

University of life, rational and communicative action of a social movement leader

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ABSTRACT. This article has as objective the understanding of the social actions performed by Lourival Soares da Silva, who stood out for a life dedicated to activism in the movements of rural workers acting for several years as president of the Rio das Pedras Settlement Association, in Uberlândia. To understand and analyze their actions, a qualitative, observational approach was used and also through semi-structured interviews, in the methodological perspective of oral history. The theoretical framework consisted of a combination of Max Weber's comprehensive sociology, which is based on the understanding of human conduct endowed with meaning, more specifically the rational action in relation to values, with Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action, centered on oriented actions by the intersubjective agreements that are revealed in language and communication. It is concluded that the meanings linked to the social actions carried out by the social movement leader are summarized in categories based on the values of equality, justice, right to work, dialogue, democracy and collective social action. These ethical and emancipatory standards are not limited to their finalistic aspect, or their results, but above all in the value of a daily course that is very present in the imagination of social movements.

Keywords: social movements, social action oriented to values, communicative action, extra-school education, leadership.

Universidade da vida, ação racional e comunicativa de um líder de movimento social

RESUMO. O objetivo primordial deste artigo é a compreensão das ações sociais desempenhadas por Lourival Soares da Silva, que se destacou por uma vida dedicada à militância nos movimentos dos trabalhadores rurais, atuando há vários anos como presidente da Associação do Assentamento Rio das Pedras, em Uberlândia. Para compreender e analisar suas ações foi utilizada uma abordagem qualitativa, observacional e também por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas, na perspectiva metodológica da história oral. O referencial teórico consistiu numa combinação da sociologia compreensiva de Max Weber, que tem como fundamento a compreensão da conduta humana dotada de sentido, mais especificamente a ação racional em relação a valores, com a teoria da ação comunicativa de Jürgen Habermas, centrada nas ações orientadas pelos acordos intersubjetivos que se revelam na linguagem e na comunicação. Conclui-se que os significados vinculados às ações sociais executadas pelo líder de movimento social sintetizam-se nas categorias baseadas nos valores igualdade, justiça, direito ao trabalho, diálogo, democracia e ação social coletiva. Além disso, esses padrões éticos e emancipatórios não se resumem ao seu aspecto finalístico, ou em seus resultados, mas, sobretudo no valor de um proceder cotidiano que está muito presente no imaginário dos movimentos sociais.

Palavras-chave: movimentos sociais, ação social orientada a valores, ação comunicativa, educação extra escolar, liderança.

Trayectoria de vida, acción racional y comunicativa de un líder de movimiento social

RESUMEN. Este artículo tiene como objetivo la comprensión de las acciones sociales realizadas por Lourival Soares da Silva, quien se destacó por una vida dedicada a los movimientos de trabajadores rurales, actuando durante varios años como presidente de la Asociación de lo Asentamiento Rio das Pedras, en Uberlândia. Para comprender sus acciones, se utilizó un enfoque cualitativo, observacional y de entrevistas semiestructuradas, con base en la historia oral. El marco teórico consistió en una combinación de la sociología integral de Max Weber, que se basa en la comprensión de la conducta humana dotada de significado, más específicamente la acción racional en relación con los valores, con la teoría de la acción comunicativa de Jürgen Habermas, centrada en acciones orientadas por los acuerdos intersubjetivos que se revelan en el lenguaje y la comunicación. Los significados vinculados a las acciones sociales llevadas a cabo por el líder del movimiento social se resumen en categorías basadas en los valores de igualdad, justicia, derecho al trabajo, diálogo, democracia y acción social colectiva. Estos estándares emancipatorios no se limitan su aspecto finalista o sus resultados, mas sobre todo en el valor de un curso diario que está muy presente en la imaginación de los movimientos sociales.

Palabras clave: movimientos sociales, acción social orientada a valores, acción comunicativa, educación extra escolar, liderazgo.

