

Men, beasts and machines. An ethnography of the vocabularies of pride and shame among industrial workers.

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1. Introduction.

This article wants to investigate the ways of how the workers' categories of ordinary understanding of the social reality of work enmesh with their daily actions and discourses. The author undertakes to comprehend how commonplace vocabulary is congruent with workers' practical way of disclosing their everyday existence, namely bringing tacitly coherence and cohesion to the collective and personal everyday experience of the immediate process of work.

Like the investigation of every «domination field», this research is aimed to catch the reciprocal «pressure orientation» exerted from different agents and groups of agents and to capture the «modalities and intensity of their relative dependence» associated with an unequal «action potential» (Elias, 1987: p.93). This kind of relative autonomy of each social micro-cosmos leads to recognize that «if the all-embracing field affects its structure, this conglobated field, as relation of force and specific game space, defines itself the very terms and risks of struggle, giving them a singular physiognomy» (Bourdieu, 2001: p.231). The workplace synthesizes, in the immediate presence, the structural contradictions inscribed in the «process of production and reproduction of the whole capitalist social relations» (Marx, 1971: pp.72, 257). So, the factory is a structuring, although not exclusive, «chronotope» of

the working class condition. In there, the «time acquires a sensually concrete character; in the chronotope the events (...) gain body, coat themselves with flesh, fill themselves with blood» (Bakhtine, 2001: p. 391).

Although there is a dominant and constrictive presence of pervading power relations, crucial dimensions of the shop floor everyday life cannot be understood without its insertion in the context of their actualization. The capitalist relations of exploitation are articulated with «relations in production» established in the everyday and relational experience in the working group – internally differentiated - and between them and other social groups (Burawoy, 1985: p.254). The working group is a «complex collectivity» made of individuals «close and different at the very same time, submitted to a common violence but capable of inventing multiple exhibitions through a collective endeavor» (Pialoux, 1984: p.57).

During 14 weeks, I worked as machine operator in a furniture shop in Rebordosa, a small industrial town nearby Porto. Although I worked in a relatively disqualified workplace, only with minor demanding technical requirements and requiring nothing but a short period of habituation, the constant presence - both in the factory as outside it - within that group of men, even without erasing the indelible social and cultural contrasts between our individual trajectories and horizons of relevance, had fostered an enduring interpersonal commitment that enabled an intense and intimate dialogue. As Erving Goffman states, the participant observation implies a submission to the contingencies and circumstances of a certain group of individuals that could lead to the progressive acquisition of an attunement with their gestures, postures and idiolect and a sensitivity with the «grunts and groans» of their ordinary existence (1989: p.126).

Each day, after eight to ten hours inside the factory, I worked a second shift, further scrawling detailed fieldwork notes that combined impressionistic accounts with reflections prompted under theoretical-constructed paths. I'll try to understand and explain the everyday density of a furniture factory relying on the pages of my ethnographic notebooks and the transcriptions of 27 recorded interviews applied to furniture workers (lasting from one to four hours each). The extensive recourse to interviews transcripts and field-notes (using italics as a way of notation; quotation marks are exclusive of citations from bibliographic references) illustrate how method and (epistemological) point of view are closely connected in such scientific research program (vd. Charlesworth and Monteiro, 2008). Returning to the rough

ground, to paraphrase a well-known Ludwig Wittgenstein rule, is a means of dismissing metaphysical forces, meanings or intentions, and favouring instead a fieldwork strategy aimed to know the visceral dimension of the everyday reproduction of the social order (e.g. Wacquant, 2002, 2005; Howes, 1990; Corbin, 1991; Katz and Csordas, 2003; Merleau-Ponty 1945, 1990).

The workers' presence in the shopfloor - material background, existentially occupied and invested space, and configuration of power relations - is unintentionally disclosed in speech and manners. This paper is particularly concerned with the comprehension of the subtleties and complexities of the verbalized forms of sensibility defined as vocabularies of shame and respect. As they are inscribed in the ways of doing and being acquired through a specific situationality in an existential universe, they could be, investigated as a vector of knowledge especially suited to access the practical dimensions that seemingly lack a definitive, intended or explicit purpose and make superfluous the presumptions of a deliberative awareness. Acting as a kind of spontaneous and doxic knowledge, the strongly metaphoric discourse employed by the workers serves as a means to make intelligible the hard, sometimes brutal, experience of industrial working conditions. That way they are employed as a means to convey insurgence and denunciate the exploitation and domination raised in the factory, that is, as a way of defending dignity and autonomy in the everyday struggles carried out in the labour process, *we're not machines!», for the management only numbers count, but we are persons too.*

At the same time, they act as a means to euphemize and sublimate those same conditions. On the basis of an irrevocably inferior, even animal, condition that workers are supposed to have themselves, they tend to justify and to anticipate the subaltern position they experience. We can enunciate this auto-exclusion, associated with their sense of one's place, *this is not for people of our kind*, as a particular mode of legitimating the work hierarchies – usually seen as something as the natural order of things. In such a context of robust power relations, these discourses act also as a way to introduce differences and promote exclusion in the interior of the workers group – as when someone is accused of having promiscuous relations with management. This way, they help to shape the informal hierarchies of virtuosity in the working collective.

