

Materialities of Digital Labor in the Global South and Communication Invisibilities

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Abstract: The book *The Privilege of Servitude: The New Services-Proletariat in the Digital Age*, by Ricardo Antunes, offers a reading of the mutations and contradictions of the world of work, through the materialities of digital labor and the morphologies of the "class-that-lives-from-labor", in a dialogue both theoretical-conceptual from the Global South and in a conjunctural analysis of the last years in Brazil, including the bourgeois counterrevolution and the devastation of the labor in the Temer government. The review aims to make Antunes' book dialogue with communication research.

Keywords: digital labor; world of work; Global South; social classes; communication.

Resumo: O livro *O privilégio da servidão: o novo proletariado de serviços na era digital*, de Ricardo Antunes, oferece uma leitura sobre as mutações e contradições do mundo do trabalho, passando pelas materialidades do trabalho digital e pelas morfologias da "classe-que-vive-do-trabalho", em um diálogo tanto teórico-conceitual a partir do Sul global quanto em uma análise conjuntural dos últimos anos no Brasil, incluindo a contrarrevolução burguesa e a devastação do trabalho no governo Temer. Procuramos, então, trazer um diálogo da obra com a comunicação.

Palavras-chave: trabalho digital; mundo do trabalho; Sul Global; classes sociais; comunicação.

1. MURDOCK, Graham. *Refeudalização revisitada: a destruição da democracia deliberativa*. MATRIZes. V. 12, n. 2, mai/ago 2018, p. 13-31.

2. ANTUNES, Ricardo. *O Privilégio da Servidão: o novo proletariado de serviços na era digital*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2018.

3. Idem, p. 16.

4. Idem, p. 16.

5. FISHER, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is there no alternative?* Winchester: Zero Books, 2011.

6. DARDOT, Pierre; LAVAL, Christian. *A Nova Razão do Mundo*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2016.

7. BROWN, Wendy. *El Pueblo Sin Atributos: la secreta revolución del neoliberalismo*. Barcelona: Malpaso, 2016.

8. ANTUNES, idem, p. 287.

9. HUWS, Ursula. *Labor in the Global Digital Economy*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014.

10. SINGER, André. *O Lulismo em Crise: um quebra-cabeça do período Dilma (2011-2016)*. São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 2018.

11. CARVALHO, Laura. *Valsa Brasileira: do boom ao caos econômico*. São Paulo: Todavia, 2018.

12. ANTUNES, idem, p. 262.

13. PRADO JR, Caio. *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo: colônia*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2011.

14. FERNANDES, Florestan. *A Revolução Burguesa no Brasil*. São Paulo: Globo, 2006.

In a time when Brazil faces the ascension of the far-right politics, the destruction of the pact built in 1988 and of the project of an autonomous, democratic and progressive country, which, as Murdock¹ points out, includes the end of deliberative democracy, the most recent book by perspective Ricardo Antunes, *O Privilégio da Servidão: o novo proletariado de serviços na era digital* [The privilege of servitude: the new services proletariat in the digital age]² is not only an encouragement, but also a potent diagnosis - realistic and aimed at seeing “light at the end of the tunnel” – about contemporary Brazil, from the point of view of the world of work. Its power comes mainly from the centrality, in the analysis, of the concrete and material life of working people and from the dialectics, which takes into account the historical process, always contradictory. Antunes starts the book³ stating that it now seems that we live in a “dark age”, but recently – about 2013 – the situation was marked by a so-called “era of rebellion.” The author then asks himself: “who could say that the system of social metabolism of capital, with its *era of counterrevolutions*, is the end of history?”⁴

If it is not the end of history, we must: a) denaturalize and face “capitalist realism”⁵, in the sense of not taking it as the only possible mode of production and way of life, in a moment when the “neoliberal governmentality”⁶ penetrates all spheres of life⁷, which means a confrontation with the destructive logic of capital⁸; and b) think and propose ways of resistance – since, according to Huws⁹, there is no control without resistance, relatively to today’s world of work.