Introduction

This article is part of a research, fulfilled within the Program of Post-graduation in Education: Professional Master of Education, University of Uberaba – UNIUBE – in the research line “Teacher Education, Pedagogical Practices and Right to Learn”.

Its objective is to analyze the meanings, which a rural worker leader, not broadly known in the academic *milieu*, has attached to his own life history, the social struggles, not only in regard to the ownership of a portion of land by the rural workers, but also in the ideal of including the working class in the process of conquering a place of autonomy and equality in society. To understand how a leader personifies and lives the social movements throughout his life is the present challenge.

The theoretical approach of this research relies on Max Weber, with some view to the theory of communicative action of Jürgen Habermas. Both German authors use analytical categories which help the understanding of the social norms which direct the social actions of the individuals. On one hand, Max Weber relies on the fact that perceptions and cognitive expectations are related to the actions of the others; on the other hand,

Jürgen Habermas admits the possibility of intersubjectivity to become a counterpart in the process.

Using some contrasts and complementarities among these two theories, it will be possible to analyze the meanings, which the aforementioned leader envisages to life and to social activism, allowing the characterization of interests, individual and collective, among those personal, instrumental or socially oriented. Our challenge is to understand why, even not fulfilling these highest goals in the agrarian reform, the leader continues to talk about social values and about justice and equality.

These theoretical approaches inform the qualitative empirical analysis, which are organized in a type of exploratory study, based on an oral systematic history, in order to identify the meanings, which are bound to the actions of the leader of the social movement, Lourival Soares da Silva.

The material and instruments, used in the empirical analysis, consist of the reporting of colleagues, documents of the social movement and recoveries of memories of the leader, available in many semi-structured interviews, which were registered and afterwards transcribed. They are detailed,

spontaneous, not subject to any constraint and allow the understanding about the meanings of the social actions. In addition, they reveal a proximity with the religious values of equality, social change, inclusion, work and education. These values have consistently taken part of the political views of social equality, and of the right to produce one's own subsistence and to commercialize the rest.

The article is divided into three parts. The first one is dedicated to the theoretical part, having the theory of the social action as its basis. The second one gyrates around the empirical analysis. The third one brings up the results of the data, and it is presented in three specific topics, followed by the final considerations. We hope that this study may contribute to a better understanding of the right of the land and to the refinement of the theories, and models which are present in the social class struggles.

Theoretical approaches: social action oriented to values in communicative action and social movements

For Max Weber, the object of study of sociology is the social action. He formulated a method, called ideal type, which consist in the construction of a model of analysis for the rational

understanding of the reality to be analyzed. Based on these grounds, Max Weber presents four pure types of social action, such as: a – the social action which is oriented to final ends; b – the rational action oriented to values; c – the affective action; e – the traditional action. Explanation about them follows, in Weber's words:

A – The rational social action in relation to its final end: it belongs to the individual who owns an objective in his action. This objective has a rational frame to reach the intended objective, considering the social action. The individual picks out the adequate means to reach the end and expectations in other people's behavior. An example to illustrate can be the situation of a person who qualifies is knowledge, by enrolling in post-graduate courses.

B – Rational action in respect to values: it is different from the action motivated to a final end, because it relies not in a target, but rather in values, motivations, religious, political convictions, ethical and aesthetic values inherent of the action of the individual.

C – Affective action: to this model belong those social actions, which refer to emotions and feelings, as results of situation or emotional discharge, without any consideration about the real

possibilities of success. A religious person may undergo sacrifices, without considering the advantages or disadvantages of the actions.

D – The traditional action: it refers to the social actions, which are derived from past experiences, and customs. Civic parades, commemorative parties, and cultural ceremonies are common examples, which illustrate this kind of social action.

Weber (1996) opens space for the individual in his research. His theory focuses on the several aspects of the social reality, starting from and moving through the cultural sphere. For him, human behavior is a social action always when the individual gives a meaning to it bound the expectations of others. In other words, the social action depends on the view of another individual.

