

INDÚSTRIA CULTURAL E SEMIFORMAÇÃO: DEMOCRACIA E EDUCAÇÃO SOB ATAQUE NOS PAÍSES IBERO-AMERICANOS À LUZ DA TEORIA CRÍTICA

INDUSTRIA CULTURAL Y SEMI-FORMATION: DEMOCRACY Y EDUCATION BAJO ATAQUE EN PAÍSES IBEROAMERICANOS EN LUZ DE LA TEORIA CRITICA

CULTURAL INDUSTRY AND SEMI-FORMATION: DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION UNDER ATTACK IN IBERO-AMERICAN COUNTRIES IN LIGHT OF CRITICAL THEORY

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RESUMO: Este ensaio objetiva refletir, urdidos pelos fundamentos da Teoria Crítica da Sociedade, sobre indústria cultural e semiformação (*Halbbildung*) no contexto dos países ibero-americanos. O conceito de indústria cultural não só permanece atual como é fundamental para compreender a semiformação ou a formação danificada. A reflexão está ancorada em M. Horkheimer, T. W. Adorno e H. Marcuse, pensadores da primeira geração da Escola de Frankfurt. A formação (*Bildung*), conforme assumida por esses autores, pode oferecer os substratos necessários para a práxis de resistência ao processo que impede o florescimento de individualidade autônoma, no qual a democracia tem sido atacada.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação. Indústria Cultural. Semiformação. Teoria Crítica da Sociedade.

RESUMEN: Este ensayo pretende reflexionar, guiado por los fundamentos de la Teoría Crítica de la Sociedad, sobre la industria cultural y la semiformación (*Halbbildung*) en el contexto de los países iberoamericanos. El concepto de la industria cultural no sólo sigue siendo actual, sino que es fundamental para entender la semiformación o la formación deteriorada. La reflexión está anclada en M. Horkheimer, T. W. Adorno y H. Marcuse, pensadores de la primera generación de la Escuela de Frankfurt. La formación (*Bildung*), tal y como asumen estos autores, puede ofrecer los sustratos necesarios para la praxis de resistencia al proceso que impide la floración de la individualidad autónoma, en la que la democracia ha sido atacada.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación. Industria Cultural. Semiformación. Teoría Crítica de la sociedad.

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ABSTRACT: *This essay aims to reflect, guided by the foundations of the Society's Critical Theory, on cultural industry and semiformation (Halbbildung) in the context of Ibero-American countries. The concept of the cultural industry not only remains current but is fundamental to understand semi-formation or impaired formation. The reflection is anchored in M. Horkheimer, T. W. Adorno and H. Marcuse, thinkers of the first generation of the Frankfurt School. The formation (Bildung), as assumed by these authors, can offer the necessary substrates for the praxis of resistance to the process that prevents the flowering of autonomous individuality, in which democracy has been attacked.*

KEYWORDS: *Education. Cultural Industry. Semiformation. Critical Theory of society.*

Introduction

What we set out to do was, in fact, nothing less than discovering why humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new species of barbarism. (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1985, p. 11).⁴

What is essential to the concept of cultural industry remains both present and relevant to the understanding of semi-formation or damaged training - the predominant form of socialization. The price paid for major changes in the social, economic and cultural world has been the progressive ruin of cultural formation and life itself. In the present stage of advanced capitalism, this situation does not leave any nation unharmed, that is, it affects all populations, therefore also those of the Ibero-American countries that, equally, suffer the repression exerted by the cultural industry, whose appearance is that of the democratization of access cultural goods and, therefore, that science and technology are neutral and act so that everyone can enjoy their results in favor of a dignified life.

Its indefatigable expansion with the apparently democratic and liberal stance ruthlessly realizes the dictates of a system of economic and cultural domination over the lives of individuals and, thus, legitimizes its existence by the irrationality with which the clarification acts in favor of the reproduction of the always identical.

This essay seeks to broaden the horizon of reflection on the cultural industry and damaged education, in a context whose cultural industry has acquired a high degree of sophistication and penetration, even in the hidden spaces of Brazil and other Ibero-American countries. Thus, mass culture gives unity to the way of thinking, acting, valuing, in short, it integrates everyone through the consumption of material and immaterial goods. It is important to note that the concept of cultural industry was formulated by Horkheimer and Adorno (1985), having as reference the development of

⁴ O que nos propuséramos era, de fato, nada menos do que descobrir por que a humanidade, em vez de entrar em um estado verdadeiramente humano, está se afundando em uma nova espécie de barbárie (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1985, p. 11).

monopoly capitalism in the countries of Europe and the United States of America in the second half of the 1940s.