In this context, *The Privilege of Servitude* joins other recent works, such as those by André Singer¹⁰ and Laura Carvalho¹¹, in their attempt to understand Brazilian political-economic context and its crisis. However, its focus is neither on Lulism, nor on the economic matrices of the last decade, but on the class struggles and the new morphology of the working class with a bourgeois domination oscillating between “overexploration” and “coup”¹². Caio Prado Júnior¹³ already described the “super exploration of the workforce” and the transformation “on top” in Brazilian peripheral capitalism. But Antunes draws mainly on Florestan Fernandes¹⁴ to discuss bourgeois counterrevolution in the contemporary scenario. In this context, we recover Fernandes¹⁵, for whom the Brazilian bourgeoisie is neither modern nor a champion of civilization, always protecting its own interests, which includes taking advantage of persistent *inequalities*. In a conciliatory arrangement through the unification of the dominant classes, there is no definitive rupture with the past. What in fact exists is a slow, molecular and surreptitious process of devastation and deconstruction of labor with Temer-Bolsonaro¹⁶.

This book by Antunes¹⁷ is thus the consolidation of a research process started in his previous work *Os Sentidos do Trabalho*¹⁸ [The meanings of work]: a book of maturity presenting both the categories for understanding current work conditions versus digital technologies and the analysis of precariousness and flexibilization of labor in Brazil. It argues that precariousness is not static, but “a way of being intrinsic to capitalism”¹⁹. The author offers a look from the Global South to the world of work without avoiding the dialogue with authors

from the North, both classic and contemporary. Antunes then presents the consolidation of the argument that the “end of the labor society” was a European-Habermasian delirium²⁰, exposing both the new morphologies of the world of work – proletariat of services, freelance jobs, infoproletariat and digital labor – and the persistence of global precarious labor. Indeed, there is no talk of “end of work” in China, India or Brazil (even Europeans have faced it more concretely in the last decade).

The precariousness of labor, as something embedded in the capitalist mode of production, turns employment contracts previously considered “atypical” - freelancers, PCs, zero hour contracts, intermittent jobs, outsourcing – into the rule of bourgeois counterrevolution in Brazil. This is in line with what has already been diagnosed by other authors in the Global North, such as Boltanski & Chiapello²¹ and Dardot e Laval²². The imperative of flexibility is the basis for the productive reorganization by business management, involving the individualization of work situations and harassment as management strategies. The latter topic has also been studied by Gaulejac²³. Based on these concepts, and taking as examples some concrete cases, such as that of call center workers, Antunes seeks to relate how the technologies of the twentieth-first century are articulated with working conditions of the twentieth century.

According to Huws²⁴, the debate is centered on digital labor and its concreteness, that is, its inseparability from productive processes and the economy in general. As Antunes²⁵ points out, “Online activities are advancing, increasingly entering the complex global production chains.” The “so-called ‘virtual’ activities are dependent on and have strong connections with the materiality of the world of work”²⁶. This concept of “re-embodiment”²⁷ of the digital may be related to other works, such as Jack Qiu’s paper on the circuits of labor involving the production of iPhone at Foxconn²⁸, and also the Chinese “digital” working class²⁹. The author therefore does not condone hegemonic visions idealizing the world of work inspired by an “ideology of the Silicon Valley”³⁰.

In the field of sociology of work, Antunes³¹ takes a step forward analysing the impact – always dialectical – of digital technologies (what he calls “digital age”) on work activities and productive processes. However, he could benefit from a better dialogue with communication research to advance his arguments. In a theoretical sense, the digital, though important throughout the explanation, appears only as an appendix in his book. This can be verified in less developed expressions such as “digitalized and technologized society”; however, we may always consider technology as a result of human labor, as Vieira Pinto³² puts it. The same happens with “financial capitalism of the information age”, an expression suggesting that information is somehow detached from the production process, which recalls metaphors idealized mainly in the 1990’s based on a non-historical understanding of technological communications, as Ampuja³³ notes.

