

NOTAS ECONÓMICAS

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J. J. TEIXEIRA RIBEIRO A TRIBUTAÇÃO DOS VALORES MOBILIÁRIOS

MICHEL AGLIETTA FINANCIAL GLOBALIZATION

ALFREDO MARQUES INCENTIVOS REGIONAIS E COESÃO

A. J. MARQUES MENDES THE FUTURE ENLARGEMENT(S) OF THE EEC

JOÃO SOUSA ANDRADE A ECONOMIA PORTUGUESA E A UEM

PEDRO LOPES FERREIRA AN USE OF THE MULTIATTRIBUTE UTILITY THEORY

REVISTA DA FACULDADE DE ECONOMIA DA UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA



conjunto de argumentos formais que correspondem a uma virtual inversão dos três tipos de argumentos dominantes da retórica reaccionária, o autor procura mostrar a importância de desenvolver formas de argumentação *democracy friendly* nos debates públicos, isto é, ultrapassar as utilizações correntes dos argumentos “reaccionários” e “progressistas” como meios para bloquear o debate democrático e cristalizar as opiniões, em lugar de as submeter à crítica e à negociação aberta à mudança de pontos de vista em função dos argumentos do adversário. Um aspecto interessante que é sugerido — embora sem ser explicitado — por Hirschman é o de que a incidência da análise sobre os argumentos formais e não sobre as configurações ideológicas, os movimentos ou as pessoas permite que os argumentos reaccionários e os argumentos progressistas possam ser articulados, conforme os contextos e as situações, por conservadores e por progressistas. Deste modo, a conhecida inconsistência do discurso político e do conteúdo das intervenções em polémicas públicas pode ser explicado, não pela desonestidade ou incoerência dos intervenientes, mas pelo facto de se tratar de recursos para a acção simbólica, como diria Kenneth Burke, que estão estreitamente associados à ocasião em que são mobilizados, ao tema e ao auditório.

Seria interessante examinar, igualmente, as possibilidades de alargamento deste tipo de abordagem aos debates associados ao que Boaventura de Sousa Santos designa por terceira geração de direitos humanos — os direitos culturais e associados aos modos de vida —, um tema muito relevante na actual fase de início da administração de Bill Clinton, particularmente tendo em conta questões como os direitos das minorias e das mulheres, ou as recentes polémicas sobre o aborto. Aliás, não deixa de ser interessante notar que, tendo nascido de uma reflexão sobre as condições emergentes da “revolução conservadora” dos anos Reagan, será provavelmente em relação com o ressurgir — já em curso — da retórica reaccionária sob a nova administração americana que esta obra de Hirschman verá confirmada e reforçada a sua importância enquanto contribuição para a transformação das condições do debate democrático.

José Reis

João Arriscado Nunes

J. P. Pfeffer (1992)

Managing with Power, Boston, Harvard Business School Press, viii, 391p.

“... there are numerous advantages to acting first. By staking out a position, by taking some action that will be difficult to undo, we can compel those who come later to accommodate themselves to our position ... When it is difficult to undo what you have accomplished, your actions serve as a base for further negotiations. You may set both the terms of the debate and the framework for subsequent action.” J.P. Pfeffer, *Managing with Power*

This short note aims at drawing attention to the book by Prof. J. P. Pfeffer of Stanford University entitled *Managing with Power*. As the author says, his book intends to be: “... a detailed, clinical diagnosis of power, its sources and how it is used”.

Therefore it is essentially focused on a behavioural analysis of the power of persons and groups in organisations. It deals only indirectly with the structural changes of a global nature which we observe nowadays both at the political and structural levels.

The exposition is largely illustrated with cases from the USA life, which makes the reading rather easy and stimulating, since in my opinion, it makes the reader feel himself/herself in the role of “actor” and/or “victim” of some institutionalised form of political power. Even the ambivalence of feelings emerging from those situations seems to confirm the sharpness of Pfeffer analysis. If on one hand, as stated by Rosabeth Kanter, “Power is America’s last dirty word. It is easier to talk about money — and much easier to talk about sex — than it is to talk about power”, on the other hand it is not less true that the exercise of power is one of the most important human activities, conditioning all aspects of our lives.