Considering that a concept has history and movement, just like the object it expresses, its immediate aspects are not enough to decipher it. Since the term to designate it was coined, the cultural industry, as an object, has undergone major changes, however always maintaining a close relationship with the society of its time. If, at present, technology allows the circulation of information in real time of events - which does not mean an understanding of the factors that pervade them - the fact that art as a commodity and the cultural industry as a system reaches all without distinction does not mean that everyone distinguishes their fetish. Theoretical analyzes are indispensable and these are not exempt from value judgments and political aspects. In this sense, researches dedicated to the critical analysis of the relationship between cultural industry, society and heteronomous formation are fundamental for us to be able to think about society for autonomy.

In relation to studies in this area, Brazil has research groups that for more than 20 years have developed theoretical and empirical works focused on the phenomena on which the first representatives of the Critical Theory of the Society were concerned, as well as taking this theoretical framework to illuminate phenomena such as those in the field of education. They develop studies on the contradictions of culture and education and explore their formative potential. Among these groups, we can mention as an example the “Critical Theory and Education Research Group”, created in 1991, with representatives from the Federal University of São Carlos and the São Paulo State University - Campus de Araraquara; the “Critical Theory, Formation and Culture Research Group”, with participants from the University of São Paulo and the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo; the “Nexos Research Group: Critical Theory and Interdisciplinary Research - Northeast”, formed by researchers from various higher education institutions. There are countless researchers in Germany and also in other countries in Europe and other continents that continue the tradition of the first researchers at the Frankfurt School. Just to mention a few of them, Germany has Christoph Türcke (University of Leipzig), Andreas Gruschka (University of Frankfurt), Detlev Claussen (University of Hannover), Alex Demirovič (Technische Universität Berlin); José Antonio Zamora (CSIC / Madrid) and Mateu Cabot (Universitat de les Illes Balears) are two researchers representing Spain.

These groups and researchers regularly hold seminars and research projects, in order to promote the international visibility of discussions related to the foundations of the Critical Theory of Society and, thus, translate the experiences and knowledge that each country has gained. Our intention is to deepen the debate and act scientifically and politically so that the potential of the Critical Theory of Society is realized.

In this text we aim to reflect on the cultural industry and the semi-formation that, being the predominant form of socialization, affects both countries that have already achieved greater cultural and technological development and those in less developed stages. Regardless of the degree of economic and cultural development of the country, goods are available to all who, due to the similar formation of their citizens, maintain inequality between them. To what extent can the Critical Theory of Society contribute to thinking about new directions for training? Such questions arise from a fact that cannot be ruled out: the society of late capitalism, ruled by the cultural industry, has been questioned and, consequently, the education and training of individuals has also been criticized. These questions and criticisms are made even by those who position themselves favorably to the established order, like the reactionary groups that oppose democracy and act regressively to reestablish authoritarianism, as, despite their specificities, it has happened in countries like Brazil, Hungary and Poland.

Two considerations are necessary here. The first concerns the democratic system and the attacks it has been suffering, whether in Brazil or in other countries. We live in a historical situation whose trends and social groups, in Brazil and in the world, have systematically jeopardized democracy and the rights achieved, for example, with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; although formal, democracy and the rights conquered are not insignificant in view of the barbarities already practiced in different times and countries. Here is not the space to list the events that constitute the objective manifestations of such trends and the groups that support them. Even so, its effects on education cannot be overlooked: an intervention project is underway in educational establishments (from early childhood to higher education), led by anti-democratic social segments and averse to the diversity of ideas, the debate of proposals and to the confrontation of positions, in short, contrary to what enriches the human experience and strengthens the individual. This attempt to intervene in education demeans one of the founding principles of the republican regime, namely, the freedom that each citizen must enjoy to express their interests and realize their potential.

In other words, in the educational field, the possibility that teachers of all levels and teaching modalities exercise their role in terms of promoting values such as justice, diversity, plurality, equality, ethics and solidarity, which are necessary to achieve a fair, socially and culturally rich and developed country. Now, this type of control (and repression) over pedagogical work is an attack on what the constitutions of democratic countries guarantee to educators - freedom of professorship and teaching - and to students - the right to learn and have access to knowledge, forms of thought, art and culture in general. Such a situation is not only a threat to education. At stake is the guarantee of rights consolidated throughout history, mainly by the action of social groups and people who have suffered,

and still suffer, oppression, the result of the inequalities that characterize our society governed by the capitalist system, therefore governed by power relations and domination of one another.

