Social Work in the Era of Technological Modernization

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Abstract: In the history of the various professions, there is at least one entry in the subject: the social service. The culture of the environment and the fears aroused by computerization led to the subject being approached through its "managerial" and political aspects concerning social services before considering the tools and the more "pedagogical", cultural and ultimately insertion, in the different dimensions of the term. It is interesting to see that it is not from the same angle that social workers are approached by new technologies (and approach them themselves). This is now an issue of acting on a double level, namely the construction of citizenship on the one hand, and professionalism on the other. The development of computerization, information, communication, associated technologies, their consequences and derived products is an achievement and it is binding all the sectors of society. It is enrichment for the citizens, for the professionals, for the institutions, but it is not limitless.

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After a few decades of technical illusions - that the "new economy" is reviving in another form - most experts and sociologists agree to recognize the place of man in the definition and implementation of techniques and technologies procedures. Based on these findings and convinced by the potential interest in social work and users, it is necessary to better define the uses and conditions of use.

The field of application is broad and the terms, even the perceptions, sometimes confused. This is the case for the tools themselves - computerization, office automation, databases, software (and software packages, etc.) for management, database management systems, information systems, computer networks and their uses, etc.

The various sectors of social work practice are not immune to the consequences of these confusions: some of them benefit from the immediate positive spin-offs - or only want to grasp it - (disability, certain integration interventions, etc.), some are at risk to fall under strong contradictions (in particular the sector of the social accompaniment of the people in everyday life).

It is important that the world of social work mobilizes itself to avoid the risk of being foreign to these developments or just to take mostly defensive positions, while having a still limited awareness of the positive or negative impacts that are nevertheless rushing. Things are changing very quickly and we can't emphasize on the training.

Furthermore, information and communication techniques must not be confused with computerization and management, information systems with information in the sense of document enrichment.

This poses the problem of understanding and mastering new potential tools, the conditions of their development, the conditions of their establishment, the contributions to the users, the initial and permanent training.

This entire process of computerization, networking and new techniques have an accelerating effect and require clarifications, including methodological ones.

Computerization and the emerging technologies represent, for social work, a risk and a chance: a risk, because they can contribute to break the relationship between professionals and users, to question the confidentiality¹, that is to say the respect of each and its autonomy, to break the fundamental responsibility of the actors.

¹ Ellul J., (1990), *La technique ou l'enjeu du siècle*, Paris, p. 94-95.

And a chance, because they can, on the contrary, contribute to a greater autonomy, given it's physical, intellectual or social, belonging to the citizens, in order to oblige a new reflection on the trades and the functions, or to help the structuring of a professional environment.

Discussion, training, exchanges and the circulation of information would be the driving forces. This discussion is open to professionals and users. This step is unavoidable.

Strategic recommendations

None of the ICT is significant in itself. It is the association and the articulation of a set of techniques, as well as their relations to the evolutions of the context, that take effect. However, they are undeniably useful to many users. IT and its ICT applications unveil, specify, a new model in the term of practices.

ICTs are not or should not be an automation of support procedures; a decoupling of relationships, a categorization of people; an appropriation of actors.

It is both a matter of respect for the person and a question of efficiency. On the other hand, computerization and ICTs can be powerful tools for "knowledge to act".

Changing the relationship of professional cultures to ICT to give the means of transparency of the technique while safeguarding the primacy of the use, the contents, the messages.

Giving the information and the means of the reflection avoiding the behaviours of withdrawal in front of the computer science and the communication or the reflexes of defence with regard to the feeling of ownership of the data and the files relating to the users.

Technology affects three points of view from which it can be considered

Firstly, it is possible to produce an analytical description of crafts in the form in which they currently exist in a given society, and then reduce them using a systematic classification to a few types. "The sociologist works here as a nerd or zoologist; the character of constancy acquired by arts and crafts under the influence of tradition allows him to study them as we study the organs and instincts of living beings" (Lapshin, 1999:51). This corresponds to a static point of view on technology, as a result of which the morphology of technology has formed.

Secondly, it is possible to investigate under what conditions and by virtue of what laws each group of rules is established, for what reasons they owe their practical activity. This is a dynamic point of view on technology, the result of which is the physiology of technology."(Lapshin,1999:52). The organs of social will have their own physiology, as are the organs of the individual will."