2. Pride and shame. Solidarity, virtues and sense of limits among furniture workers.

The invocation of the «reality» of shopfloor experience in workers' discourse frequently arose associated with the image of *prison*. Some workers refer to being *locked up all day inside four walls (todo o dia fechado dentro de quatro paredes)*. This emanates a pervasive feeling of closeness which receives all the evident proof from appearances. The enduring immersion in circumstances of spatial and economic confinement, the reiterated and proximal submission to the redundancy of social situations and to the tacit demands that every physical and social space places on its occupants, explains the acquisition, throughout individual history, of postures, practices and preferences fit to work in a practical state and through practice as *posture, manner or taste*. Through this diffuse inculcation of dispositions whose specificity and effectiveness are tied to the objective conditions associated with a specific social setting, the workers acquire a long-lasting way of seeing, feeling and thinking. The everydayness of this involvement grounds a relationship of circumspection structured by the specificity of the relationships maintained with the immediate surroundings.

Supported in the objectivity of such a form of life, it generates and actualises a sense of reality which is practically revealed in the form of *premonitions (pressentimentos)* and *knowing how to be (saber estar)*, engraved in the flesh as marks of class, such as gestures, postures, manners, body shape and appearance, and verbalized through the afore-mentioned vocabularies of shame and respect. Notwithstanding this close mutual imbibement, it is especially about the discursive representations of the factory that this article is concerned with.

2.1 Ethos and sense of frontiers.

The prescription and maintenance of a convenient distance in the sight of the hierarchical apparatus, still in a frequently ritual form, act as a factor to consolidate an autonomous and distinct place for the worker's group in the social – and physical – space of the factory. Frontier violation in the relationship with the *bosses* is a path to defilement – generally signaled by a transmutation into a *dirty or betrayed* condition (*borrado, vendido*). The multiplicity of epithets applied to those

who are supposed to *betray* or to *burn fellow workers* (*trocar, queimar o pessoal*) reveals the intransigency in maintaining a personal and collective space where it is possible for a partial inversion of the ever-present coercion from the work process, the hierarchical chain of command and even from demanding fellow workers. It is on the fringes created by these efforts where the material and symbolic re-appropriation and resistance tactics of the space, time and legitimate conception of the work are settled.

In a meeting with the shop manager which takes place in the shop-floor, thus creating a parade which shows both the collective and physical body of workers, only two workers contested the price of the pieces, while the rest of the group remained seemingly indifferent. The next day, one of those blamed the silent majority (*atirar à cara*) with several accusations about there being indecorous behavior which compromised their own virile marks of status (e.g. calling them *bunch of cowards* and *brats, cambada de cobardolas* and *cachopos*). Like the incestuous proximity to the boss, this silence was also seen as a symptom of moral weakness and disloyalty to the tacit imperatives *duties* and *responsibilities* (*obrigações* and *responsabilidades*) associated with the virtuous model of masculinity and artistic grandeur.

Rebuking (*passar-lhes uma puta*) or despising (*dá-los ao abandono*) those who are unable or unwilling to conform to this implicit ethos, expressed through the deprivation of social intercourse and a constant suspicion, is aimed to show that *giving too much confidence to the bosses* (*dar muita confiança aos patrões*) or to *fuck your fellow workers* (*foder o pessoal*) is also subverting the moral and social categories of the factory order. The *desconfiança*, that is, the loss of trust, raises a pervasive presence of hostile forces (*mau olhado, evil eye* and *má fé, bad faith*), thus threatening an allegedly idyllic mutuality between workers. *Art fellows* (*colegas da arte*) and the *people of our category* [or level] (*gente da nossa categoria*) are those who aren't supposed, except in some moments, to *chat with the boss* (*dar paleio ao patrão*) - at least, not without some degree of danger to his character and status among fellow-workers. This seemingly spontaneous triggering of notions of pollution (functioning as the negative counter-part of a virtuous idiom) is an attempt to assure or to re-establish the constancy of the world as we know it, like an ultimate safety net (vd. Douglas, 1991).

In this account of a 36-year-old joiner who had worked with me, it is shown how an ante-predicative sense of limits, verbally projected as notions of defilement, is deeply intertwined with the maintenance of personal and collective practices of integrity:

With the foremen, I'm well acquainted with all them, with the manager I'm neither good, nor badly acquainted, simply because I don't even talk with him. I'm not the kind to give confidence to the bosses, and in this case even less so because the manager at first tried to cause trouble in my life. (...) I don't like [to give "confidence" to the bosses] because I think that if people start to talk a lot with the boss, at least in the way I think, who talks a lot to the boss has to be criticizing the work fellows, they can invoke a thousand reasons for that, but there exists a word for that, it is adulate, and when adulating you have to be burning some colleague, don't you? You have to say: "listen, so-and-so says this, so-and-so says that, or so-an-so says he'll do this", did you understand? And my temperament isn't that, my temperament is trying to be as correct as possible with my colleagues, to me the boss is the last person to protect, I protect the people, the people how do you say? From my art (for the meaning is important the word to be maintained), that is the furniture [profession], at the worker's level. The boss, I know he has his powers, so as long as he needs me he'll have me there and pay me, but when he doesn't need me, he'll send me away, that's for sure. And if you don't try to protect your work colleagues, if you are creating conflicts with them and adulate the boss, your work colleagues start burning you, stop paying attention to you, abandon you, because they know that everything they say, you could say it to the boss, you know, that creates a climate of suspicion, do you understand? That's what happens. I had some problems with guys like that because I didn't think it was correct that they talk all the time with the boss, and if the boss knows things that he didn't hear, if he knows things it's because someone is somehow telling him, and which person will I suspect? That guy that stays with him, 'cause someone who didn't talk with him

*don't tell him nothing for sure. I think it's that way, maybe it's wrong, but that's the way I think it must be.*¹

