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## ABSTRACT WORK IN MARX FROM ISAAK RUBIN AND JUAN CESAR GARCÍA: RETHINKING ABOUT THE CATEGORY OF WORK

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## Abstract

The double character of work, considered one of the central points of Marx's theory of value, presents different approaches within Marxist thought. Isaak Illich Rubin considered one of the most important interpreters of the theory of value, in his work "Essays on Marx's Theory of Value", discusses the main defining elements of abstract work and analyzes its most common conceptions, reinforcing the centrality of exchange and transformation in social work. In the field of health, the Argentine physician and sociologist Juan César García also discusses the dual nature of work and, despite being part of a line of thought criticized by Rubin, brings a view of relationship between work and the health-disease process. From the debate between the contributions/reflections on abstract work in the work of Rubin and García, this article traces the contradictions and important approximations to the construction of Marxist thought between these two authors.

**Descriptors:** Work; Working conditions; Working day; Capitalism; Economy.

<p><b>EL TRABAJO ABSTRACTO EN MARX DESDE ISAAK RUBIN Y JUAN CESAR GARCÍA: REPENSANDO LA CATEGORÍA DE TRABAJO</b></p> <p><b>Resumen:</b> El doble carácter del trabajo, considerado uno de los puntos centrales de la teoría del valor de Marx, presenta diferentes enfoques en el pensamiento marxista. Isaak Illich Rubin, considerado uno de los más importantes intérpretes de la teoría del valor, en su obra "Ensayos sobre la teoría del valor de Marx", discute los principales elementos definitorios del trabajo abstracto reforzando la centralidad del intercambio y la transformación en trabajo Social. En el campo de la</p>	<p><b>O TRABALHO ABSTRATO EM MARX A PARTIR DE ISAAK RUBIN E JUAN CESAR GARCÍA: REPENSANDO A CATEGORIA TRABALHO</b></p> <p><b>Resumo:</b> O duplo caráter do trabalho, considerado um dos pontos centrais da teoria do valor de Marx, apresenta diferentes abordagens dentro do pensamento marxista. Isaak Illich Rubin, considerado um dos mais importantes intérpretes da teoria do valor, em sua obra "Ensaio sobre a Teoria do Valor de Marx", discute os principais elementos definidores do trabalho abstrato e analisa suas concepções mais usuais, reforçando a centralidade da troca e da transformação em trabalho social. No campo da saúde, o médico e sociólogo argentino Juan César García também discute sobre o duplo caráter do</p>
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<p>salud, el médico y sociólogo argentino Juan César García también aborda la dualidad del trabajo y, a pesar de ser parte de una línea de pensamiento criticada por Rubin, trae una mirada a la relación entre el trabajo y el proceso salud-enfermedad. A partir de los aportes/reflexiones sobre el tema en la obra de Rubin y García, este artículo rastrea las contradicciones y aproximaciones a la construcción del pensamiento marxista entre estos dos autores.</p> <p><b>Descriptor:</b> Trabajo; Condiciones de trabajo; Jornada laboral; Capitalismo; Economía.</p>		<p>trabalho e, apesar de se inserir numa linha de pensamento criticada por Rubin, traz o olhar sobre a relação entre o trabalho e o processo saúde-doença. Desde o debate entre as contribuições/reflexões sobre o trabalho abstrato na obra de Rubin e García, este artigo traça as contradições e aproximações importantes à construção do pensamento marxista entre estes dois autores.</p> <p><b>Descritores:</b> Trabalho; Condições de trabalho; Jornada de trabalho; Capitalismo; Economia.</p>
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## INTRODUCTION

Widely ignored, even by Marxists, the concept of abstract labor was little explored until 1920. Since Marx's death (in 1883), it has been absent from both theoretical and political debates. It was Isaak Rubin<sup>1</sup> who first took a serious interest in this concept and addressed it in his book "Essays on Marx's Theory of Value"<sup>2</sup>, pointing out that the theory of abstract labor is one of the central points of Marx's theory of value.<sup>1</sup>