Certainly, this is not Antunes’s view – especially because the author deals with new forms of expropriation of value related to digital labor, but these expressions, put in a naturalized way, are indications of lack of a greater dialogue with other

- 15. Idem
- 16. Este, ao menos nos discursos da campanha eleitoral.
- 17. ANTUNES, idem.
- 18. ANTUNES, Ricardo. *Os sentidos do trabalho*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2001.
- 19. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 59.
- 20. HABERMAS, Jürgen. *Teoria do agir comunicativo*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2016. v. 2
- 21. BOLTANSKI, Luc; CHIAPELLO, Éve. *O novo espírito do capitalismo*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2009.
- 22. DARDOT; LAVAL, op. cit.
- 23. GAULEJAC, Vincent de. *Gestão como doença social: ideologia, poder gerencialista e fragmentação social*. Aparecida, SP: Ideias e Letras, 2007.
- 24. HUWS, Ursula. *Mundo material: o mito da economia imaterial. Mediações*, Londrina, v. 16, n. 1, p. 24-54, 2011.
- 25. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 48.
- 26. Ibidem, p. 50.
- 27. HUWS, 2011.
- 28. QIU, Jack; GREGG, Melisa; CRAWFORD, Kate. *Circuits of labour: a labour theory of the iPhone era. TripleC*, London, v. 12, n. 2, p. 564-581, 2014.
- 29. QIU, Jack. *China’s digital working class and circuits of labor. Communication and the Public*, Hangzhou, v. 3, n. 1, p. 5-18, 2018.
- 30. SCHRADIE, Jen. *Ideologia do Vale do Silício e desigualdades de classe: um imposto virtual em relação à política digital. Parágrafo*, São Paulo, v. 5, n. 1, p. 85-99, 2017.
- 31. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 50.
- 32. VIEIRA PINTO, Álvaro. *O conceito de tecnologia*. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 2005.

33. AMPUJA, Marko. A sociedade em rede, o cosmopolitismo e o "sublime digital": reflexões sobre como a história tem sido esquecida na teoria social contemporânea. **Parágrafo**, São Paulo, v. 3, n. 1, p. 55-67, 2015.

34. QIU, Jack. **Goodbye iSlave**: a manifesto for digital abolition. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016.

35. SCHOLZ, Trebor. **Uberworked and underpaid**. London: Polity Press, 2016.

36. SLEE, Tom. **Uberização: a nova onda do trabalho precarizado**. São Paulo: Elefante, 2017.

37. ROSENBLAT, Alex. **Uberland: how algorithms are rewriting the rules of work**. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018.

38. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 35.

39. SRNICEK, Nick. **Platform Capitalism**. London: Polity, 2017.

40. Ibidem.

41. As, for instance, it is dealt with in another context, ABILIO, Ludmila Costhek. **Sem Maquiagem**. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2014.

42. SCHOLZ, op. cit.

43. ROSENBLAT, op. cit.

44. SRNICEK, op. cit., p. 43.

45. VAN DIJCK, José; POELL, Thomas; DEWAAL, Martijn. **The platform society: public values in a connective world**. New York: Oxford, 2018.

46. ANTUNES, 2018.

47. Disconsidering exceptions such as: ZEHLE, Soenke; ROSSITER, Ned. **Mediations of labor: algorithmic architectures, logistical media, and the rise of Black Box Politics**. In: MAXWELL, Richard (org.). **The Routledge Companion to Labor and Media**. New York: Routledge, 2017. p. 40-50.

48. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 37.

49. SRNICEK, op. cit.

researches in the area. The same applies to the expressions “digital slavery”, studied by Qiu³⁴, and “uberization”, analysed by Scholz³⁵, Slee³⁶ & Rosenblat³⁷. Regarding uberization, Antunes calls it a “private global wage-earning company disguised as deregulated work [...] appropriating the surplus-value generated by the services of drivers”³⁸, behind the mask of an application, in line with what Srnicek³⁹ says on platform capitalism.