Joaquim R., joiner, 36 years, working since 12

With the reiterative learning of opportunities and aspirations that, in all succeeded socialization, made the agents accomplices of their own destiny, we find among these workers, together with the silent injunctions issuing from the sense of one's place as visceral self-controls (e.g. aversions and fears), vociferous *calls to account* (*chamadas de atenção*) and ironic or jocular admonitions (*bocas*). This «permanent and discrete discipline», as Max Weber says when he speaks about a collective ethos (1990: 202), shows how the connivance is imposed, stimulated and consolidated by working conditions where the attempts of obstructing or shunning the technical-organizational system impositions and the power structure vigilance often have immediate and heavy costs. Whenever you expose yourself to administration's disciplinary mechanisms you're *risking your own skin* (*arriscar a tua pele*). Therefore, the tactics of restitution must be realized almost clandestinely. Together with the functioning of an informal vigilance system (when the foreman was approaching, workers mutely advise each other putting two fingers on the shoulder as indicating invisible military emblems), the mutual recriminations help the maintenance of a work rhythm (*andamento*) and a shop scenery (*manter as aparências*) acceptable both to workers and the hierarchy that could frequently restrain intrusions *from above* (*de cima*).

¹ *Eu com os encarregados dou-me bem com eles todos, com o gerente nem me dou bem, nem me dou mal que eu não falo para ele. Eu não sou muito de dar confiança aos patrões, e neste caso o gerente muito menos porque ele ao primeiro tentou complicar a minha vida. (...) Eu não gosto [de dar confiança aos patrões] porque eu penso que se a gente começar a falar muito com o patrão, pelo menos na minha maneira de pensar, quem fale muito para o patrão tem que dizer mal dos colegas de trabalho, eles podem vir com mil e uma razões, há uma palavra que existe para isso que é "fazer escova", e ao "fazer escova" tu tens que estar a queimar algum colega, não é? ou tens: "ó pá, fulano disse isto, sicrano disse aquilo ou fulano disse que vai fazer isto", estás a ver? E o meu feitio não é esse, o meu feitio é tentar ser o mais correcto possível com os colegas, o patrão para mim é a última pessoa a eu proteger, eu protejo as pessoas, as pessoas, como é que se diz? Da minha arte, que é a marcenaria, o nível operário. O patrão é assim, eu sei que ele tem os poderes dele, enquanto precisar de mim tem-me lá e paga-me, mas quando não precisar põe-me a andar, isso é certinho. E tu se não tentares proteger os teus colegas de trabalho, se estiveres a criar conflitos com eles e a "fazer escova" com o patrão, os colegas de trabalho começam-te a queimar, deixam de te passar bola, dão-te ao abandono porque sabem que tudo o que tu dissesse que ele pode vir a dizer ao patrão, prontos, criar um ambiente de desconfiança, estás a ver? É isso que surge, eu cheguei a ter problemas com indivíduos assim porque eu não achava correcto eles estarem sempre metidos a falar com o patrão e depois o patrão sabia de coisas que ele não ouviu, se não ouviu é porque alguém lhe foi dizer, e eu desconfiei de quem? Foi quem estava a falar com ele, quem não falou com ele não lhe disse, eu acho que é assim, é a minha maneira de pensar.*

2.2 Communalities and the principles of di-vision.

The group of fellow workers withdraw from romantic conceptions. While a positive aggregator of representations and an important sociality space where the shared commonalities between agents submitted to identical conditions and constraints are reinforced through interaction persists, it is crossed by intrusive and often aggressive interference in personal behavior, even in their private lives outside the factory. An iridescent blame-gossip covers a multifaceted aspect making assumptions about those who do not conform - *as man and as worker* - to the intimately professed and publicly declared ideal.

From a system of aversions and, inversely, sympathies towards some demonized figures emerge that are juxtaposed to the principles of vision and division enmeshed in the discourse and practices of these workers. The *buck* (*chibo*) is someone who resigns too diligently to *the will of the boss* (*vontade do patrão*), that is easily manipulated (*um pau mandado*) and a potential informer (*dá com a língua nos dentes*). The *boaster* (*armante*) conspicuously refuses the austere ideal that expresses forms of self-presentation and orality, *he only has pretentiousness* (*manias*) *but he isn't worth a shit, he doesn't like the sawdust* (*serrim*, or *pó*); *he doesn't like to bow the line* (*fio*), i.e. the spine. He seems also to not accept the shared forms of resigned temperance and convivial consistency between fellow-workers, *he thinks he knows everything, doesn't listen to any one; he doesn't speak to nobody, maybe he's now rich*. The *lazier* (*malandro*) is someone who doesn't like *to bend the back* (*garfo*), thus manifestly refusing engagement with work. We could also find some individuals that, professional and socially disqualified (*carreções*), are bearers of a negative symbolic capital conferred and exhibited in the form of stigmas, for instance, *bad luck*, (*má fama*); *bad leather*, (*pouco cabedal*). This is part of common sense amongst those *who are from our kind*. Therefore, without the need of a previous and explicit agreement, it functions as a system of categories of perception and appreciation that bestows the (different) value of men and things.

