

Education X Cultural Industry: the production of resentment and semiforming

Gianni Marcela Boechar*d*ⁱ 

Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Vitória, ES, Brasil

Angela do Nascimento Paranha de Oliveiraⁱⁱ 

Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Vitória, ES, Brasil

1

Abstract

This article is part of the results of a master's dissertation on the naturalization process of barbarism by the resentment that produces semi-formed subjects. We aim to analyze the influence of the media in the education of children and adolescents, as a way of showing the consequences of this process in the reproduction of the subjects and in the resurgence of the regression of the senses. With an analytical theoretical nature, the research uses the Critical Theory of Society (ADORNO, 1995). One of the bets in this study is that social transformation requires the empowerment of the school as a privileged locus for understanding social reality. We conclude that a large portion of contemporary society reacts in a barbaric way, against itself or third parties, for not being aware of other possibilities. This fact can be observed as a result of the semi-formation process produced by the mass media, which prevents the elaboration of the past and, thus, promotes the perpetuation of existing subjectivities.

Keywords: Education. Cultural industry. Resentment. Semi-training.

Educação X Indústria Cultural: a produção do ressentimento e semiformação

Resumo

Este artigo é parte dos resultados de uma dissertação de mestrado acerca do processo de naturalização da barbárie pelo ressentimento que produz sujeitos semiformados. Temos como objetivo analisar a influência dos *media* na educação de crianças e de adolescentes, como forma de evidenciar as consequências desse processo na reprodução dos sujeitos e no recrudescimento da regressão dos sentidos. De cunho teórico analítico, a pesquisa recorre à Teoria Crítica da Sociedade (ADORNO, 1995). Uma das apostas deste estudo é que a transformação social requer a potencialização da escola como locus privilegiado de compreensão da realidade social. Concluímos que uma grande parcela da sociedade contemporânea reage de forma bárbara, contra si ou terceiros, por não ter consciência de outras possibilidades. Tal fato pode ser observado em decorrência do processo de *semiformação* produzido pelos *mass media*, que impede a elaboração do passado e, assim, promove a perpetuação das subjetividades existentes.

Palavras-chave: Educação. Indústria cultural. Ressentimento. Semiformação.



1 Introduction

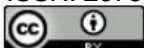
2

This work [This work was produced from the master's thesis completed in 2016 by the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Espírito Santo. It intends to question and understand how social phenomena tend to appear, in the public sphere, as if they were of a natural order. As well as if this naturalization prevents us from proposing a problematization based on a critical reflection about the ideological intentionalities of the hegemonic mass media and the fetishistic character of these mass media, especially television and the internet, which tend to prolong the false identification between the subject and the cultural merchandise.

The research problem concerns the production of resentment validated by the media [Media - term used by the Frankfurt School to determine the mass media (radio, television, internet, cinema)], in order to understand what this feeling can trigger in social relations. We start from the following hypotheses: a) feelings of inferiority can be produced and/or aggravated by means of the mediation of the cultural industry, which forms the meaning of life through the media and contributes to the semiformative process (Halbildung), which can be one of the main motivators of the subjects' adaptation; b) the lack of elaboration of the past, whether individual or collective, can be one of the factors that tend to perpetuate the subjects' convictions, mainly regarding the formation of subjectivities.

Based on some dialogues of characters from the TV series Everybody Hates Chris, we propose to analyze the concept of resentment, as well as its possible consequences. Theoretical-analytical in nature, based on a qualitative approach, the research resorts to Theodor Adorno's Critical Theory of Society, in dialogue with aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy, as well as with the tradition of psychoanalytic theory.

From Adorno's studies, it was possible to verify that the Cultural Industry plays a decisive role in orchestrating the tastes and desires of human beings, as well as





promoting the ideology that being submissive is the only possible condition for a certain class.

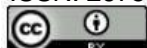
However, when resentful subjects can no longer sublimate their hatred, they turn against someone, and it is devastating. A possible way out, according to Adorno, is the realization of a crystalline elaboration of the past, in the sense of raising, to the level of consciousness, the remains abandoned in the rubble of history - individual and collective -, to search for the subjective and objective origin that conditions the existence of the actions that mean the now. Through the systematized study of the contents constructed by humanity, especially in relation to the history of existence of each people.

2 Methodology

This research aims to promote a reflection on the effects caused by the mass media in today's society. To this end, nine episodes of the TV series *Todo mundo o ódio o Chris* were selected as a result of the indication of the students of an elementary school class, from a public school in the city of Vila Velha (ES), through the completion of a questionnaire prepared for this purpose. We analyzed some of the possible causes, and also consequences, related to resentment (individual and/or collective), produced in Brazil, based on some dialogues of selected characters from the TV series. And we identify resentment as a consequence of *semiformalization*.

