

# WORK CARELESSNESS AND CARE WORK

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## DESCUIDOS DO TRABALHO E TRABALHO DOS CUIDADOS

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## DESCUIDOS DEL TRABAJO Y EL TRABAJO DE CUIDADOS

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The ongoing acute changes in the informational-digital capitalism, under financial thrust, have been significantly changing what we call as new work morphology. The Taylorian-Fordist form of production has been increasingly remaining more in the past than in the present. However, given the existing inequalities within the international division of labor, with its distinct societal conformations in their oddities and peculiarities, the capitalism does not cease to boost digital platforms, which expand more and more, affecting not only the world of big industry and agriculture, but also the so-called services sector. All of them, however, establish relationships and intersections increasingly intertwined, such as agribusiness, industrial services and service industry.

Digital platforms, new productive chains of value, all of this redraws even more the labor universe, offering new elements for a better understanding of its morphology. The precariousness, outsourcing, the explosion of the different ways of being of informality, the exponential intensification in processes and times of work<sup>(1-2)</sup>, such procedures, controlled by the destructive logic that presides over the movement of capital and corporations, are also bringing profound consequences for the health of the working class.

The illnesses, the many (social and sexual) harassment, the multiple ailments, the various mental disorders, the abundant deaths and the distinct suicides, almost always caused by excesses of labor and by (objective and subjective) constraints that are increasingly internalized, have been more constant in almost all corners of the world<sup>(3-6)</sup>.

How can a society, at its utmost informational-techno-digital advance, experience misfortunes that should be more typical of past societies?

The answer may not support subterfuge. Being expansionary in its operating mechanisms and uncontrollable in its dizzying procedures, the system of social metabolism of capital<sup>(3,7)</sup> increasingly gives concreteness to the expressive metaphor of the satanic mill<sup>(8)</sup>. In the system of capital, since accumulating and enriching are their vital goals, its gears do not have limits for its appreciation.

Thus, its lethality finds causalities in the overwhelming pace of work corrosion and abandonment, in environmental degradation, in racial segregation, in gender oppression, ethnic discrimination, among

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many other traits increasingly considered “normal” in everyday life developed by engineering of capital and its corporations.

It would be a true miracle if such destructive order could not produce many occupational accidents and ailments. For sure, these phenomena, in their most general outlines, find their ontogeny in occupational activity itself, once occupational illness were born with the constitution of the social being, in their daily chores.

Nevertheless, the consolidation of the system of social metabolism of capital led to the most profound metamorphosis. Considering a mechanism whose priority is not to meet the human societal needs, but that essentially seeks capital appreciation<sup>(7)</sup>, its major resulting, in the health universe, was to create what we might call a new social disease, expressed in accidents, sufferings and illnesses, whose causal work became part of the daily machine routine of work under the capital.

With the connection of different phases of capitalism, and particularly its current phase<sup>(9-10)</sup>, the (male and female) workers found themselves increasingly exposed to a significant intensification of rhythms, time and movements in their work, resulting from the expansion of the automation, robotics and informational and digital universe in production, all under the impulsion of the “market laws”, and from the new working arrangements guided by multifunctionality, versatility, creation and expansion of cells or production teams, inserted into a complex process of interiorization of forms of engagement and subjection.

Therefore, there occurred the expression of the exercise of inauthentic subjectivities, differentiating them deeply from authentic forms of the working subjectivity<sup>(3)</sup>. This is because, at first, the autonomy and self-activity are present, whereas in the second mode, there is the incentive of heteronymous actions, devoid of authenticity and, therefore, submerged in the world of estrangement and alienation<sup>(3)</sup>. In addition to these elements, a growing segment of the working class, which is continuously expanding, experiences working conditions increasingly precarious, with longer workdays, increasingly more vulnerable and unstable<sup>(3)</sup>. See also the excellent study of Praun<sup>(11)</sup>.

The advent and monumental explosion of the so-called work uberization is, then, the most recent creation of the deconstruction of the job. They make “new” traits that are present in the uberized work emerge: no more limits nor time, nor working day; the separation between labor time and life time seems to disappear; occupational practices are increasingly deregulated; labor rights suffer a routine corrosion process, and the intensities and the rhythms of work are exercised to the limit. The disdain becomes “normal” in the new daily work. If we can use a metaphor, it spreads the most recent work carelessness.

The new work morphology, with its divisions and transversalities between workers; between whites, blacks and indigenous; between stable and intermittent; the young and the elderly; qualified and non-qualified; employees and unemployed; natives and immigrants, among many other examples, proliferates, then, a new universe of occupational illnesses, ailments and accidents<sup>(12)</sup>.

How to think, then, of health work and, in particular, of nursing work? How to understand a work modality essentially intended to care, which has, since its origins, been a clear and remarkable human-societal dimension, which deals directly with human and social individuals?

Like doctors’ work, nursing work, being a special exercise of human care, has been, since its genesis, a vital human activity with a genuine value. When Marx<sup>(13)</sup> said, in his book “The Capital”, that, for the working class, being productive for the capital was not luck, but bad luck, element about which the German philosopher was talking: work as a vital activity, as a value, a socially useful activity<sup>(13)</sup>.

What is the health work, in medicine and nursing, developed at public hospitals, but a job that brings the whole meaning of a value?

What happens when this same healthcare work also becomes (in addition to its vital meaning), a productive work for the capital? When the care is inserted (better saying, framed) in the logic of private

and marketed hospitals, which, in addition to caring, also profit, that is, at the same time, they create value and more value? Regarding this point, see the recent and important contributions to the study of nursing work of Santos<sup>(14)</sup> and Perez Jr.<sup>(15)</sup>.

In this case, the care activity is to have a “second nature”: it remains as a vital, human-societal activity, but “buys” a “new component”, also becoming productive for the capital, since its action becomes shaped by imperatives of profit and accumulation (logic that ultimately controls the corporate hospitals). In this case, a (strange) creation flourishes: value and more value become part of the same activity; they coexist within the same being what works.

Is the nursing care work experiencing the carelessness that currently harms the social being that works?

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