The second consideration refers to the persistence of trends verified in fascist and authoritarian regimes within democracy (liberal and bourgeois). Due to the fact that people remain in a constant state of tension and frustration, since we must all be concerned primarily with self-preservation, there is a situation in which leaders who manage to channel their discontent offer apparently rational explanations for what it is the product of the irrationality that characterizes the social order (continuous and permanent threat, war, destruction, interests of capital as obstacles to human emancipation, etc.). The irrational, unconscious and regressive processes are mobilized in individuals (ADORNO, 2015, p. 184), which is facilitated precisely by their mental state and the prevalence of the semi-formation that produces this stunted and illogical mentality from the point of view of humanity. On the other hand, we must not forget that adherence to irrationality is achieved through the dissemination of ideas that articulate a certain type of criticism to society and repressed instinctual impulses (for example, the notion that the “powerful”, converted into enemies, conspire against individual freedoms or values that maintain social cohesion). In addition, there is a link between fascist-type advertising and advertising in general: both are only successful because they explore the standardization of language (devoid of meaning and real content), of the information that says about everything without anything being explained, and use stereotyped thinking.

Contemporary education and formation, by prioritizing aspects that are based on instrumental rationality⁵, contribute to the implementation of the trend present in the Enlightenment project that, according to the Frankfurtians, has promoted the regression of humanity to barbarism. Thus, we outline some aspects that characterize education and training in modern societies, without limiting ourselves specifically to Ibero-American countries, remembering, however, that the cultural industry integrates them all, creating the false idea of equality and inclusion, that is, integration presents itself as a mechanism of exclusion.

As already mentioned, our intention is to reflect on the cultural industry and semi-formation (Halbbildung), supporting us with theoreticians and concepts of the Critical Theory of Society that

⁵ On the notion of instrumental rationality, see HORKHEIMER, M. Means and ends. In: HORKHEIMER, M. Eclipse of reason. São Paulo: Centauro, 2000, p. 11-64. In this essay, the author investigates the historical process of the transformation of reason: “in its origin, the political constitution was conceived as an expression of concrete principles founded on objective reason; the ideas of justice, equality, happiness, democracy, property, all claimed to correspond to reason, to emanate from reason. Subsequently, the content of reason was arbitrarily reduced to simply being a part of this content, in its extension, and only to one of its principles, in its composition; the particular took the place of the universal. [...] Having given in to its autonomy, reason has become an instrument. [...] Its operational value, its role in the domain of men and nature has become the only criterion to evaluate it. [...] It is as if thought itself had been reduced to the level of the industrial process, submitted to a strict program, in short, it had become a part and a portion of production” (HORKHEIMER, 2000, p. 29-30).

can elucidate impacts of the cultural industry in the educational field. Our reflection takes writings from M. Horkheimer, T. W. Adorno and H. Marcuse, thinkers of the first generation of the Frankfurt School, whose exhibition we organized as follows: first, we shed light on the concepts of cultural industry and semi-formation, since education and formation are analyzed based on the intersection between them. The reflection is directed towards the understanding of the current reality, taking the Critical Theory of Society as an element of clarification about the contradiction present in the social order: the same humanity that walks for the clarification and for the complete and total domination of nature continues repeatedly producing the barbarism.

Cultural industry and semi-formation

The idea that the world wants to be deceived has become more true than it, undoubtedly, ever intended to be. Not only do men fall for deception, as they say, as long as it gives them satisfaction, however fleeting it may be, but they also desire this imposture that they themselves foresaw (ADORNO, 1986, p. 96).⁶

Adorno (1986) denounces the “arrival” of the cultural industry⁷ when, in one of the letters destined for Horkheimer, the author mentions his expression synonymous with the dialectic between culture and barbarism. Under the aegis of an apparent potential for equality between men (false identity of the universal and the particular), the society of late capitalism (twentieth and twenty-first century) is faced with new social and economic contours that, broadly, play a crucial role in the domination over men by the innovation of the technique and by the production process of goods, including cultural goods (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1985).

The fascination with new technical possibilities for communication and acting in the world enhances the illusion that a fully developed and autonomous subjectivity has been established. This conditions and determines the individual: formation should promote the skills of conquering this world, which imposes on everyone the search for efficient (economic) performances (MARCUSE, 1999). It is an illusion precisely because efficiency depends on total integration in the order and the conscience thus becomes conformist (ADORNO, 1986). Therefore, under the guise of freedom of choice, comfort and security that adherence provides to the individual, the opposite is the case. Thus, economic pressure, which continues to stimulate the struggle for self-preservation, leads to socialized semi-formation and, why not say, damaged education and life.

⁶ A ideia de que o mundo quer ser enganado tornou-se mais verdadeira do que, sem dúvida, jamais pretendeu ser. Não somente os homens caem no logro, como se diz, desde que isso lhes dê uma satisfação por mais fugaz que seja, como também desejam essa impostura que eles próprios entreveem (ADORNO, 1986, p. 96).

⁷ The term cultural industry appeared in 1947, with the publication of *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, a study that composes the work *Dialética do Esclarecimento*, by Adorno and Horkheimer (1985).