We carried out a bibliographic study about: the theoretical proposal of the Critical Theory of Society; the concept of *semi-formation*, which interferes in the production of subjects' subjectivities; the concept of resentment (re)produced and maintained by contemporary society. And, based on the lines of some characters from the TV series *Everybody Hates Chris*, we analyze the possible causes and consequences of resentment (individual and/or social) produced unconsciously by most of those involved in the process, as well as how this phenomenon interferes with scientific education and creates the opportunity for the process of *semiformation*.

3 Results and Discussion





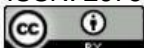
Thinking about education has always been a challenging act and, therefore, of extreme importance when one intends to understand what is necessary to promote possibilities of changes to what is naturalized by society. In these terms, we can infer that the crisis in the formative process occurs because the purpose of an education for humanization is no longer the main objective and has become centered on the formation of knowledge necessary to act in the labor market.

According to Adorno (1995, p. 181):

the reason is evidently the social contradiction; it is that the social organization in which we live remains heteronomous, that is, no person can really exist in today's society according to his own determinations; while this occurs, society forms people through innumerable channels and mediating instances, in such a way that they absorb and accept everything in the terms of this heteronomous configuration that has deviated from itself in its consciousness.

In order to break with reproductivist practices, and think of another kind of education, it is not enough just to make the institutional space available and provide access to "culture". According to Adorno (1995, p. 183), even if there are few people interested in this ideological perspective of emancipation, it is necessary "[...] an education for contradiction and resistance", which promotes moments of reflection to what is (im)put by the cultural industry as something good, "true", and therefore unquestionable. The cultural industry produces programs that tend not only to form, but also format the judgment of taste and aesthetics, that is, the formation of senses and damage. The result of this formatting goes beyond physical loss, it means the loss of properties to perceive the totality, or even details that make a difference in the way we see, hear, feel the world.

Thus, science (systematized knowledge) should permanently dialogue with art and give the subject the opportunity to have freedom to create and go beyond himself, that is, to provide an opportunity for knowledge that is not exclusively provided by the media and by everyday life (common sense). To leave the common sense, the superficiality (conveyed information), to seek a systematized knowledge, based on





concrete evidence is a great challenge, of the current proposal of education, turned to the totality, which is worth an educational system more and more superficial, based on the "interests, needs and aspirations" of young people demanded by the rules of the labor market.

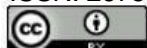
Thinking about an education beyond reproduction, of qualified labor for work, requires a change in conception and habits. It is necessary, for example, to renounce the instincts considered natural. And the question that remains latent is: how to become enlightened, if we have to repress our instincts without developing resentment or barbarism?¹

A possible answer would be, according to Adorno's (2015, p. 1) analyses, to seek to know "[...] the problem of minorities in modern society, and more specifically the problem of racial and religious hatreds", because these cannot be treated (solved) through "[...] propaganda of tolerance or apologetic refutation of their errors and lies". However, the search for a "[...] scientific, systematic, and sincere elucidation of a phenomenon of such historical significance can contribute directly to the improvement of the cultural atmosphere from which hatred feeds" (ADORNO, 2015, p. 1).

In this sense, the ideal would be an education provided still in "pre-school, a moment in which not only decisive and definitive social adjustments take place, but also decisive adaptations of soul dispositions occur" (BECKER in ADORNO, 1995, p. 166).

According to Adorno (1995), by providing an education for emancipation since early childhood education, it is possible to avoid the reproduction of violence in an alienated way, considering that, in this phase of life, children are aggressive when contradicted. The correction of such an act should not be a mere punishment, but, rather, the possibility of forming concepts of right and wrong, a way of thinking and acting fairly with others and with oneself in society.

¹ Barbarism - we use this term to determine an unjustified violence against others. For example: the denial of knowledge equally to all students, pejorative verbal aggression that promotes low self-esteem and prevents the subject from learning.





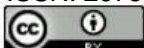
However, for this to have any chance of happening, it is necessary to promote practices that provide opportunities to think and experiment. According to Nietzsche (2005, p. 190), there is no way to build solid knowledge from discourse alone, he argues that it is preferable "[...] rather to know nothing than to know many things by half!" Knowledge does not arise from imagination, but from serious work, from dedication and systematized study.

According to Nietzsche (1986), one can consider that the purpose of culture is to domesticate man, therefore, it is possible to think that the instruments of culture promote regression, when they incite rancor and hatred motivated by "justice", legal parameters instituted by society.

When addressing the concept of resentment, Theodor Adorno notes that it is the result of promises of justice for all, established by an elite and, precisely because of this, impossible to be fulfilled. Thus, a culture is created that divides individuals and removes their confidence in these promises and in themselves. For Adorno, as a consequence of this unequal division, which is perceived in capitalist society, the anger of the great mass of dispossessed people falls not against the non-fulfillment of promises and a certain peaceful aura, which can be perceived in the concept of culture, but on those who are afflicted by it expressing in the form that such a promise should not exist (ADORNO, 1995, p. 164).