Let us consider Antunes’ ideas as a starting point for thinking: What is really new in the so-called “uberization” in reference to proprocesses of production and communication, including those involving value extraction? How do these issues vary depending on the type of platform involved – in terms of Srnicek⁴⁰, there are advertising, industrial, product, cloud, and lean – the latter exemplified by Uber itself and AirBnB? How are the labor-consumption dynamics⁴¹ involved in these platforms and the conditions and contradictions of “uberized” work, as Scholz⁴² e Rosenblat⁴³ see it? How to advance in interrelationships between platforms – defined by Srnicek as “digital infrastructures that enable two or more groups to interact”⁴⁴, which is also analysed by van Dijck, Poell & Waal⁴⁵ – and the materiality of digital labor from the point of view of working people?

However, even without this broader dialogue involving research on work and digital technologies, Antunes⁴⁶, contributes to the communication research, because he deals with the “internet of things” – something fetishized and idealized in the field of communication⁴⁷ – in a critical way and from the point of view of labor. For Antunes, the internet of things symbolizes the “informational-digital” control of production, resulting in “the expansion of dead labor, with digital machinery – the ‘internet of things’ – as the building block of all manufacturing process”⁴⁸.

Advances in this field can be achieved if we consider that data extraction has key functions in capitalism and communication nowadays, as Srnicek⁴⁹ and Turow & Couldry⁵⁰ observe when they highlight, the role of communication in the “datafication”⁵¹ of production. According to Srnicek, data can “educate and give competitive advantage to algorithms; they enable the coordination and outsourcing of workers; they allow for the optimisation and flexibility of productive processes”⁵². Data can still be used for control and surveillance of workers, and according to Fuchs⁵³, personal data of users can serve as fixed and circulating capital.

From the above context, especially in relation to the internet of things, we can infer that if communication is still a blind spot in sociology of work research, so are the points of view of production and world of work for communication research. This is especially true for researches whose central objects are the digital media, as if they were detached from the productive processes and the value chains. Still regarding the “the absense of communication” in Antunes’ work, we highlight three points.

The first is the sensitive chapter on photographs of global precarious labor, in which he describes films about the current scenario of the world of work, which could yield a more in-depth analysis, from a communicational perspective, beyond mere description. Next, we highlight the description of

“permanent freelancers”, defined by the author’s meaning: “freelancers who become permanent but have their rights circumvented and hide themselves from newsrooms when companies undergo work audits”⁵⁴. There is, in Antunes’ own exemplification, a relationship with the world of work in communications, especially with journalists, although there is no dialogue with researches that explored this theme in communication⁵⁵, showing the contradictions of working as a freelancer, including “permanent freelancers”, in a world of work marked by digital technologies and labor flexibilization.

A third point is the Antunes’s detection of a “new corporate dictionary” with terms such as “resilience”, “collaborators” and “goals”⁵⁶ – as a counterpoint to destructive management in relation to the world of work. This is because corporate grammar had undergone changes since the end of the 1990s, as Fígaro⁵⁷ points out regarding the appropriation of senses by business discourse. This dimension of communication/language about work⁵⁸ has been a concern for studies on the world of work in communication, including taking language as a market, in the sense of Rossi-Landi⁵⁹, of observing “what are the regularities that govern the circulation of words, expressions and messages, starting from the values by which they are consumed and exchanged”⁶⁰. This means that there is value in the circulating signs, which compose a grammar that, on the one hand, convenes⁶¹ people to act in certain ways (to be flexible, innovative, disruptive, resilient, entrepreneurship) to the detriment of others, in order to prescribe successful people. On the other hand it also justifies⁶², the ways of being and existing in capitalism as attenuators of the “privilege of servitude”⁶³. Thus, the communicational blind spot in the work of Antunes⁶⁴ prevents from seeing communication as an articulator and auxiliary arm of the capitalist mode of production⁶⁵, including the financial one, through the circulation of capital.

The circulation of capital is analyzed in Antunes’s work, including the role of means of transport in the circulation of goods. In this sense, Antunes⁶⁶ correctly points out, from a Marxian view, that there is a production process involved in the circulation process.

The author theorizes issues regarding time of production time of circulation and surplus-value production process, considering that the transport industry “becomes essential for the concretization of material production and the realization of surplus-value”⁶⁷. However, Marx himself⁶⁸, in the *Grundrisse*, highlights the central role not only of the means of transport, but also the means of communication – something forgotten by Antunes⁶⁹ – in relation to the circulation of capital. That is communication, both as a means of production⁷⁰ and as circulation, operates in the capitalist mode of production as extractor of surplus-value, including “datafication of production” mentioned previously.

