

Education, neoliberalism and/or managed society¹

Educação, neoliberalismo e/ou sociedade administrada²

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this work is to reflect on current conditions of individual formation, considering the current capitalist social structure and neoliberal ideology. To achieve this objective, the text is divided into three parts; the first provides elements for thinking about neoliberalism as an ideology; the second deals with individual formation under this ideology, with respect to currently required productivism and entrepreneurship, personality characteristics, favorable or contrary to democracy and related to forms of school violence; and the last part discusses the relationship between neoliberalism and the formation of the individual. It is argued that neoliberal ideology hides the inexistence of the market, helping to concentrate capital in an ever smaller number of groups, and lack of perception of this can lead to the defense of the welfare state, which allows better material conditions of life for the population, which while important has nevertheless been the target of criticism, especially by thinkers of the Critical Social Theory. In order to manage this system based on concentration of wealth, a fascist administration is necessary, even though it may have the appearance of democracy; if it is an objective phenomenon, it does not dispense with individuals who support it, who are formed by a superficial relationship with reality, which enables an expression of violence, which indicates regressed personality needs.

Keywords: Formation of the individual. Social criticism. Neoliberalism.

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RESUMO

O objetivo deste trabalho é refletir sobre as condições atuais de formação individual, considerando a atual estrutura social capitalista e a ideologia neoliberal. Para cumprir este objetivo, a exposição do texto está dividida em três partes; a primeira traz elementos para se pensar o neoliberalismo como ideologia; a segunda trata da formação individual sob a égide dessa ideologia, no tocante ao produtivismo e empreendedorismo exigidos atualmente, às características de personalidade, favoráveis ou contrárias à democracia e relacionadas com formas de violência escolar; e a última parte discorre sobre a relação do neoliberalismo e a formação do indivíduo. Defende-se que a ideologia neoliberal oculta a inexistência do mercado, auxiliando a concentrar o capital em um número de grupos cada vez menor, e a não percepção disso pode levar à defesa do estado de bem-estar social, que se permite melhores condições materiais de vida para a população, o que é importante não deixou de ser alvo de críticas, sobretudo de pensadores da Teoria Crítica da Sociedade. Para a administração desse sistema de concentração de renda é necessária uma administração de cunho fascista, ainda que possa ter aparência de democracia; se é um fenômeno objetivo, não prescinde de indivíduos que o sustentem, que sejam formados por uma relação superficial com a realidade, a qual possibilita uma expressão de violência, que indica necessidades de personalidade regredidas.

Palavras-chave: Formação do indivíduo. Crítica social. Neoliberalismo.

Introduction

In his 1960s text “*Education after Auschwitz*”, Adorno (1995) defends that no principle for education should be more important than preventing Auschwitz from happening again; he argued that if educators were not aware of this, catastrophe could repeat itself, given that the objective conditions have not changed and fascist purposes have also survived in social democracies. As it was not possible to change social conditions at that time, nor does it seem to be nowadays, we should turn our attention to the formation of the individual, his conscience, and education should become political and analyze existing social forces. As issues related to genocide are currently a concern, even considering that this concept has been expanded in relation to the one referred to by Adorno, it is up to education, which also involves school education, to politically understand what is happening, especially about the formation of conscience that can give shelter to individual fascist impulses that help sustain that catastrophe, in order to at least attempt to prevent its manifestations.

In this sense, politically, it would be fitting to think about neoliberalism, which, for some time now, has not only gained hegemony, thanks to the defense of its proposals and development of its practices, but also because it has become the main target, if not the only one, of its opponents. Certainly, as it is a worldwide phenomenon, strengthened since the 1970s, forceful and precise criticisms must be made, and this has occurred, indicating the existence of a fundamental resistance to the advances of capital and to the proposals and practices promoted by that ideology. However, we should reflect whether these criticisms are not detached from the previous ones made regarding this social regime that transforms everyone into things to be exchanged for an equivalent that eliminates any possibility of differentiation, individual formation and creations, also determined by the existing social system, since, according to Adorno (2015), at each moment, society leads to the individual regression it needs to reproduce itself.

Thus, the objective of this paper is to think about the current formation of individuals, either with regard to their personality characteristics or their socially required capabilities and competencies targeted by school education, and its relationship with characteristics attributed to neoliberalism, configuring it as an ideology, so that the true concentration of capital is not addressed. To fulfill this objective, this article will be divided into three parts; the first will bring elements for thinking about neoliberalism as an ideology, and thus the limits of the criticisms made of it, as if its implementation were real; the second will turn to individual formation, whether with regard to personality characteristics, favorable or contrary to democracy and related to forms of school violence, or as a productivist and entrepreneurial being; and the last part will bring considerations about the relationship between this ideology and the formation of the individual.

