

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POVERTY AND SOCIAL WORK

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1. Introduction

Poverty is one of the rare social phenomena where different disciplines work differently on the same problem. Poverty is an economic concept, because poverty is directly related to household income. Poverty is a religious concept. In Islam and Christianity, poverty, which means detachment from the blessings of the world, is praised and encouraged. When poverty is associated with malnutrition and the consequences of poverty are considered in terms of disorders on the organism, one can see how it is related to medicine. Poverty is a psychological concept. Because there are different behavioral patterns that poor people acquire. These patterns can be introversion or they can turn into outward aggressive behavior. Poverty is also closely related to urbanization and architecture. There is a concept called spatial cleavage in the literature. Poverty is a sociological concept. Because poverty is linked to another important sociological concept: inequality. Poverty is also a concept that concerns social services and social policies in terms of intervention.

Although poverty is a phenomenon seen in every society in the historical process, poverty debates in the modern sense date back to the early 17th century. The poverty-based debates initiated by 17th century thinkers within the framework of property rights contributed to the development of liberalism. While defending private property, liberal theorists also emphasized that the poor should not be excluded and that social welfare was as important as personal welfare. In the early industrialization period, while many thinkers were optimistic that poverty would decrease with advancing technology, the Poor Laws of the same period punished debtors in a cruel manner (Stedman, 2005).

The first well-established law for the poor was the Poor Law, enacted in 1601 during the reign of Elizabeth I in England. The law, also known as the Old Poor Law, was inclusive of all people who did not own property and local authorities were responsible for the law. In this context, the broad and ambiguous content of propertylessness used to define poverty was reinforced by the Speenhamland system introduced in 1795 and lasted until the 1830s. In order to find solutions to the new social problems created by the Industrial Revolution, a social service understanding based on philanthropy and volunteerism is observed until the end of the 1800s. In the late 19th century, the foundations of social work education were laid by the people who provided these social service activities. The first examples of professional social work education were in England in the 1890s, with courses offering theoretical and practical courses for volunteers, and

in continental Europe, in Germany in the same years, under the leadership of Alice Salomon, with courses with the same purpose. In 1898, with the opening of a summer school in New York and the establishment of Hull House in Chicago, led by Jane Addams, education began in this direction. In 1899, the Institute for Social Work Training, the first social work school, was opened in the Netherlands (Koşar & Tufan, 1999).

On the other hand, "settlement houses", one of the pioneering works of social work's method of working with the community and especially the technique of social action, started to be opened around the same time. The "magnanimous" daughters of the bourgeoisie opened settlement houses in poor neighborhoods and aimed to educate the poor by living there. In these houses, the first of which was opened in London under the name Toynbee Hall, the poor were instilled with awareness on issues such as "saving" and "frugality" (Zastrow, 2013). These first studies, which were the pioneers of the social work profession, brought Jane Addams the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

2. Definitions of Poverty

Poverty is the inability of individuals to meet their physiological and social needs and to be deprived of the income, material resources and cultural resources necessary to live humanely. "The old term for poverty in our language is neediness. Poor means a person who cannot meet his/her needs" (Abay, 2004: 81). Arabic *fukara*, Ottoman Turkish *fakirs*, the word *fakir* has also passed into our language from Arabic and its etymological meaning is quite interesting. "The word *fakir* is an adjective from the root *fakr* in Arabic, which means to pierce, dig, break, and its original meaning is someone whose spine (*fakar*) is broken" (Altuntaş, 2002: 40).

2.1. Absolute Poverty

Rowntree (1902) defined absolute poverty as the expenditures necessary to maintain only physical health. This definition includes food, clothing, rent, fuel and basic household needs.

2.2. Relative Poverty

The most common expression used in the concept of relative poverty is the examination of the results of household income and consumption expenditures or similar surveys on income and expenditures by comparing household percentage groups with each other.

2.3. Poverty Line

The poverty line is a relative line used to distinguish between the poor and the non-poor in a society.

