

Original Article

Occupational therapy, everyday life and the fabric of life: theoretical-conceptual contributions for the construction of critical and emancipatory perspectives

Terapia ocupacional, cotidiano e a tessitura da vida: aportes teórico-conceituais para a construção de perspectivas críticas e emancipatórias

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Abstract

Introduction: Everyday life emerges as a critical concept in Occupational Therapy in Brazil in 1988, understood as a socio-historical construction that makes it possible to know the concrete conditions of the existence of subjects and collectives. From 1990, it becomes one of the guiding axes of emancipatory practices. Its use since 2010 has grown significantly in national production, whether as a simple term, notion, concept or category of analysis. **Objective:** To present theoretical contributions to the use of the everyday life concept in Occupational Therapy from a critical perspective, either within the scope of professional practice or research. **Method:** This is theoretical research based on the reflective reading of contributions from the Human and Social Sciences, highlighting the contributions of Agnes Heller and Henri Lefebvre. **Results:** The article initially presents a historical retrospective of the use of the everyday life concept in Occupational Therapy in Brazil and clarifies the distinction of the use of words as terms, notions, concepts, and categories. It presents and discusses the theoretical bases that underlie critical perspectives and problematizes everyday life and the contemporary subject in the context of Occupational Therapy. Next, based on theoretical-critical arguments, it dialogues with contributions from Agnes Heller and Henri Lefebvre, indicating their use of the concept of everyday life as a critical pillar for understanding social reality. **Conclusion:** Theoretical and conceptual discussions are fundamental for the elaboration of ideas, the

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affirmation of values, the understanding of contradictions, the resignification and renewal of professional practice and research support.

Keywords: Occupational Therapy/Trends, Knowledge, Activities of Daily Life.

Resumo

Introdução: Cotidiano surge como conceito crítico na terapia ocupacional no Brasil em 1988, entendido como construção sócio-histórica que possibilita conhecer as condições concretas de existência de sujeitos e coletivos. A partir de 1990, constitui-se como um dos eixos norteadores de práticas emancipatórias. Seu uso desde 2010 cresce na produção nacional, de modo significativo, seja como simples termo, noção, conceito ou categoria de análise.

Objetivo: Apresentar aportes teóricos para o uso do conceito de cotidiano na Terapia Ocupacional com base em uma perspectiva crítica, seja no âmbito da prática profissional ou na pesquisa. **Método:** Trata-se de pesquisa teórica com base na leitura reflexiva de aportes das Ciências Humanas e Sociais, com destaque para as contribuições de Agnes Heller e Henri Lefebvre sobre o conceito.

Resultados: O artigo inicialmente realiza uma retrospectiva histórica do uso do conceito de cotidiano na Terapia Ocupacional no Brasil e clarifica a distinção do uso de palavras como termos, noções, conceitos e categorias. Apresenta e discute as bases teóricas que fundamentam as perspectivas críticas e problematiza o lugar do cotidiano e do sujeito do contemporâneo no contexto da Terapia Ocupacional. A seguir, com base em argumentos teórico-críticos, dialoga com contribuições de Agnes Heller e Henri Lefebvre, indicando seu uso do conceito de cotidiano como pilar crítico para a compreensão da realidade social.

Conclusão: Discussões teórico-conceituais são fundamentais para a elaboração de ideias, a afirmação de valores, a compreensão de contradições, a resignificação e renovação da prática profissional e a sustentação da pesquisa em Terapia Ocupacional.

Palavras-chave: Terapia Ocupacional/Tendências, Conhecimento, Atividades Cotidianas.

Mãos dadas

Não serei o poeta de um mundo caduco.

Também não cantarei o mundo futuro.

Estou preso à vida e olho meus companheiros.

Estão taciturnos, mas nutrem grandes esperanças.

Entre eles, considero a enorme realidade.

O presente é tão grande, não nos afastemos.

Não nos afastemos muito, vamos de mãos dadas.

Não serei o cantor de uma mulher, de uma história,

não direi os suspiros ao anoitecer, a paisagem vista da janela,

*não distribuirei entorpecentes ou cartas de suicida,
não fugirei para as ilhas nem serei raptado por serafins.
O tempo é a minha matéria, do tempo presente, os homens presentes,
a vida presente (Andrade, 2012).*

1 First Words

Everyday life is a word meaning what is customary, mundane; something that happens every day; it is the **present life of present men and women**. It originates from the Latin *cotidianus* and exists in Spanish under the same spelling as Portuguese called *cotidiano*, and in French as *quotidienne*. With no English equivalent, *cotidiano* has been translated to *everyday life*, as in the work of Agnes Heller (1987) and Henri Lefebvre (2014).

Although it means day by day, there is a special intensity in the word *cotidiano* that makes it inspiration for poets, musicians, writers, and scholars. There are those who use it to speak of everyday repetition, of a life that loses meaning, of a life without poetry, as they sing:

*Every day she always does everything the same
She shakes me at six in the morning
Smiles me a punctual smile
And kisses me with a mint mouth (Holanda, 1971).*

There are also poets who, even without using the term, seek the metaphors of life, in the simplicity and banality of everyday marks:

*I will never forget that halfway
there was a stone
there was a stone in the halfway
in the halfway, there was a stone (Andrade, 2013).*

Although it is not the scope of this article to map the vast academic literature on the topic, it is also important to highlight that everyday life has been a topic of interest to scholars from different areas of knowledge, who seek to know it in different scenarios, such as schools (Carvalho, 2009), prisons (Castro, 1991) or hospital wards (Simonato & Mitre, 2017). To name a few, there are studies that seek through the narrative to know the daily lives of people, whether those with disabilities (Almeida, 1993), bus drivers and their sufferings (Sato, 1995) or babies in nurseries (Coutinho, 2017).