Both the insensitive incorporation of the structures of the social order, accomplished through the reiteration of identical social situations in the biographical trajectory and by the similitude of objective experiences between the agents of a particular social group, stimulates the emergence of a «solidary system

of collective beliefs and ritual practices» endemic to a «social, moral and sensual cosmos» (Wacquant, 1998: pp.338, 328). The «occupational ethics» incorporated in this way consists of an «integrated ensemble of prescriptive and proscriptive rules, recipes and routines» (idem: p.340) about what is good or bad, allowed or forbidden, praiseworthy or censurable. Next to a moral economy, there's also a specific economy of morality that converts the oppositions in the sphere of power in terms of personal conflicts or virtuosity abilities. The condemnation of management *abuses* is fed by its manifest contrasts with the duties of reciprocity and by the sense of frontiers that bosses should observe, *gets beyond the marks*, (*passar das marcas*), signals the violations of tacit limits by employers. This moralization of economic processes gives justification and support to those who *don't let themselves to be stepped on* (*não se deixa calcar*) and who protest against the *lack of respect* (*falta de respeito*). Conversely, bosses who only think of *running fast* (*andar a correr*) are *silly* (*inocentes*) or *pimps* (*chulos*).

Giving one's own word (*dar a palavra*) is a means of establishing a web of reciprocal obligations. Undeceiving the workers in the restitutive moment of a *favor* or *grace* frustrates the expectation of *regard* (*consideração*) towards their self-assumed *value* (*valor*). The idea of belief corresponds originally to «an act of confidence implying restitution» or will «entrust something with the certainty of retrieve» (Benveniste, 1969: p.171). The structural economic transformations and the changes in the internal balance of force in the factory, makes improbable the solidarity heretofore coercively engendered in the game of interdependences, *I give my word to the man [boss] and now I'll not fail*, and turns superfluous the former mutual confidence between bosses and workers. The «logic of reproduction of charitable and confidence capital» (Sigaud, 1996: p.8) is increasingly threatened. It was frequently heard that *the bosses have no shame, so now they will be fucking off the people all of the time*. Mostly because *the money has gone to their heads* (*o dinheiro subiu-lhes à cabeça*) they become *greedy* (*ganantes*) and *take advantage of people* (*aproveitam-se das pessoas*).

The de-structuring of the «felicity's condition» (vd. Goffman, 1983) that ensured the maintenance and plausibility of such social formations is connected with the social, economic and cultural changes occurring in the dominated regions of social space. A combination of factors led to an increasing precariousness in the

social condition of these workers, specially: unemployment, casualization of job market and labor agreements, relative and absolute decrease in wages and indebtedness resulting from the access to propriety and consumption². Changes in the management strategies and in the technical apparatus of production conducted a re-configuration of the physical and social space of the factory.

The power-balance between workers and bosses over the legitimate uses and representations of the work execution, the work place and the interpersonal relationships reveals the effects of the concentration of economic and symbolic power in the managerial pole as Bruno, a 24-year-old foreman, working since 13, says:

The work rhythm is too much! I see the physical and psychological degradation, the people already start to get angry because of small questions, shouting out loud. You hear gossip that normally you don't hear... (...) I think the factory is in a phase that will be difficult for the people want in the future. They [management] are implementing a management system that for me isn't right. A management system that's based on people's sweat, based on cheap workforce, quality but cheap workforce, and based on speed. I think people are at this moment subjugated to a physical overcharge because of the number of hours they work [about 60-70 hours per week] and I also thinks that they are subjected to a psychological overcharge because they're poorly remunerated, are pressed all days with yelling, they're machines that are being pushed all day. I think that nowadays there's no one who says he likes to be there. (...) It has changed a lot. Moreover now with the harder work process, to me we're now working in a wrong way because of that pressure. I think people are getting exhausted³.

² Some of these features are revealed in a field-note taken after the work, when I take a lift with a couple of workers who work next to me in the factory: «"You know what it is?", says Madalena, worker of the polishing sector, while scratching two fingers with the meaning "money". "The people need them [the bosses]. You know what their [the bosses] advantage is? It is the workers finding themselves needing to be paid at the end of the month, the house, the car, bills at the end of the month. It is the money you have to give to the bank." And ending the conversation, she says, with a bitter smile: "But they also need us, don't they?"» (field-note 21st. March 2007)

³ *[O ritmo é impressionante! Eu noto o desgaste tanto físico como psicológico, as pessoas já começam, por tudo e por nada, a exaltarem-se, a começar a falar mais alto, tu vês umas bocas que, normalmente, nunca há. E eu tento passar, tento não ouvir, tento fazer de conta, tento passar por cima de muita coisa porque compreendo perfeitamente. (...) Acho que a fábrica está numa fase em que vai ser difícil as pessoas quererem aquilo pra futuro deles, eles estão a querer implantar um sistema de gestão que pra mim não é lógico. Um sistema de gestão que é à base do suor das pessoas, à base da mão-de-obra barata, de mão-de-obra com qualidade [mas] barata, e baseado na rapidez. Acho que as pessoas, neste momento, estão sujeitas a uma sobrecarga física devido ao número de horas que trabalham [entre 60 a 70 horas por semana] e acho que estão sujeitos a uma sobrecarga psicológica porque são mal remuneradas, são pressionadas todos os dias com berros, são máquinas que estão ali e que estão sempre a ser pressionadas. Acho que neste momento não há nenhum empregado que diga que goste de lá estar. (...) Mudou muito entretanto. Para além da forma de trabalhar mais rígida, para mim neste momento estamos*

Both external and internal dynamics combine to make even more improbable a reciprocal attunement between workers from different «modes of generation» (vd. Bourdieu, 1984). That's precisely what a 47-year-old machine operator, working since 10, says when he states:

Before, it was different. Different to such a point that when someone lifted up his arm to do something everybody says in chorus: "we must have done it already". "Hey, let's go drink a beer", "we must have gone already", did you understand? Or, "let's have dinner all together", "let's go". Today no. I've been there for 6 years, almost 7, and I started organizing the New Year's day dinner between workers, that's nothing to do with the boss. The boss did his dinner, we did ours. In the first year everybody went, in the second year the same. After that people start changing, the workers started to change, they hired new ones and others goes away, and these people came with different customs. "Hey, here we normally do a dinner, do you wanna go?", "Man, I don't go, I can't go". No one is forced to go. That people are withdrawing themselves, is pulling apart the sociability and then they are pushed away, not intentionally, not deliberately, but they're pushed away... If they don't enter into the sociability, they get excluded. (...) The times we used to have, have disappeared.⁴

The increasing precarious working conditions also have an effect on the sociability of workers; but the harshness industrial work is also seen as a sign of masculine and professional valorization.