Another issue addressed by Antunes, besides that of circulation of capital is financialization, considering “financial capital at the summit and deregulated labor in productive value chains”⁷¹. An important point is the non-displacement of financial capital in relation to productive capital, since “financial capital itself operates in the productive sphere (and controls it)”⁷². In this sense, only

50. TUROW, Joseph; COULDREY, Nick. Media as data extraction: towards a new map of a transformed communication field. *Journal of Communication*, Oxford, v. 68, n. 2, p. 415-423, 2017.

51. BREITER, Andreas; HEPP, Andreas. The complexity of datafication: putting digital traces in context. In: HEPP, Andreas; BREITER, Andreas; HASEBRINK, Uwe (org.). *Communicative configurations: transforming communications*. London: Palgrave, 2018. p. 387-405.

52. SRNICEK, op. cit., p. 41-42.

53. FUCHS, Christian. *Social media: a critical introduction*. London: Sage, 2017.

54. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 36-37.

55. See GROHMAN, Rafael. *Os discursos dos jornalistas freelancers sobre o trabalho: comunicação, mediações e recepção*. Dissertação (Mestrado em Ciências da Comunicação) – Escola de Comunicação e Artes, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2012; e FÍGARO, Roseli; NONATO, Cláudia; GROHMAN, Rafael. *As mudanças no mundo do trabalho do jornalista*. São Paulo: Atlas, 2013.

56. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 38.

57. FÍGARO, Roseli. *Relações de comunicação no mundo do trabalho*. São Paulo: Annablume, 2008.

58. NOUROUDINE, Abdallah. A linguagem: dispositivo revelador da complexidade do trabalho. In: SOUZA-E-SILVA, Maria Cecília; FAÏTA, Daniel. *Linguagem e trabalho: construção de objetos de análise no Brasil e na França*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2002. p. 17-30.

59. ROSSI-LANDI, Ferrucio. *A linguagem como trabalho e como mercado: uma teoria da produção e da alienação linguística*. São Paulo: Difel, 1985.

60. Ibidem, p. 85.

61. PRADO, José Luiz Aidar. *Convocações biopolíticas dos dispositivos comunicacionais*. São Paulo: Educ, 2013.

62. BOLTANSKI; CHIAPELLO, op. cit.

63. ANTUNES, 2018.

64. Ibidem.

65. SODRÉ, Muniz. *A ciência do comum*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2014.

66. ANTUNES, 2018.

67. Ibidem, p. 43.

68. MARX, Karl. *Grundrisse*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2011.

69. ANTUNES, 2018.

70. WILLIAMS, Raymond. *Meios de comunicação como meios de produção*. In: _____. *Cultura e materialismo*. São Paulo: Unesp, 2011. p. 69-85.

71. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 172.

72. Ibidem, p. 257.

73. Also currently worked in: DURAND, Cedric. *El capital ficticio*. Barcelona: NED, 2018.74. MARX, Karl. *O capital*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2017. v. 3.

75. SODRÉ, op. cit.

76. HUWS, 2014.

77. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 80.

78. NEGRI, Antonio; HARDT, Michael. *Multidão*. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2005.79. GORZ, André. *O imaterial*. São Paulo: Annablume, 2005.

80. HUWS, 2011, p. 52.

81. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 83.

82. HUWS, 2011, p. 28.

83. TOSEL, André. *Teoria política e trabalho imaterial em Marx*. Entrevista cedida a Henrique Amorim. *Lutas Sociais*, São Paulo, n. 23, 2009, p. 167.84. DANTAS, Marcos. *Trabalho com informação: valor, acumulação, apropriação nas redes do capital*. Rio de Janeiro: CFCH, 2012.

the so-called “fictitious capital”⁷³ – already present in the third volume of Marx’s *Capital*⁷⁴ – would be separated from production. However, again there is invisibility regarding the role of communication – without prejudice to the author, since this issue does not figure in his research agenda – in the process of financialization, which Sodré⁷⁵ calls “financialization of communication”.