2.4. Ultra Poverty

"Ultra poverty refers to the situation of people who, despite spending all of their income, can meet only 80% of the daily calorie amount based on the absolute poverty criterion. It is argued that if the poverty of the ultra-poor lasts for more than five years, it is impossible to correct their situation and those in this category are defined as chronic poor" (Gül, 2002: 82).

2.5. Subclass Poverty

These underclass or non-class groups are, according to Gans (1995): "They are elements outside the system, and the concept usually includes people who do not work, young women who have children out of wedlock and continue to receive state benefits, the homeless, beggars, alcohol or drug addicts, and street criminals. Since the concept is broad, groups such as those living in social housing, illegal immigrants, gang members, etc. are also included in the underclass. In general, this term, which lends itself to stigmatizing the poor, describes structures that have been excluded, pushed out of the system, which are now seen as dysfunctional for the system" (cited in Bauman, 1999a: 98).

2.6. Culture of Poverty

The culture of poverty was coined by the anthropologist Oscar Lewis to describe the lifestyle of people living in poverty in the slums formed as a result of migration in the big cities of developing countries. According to him, locality among the poor disappears, and people with similar habits who deal with the same problems all over the world are included in this culture.

2.7. Urban Poverty

It can be said that modern cities emerged after the Industrial Revolution. Industrialization in Western societies took place as a precursor to the phenomenon of urbanization. Simmel (1996), while discussing the situation of the urban individual, puts forward the concept of the metropolitan type of person. Simmel, who defines the metropolitan type of person as a person who reacts with his brain instead of his heart, attributes the dominance of rationality in the behavior of the individual to the certainty and objectivity brought to social relations by money, which is the only valid measure of value in urban life. According to Simmel, metropolitan life makes people cautious and insecure. The metropolitan man is alone in the crowd, he has no one to rely on but himself. This situation brings a kind of freedom and individualization to the individual. Urban life has transformed the struggle with nature for survival into a struggle between people. The intensification of the struggle between people naturally brings inequality and poverty.

3. Welfare State and Neo-Liberalism

In the 19th century, after the market system that spread all over the world came to an end with a series of disasters such as the Great Depression, the rise of fascism and the Second World War, the welfare state was implemented despite all the impossibilities and scarce resources. In this environment of poverty and scarcity, social solidarity gained great importance. Although the term welfare state entered the English language in 1941, Germany pioneered the concept of the welfare state in the 1920s. The welfare state has three important points: providing a minimum level of income for individuals and families, reducing social risks and finally providing the best standards for all citizens (Gough, 2008).

Social welfare states can intervene in the national economy in various ways. This form of intervention varies depending on the internal structure and size of the state implementing this system. In addition to welfare states that seek market-based solutions, there are also welfare

states that can disrupt the functioning of the market with excessive interventions. In this context, "Ensuring the efficient use of resources in the country, preventing economic imbalances, increasing national income, ensuring full employment and many similar market-related tasks belong to the state. In other words, the state has the freedom to use money and credit applications, investments, full employment and social security regulations and economic planning as a policy tool" (Gökbunar & Kovancılar 1998: 252). The social welfare state has been effective in the development of a pluralistic and participatory democracy. Citizens, who gained political power over time, put pressure on governments in countries that adopted the social welfare state and ensured that public services were maximized. These demands have increased over time and reached the maximum level. In this context, one of the main criticisms of social welfare state practices is the public's desire for unlimited services. In addition, the fact that individuals who are socially guaranteed - such as unemployment benefits - do not want to work even though there is work, and that they tend to consume instead of saving, thinking that their future is guaranteed, is another glaring point. Another point that has been criticized is that aid leads to moral degradation and corruption such as bribery, corruption and torpil, especially in the political sphere.

In the welfare state model, the need for the state to play an active role in solving crises and socio-economic problems that cannot be prevented by the hidden hand of the market mechanism and to take direct responsibility for providing a more secure life for individuals has been widely recognized. In fulfilling these responsibilities, the state has not completely replaced the market, but the state has been entrusted with the responsibility of creating and directing the infrastructure necessary for the functionality of the market. Thus, while protecting the rights of the entrepreneurial class and providing the necessary conditions for production in the market, the state also developed social programs for other social groups. In this process, liberalism acquired a social dimension and the capitalist state became a 'social state'.