In his work, Rubin<sup>2</sup> highlights the importance that Marx brings to the distinction between concrete and abstract labor, the dual character of labor, and points out that, in much of the literature, abstract labor is understood erroneously or in a simplified way, only in the sense of physiological labor. Based on an analysis of Marx's concepts of labor and commodities, Rubin<sup>2</sup> explains that concrete and abstract work (technical-material and social) are one and the same work embodied in commodities. The social aspect of this work, which creates value and is expressed in value, is **abstract labor**.<sup>2</sup> So, for Marx,<sup>3</sup> concrete labor is what creates useful things and is therefore central to human life, while abstract labor is what contributes to the appropriation of value by the capitalist, since, considering that capitalism is not only geared towards the production of goods that satisfy needs in their use value, abstract labor is that which relates to the essence of the transit of value, that is, to the production of commodities with exchange value.<sup>3</sup> Even so, much

of the Marxist literature has continued to reduce the concept of abstract labor to its quantitative aspect only, leaving aside its social character.<sup>1</sup>

Bringing this dual character of work into the context of health discussions, one of the main exponents of this theme in Latin America is Juan César García,<sup>4</sup> who explores the relationship between labor and health in various ways. In one of his works, García takes up this point of Marxian theory, incorporating his point of view, namely that it is only in capitalism that medicine comes to understand that there is a clear link between health and labor, and that until the 18<sup>th</sup> century this type of correlation was not established.<sup>4</sup> In addition, he points out that contemporary medicine, in its quest to deepen and decipher the relationship between labor and health-disease processes within the context of mature capitalism, sometimes only explores the physiological and quantitative nature of energy expenditure, exhaustion, leaving aside the dual nature of labor presented by Marx,<sup>3</sup> the concrete aspect of labor and its transformative role in man<sup>3</sup> which lies in abstract labor.

Currently, the global dynamics of the labor process and its relationship with health and illness are being discussed in greater depth, abandoning reductionist currents in which the epidemiological, exposure-outcome approach favored a monocausal concept in determining the worker's illness.<sup>5</sup>

Having made these considerations in mind, in this text we discuss not only the historical contexts in which the authors Rubin and García were inserted and which contributed to their analysis, but we also discuss their reflections on abstract labor and their thinking on health.

## **RUBIN AND GARCÍA: A BRIEF INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL-INSTITUTIONAL BIOGRAPHY**

### **Juan César Garcia And His History In The Struggle For Social Medicine In Latin America**

Juan César García is known in Latin America as one of the thinkers and articulators of the theoretical-political movement of social medicine, a movement which, from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, began to change the way we think about the health-disease processes. García was born in 1932 in Necochea, Argentina, into a humble background. His father was a farm worker while his mother did the housework. As a student, he experienced the beginning of political changes in his country that permeated educational systems and was influenced by the principal of

the secondary school where he studied, who was a socialist and promoted various pedagogical changes.<sup>6</sup>

He moved with his family to the city of La Plata, in the province of Buenos Aires, in 1950, to study higher education, which in the context of the time was the possibility of social advancement (i.e. improving their economic conditions). Over a period of nine years, he not only studied medicine, but also moved through various spaces of collective construction and student struggle against the Perón government's retrograde university reforms. He did his medical residency in Pediatrics at the *Hospital de Niños de La Plata Sor María Ludovica* and then at a health center in Berisso, where he had his first contact with professional and community practice. Social problems led García and other colleagues to travel around the province of Buenos Aires and carry out surveys of the sanitary conditions of the villages (*pueblos*) and towns in the countryside.

As well as medicine, he was interested in social issues and, while still in La Plata, he began a journalism course, which he did not complete. He took part in building the statutes of the Student Center, the library and a periodical called *Edición*, where he could channel his concerns and interests that went beyond medicine.<sup>6</sup> He helped in various student causes by activating in the Medical Student Center, at the time strongly opposing the policies of Perón's government.