Neoliberalism as an ideology

If there is nothing new in what is conceived of as neoliberalism, if it is basically an ideology, visualizing a new target, when it is essentially non-existent, can entail the defense of criticizable previous forms, such as the welfare state and social democracy. In relation to the latter, neoliberalism may appear to be a major social regression, but it is the continuation of a conflict, in which antagonistic poles – such as State and market – take turns as what are considered to be the main agents.

In Adorno's work (2004c), "*Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?*", the intertwining between new and old becomes visible; the author argues that capitalism, in the 20th century, maintains the relations of production as they were in the 19th century, while at the same time gaining an industrial feature, proper to the development of the productive forces. Contrary to Marx's prognosis, the latter, instead of "exploding" the relations of production, are imprisoned by them.

In recent times, neoliberal ideology, strengthened from the 1970s onwards, has been criticized, considering the weakening of the State's role, which tries to minimize the social injustices caused by the capitalist system (BRESSER-PEREIRA, 2009). The welfare state, which emerged as a response to the socialist threat in the first half of the last century, should guarantee a dignified life for its citizens, with health, education, and security. This state even changed the situation of impoverishment of the proletariat:

The proletarians have more to lose than their chains. Their standard of living has not worsened, but rather improved in comparison with English circumstances a hundred years ago, as they appeared to the authors of the *Manifesto*. Shorter working hours, better food, housing and clothing, protection of family members and of old age, with the development of technical productive forces, workers have been blessed with a higher average life expectancy, and their standard of living has improved (ADORNO, 2004d, p. 357).

In relation to the previously quoted text by Adorno (2004c), it is also interesting to note that the author uses neither the concept of "capitalist State" nor that of "*Behemoth*", developed by his colleagues at the Institute for Social Research, but rather "late capitalism", which allows one to understand that it is an anachronistic social and economic system, and as explicitly advocated by him, contrary to predictions, revived until who knows when.

For Harvey (2008), neoliberalism is more a project that achieved the re-establishment of conditions conducive to accumulation of capital than the reorganization of international capitalism. When there is conflict between neoliberal principles and the need to reestablish elite power, the latter prevails, and those principles are abandoned or distorted. Among these principles, according to this author, is that of the market, which, as Korsch enunciated in 1941, no longer exists:

To move from the terrain in which the working class struggle against capitalism was waged in the previous epoch to the terrain in which it must be continued today presupposes a complete view of a historical fact that is no less a fact because it served as an underlying theory for the claims of fascism. That historical fact that has finally arrived today can be described as a first approach, negative or positive, in any of the following terms: End of the market, End of competitive capitalism, “End of economic man”; Triumph of bureaucracy, of administrative rule, of monopoly capitalism; era of Russian four-year plans, Italian battles for grain, German “*Wehrwirtschaft*”; Triumph of State Capitalism over Private Property and Individual Enterprise (KORSCH, 2020).

If there is no longer a market, it becomes an illusion that hides concentrated economic power. Therefore, one should not criticize something in neoliberalism that no longer exists – the market – but the ideology to which it refers. If the market was never free, with its monopolies, prices are directly managed by those who sell them and not by free competition. That market becomes the financial and labor market: money and the worker are still the circulating commodities, but for the latter, formal employment is increasingly rare, due to the growing and desirable automation.

The ideology of integration, as Adorno (2004a) calls it, also tries to elide the existence of class struggle; and the welfare state, in his time, was supposed to diminish social injustices, to the point of, in the name of the bourgeoisie, taking care of workers’ interests:

Marx’s prediction has been verified in an unexpected way: the ruling class is so radically nourished by the labor of others that it decisively makes its own destiny, to have to feed the workers, and assures the ‘slave existence in the bosom of his slavery’ in order to consolidate its own (ADORNO, 2004d, p. 359).

If the working class has no class consciousness (ADORNO, 2004a; LUKÁCS, 2018), it continues to occupy a social place conducive to overcoming the scarcity of material production, and since this has reached a level that would allow all existing misery to be eliminated, in order for the sacrifice of labor to still be required, it is necessary to create, according to Marcuse (1981), occupationless professions, so that the exploitation of labor by capital can continue. If capitalism is an anachronistic system, all the new forms it takes on,

among them the neoliberal form, are reproductions of something that desperately tries to survive what is contradictory to it: the possibility of it being overcome.

Capital, however, continues to reproduce itself by means of surplus value, and the formula for this continues to be “money-commodity-money”, which makes it irreducible to financial capital; even financial crises, therefore, must be understood as crises of capital, and not because they are speculative; if financial speculations generate illusions about material production, it is the weakening of this production, because it is not as profitable and more susceptible to risk, that leads capital to speculate. More than that, neoliberalism, as it is the concealment of the few groups that concentrate power, should ensure the absence of risks, which is possible, paradoxically, with the elimination of the market and thus of competition. In this direction, Harvey (2008) argues that the market, ideologically described as a way to promote competition and innovation, has become a vehicle for the consolidation of monopolistic power. And the groups that concentrate income directly influence political decisions in their favor.