Studies about everyday life move from the great historical rhetoric to focus on the simple and common life of men and women. Researchers understand that everyday scenes testify to a space-time shaped by culture, life stories, and social relationships. Through everyday life, it is possible to access the experience, the real, the imaginary, the memory, the dreams, the feelings, the needs, and the affections.

The understanding of the everyday life also allows knowing the ways of thinking, acting, and feeling of subjects¹ and collectives; the representations that make their experiences in the midst of the hegemonic ideology that creates the establishment and results in the instrumentalization of daily life. Therefore, everyday life is experience and knowledge.

Thus, as the producers of art and knowledge look into everyday life, they reveal the fabric of life: they present the hard layers of repetition and suffering in daily life; they show the delicacy of affections and the enchantment of small gestures and deeds; they make the difference, discrimination, prejudice, and injustice visible; and they testify to the possibilities of creation, reinvention, cooperation, and transformation of themselves and the world.

2 Everyday Life and the Emergence of Critical Thinking in Occupational Therapy in Brazil: An Introduction

Everyday life got conceptual prominence for the first time in the Brazilian Occupational Therapy literature by Berenice Rosa Francisco (1988), criticizing the professional understanding of activities of daily living (ADLs), which were traditionally restricted to personal care, mechanically repeated and approached as physical compartmentalized acts. Thus, she questioned whether everyday life, when reduced to ADLs, seen as mechanical action, could actually contribute to the understanding of the concrete conditions of the existence of subjects and collectives. Thus, Francisco (1988) denounced the mistake of naturalizing everyday life, equating it to human biological actions. The author also criticized the functionalist worldview underlying this perspective and which led occupational therapy to act as a device of social control, producing adjustment and conformity of man to society, understood as an unquestionable harmonic whole.

Francisco (1988) argued that everyday life should be understood as a socio-historical construction that shows the concreteness of life in its multiple manifestations. The author distinguished everyday life from routine and associated it with transformative human practice. At this time, even if inadvertently for some, the seeds of understanding everyday life were sown as a key concept for the development of critical perspectives in occupational therapy in Brazil.

In its academic productions, the Brazilian occupational therapy continued to criticize the use of the concepts of activity and everyday life as reductionist healing resources under the assumptions of an exact science to seek new meanings based on a dialogue with the Humanities. There are three arguments that contributed to this conceptual shift. First, the critique produced by Nascimento (1990) about the therapeutic mythification of the activity in the context of attention to institutionalized people; and the displacement, proposed by the author, for reading the world of life in the spaces in which it occurs. Second, the argument produced by Castro et al. (2001) for the comprehension of the activity as an element of culture, considering its

¹Subject, as used in this paper, means a being who has unique consciousness and/or unique personal experiences; however, subjects, in this view, are produced by the ongoing processes of subjectivation and objectivation that result both from their own agency and the influence of power relations.

polysemic, complex, social, political and affective dimensions. This is an argument that identified everyday life as a concrete construction of reality as the baseline for occupational therapist performance. Third, the critical resumption of the concept of everyday life in occupational therapy, seen as the real center of praxis, in which repetition and transformation are dialectically articulated in the subject-everyday-history-society confluence (Galheigo, 2003).

In a study on the trends of academic production of occupational therapy in Brazil, focusing on the emergence of critical thinking, everyday life appears as one of the guiding axes of emancipatory practices in the various fields of professional practice after the mid-1990s (Galheigo et al., 2018). The studies revealed practices that valued the modes of expression and action of the subjects in the world of daily life for self-care, coexistence, sociability, collective organization and social participation, among others. Thus, the study found that, in addition to theoretical studies that defended the critical use of the idea of everyday life, publications that proposed and described emancipatory practices that addressed the concrete conditions of existence of subjects and collectives living conditions of disability, suffering, discrimination, and deprivation, in different care settings and life contexts were also found. Thus, the production in the period defends or reports emancipatory practices and reveals, as one of its tendencies, the organization of professional action *from*, *to* and *with* the world of everyday life (Galheigo et al., 2018).

The concept or idea of everyday life as a term of the area, object/category of research and guidance of occupational therapy practices in Brazil has continued to appear in the national production of the area with significant growth since 2010. For example, a brief consultation with the Portal of the Virtual Health Library for the *everyday life* and *occupational therapy* in the title-summary-descriptor, held in March 2019, identified 120 productions of Brazilian occupational therapists, in which 21% were produced between 1991 and 2009 and 79% were produced since 2010. Among these productions, we highlight a systematic review on the use of the concept of everyday life in Brazilian occupational therapy (Salles & Matsukura, 2013), who studied 12 articles and identified its relation to four themes: everyday life as a theoretical-methodological perspective; illness as a disruption of everyday life; the everyday life of subjects; and everyday life and intervention in occupational therapy.

It is also relevant to mention that for at least three decades, the conceptual debate held by professionals, students and researchers about the occupational therapy nomenclature has been identified in Brazilian literature: (i) the most used terms by occupational therapy in Brazil; (ii) the most pertinent to broadly express the professional doing and/or (iii) the most appropriate to disseminate the ideas of a particular theoretical-methodological affiliation. Based on different approaches and configurations, these productions and others dealt with the use and meaning of the terms such as activity, occupation, doing, everyday life and/or praxis in occupational therapy, questioning whether these terms were sufficient and/or interchangeable (Francisco, 1988; Machado, 1991; Toyoda & Akashi, 1995; Medeiros, 2003; Magalhães & Galheigo, 2010; Lima et al., 2013; Salles & Matsukura, 2013; Matsukura & Salles, 2016).