Driven by the anti-Peronist climate and the university reforms, which favored areas of science and technology as well as the field of scientific sociology, García developed his Master's degree in sociology at the *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales* - FLACSO between 1960-1961<sup>7</sup> and then became a member of the faculty at the suggestion of Dean Peter Heinz, developing works on sociological topics that still permeated the medical field. In 1964, he accepted a scholarship that took him to Harvard University, as a result of international research carried out in seven countries on the influence of the labor market and the environment on the behavior of individuals.<sup>6</sup> In this way, his dual training in higher education, doctor and sociologist, led to the social role entering medical education and questioning the structural relationship of the dominant mode of production of medical professionals.

From 1966, he became a consultant for the Pan American Health Organization - PAHO, based in Washington, USA, reaching the second phase of his intellectual production, which proposed analyzing medical education, social medicine and the social sciences in relation to the historical, economic and political context of Latin America.<sup>8</sup> He left Harvard for PAHO to take part in a major project sponsored by the Milbank Foundation, which proposed analyzing the

progress of the discipline of preventive and social medicine in the education of health professionals. During this project, García<sup>6</sup> was able to visit hundreds of medical schools in various countries. In 1972, he published *La educacion médica en América Latina* (Medical Education in Latin America),<sup>6</sup> the same year that Cuenca I was held, a seminar that analyzed the teaching of the social sciences in health and criticized the natural history model of diseases,<sup>7</sup> in which García contributed to defining the field of social science in health more clearly.<sup>6</sup> In 1983, the seminar commemorating the tenth anniversary of Cuenca I was held, when García was already very ill, and the issues of the social sciences in health were expanded. García sought to understand medical education as a process related to other broader fields, such as medical education in the late 1960's within a Marxist approach. García died in 1984 and left a legacy of political commitment to change and analysis of the health-disease binomial as a social aspect.

### **Isaac Illich Rubin And His Interpretation Of Marx In The Soviet Context**

Isaac Illich Rubin was born on June 12, 1886 in the city of Dvinsk, Latvia, formerly Daugavpils. He graduated in law from the University of St. Petersburg in 1910. In Moscow, he worked as a lawyer and collaborated on scientific literature related to civil law, during which time he also joined the Social Democratic Party. He began teaching political economy after the 1917 revolution. Among the institutions he worked at were Moscow University and the Red Chair Institute. During this period he began translating some of Marx's texts, and his prestige was mainly due to the author's interpretations of Marxian texts. In 1926, he became a collaborator at the Marx-Engels Institute, taken over by Riazanov, and was head of the office, which was responsible for editing Marx's works.

For much of his career, Rubin suffered reprimands and penances for being considered "anti-Soviet" as a result of his reformist political approach, until he was executed by Stalin's government in 1937. Even during these turbulent periods of political pressure and persecution, he did not cease to carry out and publish studies of extreme relevance to the critique of political economy.<sup>9</sup>

Rubin was arrested twice in 1921 because of his affiliation with parties and organizations whose ideals were considered contrary to the communist regime, such as the Revolutionary Socialists and the Russian Social Democrats. In 1923 he published one of his main works, "Essays on Marx's Theory of Value",<sup>2</sup> a period that coincided with his imprisonment, due to his political

bias and the Soviet government's strict stance towards **possible enemies**, a classification given to any dissonance with the Soviet regime's values. Thanks to political support, he was released early and returned to Moscow. During his exile, he wrote a large part of the book *History of Economic Thought*,<sup>9</sup> published in 1926. It is important to remember that during this period Marxism was at the basis of Soviet ideals, so academic discussions and debates were on the rise, creating great tension not only politically, but also in academia itself, with a dispute between the scholars of the time as to who would meet the theoretical demands, in addition to the fact that interpretations were the responsibility of the authorities, which led to a number of murky and even imposing analyses. Rubin's trajectory represents the dynamics of the social sciences in the Soviet republic, and is considered to some extent as a decline from the point of view of theoretical diversity.<sup>10</sup>