Following this line of thought, the author stated that the object of sociology is the search of the understanding of the social actions. Based on this fact, he believes that the social facts can be understood in society. It must be said that social actions exist, only when they have a meaning attached to it and can be communicated.

For the philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas, however,

the link with communication and reciprocity, behind the social actions, was not well explored by Max Weber. According to him, when the social actions, which involve values and affections, there must exist different modes of communication and understanding. In this case, interpretation and perceptions require extra-effort to understand and to be understood, because the participants of the communicative action may try to impose their point of view.

On account of this, Jürgen Habermas presents a kind of social action, which may be considered deeper, because it involves reciprocity between participants and it is rooted in a non-competitive logic. As a communicative action, which is reconstructed by step by step by the participants, it allows the construction of consensus. In Habermas' own words:

The actions of the agents, who are involved, are coordinated not by selfish calculus of success, but rather by the search of understanding ... This is not a question of the predicates, which an external observer would use to describe the search of understanding. Instead, it is the pre-theoretical understanding of competent speakers, who can distinguish among situations, in which they exercise the possibility of reaching a mutual understanding, and know that communicative failures may occur

and may be corrected (Habermas, 1984, p. 285-286).

In order to establish the analytic parameters of this study, the dialogue between the Weber's and Habermas' action, oriented to values, the identification of the values which were inherent in the life of the leader Lourival Soares da Silva and the relationships with his fellowmen will be taken up. In addition, the criteria which were used as parameters to measure the success of the leader's actions will be clarified, and how they were constructed and used.

To qualify this collective dimension of the formation of values and behaviors of Lourival Soares da Silva, it must be said, within the theory of the social movements, the paradigm of the collective identity, proposed by Melucci (1994) was used. His microsocial approach combines with the subjectivity of the individual analysis, present in the social political and ideological conditions of the historic context.

Melucci (*ibid.*) was interested in the dimension of the personal life of people, because he was convinced that they were not totally determined by the dimension of the social structures. He used to say, "I always had a deep interest in the emotional structures of

the people, because I do not consider only the rational individual (Melucci, 1994, p. 153). About the similarity of the social movements, he uses these essential elements to analyze the phenomenon of the collective action:

The collective action must be considered an interaction of objectives and obstacles, an intentional orientation that is established within the system of opportunities and coercions. The social movements are systems of actions, which operate in the systemic field of possibilities and limits. It is in this sense that the organization becomes a critical field of observation, that is, an analytic *niveau* not to be ignored (Melucci, 2001, p. 52).

For the author, a social movement is a collective action, which is characterized by solidarity, but also by manifesting a conflict, and bringing about the rupture of the limits of the compatibility of the system, in which it is inserted. A social movement also struggles for the ownership of material and symbolic material, so far impossible to be attainable.

According to Melucci (*ibid.*), a contemporary collective action looks like an underlying plot of the everyday life. Within such a plot, the individuals elaborate new discourses, new symbols as well as new codes of behavior, by means of innovating and decentralizing

practices. Published, they signal to authorities that society needs to be more just and less subaltern, what presumably allows the arising of a better society to live in.

Melucci (*idem*) reasons that the contemporary social movements do not struggle only to the acquisition of material means, or to take part in the political system. Contrariwise, they fight for symbolic and cultural projects, as well as for conquests which have no finalistic result. The social movements generate new languages, new methodologies of actions, new codes, new symbols and new values, which may happen to be incorporated into their culture. For the author, these are the greatest contributions of the social movements and social actions. The fact that these movements exist signal to society that there social problems to be tackled.

The social movements reveal new cultural social political messages. In addition, they are organizations that defy the existing power, when they mobilize people to express their view, to struggle for the rights which have been postponed. The social movements are agents of modernization, innovation in society, social and economic changes as

well as of creation of new strategies of actions.

In this research, it must pointed out the importance of the education in the field, by means of what, the process of awareness of the leaders and social mobilization of the social leaders makes a great difference, as it occurred with Lourival Soares da Silva.