The thinkers of the Frankfurt School criticized the welfare state existing in the so-called first world countries, which enabled, as pointed out, in those countries, a life with some comfort to all citizens, even if the distinction between social classes continued (ADORNO, 2004a; MARCUSE, 1982). Discontent with a narrow-mesh society was expressed by the various social movements of the 1960s, indicating that the expansion of the distribution of material goods for all in those countries did not necessarily bring well-being. It was a society that should manage the interests of the few, with efficient means, to the detriment of the majority of the population, which was already present at the time of the Second World War. In 1947, Horkheimer and Adorno (1985) wrote:

Under present conditions, the very goods of fortune become elements of misfortune. While in the past period the mass of these goods, in the absence of a social subject, resulted in so-called overproduction, amidst the crises of the internal economy, today it produces, with the enthronement of the groups that hold power in the place of this social subject, the international threat of fascism: progress turns into regression (HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, 1985, p. 15).

Fascist-driven concentration of capital, it seems, continued under neoliberalism. In practice, according to Anderson (1995) and Harvey (2008), neoliberal governments raised interest rates, lowered taxation on high incomes, removed controls on financial flows, increased the level of unemployment, fought unions, cut social spending, and began privatizing state programs and enterprises.

Trade unions, as pointed out by Horkheimer and Adorno (1985) as early as the 1940s, and by Marcuse (1982) two decades later, became results-based trade unions, when not prone to leaders who also threatened workers who resisted them. This pragmatism was also highlighted by Harvey (2008), but was due to rising unemployment, which made unions more moderate in their demands. Here we have three different reasons for the change in the objectives of workers' unions. For Horkheimer and Adorno (1985), it is an elite of workers who manage their power over other workers; for Marcuse (1982), there has been a separation between the struggle for socialist revolution and the struggle for better working conditions, and the latter struggle also helps to restore the power of capital; and for Harvey (2008), it is about saving what is possible, considering the increasingly large industrial reserve army; but none of these perspectives presents the individual freedom to achieve upward social mobility through merit, something present in neoliberal discourses about the merit of the worker.

The anachronism of Capital makes its turnover false, preventing, as mentioned before, a freedom already possible, given the advance of the productive forces; and the more this is true, the more this ideology must act to conceal the ever greater contradiction between existing oppressive reality and the possibility of liberation. And as Horkheimer and Adorno (1973) showed, this ideology, which is also historical, changed between Marx's time and the present day, and it is no longer by the contrast between speech and reality that is denounced; in order to convince people it is necessary to act, according to Marcuse (1981), with behavioral engineering; for Horkheimer and Adorno (1973), psychic mechanisms must be triggered to deny the verifiable: the exploitation that exists. Before understanding is reached, the senses are already affected, which is referenced in how these authors present the cultural industry, which takes the place of Kantian apriorisms.

And neoliberalism is also, and above all, ideology, and as stated in the paragraph above it must affect thought and senses. It is not only about hiding reality, but also about eliminating the possibility of conceiving other social forms of existence. According to Bresser-Pereira (2009), as long ago as the 1960s, the separation between economics and politics proposed by American economists reduced economics to mathematics, trying to make it independent from politics. This reduction, also present in neoliberalism, is emphasized by Bordieu (1998), who calls it "mathematical fiction", by abstracting the real social conditions that make it possible. Horkheimer and Adorno (1985), at the end of the Second World War, already indicated that thought began to coincide with mathematics, which turns the enlightenment movement into the myth that it aimed to overcome.

Paulani (1999) points out that neoliberalism is not ideology in the sense of false consciousness, proper to the liberal doctrine, but rather a sermon, a dogma, that does not admit contestation. Marcuse (1982) will call the affirmation of reality perceived as being the only existing reality the ideology of industrial society or one-dimensional thinking, while Habermas (1983) will call it the ideology of technological rationality; they point out that thought can no longer go beyond the visible, beyond that which exists, and perceive “determinate negation”, as discussed by Horkheimer and Adorno (1973). In this way, criticism is reduced to the refinement of what exists and not to the possibility that there is already enough material production for society to constitute itself other than through the exploitation of alienated labor, and to realize freedom and equality between individuals.

If the Frankfurt thinkers were able to delimit, as long ago as the 1940s and before the strengthening of neoliberalism, the concentration of capital, the change in trade union objectives and the new constitution this ideology, one can say of this ideological proposal that defends a non-existent market, that its components, and thus itself, are not new.

According to Paulani (1999), the goal of neoliberalism was to free capitalism from rules, confronting State intervention in the market. For its proponents, the equality promoted by the welfare state was contrary to individual freedom and, consequently, contrary to social prosperity; the notion of individualism defended is different to the notion that served as a basis for the concept of individual in liberalism; the doctrine focused on politics, with philosophical ballast, becomes an ideology that defends an economic policy aimed at market deregulation in the midst of monopoly capitalism.