## **ABSTRACT LABOR IN MARX: RUBIN AND GARCÍA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THINKING ABOUT HEALTH WORK**

### **The Dual Character Of Work: Presuppositions And Definitions**

One of the greatest contributions of Marxian thought to the critique of political economy lies in the double character of labor in the definition of a commodity.<sup>11</sup> It is understood that capital, as the result of a social relationship, has its own engine in value, driven by the production process. The value of each commodity can be understood from two angles: a mostly qualitative angle, directly related to the physical and material characteristics of that commodity and the production process - use value; and another mostly quantitative angle, which occurs from the depersonalization of the commodity, creating equivalence between them based on determined quantities - exchange value. Marx,<sup>12</sup> however, understands that, just as there are two sides to value, there are also two sides to labor, and this definition is one of the central points of the critique of political economy.<sup>12</sup>

The first of these angles, concrete labor, starts from a definition based on the technical-material aspects of labor: it represents the organic exchange between man and nature,<sup>11</sup> expressed in a specific and multiple way. The nature of this facet of labor thus produces use value, which corresponds to the value given to the material aspects involved in the production of a given commodity, such as the work involved in the construction of chairs by a carpenter: there is specificity, since the work involved in building them is not the same as that, for example, involved

in making jackets. The second facet, abstract labour, represents the social character of labour, and is only possible in a commercialized society, so that labor becomes social through the equivalence and equalization of its products, unifying and depersonalizing the commodity so that it is available for exchange.<sup>2</sup> Thus, de-characterization and exchange are defining features of abstract labor, which guarantees exchange value in the context of a market society. An example is the work of a tailor: even though he produces a certain garment, this act in itself does not represent abstract labor, but only concrete labor. In order for there to be abstract labor, the tailor's production must be correlated to a social labor that could not be achieved through his private work, since he is part of a market society. In order to achieve the quality of abstract labor, the social process of exchange is necessary, at which point the tailor's work is de-characterized and transformed into equalized labor.<sup>12</sup>

Abstract labor thus defines exchange value in a market society, and this is one of the central themes in Rubin's writings<sup>2</sup> in his detailed analysis of the Marxist Theory of Value - TMV,<sup>2</sup> confronting, however, García's interpretation of abstract labor,<sup>11</sup> so that one of the aims of this essay is to shed light on this debate which not only involves these two Marxist authors, but two major strands of modern and contemporary Marxist thought.<sup>11</sup>

## **RUBIN AND EXCHANGE AS AN ABSTRACTION OF CONCRETE PROPERTIES**

In one of his most forceful works of Marxist analysis, Rubin sheds light on the TMV, systematically detailing the different concepts that structure it. Among them, the dual character of labor is one of his main focuses, so that abstract labor takes center stage precisely because it is characteristic of a market society. In his chapter "Abstract labor",<sup>2</sup> in the book "The Marxist Theory of Value", Rubin<sup>2</sup> highlights and analytically deconstructs the idea widespread in Marxist (and anti-Marxist) sectors that abstract labor means only the expenditure of human energy in physiological form, and then reiterates the definition of abstract labor and its presuppositions.

Before understanding Marx's definition of abstract labor, as pointed out by Rubin,<sup>2</sup> it is essential to start by understanding the commodity from its technical-material (use value) and social aspects (exchange value), from which the dual character of labor (concrete and abstract) is derived. In this way, abstract labor is that which generates value, being the very social aspect of labor. Another central element of the definition of abstract labour is related to the fact that it is necessarily



inserted in the context of a commercialized society, which, together with the act of exchange, are the *sine qua non* conditions for Rubin's precise definition of abstract labour.