The proposals, conveyed by the education in field, zero in on the consolidation of the formation of the people, since, as Freire (2011) says, human beings are open projects to be fulfilled. In the same line of thinking, Arroyo (2004) points out education as a process of transformation and emancipation, within which, the values of the men who lives in the rural life gain power in heir struggle.

Anchored in the ideas of Kolling & Molina (1999), scholars of education in the field, as Lourival Soares da Silva, with his dedicated life of struggle, accepted the challenge to offer a proposal of basic education, not as an outside and strange element in the life of the peasants, but as something which arouse from within it. As it will be seen here, this is rout which was chosen the Lourival Soares da Silva.

Methodology and the context of the research

Using Weber (1989; 1994) comprehensive sociology, this study interprets the meaning of social action as an element which is derived from his participation in the action (Cohn, 1999, 2003). To complete the paradigm of analysis, Habermas (1984), with the theory of communicative action is bringing in, in order to construct the analysis of the shared values and the reciprocity of the individuals with his fellowmen or to reveal whether they act without any expected goals for their fights.

In regard to methodology, on account of the type of study, the qualitative approach was chosen, since the subjectivity of the participants was a realm to be observed as well as the institutional political and social contexts. As Minayo (2001, p. 21-22) points out, a qualitative study “counts on a universe of meanings, motivations, beliefs, values and attitudes, what corresponds to a more profound space of relations and of the phenomenon, which cannot be reduced to variables operationalization”.

In the first part of this research, an exploratory study was carried out, in order to gather information about

Lourival’s life, beginning in the decade of 1980, with the formation of the social movements in the region of Triângulo Mineiro, until the implementation of the Rio das Pedras’ project, in the municipality of Uberlândia, where this research was conducted.

Along with this exploratory research, data were gathered about the rural settlement and the role, played by the participants in the social movements, registered in INCRA – Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária – in free interviews with colleagues and local inhabitants. This procedure allowed to form a central theme of investigation, as point out Triviños (1987) and Gil (2008).

With these data at hand, as well as with some personal knowledge, formed in 5 years of work in INCRA, as a regional consultant and superintendent, the reason to choose Lourival Soares da Silva was justified. He has been a rural worker for over 30 years, who did not receive any formal education, and has struggled in favor of his fellowmen to conquer a portion of land, in which they can live their family.

As a consequence of his social struggle, in favor of the ownership of land, Lourival became part of a social construction or of an imaginary

representation, more real than reality itself. According to Baczko (1985), social relationships require the continuity of human existence and of acts, represented in images or in texts, capable to consolidate abstract ideas and sociocultural values. Therefore, to sharpen the memory of social groups by bringing up speeches is advisable to keep high ideals alive. This study offers those who do not have a portion of land an opportunity to preserve the memory of their social struggle.

The procedure, chosen to generate historical knowledge as well as of the present time, was oral history. According to Harres (2008), it is acceptable to use in research oral sources to accomplish the intended results. The research, fulfilled basically with oral sources, relies on trustworthy representative information. On account of this, the choice of the persons to be interviewed, the time to interview, the local in which to interview and the sequence of questions become central concerns in the study. The process of oral history involves the interviewer, the interviewed, the electronic implements, the surroundings, an adequate language, and an accurate attention of the participants. For the information to become a reliable document, narratives

and stories are introduced to stimulate spontaneous versions about the life of the leader.

The usage of oral source helps to register facts with abundance of details, emotions and in our case, the rational actions and communicative actions practiced by the interviewed. This type of methodology permits that the history of persons or groups, so far underlying in the silence of society, be exposed to the benefit of all. Some contributions of oral history, according to Joutard (1999, p. 33), can be grouped into 3 functions: 1 – a chance to hear the excluded and the forgotten; 2 – a chance to give visibility to the indescribable realities; 3 – a chance to give testimony to situations, considered lost case.