Bresser-Pereira (2009) is incisive in arguing that neoliberalism is an ideology produced by the rich against the poor, against social democracy. Harvey (2008) also emphasizes that neoliberalism was a project for the ruling class to return power. So, again, there is nothing new in neoliberalism that had not already appeared before. But even the return of power to capital is something to think about, because the welfare state, prior to neoliberalism, did not stop favoring capital.

Harvey (2008) points to the strengthening of social democracy in several countries after World War II, when the State was to expand its interference in the economy to solve problems such as unemployment, promote economic development, and also the welfare of citizens. The use of “Keynesian” fiscal and monetary policies enabled the suffering of the poorest to be reduced; according to the author, a “class compromise” was established between capital and labor. The working class was represented, through political parties and trade unions, influencing state intervention. But the conflict remained between those who advocated state intervention and the main beneficiaries of monopoly capitalism.

For Anderson (1995), Bresser-Pereira (2009) and Paulani (1999), neoliberalism originated after World War II, especially in the 1950s; Friedrich Hayek's 1944 text "*The Road to Serfdom*" was its theoretical basis. According to Anderson (1995), for Hayek the equality promoted by the state hindered the possibility of competition, vital for the progress of all. Before the neoliberal era, however, the Cold War already demonstrated that capital continued to be one of the existing social forces, and this new ideology could serve to strengthen it rather than to create new social alternatives.

If neoliberalism advocates individual freedom, to be found in an illusory market, it does not necessarily advocate democracy. According to Anderson (1995), England was the first developed country to adopt the liberal perspective, followed by the United States of America. In the early 1980s, several countries – Germany, Denmark and other northern European countries – also adopted a turn to the political spectrum considered right-wing. According to Anderson (1995), the USA, which never established a Welfare State, had a different variation of neoliberalism, which had as its priority competition with the Soviet Union, indicating, as in the Cold War, the continuation of the dispute between social systems.

This opposition between the two main world powers was also reflected, according to Harvey (2008) and Anderson (1995), in several countries that, after the golden years of capitalism, overthrew dictatorships and elected governments considered left-wing: France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Poland, and Hungary. They were alternatives to neoliberalism and were based on workers' movements and people's movements. However, in a world where the interests of capital are predominant, the left-wing governments that come to power will have their limits and will be forced to follow the neoliberal orthodoxy, as did indeed occur, which indicates that it is not neoliberalism that should be criticized, but rather the profit mentality, whether brought by the state or by private companies, with the strengthening of the economic elite being the rule (HARVEY, 2008) – this author also shows another trend that has strengthened capital since the late 1970s: the liberalization of the Chinese economy, run by a communist government, making China a country with high growth rates.

Thus, in the 20th century, two models of society were opposed. At the beginning of the century, with the Soviet Revolution and the New York stock market crisis, there was the progressive version, with State intervention in the economy becoming predominant; from the 1970s onwards, the field of forces was inverted. Regardless of the political regime, income concentration increased, lowering wages and giving more profit to capital. To confirm this, Harvey (2008) shows that, besides its ideological effects, neoliberalism, after its implementation in the late 1970s, concentrated income in the United States of America, England

and several other countries and substantially increased the salaries of company directors compared to other workers. In Russia, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a small and powerful oligarchy gained strength; in China, too, income inequality increased; thus, democracies and dictatorships were able to use neoliberalism to continue, in different ways, the concentration of capital and the creation of new economic, and therefore political, elites.

Despite the emphasis on a non-existent market in monopoly capitalism, neoliberal ideology requires, as pointed out, a strong State in terms of the tasks of overseeing, enforcement and favoring of oligopolies and monopolies, either through enacted laws or infrastructure funded by taxes and, according to Harvey (2008), the first experience in this sense occurred in the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. Thus, both the non-existent market and the false neutral state aim to manage goods and people, the latter also being increasingly converted into goods, in favor of a small number of dominant groups, who do not dispense the use of the legal apparatus to protect their interests. In this way, neoliberalism should not be considered a novelty, but rather a new form of concealing managed society, and as a form of concealment it is an ideology which defends the non-existent: a free market and/or a neutral state in favor of the regulation of this false market.

The transition from competitive capitalism to monopoly capitalism is pointed out by Horkheimer and Adorno (1985); with this transition, there is a need for a more centralizing, fascist form of management, as can be seen in the excerpt of their work quoted above; it is no longer about the production of goods in a society without a collective subject, which represents humanity, but rather a society in which that production is owned by groups that exercise power in the place of such humanity. Everything becomes the target of an apparently neutral form of management, which reduces everything to the order of what is manageable: this also applies to culture and to people.