Conceptual studies are important and necessary for the development of the theoretical-epistemological foundations of occupational therapy. However, it is

important to consider that the meanings of words can acquire different dimensions if used as *terms, notions, concepts or categories*. The terms *atividade (activity)*, *ocupação (occupation)* or *cotidiano (everyday life)* are ordinary words of the Portuguese language, used freely by people. Occupational therapists in their practices and writings may also use them only as words of doings and daily lives of people, service users, and caregivers. In this case, they do not refer to “[...] neither [a] theory nor the elements of a knowledge process” (Escorel, 1999, p. 23).

However, if their use seeks to highlight “[...] elements of a theory that are not yet sufficiently clear to achieve concept status and are used as 'images' for approximate explanations of the real” (Minayo, 2014, p. 177), these words would be used as a notion. The use of words as concepts requires a step further. According to Minayo (2014, p. 176-177):

Concepts are units of meaning that define the form and content of a theory. They can be considered as mental operations that reflect true points of view and constructed in dynamic relation to reality (always within a given theoretical reference). [...] Every concept is historically constructed and to understand its scope or to reformulate it in the social sciences, it is recommended that they be critically analyzed in their origin and course.

Finally, the category is the concept with a classifying purpose, whose meanings help to think and to hierarchize the studied reality. For the production of explanations and generalizations in research, the scholar creates category systems to “find unity in diversity” (Minayo 2014, p. 178). The categories are also socio-historical constructions that are transversal to the production of knowledge and social practice, such as social class, age, and work, for example.

Based on this categorization of Minayo (2014), this article supports its objective of retaking and advancing the previous study about the *concept* of everyday life of Galheigo (2003) to deepen the theoretical and conceptual contributions for its use in professional practice or in occupational therapy research as a category of analysis, both based on a critical perspective.

3 Method

[...] theory that finally has nothing to do with practice is neither theory of anything, and practice that does not return to theory never renews itself (Demo, 2019, p. 20).

This article is the result of theoretical research on the concept of everyday life in the Humanities and Social Sciences, highlighting the contributions of Agnes Heller and Henri Lefebvre. As theoretical research, it aimed “[...] at placing the theoretical and/or conceptual problematic in a specific field as an object of research” (Vasconcelos, 2002, p. 159). Thus, it enabled to revisit and reconstruct ideas, concepts, and theories, in the short and medium-term, to deepen theoretical arguments and improve practices (Demo, 2019).

The process of elaboration of the research consisted of the reflexive reading of texts, based on the problematization about how the concept of everyday life could be understood as a conceptual basis for a critical perspective in occupational therapy. However, the theoretical-argumentative body was dialogically polished throughout its offering as a content of the course *Conceptual bases for critical occupational therapy*, offered in 3 editions for the Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of São Paulo and in courses of the Graduate Program in Occupational Therapy at the Federal University of São Carlos.

4 Theoretical Bases for a Critical Occupational Therapy: Problematizing the Place of Everyday Life and the Contemporary Subject

The critical analysis of what exists is based on the assumption that existence does not exhaust the possibilities of existence and therefore, there are alternatives that can overcome what is criticizable in what exists. The discomfort, the nonconformism or the indignation in front of what exists creates impetus to theorize its overcoming (Santos, 2011, p. 23).

Stating that a thought and a practice are critical, as opposed to others that would not be considered as such, may sound arrogant and cause discomfort, especially in the context of a professional practice such as occupational therapy, which daily has to confront poverty, suffering, discrimination, and lack of access to rights of the people, groups, and collectives with whom they work. Not to mention the precariousness of services, working conditions, low salaries and the scarcity of continuing education programs that professionals face in their everyday lives. Therefore, the presentation of theoretical arguments aims to inspire and contribute to the construction of critical and emancipatory perspectives of occupational therapy, rather than seeking demarcation lines between right and wrong, at the risk of producing dichotomous and discriminatory attitudes.

Initially, it is important to resume that most of the Brazilian population - who are deprived of social goods and without guarantee of a dignified life, with freedom and access to civil, social and political rights - live a permanent confrontation between their *experiences* of deprivation, suffering, vulnerability, and social isolation and their *expectations* for a better life. For Santos (2007), the discrepancy between the *experiences* and *expectations* of most of the world's population is reversed, since the expectations of the subjects are losing their positivity character for their ongoing experiences. However, Santos (2007) argues that the ideas that underpin the desire for better and fairer societies are not in crisis and that freedom, equality, and solidarity remain the highest human aspirations, even given the crises of regulation and emancipation experienced by contemporary societies. Thus, the author provokes us to think about renewing critical theory and reinventing social emancipation.

Other ideas from Boaventura de Sousa Santos may also help to think about what could be a critical theory for occupational therapy. In his book *A crítica da razão indolente: contra o desperdício da experiência*, Santos (2011) points out as an exciting contemporary issue the difficulty of constructing a critical theory exactly in a world and time in which there is so much to criticize. However, he starts from a simple and

inspiring idea: “I mean by critical theory, any theory that does not reduce 'reality' to what exists” (Santos, 2011, p. 23). Thus, he defends critical theory as a field of possibilities and thinks that the task of the critical thinker is to define the nature and scope of alternatives to what is given empirically. Thus, as the subtitle of his book says, he stands against the waste of the human experience produced by the modern paradigm (Santos, 2011).