These aspects are relevant and meaningful to the oral Brazilian history, because they allow scholars and social activists to denounce injustices, give visibility to anonymous people, invite members of these groups, and public agents to reflect upon social injustices and exclusions. The methodology of oral history allows the investigation of social problems in depth, as in the question of land concentration, of class struggle for land ownership, of housing in urban spaces, of Indian land reservations, etc. In summary, oral

history has contributed to the understanding of our social reality, carried out by the actions and struggles of those individuals who can not bear social injustice.

Thompson's (1998, p. 337), enriching words, summarize the effort of our anonymous actor: "Oral history gives back to people their own history. By retrieving their own past, they can move towards their future". As it sounds, oral history refills words with new meanings, with the flavor of enduring struggles, with the living blood of those, who have fought to write the Brazilian history.

As a matter of fact, memory can be considered a counterpart for oral history, since meanings and time flow simultaneously. The recollections of the individual turn out to be history itself. Delgado (2003, p. 10) understands that "it gives direction to perspectives and visions of the past, calibers the present and projects the future". From this point of view, the actions and perceptions of the leader are interpreted as his personal and collective history take place.

In addition, this methodology was chosen, because it is more creative and interactive. It allows to deal with various aspects of idealizations about facts and phenomena, kept in peoples

memory, whose registration is partial, incomplete, as Freitas (2006, p. 62) says "the oral discourse, is more natural and more spontaneous, detailed and expressive. On the contrary, the written discourse is more formal, elaborated and stereotyped". In summary, the methodology of oral history allow a broader harvest of facts and details which would not be possible otherwise. The interviews themselves reveal crossed information and knowledge, which combine to form a new ground of understanding of social reality (Santos & Araújo, 2007. p. 195).

The reconstruction of the history of the leader **Lourival Soares da Silva** turns to be a narrative, in which facts and events follow in a chronological order, comprising more than 20 years, with the examination of documents, reports, interviews and long conversations.

The pathways, learnings and options of life

The first author of this research became acquainted with Lourival Soares da Silva, leader of the social movement, while he was INCRA's consultor in the 1990 decade. Afterwards, during 3 years, as he met the leader a few times, when they could debate ideas about the

ways to government could help to improve the agrarian reform.

To meet Lourival again in 2019, after 20 years, was a happy coincidence for the first author of this research. It brought about reflections about the character, who dedicated his entire life to social movements, collective actions, endangering his own life.

To recover aspects, facts, actions and experiences of his life history was an agreeable experience and an enriching process of discovering the paths he followed. The opportunities which came to be, the options which were fulfilled since his infancy until today, remain full of meaning, since he has never stopped the struggle in favor of the agrarian reform.

The retrieval was an exercise of memory, associations of facts and dates, permeated with strong emotions, either in function of victories or in function of losses, which point out to a work begun much earlier in the life of leader. As an example, the difficulties he found to study. Facts and events like these explain the choices made by him.

The city of Juazeiro do Norte, in the State of Ceará, is considered the cradle of Lourival. He was born on May 18, 1949. When he was 6 years old, his family moved to Triângulo Mineiro, in

order to study and to work in the farms in precarious conditions. In the decades of 1950 and 1960, an expansion of the agricultural area took place, because new techniques were discovered to improve the production of the fertile and of the *cerrado* soils.

Before using machines, handworkers were gathered to carry out harvests of corn, rice and later, soybeans. After the modernization of the fieldwork, machines and attempts of the owners not to follow the regulations of the law of working class were common. The workers were expelled from the farms. As a consequence, they became a class of workers without a soil to work on, popularly called “*the landless people*”. These hard social conditions did not help Lourival to continue his studies. Three times, he tried to go on with his studies, but the situation turned to be unbearable. Farmers and lay teachers were not capable to sustain the continuity of the studies of the youngsters. In the case of Lourival, when we talk about education for life, we refer to a journey, in which there are interruptions and continuities, while the individual goes on, learns, experiments, understands and legitimates himself, allowing the construction of his own

identity and of the unjust society in which he lives.