A culture reduced to managed material goods, however, according to Adorno (2004b), is something that has lost the possibility of criticism, a possibility that requires distancing to better reflect that which is being distanced, corroborating the ideology of technological rationality mentioned above. This form of management can be done by the State or by private companies, but it has the same feature: it hides the major beneficiaries of this form of management. Not by chance, even in the area of personal relations, is the term “people management” used, which clearly manifests how “things” are manipulated and, therefore, how reification is produced. And of course, social conflict between classes is also managed, that is, denied by those who extol meritocracy.

As indicated before, social contradictions do not disappear as capitalism changes, but rather take on other features. An essential change occurs in those who dominate: they are also dominated by the system that benefits them;

in Adorno's words (2004c, p. 335): "Human beings continue to be dominated the economic process. The objects of which are no longer only the masses, but also the rulers and their supporters". As Marx (1984) stated, it is not a matter of analyzing and criticizing capitalists, even if they are not worthy of greater praise, but rather of thinking about the relationship between capital and labor. In the study by Wright Mills (1951), it is evident how owners of smaller companies become employees of larger companies that merge them into their assets: the number of capitalists is reduced, and they become stronger, because capital is more concentrated.

In their works, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse criticized totalitarian social systems: Nazi-fascism, Stalinism, and formal but not true democracy, present mainly in developed countries. The issue of domination is central in their works and is not restricted to the exploitation present in capitalism. By arguing that Odysseus was the prototype of the bourgeois individual and that society as it was at the time of the Iliad and the Odyssey had traces of what much later would be considered a mercantile society, they mark a historical perspective that describes domination in various forms, and also the possibility of overcoming it. By understanding our history as that of the bourgeoisie, they indicate that the contradiction between its conservative and progressive moments should be sought in its immanence. It does not matter where domination comes from: from the market, from the State, from fascist groups that manage power. What matters is denouncing it and overcoming the objective conditions that express it.

Domination of nature, which also involved domination of human nature, characterized and still characterizes our history, but its objective necessity is no longer justified, if it ever was. The advance of the productive forces, as mentioned before, has reached conditions conducive to the elimination of misery; if this does not occur, it is because of political and no longer, preponderantly, economic reasons. Thus, their criticism should not be directed only to current forms of domination, such as so-called neoliberalism, but also to the perpetuation of domination, regardless of its form. For Adorno (2004e), the sources of fascism, used for capitalist management, transcend the economy and, as already highlighted, his criticism extends itself to all forms of domination:

The tendency – I am talking expressly about tendency – according to which present-day society, if its political forms radically and forcibly adhere to economic forms, is immediately directed, in a pregnant sense, in a metaeconomic way, that is, no longer by forms defined through the mechanism of classic bartering. There should be no controversy between us about the fact that such tendencies occur. Thus the concept of mastery once again achieves a *de facto* preponderance over purely

economic processes. From the structural point of view, forms seem to have arisen or to be taking shape through an immanent socioeconomic movement, which in turn are moving out of the determining context of pure economics and the pure immanent dialectics of society, and are to a certain extent independent, and by no means for the good of society (ADORNO, 2004e, p. 541).

At the end of the so-called Golden Age of capitalism, in 1969, Horkheimer & Adorno (1985) republished their work entitled “*Dialectic of Enlightenment*”. Although it was a decade of important cultural transformations, such as counterculture movements, student movements, revolutionary movements, its authors state: “[...] the development we diagnose in this book towards total integration is suspended, but not interrupted; it threatens to be completed through dictatorships and wars. (HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, 1985, p. 10). Indeed, in Brazil, for example, in 1969, the dictatorship that began in 1964 was expanding its powers. But the struggle against this and other dictatorships also emerged, in that decade and in those movements. Dictatorships, wars, and movements against them show the social contradictions, which tend to be suspended but not eliminated by management as an end in itself, which apparently neutrally serves the dominant powers. The schism between individuals and society becomes wider and individuals are more directly manipulated by the latter, especially through alienation, a result of this schism.

The formation of the alienated individual

Formation for a society that manages and secures the assets of the most powerful must also be managed by these interests. In order to maintain a fascist leadership, authoritarian personality types are needed who hold management positions in politics and in public or private companies, and those who support them. Executives are needed who use technical rationality to achieve their good performance, regardless of entrepreneurial purposes: the same rationality is used for manufacturing weapons and medicines; rationality prone to higher productivity; and culture and, among its institutions, schools must prepare those who bring these goals to fruition, as well as those who have to stick to the hierarchy and be obedient in order to keep their jobs, which are increasingly rare, according to Marcuse (1982), due to increasing automation and because industrial obsolescence planned to ensure profits does not decrease.

As this is structural unemployment, according to Marcuse (1981), given that, unlike the period in time analyzed by Marx (1984), in relation to the advance of machinery, new jobs have not and will not be created to replace former jobs, except for the production of goods to satisfy false needs. It is not by chance that encouragement of entrepreneurship arises following the growth of franchises, which are a form of paying to work under the franchise owner's mandatory recommendations. Schools, with their objective of preparing students for the job market, must be concerned with developing technical abilities and competencies in their students in order for them to work in hierarchical teams or on their own to invent something to sell.