Resentment can be a result of the ideas that reinforce the discourse of the naturalization of inequality, either by talent or by the determination of some. However, this same society legally determines that everyone is equal before the law/state. What is not revealed is that, at least in capitalist society, the law is produced by those who hold political power, who in most cases are also economically dominant or represent the dominant class, which turns the State into an instrument of the dominant (CHAUÍ, 1980, p. 79).

The subject starts to believe he/she is a citizen, a member of society, that is, a holder of obligations and duties, but also deserving of rights. Social resentment occurs because people who believe in the promises of equality feel aggrieved by social





inequalities that can only be overcome through struggle and revolution, which do not happen out of cowardice or fear of losing the condition of victim. In the name of "justice", the resentful act backed up, if not by legal means, by the means they deem appropriate in defending the rights now denied and, at these moments, the greatest atrocities happen (KEHL, 2005, p. 167).

7

Adorno (1995, p. 29) observes that resentment, in most cases, occurs due to the lack of elaboration of the past, because, by not knowing the causes that produce certain phenomena, one allows the perpetuation of the social convictions/ideologies that gave rise to extremely violent acts in the past, and that tend to repeat themselves continuously. For this philosopher,

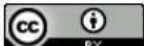
The desire to free oneself from the past is justified: it is not possible to live in the shadow and terror has no end when guilt and violence must be paid for with guilt and violence; and it is not justified because the past one wants to escape from still remains very much alive (ADORNO, 1995, p. 29).

One seeks, in ignorance, to ease the feeling of guilt and thus avoids remembering what happened. With this, one prioritizes the present in order to soften what one is, because, "[...] together with the forgetfulness of what has just happened, resonates the anger for the fact that, as everyone knows, before convincing others one must convince oneself" (ADORNO, 1995, p. 34).

This self-conviction does not occur naturally. "Everything has its price, everything can be paid. This was the moral canon of justice, the oldest and most naive, the beginning of all 'will,' of all 'equity' of all 'goodwill,' of all 'objectivity' on earth" (NIETZSCHE, 1986, p. 39).

Therefore, so that people can believe in their innocence, so that this can happen naturally, something that guarantees this "truth" is sought as a reference, like the characters invented by the cultural industry that repeatedly reproduce what they want to be believed, and that, by not being questioned, become the truth of society.

In this way, it can be inferred that, "[...] wherever television [and the Internet] apparently approximate the conditions of modern life, but conceal the problems by





rearrangements and changes of accent, a false consciousness is effectively generated" (ADORNO, 1995, p. 83), creating the illusion of *ideal models*, despertando um fetiche the ideal being for whom all is well in the end. In other words, the resentful character is a victim, someone who suffers all kinds of persecution and injustice, which is why she is allowed to take revenge or at least be recognized as worthy of admiration and respect.

Assim, a indústria cultural

[...] lends itself to the construction of characters of little psychological density, whose moral profile leaves no doubt to the reader/viewer. That is why the resentful character is the protagonist suitable for melodrama, a genre that combines the maximum psychological drama with the maximum eloquence (scenic or narrative), in order to make explicit the darkest passions, the most subtle motivations, the most secret intentions (KEHL, 2014, p. 182)

By identifying with the characters presented by the cultural industry, the semi-formed individual tends to believe that he already has enough knowledge to be happy, is limited to the information presented to him by the mass media and, thus, assumes a posture of being cultured and well informed.

According to Ginzburg (2013, p. 93), the cultural industry, attentive to market demand, always provides the immediate comfort of the consumer, adjusts some consolation structures. That is, it shows what is desired, promotes a sense of fulfillment or idealization of the perfect. "Mass media were consciously and skillfully used by dictators" who promoted truths that were never challenged. "The complicity between cultural industry and historical violence helped create societies in which technology played a decisive role in ways of defining the relationships between the human, to perception and language" (GINZBURG, 2013, p. 95), which makes us infer that

[...] semiculture carries an appearance of culture and is disguised as 'education' for the masses. Strictly speaking, it boils down to a semiformalization, responsible for the production of weakened semi-individuals virtually powerless to insert themselves autonomously into the social process (LOUREIRO; DELLA FONTE, 2003, p. 61).



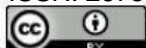


We can see this media manipulation in the eighth episode of the second season of the series in question - Everybody Hates Thanksgiving. Where the narrator and the protagonist denounce the denial of American origins and show how superficial and cruel education is when it only divulges to their students a shallow knowledge that does not provide meaningful learning, education that reinforces the abusive practices of the media. In a comical way, it brings to the scene a problem that is not only typical of the USA, but also of Brazil and many other countries (the denial of the origins of a people, promoting discrimination and superficial knowledge as something normal and acceptable).