Understanding the social aspect of abstract labor starts from the assumption of Marx's definitions of private labor and social labor. Social work, understood as that which is related to the totality of society's work, can only be achieved within a marketized system through equalization, equalization with all other forms of concrete work products, with its conversion into money. In this way, abstraction occurs, the subtraction of the concrete form, becoming equal to the mass of other works (mass of social labor), which is homogeneous and impersonal. Private work, on the other hand, represents exactly the work that is the result of the various forms of production in a commercialized society - it is work that has not yet been socialized, in other words, specifically in the case of a capitalist society, it is concrete work. Thus, in capitalism, the abstraction of the concrete properties of private labor into homogeneous social labor is precisely the transformation of concrete labor into social labor, which occurs in the act of exchange. Rubin points out that this is the reality of a commercialized system, pondering that, for example, in a socialist society, the fruit of concrete labour would itself be social labour.

Another fundamental point in Rubin's<sup>11</sup> writing on abstract labor is related to what the author considers "analytical errors" on the part of other Marxist and anti-Marxist authors with regard to the concept of the physiological expenditure of labor as the definition of abstract labor. Rubin<sup>11</sup> points out that these authors have misinterpreted Marx's writings based on reading the first chapters of the first volume of *Capital*,<sup>11</sup> not covering the whole conceptualization already widely debated in previous writings, such as, for example, in "Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy",<sup>12</sup> originally from 1859. Rubin<sup>2</sup> reports that, for these authors, abstract labour is simplified as being the same as physiological labor, differing from concrete labor in the sense that the latter would be the equivalent of the expenditure of human energy in a given form (production), while the former would be this same expenditure, but in an indeterminate way, independently of any social forms of production, characterizing its a-historicity. Rubin<sup>2</sup> points out that physiological expenditure is actually a presupposition for all forms of work, reiterating that the definition of abstract labor lies in the abstraction of concrete work based on homogenization during the phenomenon of exchange within a commercialized system, reinforcing that it is a historically and socially determined concept.

## **García And Working Conditions In Latin America**

In the 1983 article “The category of work in medicine”,<sup>4</sup> author Juan César García begins his analysis of the work-health relationship in medicine, as reflected in the habitual consciousness of the agents of production.<sup>4</sup> In an attempt to understand how the category of work relates to the processes of illness, García takes up the Marxian literature, more specifically the dual character of work, shedding light on the forms of reproduction of both concrete and abstract work on the health of workers in Latin America.

García<sup>4</sup> understands concrete work as the expenditure of labor power in a specific way, generating use value, pointing out that until 1989, few writings had been developed that evaluated the impacts of the concrete character of labor on workers’ health. García defines concrete labor as that which develops the physical and mental capacities of the human being,<sup>4</sup> making it a producer of health. Thus, if labor does not somehow generate this development, García<sup>4</sup> points out that it generates processes of illnesses, analyzing in his writings the different ways in which labor can make people ill, understanding how it can impact the development of physical and mental capacities, differentiating the productive body from the biological body and the impacts of labor in the manufacturing and large industry phases of capitalism. It thus brings in elements related to illnesses and injuries inherent to labor and the impacts of exploitation in repetitive work, for groups such as women and children, and on mental health in more intellectualized categories of labor.

Abstract labor, according to García,<sup>4</sup> in turn, deals directly with the expenditure of physiological energy at work, focusing specifically on the hours worked. In an attempt to correlate this with the impact on the process of becoming ill, García takes particular account of the length of the working day, specifically its minimum and maximum limits. The minimum duration limit, being the amount of time from which the owner of the means of production would start. This would highlight the already diminished energy of the worker, exposing the physical limitations of the human being, which is due in its normal conditions, which, in a colonizing scenario like that of Latin America, spread the concept of the **lazy** when referring to indigenous populations. This definition, which is based on a qualitative view, is understood as an obstacle to any intervention by capitalist entrepreneurs in regions where pre-capitalist forms of production predominate, and where religion and physical repression are the means used to get the so-called **lazy** population to work.