Living in such a society, the rational individual, an idealist fellow, believes that a better world is possible and shares with companions the results of the collective actions in search of a piece of land to live, work and die with dignity.

Historically, the social and political conditions in Brazil favored a division of the land, which allows a few to have almost all the land. As a result, the structure of income and properties brought about injustice and unacceptable levels within a civilized and just society. The scarcity of schools, especially in the rural area, and the precariousness of the conditions contributed to Lourival's dropping out of school. For three times, he tried, but he could not prosper. Even so, he succeeded in overcoming the lack of formal education. Life brought him lessons which he grasped and advanced in the search of his own autonomy.

Educational and Professional Education

As a Brazilian citizen and northeastern immigrant, Lourival was sensitive to the impacts caused by the social, economic and political

conditions which led the country to such a situation. Moving from farm to farm in search of work, he could sit down in the classrooms of literacy, experiences which marked his life. He still remembers "Cartilha da Infância", used in the Brazilian schools in the 1950 decade.

It is a fact that he could not remain in school, but he selectively learned from life. Lourival acquired a broad universe of informal knowledge, and developed a profound Christian belief, by means of his contacts with some progressive priests of the catholic church of Ituiutaba and Uberlândia. Due to the cooperative and experiential mode of learning, we can say that Lourival composed his vision of the world from the matrix of the Christian values of solidarity and justice.

Since 1979, still in Ituiutaba, Lourival took part in the Ecclesial Communities of Base-CEB, with continuity in Uberlândia. Presently, he is the president of the Association of the Project of Settlement of Rio das Pedras, and member of Movement of Land and Liberty – MTL. As soon as he started to take part in the social movements in the 1980 decade, he never gave up the struggle, keeping himself active, influential in all places and in actions,

proposing the improvement of the conditions of life and production of foods in the settlements.

The main conditions, which oriented the formation of the knowledge and life experience of Lourival, were his native qualities of leadership and ideas of refusal of inequality and injustice. Schools could never teach this type of world vision.

One can say that Lourival is a sage in his everyday actions. He is reflective, analytical in all moments, careful in his conversations and selective in his speeches, with a great capacity to associate ideas and make new syntheses. Most participants in the meetings say that he always speaks only after the second half of the events. In general, at least half the approved proposals approved represent what Lourival himself proposed. This fact reveals Lourival's capacity to communicate and to reach consensus. It also proves that his attendance of an intermittent school did not deprive him from becoming the leader, he turned out to be.

Another important aspect in Lourival's life, which deserves attention, is the answer he gave, when he was asked about his reading habits. He stated that he had never read a book, except the Bible itself. His own words

were the following: "I never read a book, except the Bible" (Interview, November 10, 2019).

It was the reading of Bible which prepared him to think about the human situation and the awareness of social injustice in society. The Bible helped him in his involvements in the social movements. It allowed him to realize the importance of political choices to make social actions consistent and everlasting. Faith and steadiness brought up political awareness and the necessary strength to provoke changes in society.

The biblical values of honesty, solidarity, unity, self-sacrifice and readiness to work collectively have kept alive the ideals of social change. Until the present time, he has taken part in sessions of biblical readings, prayers and faith commitments. For him, there is no incompatibility among religion, faith and political actions, even if risks of transgression may occur.

It was very important in his formation his capacity to listen whoever spoke, and to think about the messages. Two priests of Ituiutaba, an INCRA's superintendent, coincidentally, the person who presents this research and some judges in some occasions enriched could witness Lourival's social charisms. In one of those sessions, he said "life

above all and the social lower only to Christ”.

It also calls our attention the fact that the Bible could provide him with the necessary tools to struggle against social injustice in society. As a professional person, he worked for many years in agriculture, in a paper industry and as a technician in Central Elétrica de Minas Gerais – CEMIG – Minas Gerais. As a whole, most of his life span has been used to go on with the political struggles.