In summary, it can be inferred that resentment, observed in the series, crosses social relations in multiple ways (by ethnicity, existential conflicts, political conflicts, omission of history, and media influence in maintaining a submissive posture) and is a motivating factor for relationships to be fraught with violence in the relationship with the other. By repressing the desire for revenge, the subject reproduces the violence suffered at other times, with other subjects in an exacerbated way against himself, avoiding questioning and seeking what would be his by right - scientific knowledge -, accepts the lightweight information that is offered as absolute truths and in this sense promotes the process of semiformation.

4 Final considerations

During the study, when establishing the analysis of some episodes and the dialogue with some authors, the hypotheses were confirmed, that is, a large part of the products of the cultural industry represent what, in thesis, we glimpse as a possibility of existence, in face of the reality that we live. Based on Adorno's studies (1995), it is possible to infer that the cultural industry plays a decisive role in orchestrating the tastes and desires of human beings, reducing them to consumers and often confining relationships to a market perspective. The cultural industry, particularly through the media, tends to promote the ideology that being submissive is the only condition of life for





the labor-living class. Thus, semi-formation occurs, resulting from the excessive repetitions from which a large part of the subjects conjectures the transmitted behaviors as an absolute and unquestionable truth. This is a situation that borders on conformism, in which barbarism and the maintenance of the status quo are considered as something natural.

Therefore, it is up to the subjects, especially teachers, institutionally recognized as mediators of knowledge, to seek new possibilities, to know the history of society, beyond the information conveyed by the media and, thus, to consider that people act or react according to their memory.

References

ADORNO, Theodor W. **Educação e emancipação**. Tradução Wolfgang Leo Maar. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1995.

ADORNO, Theodor W. **Teoria da semiformação**. Disponível em: <http://adorno.planetaclix.pt/tadorno.htm>. Acesso em 16 mar. 2015.

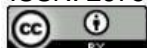
BOECHARD, Gianni Marcela. **Educação, indústria cultural e ressentimento no seriado Todo mundo odeia o Chris**. Dissertação (Mestrado em Educação) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação, Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Vitória/ES, 2016. Disponível em: <https://educacao.ufes.br/pt-br/pos-graduacao/PPGE/detalhes-da-tese?id=10025>. Acesso em 11 jun. 2021.

CHAUÍ, Marilena. **O que é ideologia**. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1980.
GINZBURG, Jaime. **Literatura, violência e melancolia**. São Paulo: Autores Associados, 2013.

KEHL, Maria Rita. **O ressentimento camuflado da sociedade brasileira**. 2005. Disponível em: <http://novos estudos.uol.com.br/v1/contents/view/1153>. Acesso em 15 mar. 2015.

LOUREIRO, Robson; DELLA FONTE, Sandra Soares. Indústria Cultural e Educação: entre a formação e a semiformação. In: LOUREIRO, Robson; DELLA FONTE, Sandra Soares. **Indústria Cultural e Educação em "Tempos Pós-Modernos"**. Campinas: Papyrus, 2003. Cap. 3. p. 51-73.

MAAR, Wolfgang Leo. A guisa de introdução: Adorno e a experiência formativa. **Educação e emancipação**. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1995, p. 11-28.





NIETZSCHE, Friedrich W. **A Genealogia da moral**. Preparação dos originais por Joaquim José de Faria. São Paulo: Ed. Moraes, 1986.

NIETZSCHE, Friedrich W. **Assim falou Zaratustra**. Tradução de Alex Marins. São Paulo: Martin Claret, 2005.

11

Gianni Marcela Boechard, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6980-589X>

Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo

Doutoranda na linha de Educação Especial e Processos Inclusivos do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação da Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo e Professora da rede municipal de Cariacica/ES.

Contribuição de autoria: Autora do artigo

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/2744169633738368>

E-mail: gianni.marcela@hotmail.com

Angela do Nascimento Paranha de Oliveira, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7246-7115>

Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo

Doutoranda na linha de Educação Especial e Processos Inclusivos do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação da Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo e Professora e Pedagoga da rede municipal de Cariacica/ES.

Contribuição de autoria: Coautora do artigo

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/1411617784264567>

E-mail: angela_paranha@hotmail.com

Responsible Publisher: Cristine Brandenburg

Ad-hoc expert: José Rogério Santana

Como citar este artigo (ABNT):

BOECHARD, Gianni Marcela; OLIVEIRA, Angela do Nascimento Paranha. Educação X Indústria Cultural: a produção do ressentimento e semiformação. **Rev. Pemo**, Fortaleza, v. 3, n. 3, e335588, 2021. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.47149/pemo.v3i3.5588>

Received June 12, 2021.

Accepted on June 16, 2021.

Published on June 17, 2021.