2.3 The production of the artist and the logic of art.

The virtuosity has always had a double meaning: artistic mastery and moral dignity. At the same time it articulates some of the opposition and disclosing

a trabalhar de uma forma errada devido à sobrecarga, devido à forma como as coisas estão a ser feitas e devida à avaliação, foi o que eu te falei à bocado daquilo da pressão a que as pessoas estão sujeitas, neste momento, a nível psicológico e a nível físico, acho que as pessoas estão a cansar-se.]

⁴ *Mas [antes] era diferente, diferente a ponto de se levantar um dedo para fazer alguma coisa e toda a gente respondia em coro: "já devia estar". "Olha, vamos ali beber uma cerveja", "já devíamos ter ido", entendes? Ou: "como é, logo vamos arranjar aí um jantar", "já devia estar". Hoje não. Eu estou ali à seis anos, vai para sete já não falta muito, e eu comecei a organizar os jantares de fim de ano entre empregados, não tinha nada a ver com o patrão, o patrão já fazia o jantar dele, [nós fazíamos o nosso]. No primeiro ano foi toda a gente, segundo ano toda a gente, depois começaram a mudar pessoas, entendes?, os trabalhadores começaram a mudar, começam a entrar uns e a sair outros e essas pessoas vêm com outros hábitos diferentes. "Ó fulano, nós aqui costumamos fazer um jantar", "ó pá, eu não vou, não posso ir", ninguém é obrigado a ir, não é? é lógico... "Ó pá, vamos a um...", "ai, eu não vou...", e essa pessoa está, está-se a afastar, não é? está-se a afastar do convívio e depois é posta um bocado de parte, não propositalmente, não deliberadamente, mas é posta de parte quer se queira, quer não, não é? Se ela não entra no convívio com as pessoas, vai-se afastando. (...) Pronto, acabou aquela, aquela coisa acabou.]*

strategies (e.g. resistance to authority, group-based control, virile language and intimidating humor, over-valorization of the sacrificial and prophylactic character of work), it converts the harshness and violence of industrial work in signs and attributes of masculine and professional valorization. In the factory, the *man makes himself a man* (*o homem faz-se homem* or *learns to be a man, aprende a ser um homem*), sees his physical shape and abilities increasing (*bota corpo, ganha corpo*), *learns what life is* (*aprende o que é a vida*), becomes a *true artist* (*verdadeiro artista*) and, lastly but not least, earns money. Like other rites of institution, it consists in «attributing properties of social nature in a way they seem properties of natural nature» (Bourdieu, 1998: p.130). The internalization of this sense-of-being, that is also a sense-of-must-be, is what enables the agents to recognize the reality as apodictic and definitive. Moreover, it re-interprets the social trajectory that intersects the factory as an apparent «subjective success in the midst of the objective failure that surrounds it» (Willis, 1978: p.61). Where vocations – mainly with «realistic» perspectives and relevance horizons (*that's for what we born, I look to that with the eyes of who knows that's the future*) – tend to coincide with the probable avocations, the «subjectivisation» of a collective *fatum* which has the appearances of a self-damnation.

The fundament of this apparently fatalistic coincidence is rooted in the «ontological complicity» between the «embodied history» and the «objectified history» that has formed the latter, that is, in an affinity relation that produces «the doxic relation with the real world, that kind of ontological engagement that the practical sense finds, a relation of belonging and possession in which the body appropriated by history appropriates itself, in an absolute and immediate way, of things inhabited by that same history» (Bourdieu, 1989: p.83). This concordance between the objective mission and the subjective aspirations explains the *gusto*, meaning literally *taste*, a kind of diligence and desire born of a visceral impulse to do that for which you have born and which must be made, *we are born to do this* (*a gente nasce para isto*). It expresses, in the language of calling and gift, a congenital *passion* and *will* (*motivação, vontade*) to accomplish what you bring with you since birth, *this born with us, (isto nasce com a gente)*.

It's necessary have the taste (gusto) for the art, it's really necessary! Have the will to make the furniture (...) The people look at a finished work and see immediately from where it came from, if it was well done or it isn't. There is furniture that only one person could do it's really necessary to know how to do it, and that person knows how to do it because she /he has a will and taste for things. She/he has a taste for the work she does and she can do it. Others work only because they need to survive. [The former] Have more taste in doing what they do than ambition in earning money. They have the taste in doing the furniture piece in the best way, and they don't look at the time it takes, they only want to finish it in the best way (...) I think this is inherited from parents, it comes from inheritance, I think it comes from inheritance. Since we don't inherit money, nor houses, nor estates, we inherit the will to work, the will to make furniture. It must be that way because we don't earn money.⁵