The project of the settlements of Nova Santo Inácio and Ranchinho and Rios das Pedras

Lourival took part in the social movement which took hold of the farms which became the settlement of Nova Santo Inácio and Ranchinho in the municipality of Campo Florido, the first one to approved in Triângulo Mineiro. The occupation occurred in 1993 and the settlement was officialized in 1994, for the benefit of 115 families. Lourival, as a settler, worked in the portion of land for 11 years. He also took part in organization of the MTL of Uberlândia. To help his work in the settlement, he exchanged his property in the settlement, where he played the role of president of the association for many years.

For us to understand with depth the relationship among the actions which were developed by Lourival, it is essential to contextualize the spans of time he lived, each one having a different mode of decision and of actions. So, it is necessary to focus upon the historical moments and political conditions which favored concentration of income and properties in society. Rural exodus, human work being replaced by machines, unemployment in the rural area, especially among those, who were illiterate or poorly qualified to work in the environment of technology.

In the time of the organization of the social movements, the occupations of the unproductive farms, as well as of public buildings and social demands, especially the spaces of INCRA, the leaders personified the essential values: land to live in and to work to get the necessary income to lead a family. Lourival conquered the confidence of his fellowmen to present these demands and to struggle for them.

He took part in more than 10 occupations of farms, helped to organize the conquered farms and gave support to carry out other invasions. Instead of feeling sorry on occasions, his values and principles were always on top, especially when he helped to people to

overcome poverty. Despite the fact the did not have opportunities to advance in his formal education, today he can see the children of the settlers, studying in public schools.

Lourival got his lot of land, measuring 17 hectares, where he cultivated vegetables, produced cheeses and candies to be sold. He lives in basic house, with electrical energy and potable water. A truck of his is used to commercialize his products and to locomote to meetings. Lourival brought up three children: one is a pharmacy technician; another one is an electrical technician and a girl who became a teacher. No one lives the settlement, because of their professions an career. He is retired by the Instituto Nacional de Seguridade Social – INSS. Despite of this, he has not stopped to work.

A Hermeneutics of speeches

In this section, we will study the speeches of our leader, considering not only the written texts, but also the pragmatic norms, as Habermas (2002) proposes. It would not be exaggerated and polemical to say that some leaders of the social movements may be considered icons, but, in this case, the sense of duty with the collective, in search of the dignity of the human

person, is really outstanding. Now, we are going to analyze ant to interpret, as close as possible to the original meaning, the interviews of our leader.

Asked about Lady Maria Elizabeth, his wife, in a marriage which started in 1972, he answered: “she is my beginning, may middle and my end” (Interview, October 10, 2019). The depth of some of his answers are impressive. In this case, it deals not with a poetical form, but rather with a pragmatic situation. She gave him support, inspiration and balance throughout his active life. As a sign of gratitude and recognition of her value as a human being, the wife gained prominence in the couple’s life.

He is convinced that, because he is a leader, his family had to face situations, in which she was able to handle the problems in the absence of the husband. Nowadays they live together without those problems, which were overcome, because she could understand his situation as a leader of social movement.

In Lourival’s point of view, no children of the settlement will be out of school. On this matter, a question was put to him about education and answered: “Education is like money; if well used, it is good; if badly used, it is

bad” (Interview, October 10, 2019). Another wise answer, considering that the person who answered the question had a tiny chance to have school education.

For him, a humanizing, participating and loving education is very important, especially for the excluded. In his dealings with people, he worked with scholars, politicians, public managers and with scientists of high levels, who were not sensitive about the needs of the excluded. That is why he thinks that education has two sides: one good and one bad. Formal education, for instance, allows human rationality to pursue the desired objectives to be reached.

The environment, for Lourival, has to be recognized as the greatest of all values, since the destruction of nature menaces the future of life on earth. A considerable part of his lot in the settlement is spared for preservation. When one asks him for some piece of wood, he says: “The trees belong to God, nobody can cut them down”. In the lowest part of his lot, there is a humid area, near a rivulet, which has been preserved and he does not allow economical exploration there.