As Pfeffer says, “Knowledge without power is remarkably little interest. And power without the skill to employ it effectively is likely to be wasted”.

The text is organised in four parts: the first part presents a detailed analysis of the exercise of power in organisations. In the second part the sources of power are studied while the third part studies the utilization of strategies and tactics intended to guarantee an effective use of power. Finally the fourth part presents the dynamics of power — the way in which power is gained or lost, and how organisations are transformed.

Although I do not intend to make a critical analysis of

Pfeffer's work I will make a short reference to some specific questions which draw my attention and interest more intensely during the reading. It seemed to me particularly interesting the reference to the so called "implementation science". The distance between a decision and its implementation is clearly shown. Among other questions the author points out the difficulty in evaluating the quality of the decisions, once they are made. This stems from the fact that the consequences of a decision in general, may only be evaluated much later and in many cases in an indirect manner. It is easily understood that for any political power this is an essential point to legitimate the action of feedback mechanisms.

Thus it is not surprising that in many cases, the difficulties of material nature join the power holders' resilience regarding the evaluation of the results of their decisions. The situation becomes even more fuzzy if we take into account that power has always a symbolic component, besides its substantive component, which motivates interesting comments by Pfeffer among which I would like to stress the following: "we are sometimes perplexed as to why so much effort and energy are expended over seemingly unimportant decision..."

Moreover questions regarding scarcity of resources, a substantive source for the exercise of power, are often misrepresented. As Pfeffer says: "The most precious resource in an organization is an incremental resource." In fact it is completely different to decide upon an allocation of new resources or upon the redistribution of something already in use. In the second case, the tendency shows that we are in the presence of a problem which according to the theory of games is called a zero sum game, i.e., the gain of a player implies the loss of another player... Bearing in mind the interdependencies among several actors in organisations, this situation is in general negative, particularly if we take into account that the current need for innovative solutions may imply, as it is known, a threat to the status quo.

Last but not the least I intend to make a comment on the chapter of the third part of the book, dealing with the "Policies of Information and Analysis". The author, without failing to recognize the importance of information as a political strategy, emphasizes, the limitations of its use as well as the limitations of the decision analysis methodologies in practice. In short Pfeffer argues that information processing techniques are very often mostly used as a political tactics, by stressing the following points:

- the request for studies from external consultancy firms, usually very expensive, is not in general based on any real need for more and better information assessment, and/or better decision support in difficult decisions. It is rather an artificial way for keeping up appearances and justify decisions which policy makers want to impose through supposedly scientific criteria. The external consultants are suggestively designated as "hired guns";

- the possibility of making decision analysis and the importance of information, when common sense and subjective judgment are at stake, is rather questionable;

- the selection of the alternatives and criteria used by the decision makers is determined by several factors such as the interests and professional background of the decision makers: they prefer in general to deal with elements which are familiar to them, thus feeling more comfortable when looking for the required trade-offs;

- because of the complexity of the decision process and the interests at stake it is also questionable the possibility of using information and decision support techniques as learning factors, enabling to improve the skills of the decision makers.

The approach proposed by Pfeffer is an intelligent one and points to deeper questions which affect organisations nowadays. Nevertheless it seems to me rather reductive in perspective. As an operational researcher I am used to debating with mathematicians who never give up constructing normative or abstractive models for the decision processes, even in the more complex cases. In my opinion, they do not understand that they are irrevocably destined to failure! Also, many times, consciously or unconsciously, they think it is possible to force reality to accommodate to their models according to the well known sentence: "tools first, tasks after." We should not forget that the failure of the traditional operations research models when applied to many real world problems results among other factors, from the fact that they were not able to take into consideration subjective judgments and reasonings by analogy, which are often made by decision makers. The approach to try to overcome this type of questions implies complex research of interdisciplinary nature, a lot of care in the analysis and in the synthesis of the decision processes and adequate validation of the data, models and results. In many cases disciplines such as cognitive psychology, sociology and political science have an important role to play. The position of Pfeffer lies in the opposite extreme of the mathematicians. He considers that the complexity of the decision processes in the organisations greatly devaluates the role of