Added to this situation is the guise that the cultural industry democratically promotes access of all individuals to cultural goods, regardless of social origin, which, in turn, further stimulates consumption, but only of what confirms the status quo. In short, the ideology of the cultural industry operates in the following terms: an order is always transmitted that must be accepted by all, but such an order cannot be (and never is) confronted with the real interests of human beings (ADORNO, 1986); it works by providing compensation so that individuals accept that nothing should be done because nothing can be changed, after all what they could be as human beings has been reduced to what they already are. Adorno (1986, p. 93) states:

The consumer is not king, as the cultural industry would have us believe, he is not the subject of that industry, but its object. The term mass media, which was introduced to designate the cultural industry, immediately shifts the emphasis to what is harmless. It is not about the masses in the first place, nor about communication techniques as such, but about the spirit that is instilled in them, namely, the voice of their master. The cultural industry abuses consideration towards the masses in order to reiterate, secure and reinforce their mentality, which it takes as a priori and immutable. Everything is excluded so that this attitude could be transformed. The masses are not the measure, but the ideology of the cultural industry, although the latter cannot exist without adapting to them.⁸

In the cultural industry scenario, the fetishization of technique and the reification of consciences are spread without measure. The fetish of merchandise, a concept coined by Karl Marx in his work *Capital*, in the second half of the 19th century, stems from the fact that in its character as a thing it hides social relations and the exploitation of workers by capital. In addition to the use value, existing in any product, there is the exchange value. The first concerns the utility or material property that a product has for the process of satisfying human needs. Exchange value, on the other hand, refers to the need for capital to produce equivalence between commodities, including labor power as commodity, since this mechanism, which abstracts use value and real human needs, allows for accumulation and reproduction of capital. In other words, social domination and economic exploitation of non-owners of the means of production are hidden in the commodity, ways of satisfying the need for capital: profit.

The fetish of the merchandise creates the illusion that the consumption of products, whether material, cultural or services, meets human needs, in addition to making what is necessary superfluous

⁸ O consumidor não é rei, como a indústria cultural gostaria de fazer crer, ele não é sujeito dessa indústria, mas seu objeto. O termo *mass media*, que se introduziu para designar a indústria cultural, desvia, desde logo, a ênfase para aquilo que é inofensivo. Não se trata nem das massas em primeiro lugar, nem das técnicas de comunicação como tais, mas do espírito que lhes é insuflado, a saber, a voz de seu senhor. A indústria cultural abusa da consideração em relação às massas para reiterar, firmar e reforçar a mentalidade destas, que ela toma como dada *a priori* e imutável. É excluído tudo pelo que essa atitude poderia ser transformada. As massas não são a medida, mas a ideologia da indústria cultural, ainda que esta última não possa existir sem a elas se adaptar.

and vice versa (MARX, 2006). The perception of the individual, in this sense, is tied to the appearance of the commodity and to the false identity between the universal and the particular (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1985), from which, in a way, often establishes immediate relationships between isolated manifestations of a phenomenon and the social and economic totality without suspecting that between one and the other there are a variety of possible and necessary mediations. The manipulation takes place by the direct association between the possession of a commodity, momentary satisfaction and happiness.

The masses, I said, are manipulated out of their own interests. For this reason, manipulative phenomena speak about the language of real interests, albeit as a foreign language of alienated and disfigured interests, therefore, unrecognizable. The objectivity of happiness and suffering also underlies that of manipulation (HAUG, 1997, p. 14).⁹

This commodity fetish mechanism is present in the cultural industry. For Adorno and Horkheimer (1985, p. 113), this gives culture as a commodity “an air of similarity”; the products intertwine in a system. The tendency towards standards is no less important: cultural productions and individuals are subject to laws of equivalence that frame creativity, imagination, perception and experience along the lines of political economy, affecting the senses in equal measure both of those who produce cultural goods and those who receive them. It is a situation that enhances the rationality of domination itself, which has the “compulsive character of society alienated from itself” (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1985, p. 114); the individual who differs from this common and unique format or stands out in it, precisely because he adapts, is soon discovered by the “talent hunters”. This is a way of containing critical reflection and maintaining the established order, raising the status of popstar to the person who participates in this phenomenon, as in the recent status achieved by bloggers, youtubers and so-called digital influencers.¹⁰

The same authors affirm that "the schematism of the procedure shows itself in the fact that mechanically differentiated products end up always being the same thing"; this means that only artificially and apparently individuals make choices, since what is imposed on them prevails. However, each one has the false idea that he acts according to his own choices, that is, the individual who is at the base of bourgeois society, whose freedom was his flag of struggle, is paralyzed,

⁹ As massas, afirmei, são manipuladas por força de seus próprios interesses. Por isso, os fenômenos manipulativos falam sobre a língua de interesses reais, ainda que como língua estrangeira de interesses alienados e desfigurados, portanto, irreconhecíveis. A objetividade da felicidade e do sofrimento fundamenta também a da manipulação (HAUG, 1997, p. 14).