While he reflects upon the difficulties that he faced since his

moving from the northeastern of Brazil, such as, the hardworking, the impossibility to study, social exploration, the struggle against the unjust system, he feels that he did his best: “Individually I feel good, but collectively I do not”. (Interview, October 10, 2019).

This answer reveals his awareness about the social situation in the settlements. This capacity to distinguish between private and public life reveals a critical view of living in society as a leader. The oral history methodology offered us an important opportunity to dialogue with Lourival, observing the language of body and eyes as sources of deep meanings.

Even after having advanced in many fronts in his struggle, as the conquest of a lot to live in, the building of his house, the buying of his car and his children educated, the concern about the situation of the whole settlement never abandoned him. The future, he ponders, will fair only when everybody can have access to the goods civilization has produced.

As our analysis follow ahead, we come across another jewel of Lourival’s thoughts. He says: “I believe I will never stop acting, while the poor has to carry the luggage of the rich”. Interview,

October 10, 2019). In fact, since the ecclesiastic communities of basis in 1979, he never stopped the work, which can be considered a transcendental mission.

Lourival succeeded in incorporating in practical and theoretic grounds some values of the catholic church, such as, the fusion of experience and values in ethical and moral concepts. He himself remembers Dom Hélder Câmara, when says: “As long as I have strength in my legs and my tongue, I will walk and speak”. (Interview, October 14, 2019).

As a matter of fact, Lourival is not only a visionary, but also a missionary. To overcome social injustice and inequality became a dogma which he never gave up. Religion and social activism, based on religious foundations, were his terrain. Violence was not a part of his reservoir of actions, even in the moments of confrontation among settlers and police. In 1991, when the settlers were surrounded by the police force, which used bombs to intimidate them, he insisted in dialoguing.

As he says: “I have been an activist throughout my life. An activist never brings home anything.” (Interview, October 10, 2019). In this

sentence, one can see the sense that he gave to his mission: to work in the construction of a society, in which all may live in peace and in justice. His methodology has been the dialogue learned in the university of life.

As we could revive Lourival’s steps and struggles in society, we could also figure out the synthesis that he managed to do: his social actions, care for his family, the settlement, nature, religion and an especial mysticism became an original combination, stamped in his personality. The Catholic Church, especially the Movement of Communities of Basis (CEB), was the source from which drank.

His past personal experiences as a rural worker from northeastern immigrant, difficulties to pursue formal education and his actions within CEB made a great difference. Always ready to exercise the role of leader, he combined reflection, dedication to the settlers’ cause, and helped to start then MLT – Movimento Terra, Trabalho e Liberdade. These values helped to consolidate his strong personality, stamped in his public image in the land of Triângulo Mineiro.

Final considerations

This research tried to analyze and understand the rational social actions, performed by Lourival throughout his life. A great depth is perceptible in his actions in favor of social justice and a disposition not to stop the struggle, as long as in justice and inequality persist.

In this sense, Max Weber's concept of social action, geared to values, explains the structure of Lourival's endeavors to change the social situation of those who are victims of society. In addition, Jürgen Habermas' concept of communicative action reinforce the role that dialogue may produce the social changes in society. It makes a great difference that fact the Lourival acted as a person who has rooted beliefs in what he did.

In summary, we can say that Lourival has been successful in his endeavors, because he has been coherent in his beliefs, strong in his actions, and patient in the rhythm that he has impressed to his social duties. The importance and the meaning of these values fit in Max Weber's in 1989, page 43: "because of the importance of the cause, not mattering its goal", social actions are successful.

We can state that Lourival's responsibility in the social movement

and the collective struggle, which he managed to carry out, became his main occupations in life. These values became his passions and everlasting ideas, in such a way that they became his transcendental mission. His life has been a complete dedication to his family, to nature and to the settlement. Retirement was not a motive for him to give up the motives of life struggle.

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