so that from the physical structure to the valuation of the faculty or even the expectations about the students are different (Gentili, 2009).

In this way, school characterizes itself as a space of the reproduction of inequalities. In the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988 [s.d.], education is the first to be listed among the social rights of Brazilians. According to Saviani (2011), this classification is based on Thomas Humphrey Marshall’s division in which civil rights (linked to the exercise of individual liberty), political rights (linked to participation in political power), and social rights (to the minimum level of well-being afforded by the current standard of civilization). However, the author states that, in addition to being a specific type of right, education is the basic (even though not sufficient) condition for all other rights to be exercised, since in modern societies this presupposes access to written codes. This condition does not materialize, however, when education is directed toward the domestication of popular majorities, as Freire (2016) points out. According to this author, the teaching relationship that is based on a “banking” conception of education, that is, that conceives students as custodians of the knowledge of a readymade world, is based on a comprehension of man as spectator, not recreator of the world. In constructing the curriculum and the daily practices considering the students as passive beings, the school goes against a formation for the active participation in the construction of the society.

The student arrives at the school and finds a ready curriculum, which disregards the community where it is inserted, the history of the subjects and groups and ethnic-racial differences: a curriculum that applies in any region of the country. However, the LDB (Education and Guidelines, 1996) guarantees the possibility of participation of students, communities and families in the collective construction of the curriculum and points to the need to democratize the school space. If, however, the school leads students to passivity from the outset of their formation, how can they appropriate this right and effectively participate in the construction of the curriculum? How can you become a conscious adult who exercises your citizenship, seeking to become involved in building a more democratic country?

In this sense, a critical perspective of Psychology, when standing next to the popular majorities, must return its work to the construction of spaces where participation is learned, so that not only the right of the democratization of the school materializes, but the school also becomes a place that promotes the culture of popular participation. Since 2014, through a project of university extension and research, called ECOAR (Spaces of Coexistence, Action and Reflection), we have built a psychosocial practice for coping with violence in public schools in the outskirts of the city of Campinas-SP. All the work of coping with violence is constructed from the perception of the school actors about it, and the referrals are constructed collectively and dialogically.

These spaces allow the exercise and learning of participation, the search for a joint reflection that builds the conditions for people to organize and use their capacity for action in a generalized way. We seek to both strengthen participation spaces already constituted in the school (such as School Councils and Student Councils) and to establish new spaces that foster the work of those who already exist. In this sense, one of the strategies we have used is the class assembly: the students (from elementary school) of each class meet once a month to discuss and address problems they face at school, or suggest some action (like sports and arts, for example) for everyday school life. In these spaces, students learn to think, listen, argue and choose the action that best fits the problem. They also learn to document discussions when writing minutes, which are signed by all students at the end of each meeting.

It is through these participatory spaces that we address the problems of violence, struggle for improvements in the physical conditions of the school, engage the entire school community in building a rich curriculum that respects their identity, demands decent working conditions for the teacher and the rest school workers. Thus, Psychology places itself at the service of the construction of an education that not only organizes itself for the accomplishment of tests, but forms the subjects, literacy them to, as proposed by Freire (2016), to be able to “read the world”. Education with an emancipatory horizon, which teaches them to participate, prepares them to break with the structures of oppression and to build a more humane society.

Final considerations

Two formulations of Psychology – Latin American and German – two continents – Europe and Central America – with different social and economic realities, and authors who responded to the demands of their political and social contexts – Martín-Baró and Klaus Holzkamp – awaken the importance of the criticism that

we must make to the dominant Psychology, as well as to the evidences of the subjectivity constructed in these social spaces conditioned by the capitalist way of life.

It is necessary that Psychology strengthens historical subjects in the knowledge and confrontation of their living conditions and move, organize themselves so that changes take place. In this sense, both Martín-Baró and Klaus Holzkamp provide tools for the ethical and political training of professionals to be the essence of their actions in different fields of activity.

It should be pointed out that social transformation does not take place instantaneously, even if it does not happen through the hands of a few. Historical conditions are the resource for this change. However, they are subjects, ordinary people, who operate on the world and make the transformations. Hence the action that is expected to take place within each of us, in the group of our close relations and also in what we call social, which is the light that splendors under the rift of so many relationships. What traditional psychology has done is to oppose subject and society as contiguous, distant elements. Here is the mission of Critical Psychology: to reconcile with the real subject the complex web of relations between subjects (the social in the subject) and possibilities of transformation of the relationships that are demanded of them (the subject in the social).

It is the change of the world as such. This is undoubtedly the basic element of the new subjectivity: the perception of historical change. It is this element that triggers the process of constitution of a new perspective on time and history. The perception of change leads to the idea of the future, since it is the only territory of time in which changes can occur. The future is an open temporal territory. Time may be new, for it is not only the extension of the past. And in this way history can be perceived not only as something occurring either as something natural or produced by divine or mysterious decisions as destiny, but as something that can be produced by the action of people, by their calculations, their intentions, their decisions, therefore as something that can be projected and consequently felt. (Quijano, 2005, p. 124)

When we criticize Classical Psychology, dominant and impregnated in the relations of capitalist production, it is necessary to consider, as Politzer (1973) teaches us, that this work is precisely the dismantling, by piece, of principles and theoretical formulations to unveil the constitutive processes and implicit postulates. This is, therefore, the reason why criticism should not be presented by general statements, which merely condemn without executing. From the reading that subjects make of reality, and from the ethical commitment to the process of responding to the more complex situations of domination and exploitation, is that

the Psychology of Klaus Holzkamp and that of Ignacio Martín-Baró has its ontological foundations based on the same commitment to social change. For these authors, Psychology can favor the awareness of oppressed and violated populations in their fundamental rights and favor their self-organization for the struggle for a radically free and democratic society.

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