As we can see, the new (and old) forms of extracting surplus-value in contemporary capitalism, including digital labor, as part of the scope of Antunes ‘work, in line with from Huws’⁷⁶ research, highlighting the relevance of the Marx’s law of value today. In this context, is also inserted the debate on material and immaterial labor, in which the author asks: “Do or do not these activities, considered to be predominantly immaterial, have connections with the complex mechanisms of the law of value currently operating in their valorization process?”⁷⁷ Antunes then observes new mechanisms of extraction of overwork in activities considered as “immortal”, and frontally opposes to statements such as those of Negri & Hardt⁷⁸ or Gorz⁷⁹, regarding “immortal labor”, which extirpate both value and “redundant, messy, vulnerable materiality”⁸⁰ of humans, especially in the Global South context. According to Antunes⁸¹, André Gorz

by making immaterial labor as dominant and even decisive in present-day capitalism, and unrelated to the generation of value, ended up creating an obstruction that precluded the possibility of understanding new modalities and forms of this law, which are present in the new proletariat of services (cybertariat or infoproletariat), who performs activities of highly immaterial profile, but that are a constituent part of the creation of value and are more or less embedded in the material work [...]. It is worth remembering that formulations that hyper dimension the immaterial labor and convert it into a dominant element often disregard the empirical trends present in the world of work of the global South.

In our view, a work’s product is considered intangible or digital does not mean that production processes are “immortal” because, as Huws⁸² states, “cultural products such as books, films, ‘science’ or advertisements - and the ‘ideas’ they contain (at least to the extent that these are a conscious result of mental effort) are also the products of human intellectual and physical labor”. According to Tosei⁸³, “the immaterial is a form of materiality as the symbolic also is” and results in products of many orders that depend on the work – which is always mental and bodily – of men and women in the productive chain of value. In the same line, Marcos Dantas⁸⁴ completely refutes the category of “immortal labor”, stating that

the informational work is material, since it is the transformation, through the human body and its mind, through appropriate prostheses (tools and technologies), of materials carrying signs that contain value for the sign they carry. Labor is immaterial only if it is done by God in the act of creation...⁸⁵

This perception of digital labor is shared by Huws⁸⁶ and Scholz⁸⁷. For Huws, the internet depends on power generation, circuit breakers, satellite launch, “the construction of the buildings in which they are designed and assembled

and from which they are marketed”⁸⁸, among other material products. In this regard, Scholz⁸⁹ states that “digital labor is everything but “immaterial;” it is a sector of the economy, a set of human activities that is predicated on global supply chains of sweated material labor”, which means human activities carried out through various devices and platforms.

This is not exactly like Antunes’s⁹⁰ view, as the author states that Marx himself, in the unpublished chapter of *Capital*⁹¹, already dealt with the existence of “non-material production”, therefore it was not something that did not exist. However, he does not consider this category as having the dimension attributed to it by Gorz⁹² and Negri/Hardt⁹³, in reference to the extraction of value and production/circulation of capital. In this context Antunes⁹⁴ understands expressions such as “knowledge-based society and immaterial labor as manifestations of the complexity achieved by the division of labor, in which co-exist both intellectual and manual activities, creative ones and more routine-like as well.” Can we question the separation between material-immaterial, manual-intellectual (as shows Sohn-Rethel⁹⁵) and creative-routine labor? To what extent do these expressions, as they stand, help us to understand the “dialectical dance”⁹⁶ of the contemporary world of work without falling into reductionisms or adjectivations? As Huws observes⁹⁷, “Why is there the desire to classify these workers? And particularly, why now?”

Contrary to these classifications Antunes’ offers another contribution, since Os sentdos do trabalho [The meanings of work]⁹⁸, which is the category of “class-that-live-from labor”, that is, an enlarged view of the working class, considering its heterogeneous composition, reconfigurations and new morphologies of class. Managers of capital, small entrepreneurs, urban and rural petty bourgeoisie, and those who live from interest and speculation, would be excluded from the working class, in the author’s view. This view of “class-that-lives-from labor” thus reaffirms the centrality of the class struggles and of social classes in contemporary society⁹⁹, taking into account mutations in class formations.