When analyzing the recent Common National Basic High School Curriculum [*Base Nacional Comum Curricular para o Ensino Médio – BNCC*], Silva (2018) emphasizes the adaptive character; this “managed formation”, according to the expression she uses, is contrary to a formation based on a cultural-historical dimension, isn't favorable to individual differentiation and autonomy, and little inclined to reflection. This new legislation (the Common Curriculum), which according to the author is not new, had already been set forth in the educational legislation of the 1990s. This adaptive character can be seen by the restriction of compulsory subjects to Mathematics and Portuguese and by the removal of Philosophy and Sociology as compulsory subjects. Also according to this author, the competencies required in formation are conducive to that form of adaptation and not to criticism.

The changes proposed by the BNCC are intended to meet the presumed changes in the labor market, which, as we have argued, is increasingly restricted due to structural unemployment, brought about by growing automation. Favero, Consalter & Tonieto (2020) also emphasize this instrumental character of the current proposal for High School, which is based on the “Pedagogy of competencies”, proper to utilitarian learning.

The criticisms made by Silva (2018) refer to the pseudo-formation described by Adorno (2004a) in the 1950s: a tendency toward an external relationship with the contents that are taught and are proper to serving for the individual's adaptation to a society that excludes everyone, and this pseudo-formation occurs in two ways: adaptive (pragmatic) and by valuing culture as an end in itself. The former, it seems, has gained primacy, and the latter should not only be linked to superficial erudition, but also to criticism of society. Adorno (2004a) advocates a relationship between society and culture – in which education occurs through the incorporation of culture –, in which there is an initial movement of detachment, so that there is reflection on society and a return to it, so that it can be criticized and, if and when possible, modified.

Thus, the mere teaching of Philosophy and Sociology is not enough, by itself, to be able to criticize pseudo-formation and, consequently, the society that objectively provides it.

Favero, Consalter & Toniato (2020) indicate the controlling character of education by means of standardized assessment by the State due to market needs and, like Taffarel & Beltrão (2019), associate these changes with neoliberalism present in education. Taffarel & Beltrão (2019) indicate that the High School BNCC is a way to further impoverish the education of working class students. However, it should be noted that these authors do not have a similar understanding to the one defended in this text, i.e. this is not a new form of capitalism – neoliberalism –, but the continuous concentration of income. Favero, Consalter & Toniato (2020) even present the centralization of private education in powerful groups that are increasingly fewer in number, thus characterizing monopoly capitalism, and yet they maintain the criticism of the ideology that denies the existence of these monopolies.

Development of knowledge and skills contributes to maintaining orderly progress, both at work and outside of it. But, as society is contradictory, school education also includes criticism of this kind of formation. As argued by Adorno *et al.* (1950), in self-reflection and in reflection about the world, which, despite being distinct, are correlated, it is not appropriate to separate formation provided at school from the personal characteristics, behaviors and skills developed from acquired knowledge, and which are fundamental to overcoming alienation.

If, as argued at the beginning of this text, education must be political, directed towards the formation of consciousness, then alienated consciousness of social conflicts and reified consciousness, which converts everyone into objects of management (manipulation), must be criticized, and, as discussed in the previous part of this article, ideology, whether by occupying consciousness through a vision reduced to the existing world or by being a manifest lie, must be fought, with the aim of removing the subjective basis of support for objective extermination. It must be emphasized that violence and the tendency toward nonviolence, present and fostered at school, are socially mediated (ADORNO, 2004a).

Regarding social violence and personality formation, Horkheimer & Adorno (1985) argued that in the Nazi period it was no longer anti-Semitism that existed, but the ticket mentality; adherence to a set of adjectives – conservative or progressive – that reduced beings to these qualities and the fixedness of the relationship between these adjectives; a stereotyped way of thinking. In his study on authoritarian personality, Adorno (2019) indicates certain types, in addition to the characteristic sadomasochistic type – standing out among which are the psychopath, whose desire for destruction is visible, and the manipulator, whose pleasure is found in “doing things,” in efficiency; social alienation and

the transformation of life and people into things to be manipulated are clearly perceivable. As Adorno (2004a) indicates, there are important psychic elements that constitute pseudo-formation. These include narcissism and paranoia, correlates of an education for alienation, for indifference. There is no experience as such, but rather superficial contact with content that makes no sense to those who study, which leads Adorno to state that what is learned must soon be “erased” so that new content can, superficially and briefly, occupy thinking that is not aimed at understanding the object, but rather at the repetition of its appearance.