Inspired by his arguments, we can think of theoretical and conceptual bases for a critical occupational therapy in terms of a field of possibilities that seeks to understand and unveil alternatives to deal with the concrete conditions of everyday life of the subjects and collectives for those it dedicates professional efforts and knowledge. It is a professional activity that thinks and makes its emancipatory practices *beyond what exists*. Thus we think it is necessary to rescue and problematize what has been done since the end of the 1970s (Galheigo et al., 2018), and, on the other hand, to build arguments that can replace, provide and support a theoretical-critical framework for occupational therapy. Perhaps from this point on, we may produce increasingly emancipatory practices, not only for Brazil but also for the countries of the South. After all, the social, cultural and political conditions typical of the process of colonization and insertion in global capitalism demanded for distinct ways of dealing with social issues in the South. Thus, their scholars, policymakers and professionals engaged in different propositions in relation to those developed in the countries of the North (Simo Algado et al., 2016).

The critical perspectives on occupational therapy have been built in the South and had to make shifts in their understanding of the subject and society. First, they had to overcome the individual's conception of traditional occupational therapy, based on the understanding that the individual and society follow the invariable laws of nature. Thus, the one who deviates from the expected normality pattern is understood as a sick person, with dysfunction or inadequate to society, in an asocial and ahistorical perspective. From this viewpoint, the problem of the person is exclusively his/her own, while it is up to the therapeutic action to return him/her to normality, to society or to make adjustments for his/her social adaptation (Francisco, 1988; Pinto, 1990; Galheigo, 1988, 2012).

The second necessary shift was to advance the conception of the individual brought about by humanism, as cited by Francisco (1988) and Pinto (1990), and to overcome the person-centered or client-centered therapy perspective inspired by American humanist psychology (Hagedorn, 1999). The humanism that inspires humanist occupational therapy cited by Francisco (1988) and Pinto (1990) is the one that put man back in the center of the universe, as opposed to the positivism that placed him on the level of nature. The humanist perspective advanced in the comprehension of singularity and subjectivity, based on the defense that “[...] there is no opportunity without the exercise of subjectivity” (Pinto, 1990, p. 42). Thus, this author highlights Merleau-Ponty's conceptions of perception and consciousness and Sartre's ideas of intentionality and project as important contributions to support the argument about restoring man's centrality in the world (Pinto, 1990). However, Francisco (1988) and Pinto (1990) also cited the limits of this conception that implies the existence of equality and universality in the access to social goods and rights, as if the economic

and political system in which the subject is based did not exert any unequal influence on their life projects depending on their position in the social stratum.

From the perspective of the client-centered therapy inspired by humanistic psychology, the individual's ability to control his own life and make decisions about who or what he wants to be is validated (Hagedorn, 1999). Thus, the processes of change throughout life happen only if they are active and meaningful to the subject. Hagedorn (1999) points out that although this is not an occupation-oriented perspective, it has been the basis for the development of client-centered occupational therapy, for which self-esteem, self-realization, and meaning are the axes for understanding the needs, feelings, goals, and choices made by the persons. However, the author also points out the limits of this perspective, since the idea that a person can control the choices in his or her life can be exaggerated and unrealistic.

Therefore, two shifts were necessary to reach the historical subject of critical occupational therapy. In the production of Brazilian occupational therapy, the works of Francisco (1988) and Pinto (1990) were the first to defend the conception of historical subject in occupational therapy practices. Based on historical materialism, the authors presented man as a socio-historical construction that seeks to produce the material conditions for his existence through his work. They also showed that capitalism appropriates this self-creating process of man and the “[...] body of the worker, empties [him] of his humanity, taking his productive body” (Pinto, 1990, p. 73). From this perspective, the critical and transformative action of occupational therapy comprehends, addresses and engages the subject in the understanding and transformation of social processes, which naturalized oppression and lack of access to citizenship rights.

The comprehension of a socio-historical subject as the one produced by his/her social class, time and insertion in the modes of production was extended to other social questions to understand them as socio-historical constructions as well. Thus, there were changes in the critical understanding produced by the Social and Human Sciences regarding issues such as health-disease processes; the educational processes; social and political participation and organization; guardianship relations with children, the elderly, the persons with mental suffering or disabilities; social control actions towards families and communities; interventions with populations not incorporated by the productive sector; the conceptions of disability, suffering, “deviance”, crime and violence, among others.

Thus, even though the Brazilian literature of occupational therapy distanced itself from the discussion of philosophical models proposed by Francisco (1988) and Pinto (1990), the socio-historical perspective was incorporated into both research and the production of emancipatory practices in therapy through the different aspects incorporated into the debate of the area, based on its dialogue with Collective Health and the Human and Social Sciences (Galheigo et al., 2018).

Finally, criticisms on the understanding of the subject of historical materialism – based on feminist, cultural, subjectivity, decolonization and coloniality of power studies - made visible the fact that social class was not the only condition producing lifestyles, social relationships, conflict, power, inequality, and discrimination in social life. These perspectives brought elements so that the contemporary subject could be understood in his/her complexity, diversity, and

heterogeneity. Therefore, it is no longer possible to think of social problems as historical issues or historical-social totalities based on a single logic of existence (Quijano, 2010), whether this is social class, ethnic or religious identity, gender, sexual orientation, insertion into the world economy, among others. For Quijano (2010, p. 97-98), in the contemporary:

What can be called as 'subject', not only collective, but even individual, is always constituted by heterogeneous and discontinuous elements, and they become a unity only when these elements are articulated around a specific axis, under concrete conditions, in relation to concrete needs, and in a temporary way.

Taking these ideas as an inspiration, we affirm that the critical and emancipatory action of occupational therapy in contemporary Brazil should consider the individual and collective subject in his/her complexity, diversity, and heterogeneity. This means a subject who is constituted under the colonality of power, producer of intersubjective and cultural relationships in the context of colonial/modern capitalism, marked by processes of exploitation, discrimination, domination, and naturalization, based on social, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation. Processes also produced by dissonance and conflict with the hegemonic standards of normality, capacity, productivity, and legality. Today, in a critical perspective, occupational therapy practices call for listening, sustaining and fomenting dialogical encounters, social and network articulation, and the construction of therapeutic and life projects with those who need and/or claim care, support, a life with dignity, social participation and access to rights.