¹⁰ Social networks are structures formed, mainly in the scope of the internet, by people and organizations that connect through common interests or values. The new celebrities in the digital universe are “ordinary” people who have a high number of followers and produce various types of content (fashion, health, politics, education, etc.). Many of them are hired by companies to promote and expose products and brands to their followers.

controlled, but a believer that he has freedom of expression, of thought, when, at the same time, he becomes a consumer of desires, tastes and goods. This is the way in which the cultural industry itself is promoted, since nothing appears as manipulation of behaviors, sensitivity and conscience. In this sense, "for the consumer, there is nothing more to classify that has not been anticipated in the schematics of production" (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1985, p. 116-17).

At the same time, as Marcuse (1997) points out, in the culture itself the dimension conducive to the possibility of humanity survives - a free, dignified and happy life. It is observed, therefore, in the same movement in which progress is associated with destruction and culture as manipulation and "mystification of the masses", there is the domination and historical persistence of the promise of freedom and happiness. In this movement, the affirmative character of culture prevails - reason defined as an instrument of coercion that justifies a state of social exploitation -; as the indication that along with this trend there is the one that denounces the oppressive reality and sees the possibility of a higher "existential order", whose realization requires the transformation of this "world into a new way of being" (MARCUSE, 1972, p. 154). For this to be possible, the relationship between reason and sensuality (senses) must be done in terms other than the opposition between them. The author refers to the way in which reason has been reduced to the inner life of individuals, while the social order imposed objective restrictions, while pointing out the contradiction contained in this process:

The freedom of the soul was used to excuse misery, martyrdom and servitude. It served to ideologically submit existence to the economy of capitalism. However, correctly understood, the freedom of the soul does not point to the participation of man in an eternal beyond, where in the end everything is resolved when the individual no longer enjoys anything. On the contrary, it presupposes that superior truth according to which in this world a form of social existence is possible in which the economy does not decide about the whole life of individuals. Man does not live only on bread: a truth like this does not end with the false interpretation that spiritual food is a sufficient substitute for the lack of bread (MARCUSE, 1997, p. 108).¹¹

In any case, the reproduction of mass culture corroborates the decrease in ways of thinking about the world, that is, it limits consciousness and allies itself with the development of instrumental reason. In this sense, training is prevented, which can be seen in the aversion to those who manifest critical capacity and in the aversion to experience with the non-identical. Life in general and choices are subsumed and integrated with the dictates of the logic of equivalent exchanges and standardized

¹¹ A liberdade da alma foi utilizada para desculpar miséria, martírio e servidão. Ela serviu para submeter ideologicamente a existência à economia do capitalismo. Porém, apreendida corretamente, a liberdade da alma não aponta para a participação do homem num além eterno, onde por fim tudo se resolve quando o indivíduo já não usufrui de nada. Ao contrário, ela pressupõe aquela verdade superior segundo a qual nesse mundo é possível uma forma de existência social em que a economia não decide acerca de toda a vida dos indivíduos. O homem não vive apenas de pão: uma verdade como essa não se esgota pela falsa interpretação de que o alimento espiritual é um substituto suficiente para a falta de pão (MARCUSE, 1997, p. 108).

culture, leaving individuals with distraction and entertainment as a form of compensation for what is prevented from being accomplished. In fact, they themselves no longer yearn for liberation, because they care about total integration - a condition for self-preservation. On this aspect, Zuin (1999) states that the ability to evaluate something as good or bad does not belong to the individual; is appropriated by the managed company. This form of expropriation of subjectivity, in addition to improving the forms of social control and domination, serves the purposes of dehumanization. This issue can best be elucidated as the reflections of TÜRCKE (2010, p. 32), who thinks that

[...] the theory considers advertising promptly as what resulted from the restriction to the commercial of products, entertainment, without questioning what under this label works as a programmatic field, without thinking for a moment about the economic nuances present in the expression 'to be entertained', or the origin of what should entertain, in the game, in the show, festival or ritual, or without raising the slightest doubt about the autonomy of the mass media system.¹²

Adorno and Horkheimer (1985, p. 151), previously to TÜRCKE, had already stated that “culture is a paradoxical commodity. It is so completely subject to the law of exchange that it is no longer exchanged. It is so blindly confused with use that it can no longer be used. That's why it merges with advertising”. Here, we find another aspect that produces the rigidity of thought that closes in on itself, submitted to the interests of capital in conciliation with the reproduction of barbarism.

At this point, it is possible to highlight the association between the cultural industry and the semi-formation, which, among other aspects, is consistent with the aversion to the experience of the non-identical. In place of authentic experience, the cultural industry fills consciousness with its ideological contents and, mainly, with the elements of the general trend of society (standardization, logic of the exchange of equivalents, specialization resulting from the social division of labor under capitalism, abstraction from use value, etc.) (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1985). Such a situation eliminates diversity and the other, in short, eliminates the experience of individuals with the non-identical of culture, even if this happens in a hidden way, because the cultural industry is sustained in advertising that everyone, regardless of the differences they present, can enjoy your goods. Culture and its objects, purged of their real concreteness and subjected to stereotyping of thought and repetitive and automatic behavior, disconnected from reality, are no longer accessible to the experience of individuals (ADORNO, 1996), making them even averse to it.