At that time, in the 1940s, in the domain of monopolies, a more psychically regressed individual than the classic authoritarian individual was present (CROCHICK, 2019); in this type of individual, an object of passion – of hate – no longer needed to be established and configured, what mattered was the movement of destructive impulse, no matter against whom. Thus, Jews, at the time of Nazism, were a target marked by the German state to be persecuted, but they were neither loved nor hated, they were just a permitted object for the fury of the sense of real powerlessness to be vented.

In a text published in the mid-1950s, therefore in the golden years of capital, Adorno (2015) argues that neurotic individuals studied by Freud are replaced by narcissists, who abdicate consciousness and act only according to their interests, and might be socially pleasing. Narcissism, however, is a movement of the drive that must return to the ego, on occasions of suffering, and returns to collective narcissism – the love of the homeland or another ideal – when individual narcissism is criticized. In short, if in liberalism part of the population had to develop an ego in its relation with the objective world so that liberalism could continue to be produced, in the managed society, individuals must turn to themselves, and no longer to production, but rather to the consumption of superfluous goods, since the permanence of a fragile ego is nourished by such consumption.

Whereas narcissism had already been indicated as psychic regression present in the golden years of capitalism, it was only at the end of the 1970s that outstanding works on narcissism began to appear. In 1979 Lasch published “*The Culture of Narcissism*” (LASCH, 1983); in 1982 Green published “*Life Narcissism, Death Narcissism*” (GREEN, 1988). Coincidentally, without it being a cause-and-effect relationship, neoliberalism and the discussion about narcissism become stronger after this decade.

According to Crochick (2019), another phenomenon emerged in the 1980s, correlated to more psychically regressed personalities: bullying, directed to satisfy primitive desires of omnipotence, such as that of full domination and destruction of those who do not react sufficiently to violence; it does not have a

delimited object, as is the case of prejudice. Some researchers (ANTUNES; ZUIN, 2008) have argued that the discussion of bullying impoverishes the discussion by the Frankfurtians about prejudice; recent research data (CROCHICK, J.; CROCHICK, N., 2017), however, indicate that both phenomena are related but aren't the same, and that if prejudice can bring about a defense of existing moral and social order and a latent desire to destroy it, bullying relates only to the latter, and anyone can be the target to be destroyed; prejudice would indicate a less regressed personality, since it needs a delimited object (Jew, Black, disabled person) to project its forbidden desires and its anguishes; on the other hand, for the bully, any object that does not resist serves for his desire of domination and violence, which leads one to think that bullying is a more primitive form of violence than prejudice (CROCHICK, 2019).

As argued by Adorno (2015), the more society becomes technically and managerially refined, the less individuals are needed, and the individual formed with a more fragile ego – common to narcissists, psychopaths, and manipulators – illustrates this transformation: society tends to generate more regressed individuals, whether in terms of social relations or in terms of understanding the world. A culture that does not provide an experience, a substantial contact with the world, is a culture that enables insensitivity, indifference towards objects with which the regressed individual relates according to his imaginary desires and fears; in this sense, an education that enables openness to experience with objects would be contrary to violence, but, for this to happen, education should not be external, alien to students, but based on the understanding of the social contradictions that must be overcome, contradictions that can be perceived in each object to be transmitted and in each skill to be developed in its historical relationship with society.

If narcissism is more current than sadomasochism due to existing social conditions, as discussed earlier these correspond to higher concentration of capital, and it is with the ideology of capital that individual desires are associated. As Freud (2011) analyzes, ideational content is based on strong psychic needs, and Adorno *et al.* (1950) present as a hypothesis of their study on the authoritarian personality that a set of ideas is adhered to by individuals through their desires expressed by their personality structure. Culture mediates the relationship between individuals and society, serving as a filter so that it can be perceived and interpreted; as mentioned before, as it comes from a contradictory society, culture contains not only a distorted perception of the world that characterizes ideology, but also the possibility of criticizing it; thus, the more diverse and richer a culture is, the more individuals can differentiate themselves and express their desires; the less diverse and poorer a culture is, the less individuals can express their desires.

The cultural industry, however, according to Horkheimer and Adorno (1985), brings the fetishism of cultural goods, and in this sense, transmits ideology, in this case the fixedness of existing reality. It promotes imitation of appearance as if the latter were real, and thus compels adaptation to what exists; in this way it impoverishes the possibility of perceiving social contradictions; at times these are perceived, and when this occurs some individuals adhere to the manifest lie in order to satisfy primitive impulses that are not always allowed, such as cruelty and imitation that is made possible when the object of imitation is ridiculed.

If the cultural industry is characterized by the repetition of that which is always the same, it does not offer specific objects with which individual drives can be associated. According to Freud (1997), the objects offered by culture allow individual differentiation, by the contrast between fantasy and reality; if culture, like culture transmitted by the cultural industry, does not provide objects, then it produces a drive that is satisfied by repetition, which characterizes compulsion. If, as argued before, the destructive impulse of bullying does not require objects, then the cultural industry aids its development by obstructing, in turn, the individual's possibility of differentiating himself through experience with the objects offered by culture.