The capitalist state, in the form of the welfare state, served to smooth social tensions and legitimize the system. The contemporary capitalist state has had to spend more to provide the conditions necessary for the capital accumulation process to function, while at the same time reducing social tensions and keeping the legitimacy of the system out of question. This process manifested itself as the crisis of the welfare state and led to the restructuring of the capitalist state. This restructuring led to the replacement of the welfare state with an understanding similar to the minimal state of the 18th century. In this context, the minimal state is an analysis developed by neo-liberal movements. This system renders the nation-state dysfunctional and advocates the separation of economy and politics. Thus, a complete and absolute freedom of the market will realize individual freedom, which neo-liberalism regards as the most fundamental, ethical value (Şaylan, 1994).

While neo-liberal intellectual schools and think tanks strengthened the theoretical foundations of the new market-centered model of society and welfare, new right-wing governments carried these policies to the ground of implementation. By identifying with globalization and the new world order, neo-liberal policies have, on the one hand, strengthened their legitimacy at the national level with different names such as 'Reaganism', 'Thatcherism' and 'Ozalism' in country

experiences. On the other hand, they have been presented as non-alternative marketist models imposed on countries by international financial institutions as a necessary and obligatory condition of globalization in today's world economy (Gül, 2004).

The economic stabilization and structural adjustment programs imposed on developing countries by the IMF and the World Bank since the early 1980s have led to the impoverishment of hundreds of millions of people. Structural adjustment was used to collapse the economy of the former Soviet Bloc and the system of state-owned enterprises. As a result, social spending was cut and most of the gains of the welfare state were eliminated (Chossudovsky, 1999).

With the globalization process, socio-economic problems are increasing more rapidly than ever before. There is an intense debate all over the world about the future of the size and increasing cost of social welfare services. Doubts about the sustainability of social security systems, unemployment, poverty and poverty-related problems (beggars, street gangs, homeless people, rising crime rates, increased violence, commodification, organ trafficking, etc.) are on the rise and many people feel that their future well-being is becoming more uncertain. Declining protection against increasing risks and the weakening of the welfare state affect the poor the most. Many people perceive globalization as a threat, fearing job loss, diminishing economic security and increasing inequality, and distrust that in the future there will be inadequate protection against unemployment, old age and illness. In the 21st century, a new kind of Welfare State may not be as generous as before, but the victims of globalization will not be as dispossessed as in the last quarter of the 20th century (Gökbunar et al., 2008).

4. Conclusion

The necessity of the existence of the state has been questioned in relation to the current state of the world. The question of what should be the function of the state in society is one of the most debated topics in social sciences today. In relation to the social welfare state, it can be said that the Citizen has started to turn into the Customer.

Citizens expect more services from society, but they also want to have more influence over governments and pay less taxes. Governments now have to do things with better quality at less cost. In this context, associations and foundations established by volunteers to help the state are gaining importance (Gökbunar and Kovancılar, 1998). The most important reason for this is that the state cannot adequately meet all the social needs of the people. Modern developments such as globalization, technological advances, the rapid decline of agriculture, changes in the family structure, women's increasingly widespread participation in working life, and an aging population are indicators that poverty is transforming into a new form all over the world. The working poor have become an important problem not only in poor countries but also in rich countries.

Globalization has transformed the world into a big village of spending-indexed peoples, bringing with it huge capital accumulations and mass poverty. "While the number of unemployed people around the world has approached the one billion mark, millions of people are facing homelessness, malnutrition and health problems due to the cutting of social programs and funds due to the nature of structural adjustment programs, the process of reducing education

and health expenditures, in short, the liquidation of the social welfare state" (Soyak, 2004: 38). Unable to withstand global competition, nation-states are choosing the path of downsizing and abandoning social welfare state policies. Therefore, the poor seem to be left to the mercy of the market economy and non-governmental organizations in this period.

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