¹² [...] a teoria considera a propaganda prontamente como aquilo que resultou da restrição ao comercial de produtos, entretenimento, não questionando o que sob esse rótulo funciona como campo programático, sem pensar por um instante nas nuances econômicas presentes na expressão 'ser entretido', ou na origem daquilo que deve entreter, no jogo, no espetáculo, festival ou ritual, ou sem levantar a menor dúvida a respeito da autonomia do sistema dos meios de comunicação de massa.

The challenge to be faced by the critic is to think about the new aspects established by the development of the cultural industry, especially with regard to formation. The assertion to describe the civilizing process still seems valid: instead of “entering a truly human state, it is sinking into a new species of barbarism” (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1985, p. 11). In this sense, formation (*Bildung*) and education have conformed to the milestones of late capitalism and the cultural industry, in conjunction with technological rationality (MARCUSE, 1999) and semi-formation (*Halbbildung*), which predominantly promote adaptation and the thingification of thought. The dehumanization conducted by the capitalist system and the cultural industry is just that - “the *man of spirit* is an endangered specimen; the supposedly *realistic man* thrives in his place” (PUCCI, 2009, p. 70, highlights in the original). This same author, anchored in Adorno's ideas, adds:

The images and cultural forms that characterized it [the formation] were replaced by the images of the film artists, and by the successful songs, which, with their produced beauty, their letters and their standardized titles, radiated a calculated brightness. The good manners at the table and in the treatment with each other, the waste of time with the choice of a gift for the loved one, the slow construction of lasting experiences, the scrupulous precision in the way of expressing oneself, the sudden presence of the act of learning through memorization and the testimony of the memory of things, they are progressively and definitely exchanged for direct treatment, functionality, precision, speed, and the memory of machines (PUCCI, 2009, p. 70).¹³

Finally, if the Critical Theory of Society presents elements to oppose the overwhelming force of objectivity that imposes on individuals voluntary adherence to their dictates, it depends on a scientific and political practice that investigates the roots of irrationality present in society and of its productivity destroyer of the free development of human needs and faculties (MARCUSE, 1969). On the one hand, there is the collapse of cultural formation, which is observed everywhere and which does not end with the insufficiencies of the educational system, imprisoning individuals in the mesh of illusory socialization (ADORNO, 1996); on the other hand, we have the increasing advance of the productive forces and the development of technological rationality, which increasingly imposes the domination of society over the individual (MARCUSE, 1969).

This being the diagnosis, Marcuse thus (1969) defines the objective of the Critical Theory of Society: to investigate and examine the historical possibilities used, unused and misused to improve

¹³ As imagens e formas culturais que a caracterizavam [a formação] foram substituídas pelas imagens das artistas de cinema, e pelas canções de sucesso, que, com sua beleza produzida, suas letras e seus títulos padronizados, irradiavam um brilho calculado. As boas maneiras à mesa e no tratamento com o outro, a perda de tempo com a escolha de um presente para a pessoa amada, a lenta construção de experiências duradouras, a precisão escrupulosa na maneira de se expressar, a presença repentina do ato de aprender de cor e do testemunho da memória das coisas, são progressiva e definitivamente trocadas pelo tratamento direto, pela funcionalidade, pela precisão, pela rapidez, pela memória das máquinas (PUCCI, 2009, p. 70).

the human condition. Therefore, it is a theoretical and practical action that involves what it means by historical objectivity, considering:

- 1) the judgment that human life [...] can be or should be made worthy of living. This judgment is the base of all intellectual effort; is a priori to social theory, and its rejection [...] rejects the theory itself;
- 2) the judgment that, in a given society, there are specific possibilities for improving human life and the specific ways and means of achieving those possibilities. [...] The established society has a determinable quantity and quality of resources used for the maximum development of intellectual and material resources. How can these resources be used for the maximum development and satisfaction of the needs and individual faculties with the minimum of toil and misery? Social theory is historical theory, and history is the sphere of possibility in the sphere of necessity (MARCUSE, 1969, p. 14-15).¹⁴

For the author, the improvement of the human condition can only be achieved when the tendency to irrational, present within civilization itself, can be fought objectively - and not only in the abstract plane of the theory, even though it plays an indispensable political role. This means to affirm that it is fundamental to abolish the social relations of domination (of which capitalism is nourished at the same time that it develops them), in addition to pacifying the struggle for existence (reorienting the course of history so that progress can no longer be of aggression and destruction).