The mention of complexity and diversity is intended to mark that the processes experienced by the subjects need to be understood in the midst of the socio-historical conjuncture, the social contradictions from which these processes result and the uniqueness of the lived experience. Therefore, the difference cannot be addressed exclusively in its particularity, for example, being a woman or being young. By taking Morin's (2001, p. 38) idea of complexity as derived from the term *complexus* that means "what is woven together", the occupational therapist must consider the uniqueness of the subjects and their historically constructed conditions that are intertwined with social, ethnic, generational aspects, etc. In this context, the everyday life approach assumes a special prominence since, in it, such conditions and processes can materialize and produce the fabric of each person's life.

The theoretical construction of the term everyday life as a critical concept for occupational therapy implies a dialogue with the Human and Social Sciences, in which this concept has become important for the understanding of the contemporary social reality. To begin with, the idea that the *Sociology of Everyday Life* considers its object of study a key tool for understanding social relationships in contemporary societies. In its view, everyday life cannot be dissociated from social life and allows a path to knowledge (Pais, 2003).

In fact, everyday life cannot be hunted in a snare when it rides in front of us in the exact measure that everyday life is the snare that allows us to "raise the game" in social reality, giving knots of intelligibility to the social (Pais, 2003, p. 31).

This image that everyday life is a resource to understand social relationships is associated with another metaphor of the author that identifies the sociology of everyday life as a loom shuttle that goes from side to side, “daring in the social universe the micro and the macrostructures” (Pais, 2003, p. 114).

Thus, the understanding of daily life calls us to an open look at the new, based on a “logic of discovery” (Pais, 2003), which does not start from the preconceived or socially pre-established. This understanding allows for deepening:

Not only the complexity of the social fabric but [of] new dimensions of both injustice and the resources of intersubjectivity to address it (Martins, 2014, p. 173).

Everyday life is a space-time in which the subject, individual or collective, immediately and not always consciously, accesses opportunities and resources, facing adversity and limits, making decisions, adopting mechanisms of resistance and inventing new ways of being, living and doing. As everyday life is lived in various contexts, we could even speak of everyday lives, in plural, which take place in different space-time settings. Although the theme is not proper to Boaventura de Souza Santos, we highlight his understanding that everyday life in complex societies is made up of various everyday lives, organized in six space-time settings, which relate to distinct forms of power: domestic space-time; the production space-time; the community space-time; the structural space of the market; the citizenship space-time; and the world space-time (for more details see Santos, 2007, p. 61-62).

The intersubjective resources produced in the different space-time settings for confronting power relationships in everyday life are articulated in particular ways and are distinctly understood by different authors. For example, Certeau (1994) attributes to those who have a place of power and will of their own, the proposition of *strategies* for calculating or manipulating power relations in social life. He identifies that, in contrast, “[...] *tactics* are the art of the weak ones” (Certeau, 1994, p. 101), that is, the person who has no place and occupies the place of the other, and needs to be cunning and watchful to create surprises in the opposing field. Goffman (2014), in turn, discusses the interactive process and how people make use of expressions, representations, and manipulations for social mediations in everyday life.

Deepening the contribution of the various authors and their aspects would require a separate article, which is why some general considerations were presented, leaving for the next section the presentation of the theoretical contributions of two authors - Agnes Heller and Henri Lefebvre - who developed “the essential components of a theory of everyday life” based on the Marxist tradition accumulated in recent decades (Netto, 2000, p. 65).

5 Contributions by Agnes Heller and Henri Lefebvre to the Understanding of Everyday Life: Inspirations for the Critical Use of the Concept in Occupational Therapy

Agnes Heller and Henri Lefebvre were two European philosophers of Marxist tradition who, in the postwar context, wrote about everyday life with contributions that even different became a reference for everyday life studies in different areas of

knowledge in Brazil. Their works are relevant for transforming a subject, considered “minor” in the Humanities and Social Sciences, into a conducting theme for the understanding of the human experience.

5.1 Agnes Heller

Heller said that only those with radical needs can want and make the transformation of life. These needs make sense in the meaninglessness of everyday life. The impossible can only be desired by those to whom everyday life has become unbearable, precisely because that life can no longer be manipulated (Martins, 1998, p. 6).

Agnes Heller was a philosopher born in 1929 and died in 2019 in Hungary. She lived in a Jewish ghetto during the Nazi invasion of Hungary, escaped with her mother from being sent to the death camps, but her father died in Auschwitz. In the 1960s, Heller was a member of the Budapest School, created by close followers of Georg Lukács, being his student, assistant, and collaborator. She published her study of daily life in 1970, which was her first work translated into Portuguese under the title “*O cotidiano e a história*” (Heller, 2000). The political persecution suffered by members of that school in the late 1970s led Heller to exile in Australia and later moved to the United States, where she taught political theory for 25 years. She returned to Budapest, where she continued writing and lecturing. In her intellectual activity, she dedicated to ethics and social life, based on the Marxism understood by Lukács as the ontology of social being.

In an interview with Csaba Polony in 1997, Heller said that her interest in Ethics and History comes from having lived under both the holocaust and the totalitarian regime that made her wonder *how* such experiences could happen and what kind of world allowed for such situations to happen. Her talk goes back to a position, an aspiration for “redemption” over her surviving condition:

Writing about the philosophy of morals and the philosophy of history for me has become a way of paying my debt as a survivor to the people who could not survive (Polony & Heller, 1997, s/p.).