Mário L., machine operator, 44-years-old, working since 12

This personal account of a machine operator reveals how the work could be a process of renewing the moral integrity of the individual: an authentic «prophylactic sacrifice» (Turner, 1977: p.214). The conversion of necessity in virtue, in spite of not occurring without doubts, is capable of assimilating the suffering, privation and subordination of industrial work to the realization of a Spartan ideal, *the work never does ill to anyone*, or the confirmation of a vocational imperative, *we have been born to do this*. As «vocabularies of motives» (Gerth and Mills, 1984: pp.120-135) they sanction and confer coherence to the factory experience. All of them, act as «practices of personal integrity» (Moodie, 1991: p.39) in a context where hierarchical constraints and work violence endangers the very humanistic attributes of the worker

The logic of art materializes the auto-valorization and auto-justification of work, translating the constraints of work processes in terms of *responsibility, respect*

⁵ *É preciso ter gosto pela arte, é preciso ter gosto pela arte! Ter vontade de fazer o móvel... (...) A gente olha para uma obra e vê logo de onde é que ela veio, quando ela é bem acabada e quando não é. Há móveis que só uma pessoa é que os faz, é preciso saber mesmo fazê-los, e essa pessoa sabe fazê-los porque ela tem vontade de os fazer, tem gosto pelas coisas. Tem gosto pelo trabalho que faz e consegue fazê-lo, e há outros que trabalham porque têm que sobreviver, percebem? [Aqueles] Têm mais gosto naquilo que fazem do que ambição de ganhar dinheiro (...), têm sempre o gosto de pegar num móvel e fazê-lo bem feito, fazer uma coisa difícil, e ele não olha ao tempo que está a fazê-lo, ele quer fazê-lo, ele quer conseguir... (...) Eu acho que isso é herdado dos pais, vem da herança, eu acho que vem de herança. Já que não se herda dinheiro, nem casas, nem terrenos, herdou-se a vontade de trabalhar, a vontade de fazer móveis, deve ser isso, porque não se ganha dinheiro.*

and *pride*. The *passion for the art* is the eminent attribute of the *artist*. It emphasizes the redemptive characteristics of work and establishes the *gosto* as the necessary requirement and eminent manifestation of professional and personal grandeur. The ethos of sacrifice and abnegation in work⁶, together with the euphemized nature of the everyday violence of work and the explicit reference to an artistic meritocracy, converts the factory to a school of virtues. This *passion* injects the industrial work with a redemption of meaning, enabling a self-restitution process that could symbolically reverse the economic compulsion associated to industrial work. The artist's notoriety is consecrated and demands a constant revelation of an excellence made of *gosto*, *jeito*, *pranta* and *fama*, that is, willingness to work as sign of commitment, a ratified physical cunning, a distinctive postural presentation and a popular recognition.

2.4 Collusion and visceral awareness.

The *bad environment* in the factory organizes both the material and interactional conditions that make improbable and implausible its symbolic refutation. The recognition of a legitimate order inside the factory is generated by means of a particular «effect of place», which results from the «deaf injunctions and silent calls to the order of the structures of appropriated physic space that are one of the mediations through which the social structures become progressively mental structures and preference systems» (Bourdieu, 2004: p.162). The collusion corresponds to the accomplishment of the conditions that the social space tacitly demands of its occupants and is sustained by the existence of a more or less diffuse inculcation process of dispositions and in an implicit sense of one's place, *put yourself in your place*, (*põe-te no teu lugar*); *don't stretch yourself* (*não te estiques*); *that's only for those who can*, (*isso é só para quem pode*). In the factory, this means the naturalization of limits and distances of the social space as counterpart to the pre-reflexive adjustment and the inadvertent recognition of subjacent principles. That way, it's the «generalized sub-reproduction» of a whole social system that takes place (Pinto, 1981: p.209).

⁶ There is a vast array of expressions, for instance: *I don't need that somebody ordain me to do something*, *não preciso que ninguém me mande*; *work to be someone in life*, *trabalhar para a frente para ser alguém na vida*; *in this work you don't get doctor's hands*, *neste trabalho não se tem mãos de doutor*.

However, as Pierre Bourdieu said, «the doxic attitude does not mean happiness; it means bodily submission, unconscious submission, which may indicate a lot of internalized tension, a lot of bodily suffering» (Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1992: p.120). We find a kind of painful resignation in the worker's affirmations that *not everyone could be doctors, we have to submit (temos de nos sujeitar) or the necessity compels and I had to go [working] (a necessidade obriga e eu fui [trabalhar])*. The *respect* that surrounds the figure of the boss issues from the symbolic alchemy of a particular situation where huge social distances are combined with spatial and affective proximity.

Shame (vergonha) and *embarrassment (atrapalhamento)* are visible whenever someone feels that the authorized limits circumscribed by his «positional vision», a perspective that re-interprets the reality from the differential position occupied in a structure of resource distribution (Lopes, 1976: pp.213-214), are being threatened. In the factory, it is necessary to *know how to stay (saber estar)*, being desirable to stay in *my place (quero é estar no meu sítio)*, and *fulfil with the obligations (cumprir as minhas obrigações)*. Those *who don't like this, must change their place of work (quem não está bem que se mude)*. Be they bosses or workers, those who *stretch themselves (se estica)* or *speak loud and bold (falar alto e grosso)* or *fail their duties*, cross deference frontiers invested with emotional and moral charges. These acts and words are mostly described in the language of profanation that signalize a dramatic rupture, *for me it's over, (para mim acabou); I never look at him the same way, (nunca mais o olhei direito); I can't even see him front of me, (nem o posso ver à minha frente)*.