The quantitative definition of laziness, however, came about when the medical field began to articulate with the economy, partly pathologizing this **phenomenon** based on debilitating diseases and quantifying the decrease in working capacity.<sup>4</sup> In the case of Latin America, the transition from qualitative to quantitative laziness occurred at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, coinciding with major investments in capitalist agrarian production. These advances led in the following decades to an extension of the working day never before experienced by the working class, thus exceeding its physical, mental and moral limits. This led to the maximum length of the working day, defined by García as the period in which the term “pathological fatigue” emerged, i.e. the exhaustion of the workforce. Later studies also indicated a differentiation between the physical fatigue of manual workers and the intellectual fatigue of students and professionals, but both would fall within the effects of the maximum duration limit. It also points to more contemporary events at the time it was published, with capitalist concepts and strategies that attempt to “democratize” the organization of labor, while maintaining the basic structure of exploitation.

### **RUBIN AND GARCÍA: THEORETICAL CONTRADICTIONS**

Both texts, which are part of the Marxist school of thought, make important contributions in their respective fields: Rubin in his more in-depth analysis of the TMV, being one of its main exponents to this day; and García shedding light on the correlation between the dual character of work in Marx and its impact on health, focusing on the Latin American scenario. Despite this, the authors present different approaches to the interpretations of Marxian literature. More specifically, García is part of the group of Marxists who understand abstract labor as the expenditure of physiological energy - a group that Rubin disagrees with in the opening sections of his chapter. García, focusing his analysis on the length of the working day, interprets abstract work as the energy expended during the process, failing to mention the defining elements of abstract labor pointed out by Rubin, such as the need to abstract the specific concrete parameters that structure concrete labor into a homogeneous mass of labor in the context of a commodified system, occurring exactly in the act of exchange, thus guaranteeing its exchange value. Furthermore, by focusing specifically on the impact of working conditions, García does not go into greater depth on aspects relating to value and the social and private characteristics of labor, which are central elements in Marxian literature. Another implication that limits García’s vision, as listed by Rubin, is related to the fact that abstract labor as an expenditure of physiological energy also represents

the absence of the social and historical properties that structure it, which are the main pillars of political economy and its critique.

Despite this, Rubin doesn't point out that abstract labor doesn't somehow involve physiological expenditure. In fact, the author reiterates that, according to Marxian literature, physiological expenditure represents a presupposition of abstract labor, that is, a prior element, and not its definition in itself. As a presupposition, Rubin points out that labor is carried out in the form of the expenditure of physiological energy in every social form of economy, neither being nor creating value. Rubin also points out the existence of formulations considered by the author to be more sophisticated because they understand abstract labor as homogenized physiological expenditure, in other words, as the sum of the expenditure of all forms of concrete labour (concept of homogenous physiological labour). However, even this interpretation is still considered by Rubin as a presupposition for understanding the accurate definition of abstract labor, as it does not deal with two of its central elements: the need to be inserted into a labor context in a market society; and that this homogenization occurs in the act of exchange. Thus, according to Rubin, García's vision does not encompass what the author will consider to be the **inseparable link** between the concept of abstract labor and that of value.<sup>2</sup>

Despite this crucial difference between the two approaches, Rubin includes in his chapter<sup>4</sup> a section in which he addresses the impacts of working hours and conditions. However, the author does not describe these as manifestations of abstract labor, but rather **quantitative properties** that will distinguish labor from its two presuppositions: technical-material and physiological, quantitatively influencing abstract labor before the act of exchange. He then lists the duration/quantity of time and expenditure on labor; the intensity of labor; its qualification; and the quantity of products produced in a given space of time.<sup>2</sup> The author goes further into the subject, bringing up Marx's definitions of **intensive magnitude** and **extensive magnitude** of labor, being respectively the intensity and time spent on labor. Despite this, he reiterates that both aspects are considered to be conditioning technical-material and physiological properties, sometimes complementary and subordinate, in such a way as to allow differentiation between the different natures of labor, which are only homogenized, equalized in a society that is commodified through exchange. This, however, does not reduce the singular importance of García's work in terms of taking a deeper look at these conditioning properties that directly affect the living and working conditions of the working class.<sup>4</sup>

## LIMITATIONS AND CONTEMPORARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Despite Rubin's important contribution to the development and understanding of the TMV, it is essential to explore its limitations and its insertion in the larger context of modern and contemporary Marxist thought, especially taking into account its implications when comparing it with the premises set out by García.