Heller's reflection on everyday life seeks to situate it as the human experience that no one can refrain from living, whether alive, regardless of social class, age, gender, ethnicity, local insertion, or nationality. Everyday life goes through the human condition, as the author states “**Everyday life is the life of every man**” (Heller, 2000, p. 17); an experience that reveals as a historical narrative situated in a time and place. Thus, all societies in their time and context produce their own everyday lives, but they also assimilate past daily experiences: “**Everyday life is not 'outside' history, but at the 'center' of historical happening**” (Heller, 2000, p. 20).

If there is no human life without everyday life, this is integral, unique, unrepeatable, singular, heterogeneous and hierarchical. These characteristics are never identical even over a single lifetime. Everyday life calls for the participation of the totality of the person - “**Everyday life is the life of the whole man**”

(Heller, 2000, p. 17). Such an experience implies the integrality of the human, without splitting body-mind, affection-reason because in everyday life the ways of thinking, acting, doing, creating are manifested. In it, the subject uses the set of his abilities, beliefs, and ways of being and existing. Therefore, everyday experience manifests the uniqueness marks of each person.

Everyday life composes a set of human actions, heterogeneous in content and meaning - **“The meaning in everyday life, as well as its content, is not only heterogeneous but also hierarchical”** (Heller, 2000, p. 18). Therefore, everyday life happens from birth to death; it is traversed and modified according to historical time, culture, social class, gender, and age. It includes taking care of oneself and others, the chores of the house and the maintenance of life, work and inactivity, play and leisure, the space-time of religion, and social and political participation. At the same time, these activities vary in need, importance, and meaning over the course of a day, and throughout life, which creates a dynamic hierarchy in everyday life.

Agnes Heller brings individual-collective inseparability in her reflection on everyday life. **“The individual is always simultaneously particular human being and generic human being”** (Heller, 2000, p. 20). The particular human being is revealed in the way it identifies, at first, human needs as self-needs, such as the satisfaction of hunger, the maintenance of survival and the reduction of suffering. Thus, the particular human being lives its ontological experience as unique and unrepeatable. The generic human being is manifested in the activities and creations that imprint their mark on the world and on representative human experiences, such as feelings and passions. Thus, in everyday life, the person is in relation, conscious and unconscious, with the characteristics of particularity and genericity of his acts. Therefore, even if the choice for a particular work, artistic, scientific, political or care activity comes from an individual initiative and desire, these activities are nonetheless part of the human kind.

For the philosopher, the individual is also generic in which his/her ways of life express the social relationships of his/her time and constant search for integration in the collectives - **the generic-human being is always represented by the community through which he passes** (Heller, 2000, p. 21) – enabling the individual to form his *consciousness of we* and reconfigure a self-consciousness.

It is in the context of the particularity-genericity that is established in a relationship of *mute vital unity* within the scope of everyday life, Heller (2000) puts the relevance of ethics. For this thinker, these two functions are tacitly and parallelly performed without a conscious understanding of the conflicts between them as we are born immersed in daily life, at the risk of the particularity

[...] subjecting the generic human to himself/herself and placing the needs and interests of the social integration in question at the service of the individual's affections, desires, and selfishness (Heller, 2000, p. 21).

The author attributes the mute coexistence between particularity and genericity to the fact that **“[...] everyday life, from all spheres of reality, [is] the one that best lends to alienation”** (Heller, 2000, p. 21).

Therefore, ethics would have the role of intimating the individual to submit his particularity to the generic, converting “[...] this intimation into inner motivation”

(Heller, 2000, p. 21). Thus, given the various choices that the individuals make in their daily lives, the *[ethical] consciousness of we* allows the particularity-genericity relationship to move from being *mute* to assuming an ethical commitment to the other. For this, it is necessary that the individual rises above everyday life since **in everyday life it is not possible to concentrate all the energies in each decision** (Heller, 2000, p. 25).

According to Heller (2000, p. 27), some human activities would require a “[...] partial or total dialectical overcoming of particularity, for the takeoff of everyday life and its elevation to the generic-human”, a process that she calls *homogenization*. For the author, art and science would be those activities that bring more lasting objectification of this process. However, homogenization may apply to various other human-generic activities and occurs, in its conception, only when three factors are present: (i) a concentration of all attention on a single issue with suspension of any other simultaneous activity; (ii) a use of the entire human individuality in the performance of this activity; (iii) a non-arbitrary process, but the result of the individual's choice, whose conscious and autonomous engagement causes “[...] individual particularity to dissipate in human-generic activity” (Heller, 2000, p. 27).

Heller understands that everyday life has its own structure with characteristics that cannot be disregarded: **“There is no everyday life without spontaneity, pragmatism, economism, analogy, precedents, provisional judgment, ultrageneralization, mimesis and intonation”** (Heller 2000, p. 37). In her view, **spontaneity** is the dominant feature of all others. After all, even if there are different levels of spontaneity in daily human activities, it would be impossible to accomplish everything that is done daily if there was reflection before each act. Thus, spontaneity is a fundamental tendency in everyday life, even though it is also driven by its rhythms, repetitions, and regularities.

Choices to make, from the simplest, such as the time to leave home or how to cross the street, are made based on probability. In everyday life, by lack of time, this calculation of possibilities could not be mathematical and results from an immediate articulation between thought and action, which makes “[...] **the attitude of everyday life [being] absolutely pragmatic**” (Heller, 2000, p. 32). At the same time, in this pragmatic decision-making, what is important, makes sense and is essential remains, which points to the **economism** of everyday life. Other resources are also used in the way we *do* our daily activities. We use previous experiences as beacons using **precedents** and **analogy** based on the belief and confidence that they will work again. Sometimes it is necessary to use **provisional judgments** based on the **ultra-generalization** of one's personal tradition or experience. Thus, daily practice is expected to confirm previous results; otherwise, new ways of doing and living need to be reinvented. Also, according to Heller, there are two other characteristics based on which everyday life is structured. One is **mimesis**, a human characteristic essential to the learning and incorporation of habits and customs, which manifests throughout life at different levels and intensities - “[...] **there is no everyday life without imitation**” (Heller, 2000, p. 36). The other characteristic is the **intonation**, that is, the way in which each person “sets the tone” in their life, producing the marks of uniqueness to their daily lives.