Since the 1930s, when Horkheimer (1991) wrote the basic essay *Teoria tradicional e teoria crítica* (Traditional and Critical Theory), it remains an important role to examine the reasons that produced and developed instrumental rationality, semi-formation, the cultural industry, the intertwining of enlightenment and barbarism, finally, the objective and subjective conditions that generate fascism, hatred, violence and prejudice within democratic regimes. In this sense, more than ever it is necessary to resort to the contributions of the authors of the Frankfurt School.

Critical Theory of Society as a possible resistance to what was instituted in the Ibero-American context: Final considerations

We start from the assumption that if the hegemony of instrumental reason (subjective reason) over emancipatory reason (objective reason) operates in the current social moment in the service of

¹⁴ 1) o julgamento de que a vida humana [...] pode ser ou deve ser tornada digna de se viver. Este julgamento alicerça todo o esforço intelectual; é apriorístico para a teoria social, e sua rejeição [...] rejeita a própria teoria;
2) o julgamento de que, em determinada sociedade, existem possibilidades específicas de melhorar a vida humana e os modos e meios específicos de realizar essas possibilidades. [...] A sociedade estabelecida dispõe de uma quantidade e de uma qualidade determináveis de recursos utilizados para o máximo desenvolvimento de recursos intelectuais e materiais. Como podem ser esses recursos utilizados para o máximo desenvolvimento e satisfação das necessidades e faculdades individuais com o mínimo de labuta e miséria? Teoria social é teoria histórica, e história é a esfera da possibilidade na esfera da necessidade (MARCUSE, 1969, p. 14-15).

the propagation of domination and social injustices, this does not mean that it always has to be that way.

Although we have not achieved a dignified life for all, the democracy already achieved is no small feat, however, the very forgetfulness of the past has led us to forget not only about barbarism, but also the right to non-regression. In the name of civilization and access to consumer goods, we place ourselves as deserving of goods that identify us and instead of uniting in favor of humanity, the union is made in favor of the reproduction of capital, even if it may mean the destruction of humanity itself.

As argued at the beginning of this essay, objects and concepts have movement and history, the understanding of which is necessary for the essential to be revealed. In these terms, it is not possible to speak in Ibero-American countries apart from advanced capitalism and the mechanisms used for its reproduction, the cultural industry being one of them. At present, the latter has even served to attack democracy and education in all parts of the world.

The fact that the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI) was historically and politically established 90 years ago does not mean that the countries that compose it are protected from the mechanisms used by advanced capitalism for their reproduction, since the principles that guarantee this reproduction permeate the goals and objectives of that Organization.

By highlighting, for example, the second objective of the OEI, according to its organic regulation in force since 1985, we can observe that education, culture and the subject that is formed are defined as an alternative for the democratic and legal society to become effective. Thus the objective is written:

2. Foster the development of education and culture as a valid and viable alternative for the construction of peace, through the preparation of human beings for the responsible exercise of freedom, solidarity and the defense of human rights, as well as supporting the changes that allow a fairer society for Latin America (ORGANIZAÇÃO DOS ESTADOS IBERO-AMERICANOS).¹⁵

Therefore, what is observed is the prevalence of a conception that places hopes on education and culture (factors belonging to the superstructure of society) with regard to the transformations that would result in overcoming inequality and exploitation. And this is because the social structure and the economic base are not contested, or because it is estimated that it is within the scope of capitalism

¹⁵ 2. Fomentar o desenvolvimento da educação e da cultura como alternativa válida e viável para a construção da paz, mediante a preparação do ser humano para o exercício responsável da liberdade, da solidariedade e da defesa dos direitos humanos, assim como apoiar as mudanças que permitam uma sociedade mais justa para a América Latina (ORGANIZAÇÃO DOS ESTADOS IBERO-AMERICANOS).

that freedom and justice will be realized, or because there is a feeling of helplessness in the face of the power of objective reality. Now, only through a process of social emancipation, the product of organized political action, will social transformation be possible.

The Critical Theory of Society as a possibility of resistance to the instituted requires some considerations, with which we conclude our reflection: how to enable this objective to be fulfilled if the training that is developed at school and outside it is for adaptation to the society in which the promise of freedom, fraternity, equality and justice has not been fulfilled? How is a just society possible if it is supported by exchange whose justice is profit? If society is not fair, how can the school form to the contrary? It seems that a possibility of resistance is to think of a school that can distance itself enough from society to then understand its functioning and its movement, to realize that we are seduced daily by the goods advertised through the cultural industry. It remains for us to fight not for the possibility of consumption, but against the consumer society and think of a school that provides access to systematized knowledge - school failure is another form of injustice.