Rubin, who starts from the social division of labor, distances himself from the writings of traditional Marxism, which does not understand the Marxist theory of value as fundamentally different from the one listed by Ricardo. He also distances himself from the Sraffian (neo-Ricardian) interpretation, which tries to articulate elements of the price and value systems. Among Rubin's main contributions to the development of the TMV is the need for the presence of abstract labour in the context of a mercantile economy, thus overcoming analyses whose focus is solely on price, guaranteeing notoriety for the social relations of production.<sup>13,14</sup> Another aspect inaugurated by Rubin and of great value to Marxist thought in general, is precisely in writings subsequent to the one analyzed in this essay, in which he establishes a new approach to monetary analysis in Marx, highlighting the central role of money in mercantiled societies. Despite this, there are important limitations in his interpretation of TMV, specifically with regard to the idea that mercantile exchange is the primary and defining characteristic of capitalism, which, according to Saad-Filho,<sup>13</sup> denotes his inability to illuminate important real relations identified by Marx, such as, for example, the capitalist monopoly of the means of production, the subordination of workers in production, the social regulation of the production process (and not just its result) by competition, mechanization, the de-skilling of workers and the mediations between prices and values.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond the limitations of the interpretations of TMV based on Rubin, it is important to draw parallels with the Brazilian reality in terms of the intersections between Rubin and García, most notably the conditioning properties of abstract labor (qualitative properties) - the living and working conditions of the working class. In the specific case of the working class itself in the health sector, the reality of the work of Community Health Agents (ACS) is an important example of the contemporary impacts of precarious working conditions, deepening the processes of illness and deteriorating the vital capacities of the working class. In a recent survey conducted on the basis of interviews with ACS's across the country, elements such as the heterogeneity of

employment relationships, low salaries, precarious working conditions, insufficient technical training for ACS's, lack of material equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE), etc. were listed repeatedly. Thus, even if the work of ACS's is not subject to the process of abstraction, due to its public nature, it is no less inserted in the general context of exploitation represented by the qualitative and conditioning properties of the technical-material and physiological aspects that precede its concreteness.<sup>15</sup>

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Juan César García and Isaak Illich Rubin were economic thinkers who proposed and represented important approaches and interpretations of Marxian thought. Born in different times and realities, their contributions led to reflection on the Marxist theory of value beyond its market character, establishing the centrality of its social and historical aspect. Rubin stands out in particular for inaugurating a new approach to TMV, reinforcing the concept of abstract labor based on the equalization of the concrete properties of labor in the act of exchange within a commodified economy, defining this as the way in which private labor is transformed into social labor within capitalism. He thus rejects the interpretation of abstract labor as physiological expenditure, considering it to be merely a presupposition of every social form of labor, along with its technical-material aspects.

García, on the other hand, although based on Rubin's rejected definition of abstract labor as the expenditure of physiological energy, sheds light on the impacts of the conditioning properties of the technical-material and physiological aspects on the health-disease process, taking a specific look at the reality of Latin America. It thus demonstrates the triggering factors for workers' illness from the perspective of the minimum and maximum working day. Although both interpretations have their theoretical and practical limitations, with new lines of interpretation within the Marxist school of thought, Rubin and García have shown themselves to be fundamental authors for a comprehensive understanding of the transformation and social division of labour in Marxian thought, thinking of value as materialized labour. This allows for a historical and social understanding of the implications of the precariousness of living and working conditions in contemporary times and the relevance of Marxist thought in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **AUTHORIAL CONTRIBUTION**

All the authors contributed substantially to the conception and design of this article.

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