For individual development to be possible, according to Adorno (2004a), it is fundamental for the student to have a substantial relationship with the contents offered, which cannot be less substantial for the student's adaptation to existing society and for overcoming their limits. The two forms of pseudo-formation mentioned above – culture learned only as a means of adaptation or exaltation of culture as culture – are fostered by the cultural industry and strengthened by the school; when the school does not criticize it and reproduces the absence of substantial content transmitted by the former, it becomes part of it.

If school education should not only address issues of violence, which is not restricted to school life, and is reproduced in the lives of adults in society, it also has as its fundamental objective the transmission of content and the development of skills. When thinking about the trends in Brazilian education in recent decades, one can think of the emphasis on the scientific method to the detriment of knowledge proper to the humanities in the 1970s, the emphasis on skills and abilities, with the Curriculum Parameters of the 1990s, which extend to the currently proposed Common National Basic Curriculum, as mentioned before, and think of the encouragement of discussion of personal projects, proactiveness and entrepreneurship. Such proposals, according to Taffarel & Beltrão (2019), contribute to social resignation to precarious labor conditions, including acceptance of underemployment.

Now, in monopoly capitalism, with employment increasingly rare, it is difficult to think of alternatives for an individual project, and also for entrepreneurship, which serve as a clear indication that each one has to learn to take care of oneself, without depending on social options, which in turn are less and less real. One is thus educated as to what to do in a society of structural unemployment. If the objective interests of capital are safeguarded, there can be conflict between individuals without those interests being threatened. Thus, more than ever education is for alienation, especially alienation and ignorance of a life that could be possible. A formation for alienation that does not need culture to be incorporated, because culture increasingly loses the possibility of reflection through experience with substantial objects, such as freedom, equality, justice, happiness, solidarity and autonomy; reflection that should not be constituted externally to these objects.

Neoliberalism and formation for alienation

While the first part of this article highlighted the ideological nature of neoliberalism, which hides the advance of concentration of capital in the form of a continuation of monopoly capitalism, the criticism of the formation of the individual for alienation made by Adorno (1995 and 2004a) at the end of the 1950s and in the 1960s has also been highlighted. Moreover, the failure of education had already been described in Horkheimer and Adorno's "Elements of Anti-Semitism" (1985). The shift of attention from the misfortune of the poor to hatred of the Jews, the resentment that turned against them, was already, according to these authors, an interchangeable object.

At the time of Nazism, people's most primitive psychic characteristics were already targeted by power, and this continued after the defeat of that system. It is not neoliberalism that leads to this regression, but the ownership of capital, present in both the Welfare State and the theological doctrine of the market, as Hobsbawm (1995) refers to neoliberalism. Certainly, the State is not indifferent, especially to the poorest, when it offers compensations for the social injustices produced by the market, but since the market no longer exists, the benefits offered by the State, which represents capital rather than society, prevent conflicts from being overcome, since they are not even perceived.

In the 1970s and 1980s, there were: 1- the strengthening of the neoliberalism doctrine, to hide the concentration of capital; 2- discussions about narcissism, a more regressed psychic formation of personality in relation to

the sadomasochist of more distant times; and 3- discussions about bullying, a more primitive form of violence than prejudice, especially in school life, and its impacts on psychic, school, and adult life. And these phenomena occur in an increasingly technically and managerially refined society that allows social conflicts to be forgotten, protecting the interests of those who belong to the social elite, and the formation of individuals can become increasingly regressive; the relationship with culture and society is external, alien to the most pressing interests of the individual himself: his self-preservation, and more than that, the possibility of his self-determination. Identification between individuals must be denied, in the name of self-preservation, and education, even school education, favors the development of coldness, of insensibility, the inability to differentiate between oneself and others and between others; but sensitivity, the ability to differentiate, expresses human intelligence, and when this is reduced to repetition of that which exists, it regresses.

Neoliberalism and concomitant psychic regression towards more primitive forms of destruction express the continuity of domination of the few over the many, and everyone has difficulty in admitting their powerlessness in the face of what they perceive: the false life that exists and the possibility of overcoming it. Forming a consciousness that allows one to perceive the falsity of neoliberal proposals and consequent individual demands is fundamental, and educators should not abandon this objective, either through the transmission of culture, as a historical property of all, the acquisition of which allows individuation, or through the possibility of students being able to express themselves through the languages they learn. This individuation and possibility of expressing desires and fears can avoid irrational violence so that we can identify, with precision, the targets against which we must fight, so that the threats to life, generated by society, are extinguished, since the objective conditions of fascism still remain, promoting new Auschwitzs, indicating that the maintenance and strengthening of power given by the concentration of income for a few and to the detriment of the majority of the population continues to be one of the greatest evils to be fought for a substantially democratic life, which has the school as a privileged institution.

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