Finally, thirdly, the combination of dynamic and static points of view makes it possible to study the nucleation, apogee, and decline of each of these organs in a given society or even the evolution of all the technology of humanity, from the simplest forms to the most complex ones, in the alternation of traditions and inventions, which makes up the rhythm of this evolution. "The combination of these three kinds of research forms a common technology." (Lapshin, 1999:53).

Today, voices are increasingly heard that science should play the role of the main engine of social development. Emphasizing the need to obtain technological applications from science, they usually forget that these applications only become the property of society when they are embodied in certain social structures. If we want to not only get the benefits associated with them, but also to avoid the often un foreseen consequences from the point of view of the natural and technical sciences, it is impossible to do without social and humanitarian expertise (Jonas, 1996:66). Today we should talk about the growing role of the social sciences and humanities, which, unfortunately, is not observed.

Support for innovation is essentially understood as support for technological innovation, although social innovation is almost completely unexplored. "For example, in Germany, huge amounts are invested in improving automotive engines, but only a few hundred thousand euros in solutions that promise potentially multiple savings. In other parts of the world, much more attention is paid to this issue. Its importance is emphasized by the fact that at the 2010 Shanghai exhibition (Schneidewind, 2009: 24-25), Bremen became one of the few German cities that received an invitation to participate in it, because it came up with the concept of urban logistics, which very interested the Chinese in the idea of sharing property (car). In other areas, a similar situation is observed. For example, the use of the huge potential of energy saving in the field of building construction for energy-saving projects is in fact not a technological, but a sociocultural challenge (Schneidewind, 2009: 24-25).

The use of new scientific knowledge leads to positive social results. Technology is the application of scientific knowledge to the solution of

practical problems. In fact, social welfare is equated with economic growth and this with innovation.

The financing of basic research corresponds mainly to the public authorities. Scientific knowledge is socially beneficial, but not being appropriable would not be developed by private agents, so it must be the state who is responsible for this task.

In this conceptualization, as is evident, technology does not pose notable epistemological or ethical problems. It is a mere instrument, an intermediate link between science and the satisfaction of social demands. It is not surprising that technology went unnoticed for a long time for philosophy, humanities and social sciences (although there are exceptions). With the aforementioned change in public and academic sensitivities, between the late 1960s and early 1970s, the social contract for science, and the very nature of the relationship between science-technology-society, begins to be questioned both by the action of social movements as by new analytical approaches in the humanities and social sciences.

This is not the place to review the emergence of the countercultural movement, the evaluation of technologies, CTS studies or the philosophy of post-Kuhnian science, given the already abundant literature in this regard (González García et al., 1996:41).

The individual sciences apply to problems that must be treated because they come from the manifestations of life proper to today's society. Both individual problems and their assignment to specific disciplines ultimately stem from the needs of humanity in its present and past forms of organization.

This does not mean that every single scientific investigation satisfies some urgent need. Many scientific companies have produced results that humanity could easily do without. Science is no exception to the misuse of energy that we observe in every sphere of cultural life.

The development of branches of science which present only a dubious practical value for the immediate present, however, forms part of the extension of human labour, which is one of the necessary conditions for scientific and technological progress (González García et al., 1996:41).

In the articulation of these various spheres of reality - material and spiritual, economic and aesthetic - and within the framework of the interpretative totality that Simmel calls the "unity of things", philosophy plays a fundamental role. It feeds on the contribution of the various disciplines without which it could not see the empirical phenomena nor know them but it can, at the same time, only transcend the horizon of each

one in order to compare and connect their specific knowledge (Borgmann, 1999:25-28).

By seeking links and analogies in aspects of reality that are at first sight remote and immeasurable, she interprets and structures them into a coherent whole. So, the project of social aesthetics that we have outlined allows us to test this unifying conception of philosophy around the question of the sensitive manifestation of social phenomena. In this perspective, philosophy does not reach its knowledge in an abstractly speculative form: it does not deduce, but distils and organizes the induction offered by sociology, anthropology and social history.

Its task is to serve as a meeting place for the social sciences by making possible an interdisciplinary synthesis thanks to a kind of common anthropological denominator elaborated in the light of certain fundamental questions concerning the constitutive aesthetic-social dimension of the human condition.

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