The feeling of occupying a non-deigned social situation, that everything in and outside the factory seems to confirm, acts as a «self-fulfilling prophecy» where «such fears become reality» (vd. Merton, 1948). The same reality which inscribes in the social position of this agents the acquisition of a sense of inferiority and indignity as their natural form of being persists, embodied in the flesh of those men in which it is constantly re-instated and reproduced – just by those who, generated in that reality, see and feel it as natural. These collective feelings of inferiority unfetter processes of self-exclusion and retraction that are present in the hexis «The bodily hexis is the practical manner to experiment and express the sense possessed about (...) one's social value» (Bourdieu, 1979: p.552). A multitude of occasions reveal and express the carnal marks of social illegitimacy and loss of confidence

that haunts, more or less diffusely, several workers (e.g. these two excerpts from my notebooks).

When Fábio has to talk with the manager about the end of his contract, he «gets nervous» and «gets completely embarrassed». That to such an extent that he can hardly say a word («he even can't talk» says Tobias) and gets tears in his eyes. He is the personification of pervasive and permanent domination: now, at 51-years-old, he feels the latent decadence of his body and the progressive obsolescence of his craft. «He hasn't got used to the new style of working. He is blocked» says Jonas, by means of an operation of transmutation, the social order gets inscribed in corporeal postures of reverence (fixed in the form of discourse as «eyes on the floor», «he doesn't even look at him», «speaks in low voice», «the words aren't well suited»).

(Field-note 21th. March 2007)

Pedro justifies his silence in front of the manager saying that he « doesn't know how to talk» («He [the manager] calls me an ass and says to learn first how to talk before saying anything...») and ends his account giving himself reasons to justify this inability («we don't have any studies», «we have little culture», «I don't know how to express myself», «I don't have words to say what I think»). While shrugging his shoulders, resigned («encolher os ombros»), he shows in an immediate way the efficacy of the interiorized mechanisms of subalternity and «respect for the one who's ruling» («respeito por quem está a mandar»).

(Field-note 13th. March 2007)

A mode of being apparently defined by recurrent negation, closely linked to an utmost and redundant and taken for granted order of things, represses and inhibits even the articulation of a discourse that could make intelligible this particular experience of the factory (vd. Charlesworth, 2000). The incorporated domination appears mainly in the form of corporeal metaphors recorded in the flesh and bones of workers and enmeshed in practical form. That's why, in the words of management, workers are often referred to be *stubborn* (*teimosos, torrões*), intellectually and physically limited (*limitados, empancados, fraquicos, burros*), *nervous*

or *contentious* (*nervosos* or *zaragateiros*) - so they become potentially dangerous as they *freaking out* (*passam-se*). The workers are willing to accept that definitions are imposed over them, in part because they believe the legitimacy of the management to refer to them in these terms and also because they find barriers to the articulation of speech and a censorship that inhibits attitudes that could subvert that same opinion. However, sometimes the workers use the management credulity in their irredeemable nature to persist in some practices (like drinking at work or defying the working prescriptions).



[A view from inside the factory. Upstairs, we could see the management office.]

3. Honor and usury.

The workers' representations and practices, actualized as a way of giving meaning and coherence to their immediate and physical presence in the shop floor, oscillate between ennoblement and in-humanized accounts. The metaphors supposed to crystallize the factory's vivid experience are conditioned by the fact that the social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived (vd. Douglas, 1991). The objective conditions of existence regulate not only the materiality of the body but also its perception and appreciation. The polysemy (the fact that the same work as several different meaning) by which it is usually conceived and designated as the body in the workers' discourse translates as either differences in the mode of presence in the factory world (which defines the configuration of what can or cannot be experienced in a certain culture), or the fragility and precariousness which are present in the judging processes and reference method used in workplaces about the bodily situation. The images of a bestialized body and of a mechanical body establish axis of articulation for ambivalent discourses, both of accommodation and denunciation, on the workers' body status in the field of power relations and in the work process.

Workers *aren't made of iron*, they are *made of flesh and bones like them* [the bosses]. As a machine-operator summarizes, *people, I think the name says all, are people, aren't machines*. These are discourses that help to sustain practices of personal integrity and enhance self-affirmation tactics of the dignity of *being a person* that the factory seems to endanger. Frequently, the boss *don't give any value to the worker, don't care about a man or if he and his family have any trouble*. He only *wants you to work hard*, since he *only sees numbers*» and *the results at the end of the month*. He desires a *worker who works twenty-four hours for free; they [bosses] think we are machines*. In the workers' classification schemes, the metaphorical duality about the body-in-work parallels the division between the workers' practices of personal integrity (moral and physical) and managerial ascriptions that seem to interpret these workers as *machines* or *things* subordinated to self-seeking (*interesseiros*) economic interests⁷. At this point, the apparently contradictory ascriptions and uses of the body-in-work, imbedded in the relations of social force between workers and bosses, ground and stabilize double-faced representations.

⁷ That's why that which is designated, in the euphemized language of management, as «human resources» acquire an ironic tone in these workers narratives.

The refusal of the de-personalization that lays in a supposed management procuring (comprehending both an economic, moral and bodily meaning), in which the bosses are *pimps* and the workers *sell themselves*, is expressed in collective indignation and resentment that seems to constitute an «idiom of bodily exploitation» (Wacquant, 2001: p.182). Even if, sometimes, the same motives are used to do a self appraisal of the personal worker's capacities, *I'm a computer, I'm a machine*. The expressions '*fuck the leather*', '*scratching*', '*being beaten in the loin*' underlines that other bestializing dimension of painful work and a hostile environment that reduces men to *beasts* and *camels*. In a semantic turn, we also have here the means to put in relief the strength and the size of the corporeal capital (having a *great hide* and being a *horse full of power* or a *bull*).

