

**EDITORIAL, v. 24, n. 3, sep./dec. 2020: THE RACISM/PRECONCEPT QUESTION BETWEEN THE SUBJECTIVITY OF THE PERCEPTION AND THE POLITICAL QUESTION IN DEMOCRACY**

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Dear readers, I wish I did not want to return to this theme in my editorials, however, at this moment, it was very difficult for me to ignore what is going on and not manifest myself. Considering countless events in these pandemic times, the dimension of respect, tolerance and ethical relations seem to have disappeared from society as a whole. Peaceful voices seem to be the target of ironies not to say, perhaps, even sarcasm. It seems that different groups need, at all (and any) cost, to affirm themselves as the holders of the wisdom and truth about human beings and their relationships, whatever they may be. It seems that our society, divided into “niches” (partisanized, or not), asserts itself by antagonism, in opposition to the other (whoever the other may be). In these "niches" they establish what is necessary for survival and also for the proliferation of the beings that live in them and nourish themselves in the same ideal, a biased and mediocre fundamentalism, low and subservient to anachronistic principles that involve backward minds. There are vocabulary problems that are like mantras reproduced to reverberate the sound and not the meaning or the essence. When I repeat the "mantra" I integrate, I identify and support myself; so I am not me, I am "everyone". If the other is not part of that "everyone", it is not part of me; it is different from me, I do not integrate, I do not identify myself and I cannot support myself in this “other”. This different scare me, makes me a little angry because it can't support me, because it does not speak the way I speak, because it does not dress the way I dress, because it does not like the things I like and, mainly, because it does not behave like I behave, it does not know the "mantra"; so many differences contradict me (antagonize me); sometimes they enrage me. Thus, I identify this position as a prejudice that, looking like a word of the moment and with a sophisticated narrative status, few are clear about its meaning or the meaning of this type of feeling or manifestation for the other. Prejudice is any and every opinion or feeling conceived without due examination or critical reflection in context; then it reveals itself in hostile feelings, the result of perverse generalizations, without foundation and tolerance. When guided by ignorance it becomes radical and aggressive.

At this point I want to ask how far can this question go? Is there a political component to this way of thinking and behaving? To what extent does the sonorous reverberation of the “mantra” (or mantras) guide? Where is the political responsibility of the leaders who thus (un) teach and impose the "mantras"? Are we, at the University, in this context and in our action/interaction doing our part?

Here we affirm that, in turn, the lack of effective action by leaders and governments favors these fundamentalist niches to proliferate and strengthen themselves until they become a “public problem”, due to a double logic of problematization and publicization. The problematization here designates the process by which some actors will perceive the situation

as abnormal and will qualify it in a particular way (MULLER; SUREL, 1998). As for disclosure (publicization) it refers to the passage of a problem from the private sphere (or sphere of civil society) to the public sphere when it becomes part of the political and institutional agenda. Subject to public action labeling procedures, this problem at some point becomes a legitimate object of this agenda or institution (SHEPPARD, 2006). Here begins a question of narratives and arguments directly linked to communicational issues. Narratives and stories have power in their communications, but they effectively delineate the outlines of a public policy through the action of concrete actors. Words change mantras, change sounds, tones, colors, hues, patterns; when decontextualized, meanings, senses, concepts change, so languages are derived, whose narrative can be used as a resource by different actors, as much as it provides the structure in which the action is circumscribed. So we are facing policy narratives where the dynamics of power and the emergence of a dominant narrative are linearly interrelated. Once accepted - even if not properly understood - as a set of shared conceptions about politics, this dominant narrative "frames" the choices and redirects the preferences (RADAELLI *et al.*, 2000). In this sense and context, political narratives are resources used by entrepreneurial actors and elements of the cognitive structure of public policies; that as such, shed light on the relationship between structure and agenda in the political process. The analysis of the two policy narratives allows for insights into what is excluded from the agenda, the style of policy and the change of/in politics.

Along this path, I consider that the cognitive analysis of public policies has systematically contributed to the production of this knowledge critically aiming to clarify more than to renew a series of fundamental questions in political science. This undertaking for clarification and renewal now faces several obstacles to answer what remains of central questions regarding how (we understand) we make order in a complex society (MULLER, 2000). The current moment and context, where democracy considers that the object of public policies is no longer just to solve problems, but to build frameworks for interpreting the world, from priority relationships to priorities in relationships, in commitment to the other. We are facing situations with great obstacles that need to be removed for renewal, since the difficult question of the relationships between the actors and the structures of meaning needs to be transformed and, perhaps, broken taking into account the global dimension of public action and its effects on the doing (attending) of the state at the service of society. We urgently need analytical perspectives that better guide us to understand, in breadth and depth, the political meaning and politicization of public action against discrimination and the ways to overcome it. Bear in mind that discrimination, prejudice, intolerance and other forms of languages, treatment

or behavior, in this context, are made up of the vocabulary learned from actors from a time when the word "racism" was not even created.

Democracy today is dear to us because we understand the contradictory as evidence of individual, peaceful and pacifying differences and not as conflicting and subjugating. Conflict, radicalism and intolerance are direct effects of distortion of the principles of egalitarian democracy, by the gaze and by eugenic minds, as a factor of civilizational decay due to its possibilities of miscegenation in society (TAGUIEFF, 1998). It clearly represents and exposes the most retrograde thought, pessimistic *racialism* - discussed at length by Gobineau in his *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races 1853–1855*) - where pure races disappeared irrevocably due to the effect of generalized miscegenation. Here we are back to policy narratives in the quest to become dominant, “framing” choices and “determining” preferences. In view of this context, for reasons of clarity, the notion of political learning should be expanded, which, according to American and European theories that integrate the cognitive dimension of public policies, is necessary to include expanded knowledge in relation to the actors' resources and strategies opponents of this form of action in public policy, as well as the means to neutralize them. Here we find a large part of our problem that I highlight in the title of this editorial - *The issue of Racism/Prejudice between a subjectivity of perception and the political issue in democracy*. In much of the literature in general, and in Brazil in particular, there is an extremely limited place to the processes of cognition and learning, although ideas play a central role in most of the described theoretical approaches. Thus, the field of ideas, in practice, often neglects or underestimates institutional, socioeconomic, territorial and community factors, among others. In this sense, there is a clear need to improve both studies and the possibilities of employing cognitive processes in the formulation of public policies. Using the cognitive dimension for clarity and the renewal of ideas in the perception and assumption of the principles of egalitarian democracy where a new public action, towards equality, allows an unprecedented expansion of the community's field of competence and the legitimacy of interventions in this area become largely reinforced. In fact, it is assumed that, considering the assumptions here reflexively put, the results of this type of intervention will favor the transition from an exception model to an anti-discrimination and welcoming model, although, still, to a large extent, uncertain as to its permanent sustainability through a policy specifically structured around the challenges established in diversity and inequality.

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Editor