Finally, Heller (2000) resumes the discussion of overcoming the alienation of everyday life, using Goethe's words "conducting life" to introduce the possibility of building a humanization of everyday life. In his view, it is not a question of abolishing the spontaneous structure of everyday life to make it less alienated, but of unmuting the individual-society relationship. Thus, she invites the production of new ways of conducting life, which enable a new "ordering" of everyday life, based on a conscious, provocative relationship, with ethical engagement to "[...] transform the very ordering of everyday life into a moral and political action" (Heller, 2000, p. 41).

5.2 Henri Lefebvre

The critique of everyday life - critical and positive - must clear the way for a genuine humanism, for a human which believes in the human because it knows it (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 272).

Henri Lefebvre was an author who was born in 1901 and died in 1991 in France. Originally a philosopher, he became a sociologist after his personal and political experience. As an education activist, Lefebvre offered courses for factory workers, was a member of the French Communist Party (FCP) and the French resistance. In the context of the resistance, he was assigned to operate in Spanish and French border traffic in his village in the Pyrenees. To camouflage his performance, he used his status as a scholar, conducting historical research on peasant resistance; in the postwar period, he received a doctorate in rural sociology (Martins, 2019). He was expelled from the FCP for his positions against the uprisings in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, an experience that, according to Martins (2019), helped to free the social scientist.

The relevance of his studies can be attributed to his breadth and density, particularly for the development of sociology and geography, producing an extensive work of about 70 books. He was an author known for his quest for a return to dialectics and Marx, critically opposing orthodox and idealized Marxism, which in his view departed from Marx's original ideas. According to Martins (2019), Lefebvre's work was important because it shows that in the margin themes, there are great theoretical possibilities of sociology.

Lefebvre was an important student of everyday life, producing a trilogy on the topic: *Critique de la vie quotidienne* (Lefebvre, 1947), *Critique de la vie quotidienne II, Fondements d'une sociologie de la quotidienneté* (Lefebvre, 1961) and *Critique de la vie quotidienne, III – De la modernité au modernisme (Pour une métaphilosophie du quotidien)* (Lefebvre, 1981). The trilogy was published in a single volume in English, as one of the references used in this article (Lefebvre, 2014). Lefebvre also wrote *La vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne* (Lefebvre, 1968), which was translated into Portuguese (Lefebvre, 1991).

One of Lefebvre's contributions to the topic of everyday life was to "convince Marxists [...] of the value of the analysis of superstructures based on the concept of alienation; [...] to demonstrate to philosophers that the trivial should not be exempt from philosophical scrutiny" (Trebitsch, 2014, p. 21). Lefebvre's reflection on everyday life has been built over decades. It began in the immediate postwar period, even before the onset of the Cold War, and followed the construction of the consumer

society, into the 1980s, in the era of postindustrial society and the information society. Therefore, when talking about his contributions in a few paragraphs, besides an unworkable task, we have the risk of an unacceptable reduction of his work, marked by a sharp critique of social reality, taken in its uniqueness in each of the historical moments, associated with literary and artistic appreciation, in an extraordinary narrative and reflexive construction.

In the preface to the second edition of his first book published in 1958, a decade after its original publication, Lefebvre discusses the cold reception of the work by Marxists and philosophers, but points to the growing interest in the subject by “[...] historians, ethnographers, philosophers, sociologists, as well as of writers, artists and journalists” (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 29). In this preface, the author showed the growth in the production of consumer artifacts for homes, such as kitchens, stoves, and televisions among the social changes that occurred in the period between 1947 and 1958, which mark the emergence of another type of social need. He points to the contradictions created by these technological advances that came to produce conflicts for concrete social life, marked both by a marked development in the application of everyday life techniques and by a significant degradation of the social life of much of society (Lefebvre, 2014).

In this preface, by making considerations about everyday life in the ambit of theater, cinema, and literature, he dedicated to analyzing Charles Chaplin's vagabond character, which in his view would be the reverse image of the subject produced by bourgeois society. For Lefebvre, the critique of everyday life takes the form of this dialectical pair: *modern times*, and all the artifacts it produces, and the vagabond - “[...] poor but full of vitality - weak but strong - ruthlessly seeking money, work, prestige, but also love and happiness” (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 35).

Thus, in his first book, Lefebvre seeks the global and the totality, contrasting *the misery of everyday life with the grandeur of everyday life*. The first one marked by

[...] boring work, humiliation [...]. The elementary relationships with things, with needs and money [...]. It is the kingdom of number. [...] the repetitive. Survival of penury and prolongation of scarcity (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42).

The second refers to the

[...] life that perpetuates [...] the appropriation of the body, space and time and desire. The home, the house. The drama that cannot be reduced to a number. [...] The creation of a practical-sensitive world. [...] the possibility of making everyday life a masterpiece (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42-43).

For Lefebvre (1991, p. 35), everyday life is not just a concept, but a “guiding thread to know 'society', situating everyday life in the global: the State, the technique, the technicity, the culture (or culture decomposition)”. Thus, criticism of everyday life allows grasping human creations, ideas, values, and feelings, in short, society itself.