The duality about the same bodily typological figures «mustn't be seen as a contradiction between the workers' illusion, situated at the level of their representations, and the "reality" where they are placed, but on the contrary, as a contradiction between the two aspects of that same "reality": the reality of their representations and their sustentation in the working conditions» (Lopes, 1976: p.114). The workers aren't simply deceived or incapable of consolidating a more adequate account about the industrial work, «but it is that very "reality" that eludes them, showing to the worker under a dissimulated and inverted form» (idem: p.114) where it instils spontaneous and «natural» representations that justifies itself.

The reality of these representations is so suitable to the reality of the working conditions that it serves to hide what those working conditions contain. As Seth Holmes asserts, «the perceived bodily difference along class lines serves to justify or naturalize inequalities, making them appear purely or primarily natural and not also social in origin» (2006: p.1787). Each kind of body seems to deserve its relative social value as matter-of-factness. People internalize their position, henceforth «publicly» manifest as pride or shame, indignation or deference, via perceptual significances that irradiate from the diffuse or formalized appreciations that are thrown over their most intimate manners, attitudes and conducts. Because of these perceptions, the workers bodies are seen to belong to its position in the very system in which imputations of inferiority had conducted to their inferiorization.

Here, what we find is an intrinsic ambivalence in the conceptions of the workers' body before the indisputability that *a man doesn't last forever*. The body is a

perishable and limited resource, one which in making profits with it is painful and must be disputed with the boss. *They [bosses] must have respect. It isn't only that we accept collaboration with them and know they are always 'fucking us'. 'Cause I think this way: the bosses must live their lives, but they must have eyes to see how it is, what we deserve* (field-note March 29th. 2007). This implies a body economy, either because this is the fundamental nexus in the work process, or because it's necessary to have a constant saving and conservation that the *easy way of working* ensures.

However, increasing the volume and esthetical, ethical and technical qualities of the body means also *pushing the carcass*. Besides the frequent amputations and deformations, the emergence of salient veins in the arms and *stout* and *callous* hands are the best marks of the passage in the factory. This depreciation process, progressive or sudden, is visible (*the work wears out the body, spent body, sell the body*) and the flesh and mind usury reveals to the workers through their own body and the body of their fellows. Asking *show me your hands, let me see your hands*, is the immediate way to confer if they are *doctor's hands* or, otherwise, if they are *worn out*. The contradictory nature of the workers' assertions lays in the double truth of the process of investment and valorisation of the body, where at the same time the work transforms the very materiality of the body and associates with its ethical qualities, and the combustion of the body.

4. Conclusion.

Existence as a «class-object» (vd. Bourdieu, 1977) is entangled with a personal and interpersonal experience of objectification. The reproduction of social patterns of subalternity, retraction, reactivity and self-negation due to cultural shame that characterises the working class condition, involves the transfer, in living flesh, of class differences, both through the inculcation structured in terms of the naturalisation of arbitrary dominant cultural factors and through the subtle, disperse and implicit assimilation of social personalities. The places of class are always especially effective places of socialisation.

The symbolical-ideological effectiveness of the domination objectively experienced by the working classes in the locus of production emerges precisely in

the discourse used to disclose the everyday experiences. It is these discourses that allude immediately and fragmentarily to the silent assimilation of a social experience of impotence and objectification. The reiterated experience of the world of these workers implicitly defines what is cognitively and emotionally perceived as allowed or forbidden, praiseworthy or blameworthy, good or bad, that should be repressed or flaunted. This mutual understanding between the (re)socialised lived body and the objectified space naturalises the social distances and limits, infra-consciously recording them as postures of deference, a sense of one's proper place and own value, and a sensibility adjusted to the practices and goods plausible and suitable for *people of our kind*.

The order of things is engraved in the flesh and bones of agents in the form of preferences and rejections, likings and aversions. This sense, acquired socially and interpersonally, incorporates a cultural history made up of relationships of inequality. It is this propensity to be, to see and to do that guides social agents, giving the body an objectivity, a perceptibility and a significance for others that constitutes the basis of social experience. The effects of the differential form of being of manual workers, due to their differential relationship concerning the resources, affect the most intimate processes through which the individual is formed. It is the inter-subjective structure of behaviour that, in turn, concretises and actualises this specific social experience. Precisely because of that, the reference dimension of practices and representations, of experiences and significances, that is, the universe of the significant distinctions of social agents is absolutely twinned with their properties of position.

The vocabularies of shame and respect are firstly related with the contrasting representations, conceptions and interests placed upon the body-in-work of workers and bosses. The legitimate vision of the body is disputed over the asymmetrical social space of the factory. In such a context, from the point of view of workers, it appears as a scission between the maintenance of *naturalness* and *maleness* as sources of autonomy and humanity before the invasive managerial intentions of bodily objectification by means of over-exploitation, strict vigilance and disciplinary prescriptions.

These vocabularies are also related with a complicated conciliation between the fragility and detritions of the body-in-work and a symbolical economy of virtues and a masculine culture based on carnality. The workers find in work,

simultaneously, a way of virtuous aggrandisement and a constant usury of their corporeal capital. Therefore, the ambiguity and duality that lay at the heart of the vocabularies of pride and shame employed to confer coherence to the shopfloor experience are rooted in the very contradictory nature of the workers presence in the social relations of production.

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