For the author it is a curious fact that discourses on decentering of class categories and work should appear precisely at a time when “there is an enormous increase in the group of social beings who live from the sale of their workforce on a planetary scale”¹⁰⁰. For Antunes, “the center of social transformation is still rooted in the whole working class”¹⁰¹, so it is essential to avoid certain fractures or class divisions. This means understanding its complexity and heterogeneity, as follows: a) its relations with racial, ethnic, generational and gender issues, which have an “increasingly globalized conformation”¹⁰²; b) the connections between “stable” and precarious labors, and between nationals and immigrants”¹⁰³; which are considered as fractures imposed by capital on the working class; and c) the problem of defining middle classes.

Regarding middle classes, Antunes cites Bourdieu¹⁰⁴ – something rare in his works – even if briefly, stating that “the middle classes, in addition to their distinctions and typical structural oscillations, are defined to a significant extent by cultural, symbolic, consumption values¹⁰⁵.” This observation leads us

85. Ibidem, p. 17-18.

86. HUWS, 2014.

87. SCHOLZ, op. cit.

88. HUWS, 2014, p. 157.

89. SCHOLZ, op. cit., p. 6.

90. ANTUNES, 2018.

91. MARX, Karl. **O capital**: livro I: capítulo VI (inédito). 1. ed. São Paulo: Livraria Editora Ciências Humanas, 1978.

92. GORZ, op. cit.

93. NEGRI; HARDT, op. cit.

94. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 43.

95. SOHN - RETHEL, Alfred. **Intellectual and manual labor: a critique of epistemology**. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978.

96. HUWS, 2014.

97. HUWS, Ursula. Aignição no motor: trabalhadores criativos na economia global. **Parágrafo**, São Paulo, v. 3, n. 1, p. 85-92, 2015.

98. ANTUNES, 2001.

99. As we intended to show in reference to communication, GROHMANN, Rafael. **As classes sociais na comunicação: sentidos teóricos do conceito**. Tese (Doutorado em Ciências da Comunicação) – Escola de Comunicação e Artes, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2016.

100. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 87.

101. Ibidem, p. 87.

102. Ibidem, p. 303.

103. Ibidem, p. 303.

104. BOURDIEU, Pierre. **A Distinção: crítica social do julgamento**. São Paulo: Edusp, 2007.

105. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 54.

to reflect that a refinement (or greater problematization) in the relationship between Marxism and Bourdieusian theory¹⁰⁶ would be productive. Still on middle classes, another point that would yield more focused empirical research (as is Ronsini's¹⁰⁷ research in the communication area) is, from a bourdiesian perspective is the issue posed by Antunes¹⁰⁸ that "the consciousness of the middle classes often appears to be consciousness of a non-class".

Finally, the conceptual and empirical portraits brought by Antunes reveal a concern to understand the conditions, contradictions and complexities of the current world of work, connecting concepts discussed mainly in Europe and North America to a national and the global South perspective with a look, that simultaneously realizes the "privilege of servitude" at the present stage of devastation in the world of work, but also has a perspective – as a "light at the end of the tunnel" as a meaningful life both inside and outside the world of work. As for our role as researchers, we try to understand and diagnose the world of work, but also to reconnect effectively to the "daily life of men and women who live from their work"¹⁰⁹, without getting snooty in our institutional spaces and small "field powers". And as for the concrete life of social subjects – as Lukács says, "Science grows out of life, and in life itself"¹¹⁰.

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106. Following the example of: BURAWOY, Michael. **O marxismo encontra Bourdieu**. Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 2010; or the same proposed in: GROHMANN, 2016.

107. RONSINI, Veneza. **A crença no mérito e a desigualdade**. São Paulo: Sulina, 2012.

108. ANTUNES, 2018, p. 54.

109. Ibidem, p. 244 – this quotation was aimed at the left wing parties.

110. LUKÁCS, Gyorgy. **Para uma ontologia do ser social I**. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2012. p. 293.

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