To understand this properly, we need to think about what is happening around us, within us, each and every day. We live on familiar terms with

people in our own family, our own milieu, our own class. This constant impression of *familiarity* makes us think that we know them, that their outlines are defined for us, and that they see themselves as having those same outlines. We define them (Peter is this, Paul is that) and we judge them. We can identify with them or exclude them from our world. But the familiar is not necessarily the known. As Hegel said in a sentence that could well serve as an epigraph for the *Critique of Everyday Life*, “What is known is not recognized” (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 36-37).

Thus, to understand alienation in everyday life for Lefebvre (2014), a critical distance from everyday life is necessary, a fundamental condition for the establishment of new social relationships.

[...] And is not everyday life the sum of insignificances?

Such a view supposes a critical attitude. It is impossible to grasp the concept as such, accepting it, 'living' it passively without retreating. Critical distance, contestation, and comparison go hand in hand (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33-34).

Also, the author stated that the modes of exchange and social division of labor in capitalism imply that there is no social relationship without any alienation. In social relationships, the sense of familiarity described earlier is not an illusion, it is real. However, in his view, familiarity produces a game of masks by which we recognize others and are recognized by them. Thus,

A [social] role is not a role. It is social life, an inherent part of it. What is faked in one sense is what is essential, the most precious, the human, in another. And what is more derisory is what is most needed (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 37).

This understanding is admirably presented in his description of a waiter:

The waiter in a cafe is not playing at being a waiter. He *is* one. And he is not one. He is not selling his time (for working and living) in exchange for the role of a waiter. And it is precisely when he is playing at being a waiter (and a virtuoso in the art of carrying overlaid trays etc.) in front of his customers that he is no longer a waiter; by playing himself, he transcends himself. Moreover, it is certain that a worker does not play at being a worker and could not transcend himself if he did. He is completely “that”, and at the same time he is completely other and something else: head of the family, or an individual eager to enjoy life, or a revolutionary militant. For him and within him, at his best moments and his worst, contradictions and alienations are at their maximum (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 37).

When discussing the exercise of everyday social roles in the context of the contradictions and alienations experienced by the subjects in producing and enjoying the world of life, as in the discussion about the role of the waiter, Lefebvre sharply problematizes the functionalist perspectives that comprise the social role as univocal,

consensual, neutral and guarantor of social integration. Thus, it can be a critique of the role of the practitioner who assumes that it is his or her competence and responsibility to promote adherence, compliance and better performance of individuals to their roles as if they were inherently desirable and not conflicting.

Lefebvre's studies approach everyday life from three main angles: the search for the real and reality (in their practical and abstract aspects); the understanding of everyday life based on the totality and possibility of social transformation. For him: "It is in everyday life that the (...) real center of praxis is situated" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38).

Lefebvre (2014) argued that the knowledge of everyday life allows reaching what is hidden in it. For example, when analyzing a simple event, such as a woman buying a kilo of sugar, he shows how it is not enough to describe it, but it must show all its facets and spheres that unfold from the original event, that is, the story of the woman, her tastes, habits, social class, her use of money and the state of the market, social aspects of that country, etc. Thus, he concluded:

So now I see the humble events of everyday life as having two sides: a little, individual, chance event - and at the same time an infinitely complex social event, richer than the many 'essences' it contains within itself. The social phenomenon can be defined as the unity of these two sides. It remains for us to explain why the infinite complexity of these events is hidden, and to discover why - and this too is part of their reality - they appear to be so humble (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 79).

Lefebvre proposes that research on the critique of everyday life be about how we live. They could contemplate: the search of reconstructing people's real life, comparing it with the interpretations that people make of it; examining everyday life in as little detail as possible, for example, as a day in one's life, even trivial it might be; the critical analysis of this life in the broader context of the society or country in which someone lives; and reflection on how criticism of everyday life can contribute to the art of living, which implies a movement towards the end of alienation (See Lefebvre, 2014, p. 216-220). Consequently, in the second book of the trilogy, the author suggests specific categories that can contribute to concrete investigations about everyday life, including totality, the idea of reality, alienation, what was and is lived, spontaneity, the idea of ambiguity, space and social time, and praxis (See Lefebvre, 2014, p. 474-569). Lefebvre's understanding of everyday life, as such categories give rise, admits chance and intentionality, the concreteness of life and alienation, repetition and transformation. After all, as Martins (1998) pointed out, the reproduction of capital is also the reproduction of social contradictions. Therefore, routine and repetition may give rise to creation, the new, "the time of the possible".

6 Final Considerations

This article proposes to resume everyday life as a critical concept for occupational therapy, deepening readings previously performed by Brazilian occupational therapists. Thus, it was necessary to discuss the theoretical bases that underlie the critical perspectives of occupational therapy to problematize the place of everyday life and the

subject of the contemporary. We briefly presented some possible dialogues on the critical use of the concept by occupational therapy and the human and social sciences, understanding contemporary social reality. Finally, we explored the contributions of the works of Agnes Heller and Henri Lefebvre on the concept, within what would be possible within an article. We expected that these contributions will present aspects to be explored by occupational therapists in their reflections on professional practice and in their research.

Among the limitations of the work, we emphasize its theoretical character and the logistical impossibility of doing, in a single article, deepening on historical-philosophical foundations and theoretical-conceptual discussions, associated with the discussion of daily professional practice. We think that the motivation of theoretical work is not to prescribe the practice. We believe that it is in the encounter with the other, singular and collective subject that professional action is constituted; the daily path to be made is created, built and “walked” in an approach of affection, delicacy, and dialogue. The theoretical work also does not replace the richness of the experience of the other, which, through its narrative, reveals the fabric of life. However, we argue that theoretical and conceptual discussions are fundamental for the elaboration of ideas, the affirmation of values, the understanding of contradictions, the re-meaning and renewal of professional practice and the support of occupational therapy research.

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