

Citizenship as horizon for Brazilian political psychology: Is this about liberation?

Antonio Euzébios Filho, Fernando Lacerda Júnior, Raquel Souza Lobo Guzzo
Pontifical Catholic University of Campinas
Campinas, São Paulo, Brasil

toninhoeuzebios@hotmail.com, Fernando_lac@yahoo.com.br, rguzzo@mpc.com.br

A brief review of Brazilian political psychology papers about social change, democracy, social movements, and citizenship shows that the main political horizon permeating those writings is the realization of citizenship. Democratic societies appear as the highest conquest in humanity and the challenges that psychologists engaged with processes related to emancipation would be to contribute with the widening of civil society, to conquer rights in the public sphere, or help with the development of public policies through formation of social subjects conscious of their rights and duties. This essay tries to think the relationship between the struggle for citizenship and the struggle for liberation. Would there be identity between both? Would democracy be the ideal regime for the accomplishment of the highest aspirations for freedom, equality, and fraternity? From a Marxist approach we will argue that it is impossible to find liberation for popular masses inside the democratic societies, since that citizenship always supposes the existence of a State that mediates social relations. The apparatus of the State, far from having a “neutral” form that depends on the content that fills it, has a very specific social function, either in dictatorial societies or in democratic ones: the domination of one social class over other social classes. The State always have a class character and, if psychology wants to help the historical struggle for liberation, so it necessarily needs to go beyond citizenship, that is, to broaden its scope from the negotiations that occur within the civil society towards the inherent antagonisms within class struggles.

This paper is structured in four parts: (1) a review showing how the citizenship appears as the mainstream political horizon in Brazilian political psychology; (2) a discussion regarding the anatomy of civil society, elaborated from a Marxist standpoint, where categories like citizenship, State, and civil society reveals the intrinsic relationship between democratic society and capitalist sociability; (3) an analysis pointing out that if the ideological horizon of political psychology is the struggle for citizenship, so this horizon flaws itself because it is restricted to a class society, in other words, a society where still exists social relations based upon oppression and exploitation; (4) considerations regarding what means liberation, the relationship between this process and the positive realization of working class’ objective needs. As theoretical foundations, we will use the contributions made by Martín-Baró’s liberation psychology, the Marxist tradition (specifically those inspired by the late Lukács), and some reflections of critical psychology. Support: National Council of Research (CNPq).