Finally, the authors of Critical Theory of Society authorize us to affirm that one of the foundations of educational practice is democracy. The defense of such a postulate is not based on mere idealization or abstract belief in the power of education, but on a political position. For Adorno (1995, p. 141), education is “the production of a true conscience”. The author continues:

This would be even of the greatest political importance; your idea, if it's allowed to say so, and a political demand. That is to say: a democracy with a duty not only to function, but to operate according to its concept, demands emancipated people. An effective democracy can only be imagined as a society from which it is emancipated. In a democracy, those who defend ideals contrary to emancipation, and therefore, contrary to the independent conscious decision of each person in particular, are anti-democrats, even if the ideas that correspond to their purposes are disseminated in the formal plan of democracy. The tendencies of presenting external ideals that do not originate from the emancipated consciousness itself, or rather, that are legitimized in the face of that consciousness, remain collectivist-reactionaries. They point to a sphere that we should be opposed to not only externally by politics, but also on other, much deeper levels (ADORNO, 1995, p. 141-42).¹⁶

At an extremely serious and dramatic moment in the history of Brazil and many other Ibero-American countries, with democracy and education being attacked by those who insist on remaining

¹⁶ Isto seria inclusive da maior importância política; sua ideia, se é permitido dizer assim, é uma exigência política. Isto é: uma democracia com o dever de não apenas funcionar, mas operar conforme seu conceito, demanda pessoas emancipadas. Uma democracia efetiva só pode ser imaginada enquanto uma sociedade de quem é emancipado. Numa democracia, quem defende ideais contrários a emancipação, e, portanto, contrários à decisão consciente independente de cada pessoa em particular, é um antidemocrata, até mesmo se as ideias que correspondem a seus desígnios são difundidas no plano formal da democracia. As tendências de apresentação de ideais exteriores que não se originam a partir da própria consciência emancipada, ou melhor, que se legitimam frente a essa consciência, permanecem sendo coletivistas-reacionárias. Elas apontam para uma esfera a que deveríamos nos opor não só exteriormente pela política, mas também em outros planos muito mais profundos (ADORNO, 1995, p. 141-42).

servile and subservient nations and with the majority of the population subject to the standards that perpetuate social, ethnic-racial, regional and gender inequality, using devices such as the manipulation of facts, the threat, repression and violence, in short, in this situation investigations guided by the Critical Theory of Society, with analyzes and consequent developments, which show what is involved in the production and reproduction of violence and prejudice, including at school - we know that these are not phenomena restricted to the field of education and that Ibero-American societies have violence as one of their historical marks practiced against groups and people who oppose the social order, often because simple only its existence calls into question social standards and norms.

Thus, we can shed light on the irrationality contained in the social relations that take place at school and in other spaces and indicate ways to combat situations that victimize a significant number of people just because they exist in a certain way; and existing in different ways from those considered in conformity with the dominant standard, they show all the human wealth and diversity that we possess.

However, those who practice violence and domination are people who (even unconsciously) either do not admit to giving up the position of power they hold or are averse to human differences and diversity. For these reasons, it is essential to link democracy and education, not least because:

[...] democracy has not established itself to the point that it appears in people's experience as if it were their own subject, so that they understood themselves as being subjects of political processes. It is perceived as a system among others, as if in a menu we chose between communism, democracy, fascism or monarchy; it is not apprehended as identifying with the people themselves, as an expression of their emancipation (ADORNO, 1995, p. 35).¹⁷

Educators could perhaps, as Adorno (1995) postulates, take sociologically oriented political education seriously in the sense of incorporating content related to disputes over interests and power relationships (which define the correlations of political forces between groups and social classes) and, also, to use psychoanalytical knowledge and social psychology, precisely to face what is underlying the constitution of subjectivities, since aggressive, intolerant, manipulative and violent individuals continue to be trained, including in schools. In this way, something may be done in opposition to the capitalist social order that produces the objective and subjective conditions of its reproduction and maintenance.

¹⁷ [...] a democracia não se estabeleceu a ponto de constar da experiência das pessoas como se fosse um assunto próprio delas, de modo que elas compreendessem a si mesmas como sendo sujeitos dos processos políticos. Ela é apreendida como sendo um sistema entre outros, como se num cardápio escolhêssemos entre comunismo, democracia, fascismo ou monarquia; ela não é apreendida como identificando-se ao próprio povo, como expressão de sua emancipação (ADORNO, 1995, p. 35).

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How to quote this article

OLIVEIRA, Marta Regina Furlan de; GALUCH, Maria Terezinha Bellanda; GIOVINAZZO JÚNIOR, Carlos Antônio. Indústria Cultural e Semiformação: Democracia e Educação sob ataque nos Países Ibero-Americanos à Luz da Teoria Crítica. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 14, n. esp. 4, p. 1883-1898, dez. 2019. E-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riaee.v14iesp.4.12912>

Submitted: 25/06/2019

Approved: 28/07/2019

Published: 01/09/2019