information and decision analysis. I believe this position is incorrect. The new technological and methodological developments may not be sufficient to overcome certain difficulties. Nevertheless when correctly used they are unquestionably useful. With the means presently available it is possible to construct very flexible decision support systems which enable, in many cases, to incorporate the experience and intuition of the decision makers, regarding the options to be evaluated, even when facing ill-structured problems. My experience led me to conclude that the present development in information and communication technologies, as well as multidisciplinary methodological developments could significantly improve the present contribution of effective decision support systems to decision makers when dealing with planning and management problems. The above mentioned decision support systems are computer based systems, generally interactive with the objective of supporting and improving the decision process especially in complex problems. These systems integrate modern computer science techniques, including sophisticated Human/computer interfaces, operational research methods, statistical methods and, more recently, artificial intelligence techniques.

I believe that the adequate use of this type of tools, having in mind a way of filtering rather than enlarging the usually excessive information available to the decision makers, clarifies some of the problems under study in modern organisations. It should also be noted that the need for effective decision support systems has made many researchers in the area to understand that, in many cases, humans do not take decisions according to the classical axioms of decision analysis. This justifies the necessity of methodological innovation in this area. For example the combination of operations research and artificial intelligence methods as well as the development of interactive visual simulation systems have shown to be extremely useful.

It is therefore essential that decision support systems be user oriented tools devoted to support decision makers and not to replace them. They should enable to take into account the main limitations of the human beings in terms of attention, memory and speed of calculation and potentiate the creativity as well as the capacity of dealing with complex and integrated information. In these conditions I believe the role of this type of tools in the organisations may overtake the destiny which Pfeffer seems to allot to them. Indeed this is already happening today in some cases and situations.

João Clímaco

Jean-Pierre Dupuy (1992)

Le Sacrifice et l'Envie — Le Libéralisme aux prises avec la Justice Sociale, Paris, Calman-Lévy, 371 p.

Jean Pierre Dupuy, Professor de filosofia social e política na Escola Politécnica de Paris, onde dirige o Centro de Epistemologia Aplicada, e Professor na Universidade Stanford, na Califórnia, representa na comunidade científica um momento forte de diálogo entre a cultura social francesa e latina e a que é de origem anglo-saxónica, de que a obra em apreço é uma fecunda expressão.

Se fosse possível resumir os objectivos desta obra, diríamos que ela pretende ser uma leitura crítica dos mais consagrados textos que o liberalismo tem produzido, para, analiticamente, desfazer-lhes os equívocos e os paradoxos em que se enredam, na fundamentação das teorias liberais, esclarecer os fundamentos teóricos da ordem social moderna, particularmente da Economia Política, como teoria de ordenação social hoje dominante, elucidando-nos sobre o lugar que o conceito de Justiça Social ocupa nas diferentes correntes do pensamento liberal.

Duas preocupações estão na origem das investigações de Dupuy: por um lado, pensar o "mercado" nas suas dimensões políticas e morais, por outro, admitida a hipótese de que nas sociedades não-modernas a gestão da violência se operava pela sua expulsão sob a forma de "sagrado", perceber e explicar o que se passa com as sociedades modernas em dessacralização. Parece ser irrecusável a concomitância moderna da retirada do religioso e sacrificial com a invasão da racionalidade mercantil. Finalmente, a grande preocupação de Dupuy permanece a mesma de uma obra sua anterior (em colaboração com Paul Dumouchel), *L'enfer des choses*: compreender como a lógica da economia e da mercadoria invadiu progressivamente todos os domínios da vida, privada e pública, social e política.

As preocupações de Dupuy levam-no a organizar a sua leitura ao redor das duas expressões que constituem o título principal da obra — o sacrifício e a inveja — que funcionam como o mote sintetizador das situações paradoxais que embaraçam os fundamentos dos projectos liberais. Sacrifício e inveja, porquê? Porque designam rejeições. A boa sociedade liberal exclui o sacrifício do indivíduo ao conjunto; rejeição que corresponde à rejeição da organização religiosa, intolerante e sacrificial, da sociedade, num mundo em processo de dessacralização. A rejeição da inveja refere-se à ideia acusatória de que a justiça social não seria mais que um ideal de invejosos, é a rejeição da