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IMMANENT CRITIQUE (EN)COUNTERS TRANSCENDENT CRITIQUE AND VICE-VERSA: ADORNO'S DIALECTICAL LITERARY CRITICISM*

In his study of the history of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, Martin Jay characterizes the aesthetic criticism carried out by what later came to be known as the Frankfurt School as belonging to a lineage that opposed the model of criticism that had hitherto been most common within traditional Marxism, oriented toward uncovering and evaluating the political tendency expressed by a work of art or literature [*Tendenzliteratur*] (Jay, 2008). This later position was defended by Lenin in his writings against artistic formalism in the context of the Russian Revolution and, systematized by Zhdanov at the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, would lead to the infamous aesthetic stiffening defended under the name of "socialist realism".

The distinctive feature of the approach of the Institute, according to Jay, would be the refusal of the immediate politicization of art, a position that, in fact, was not exactly new in Marxism, having already been supported by Friedrich Engels in his writings on literature, in which the author warned of the need for the interpretation of artistic works to start from the distinction between the manifest political position of the author and his class origins and the objective social content of the work of art he produced. For Engels, there would be no direct and necessary consequence of the author's political position in the political content of his literature — and the emblematic figure of this disjunction would be Balzac (a writer also esteemed by Karl Marx), who was politically conservative and a defender of the monarchy, but whose loathing of rising bourgeois values was associated with a special aptitude for revealing the dark side of the society that was then emerging, in which he glimpsed the damaging effects of the predominance of money as the measure

of all things. This meant that, in the eyes of Engels and Marx, Balzac was more realistic than politically well-intentioned writers, so to speak — as was the case with the writer Margareth Harkness, whom Engels criticized for being insufficiently realistic in her representation of the working class, even though her political disposition was decidedly socialist[1].

Although Jay is correct in pointing out that the art criticism practiced by the members of the first generation of the Institute for Social Research was committed to circumventing the limitations of traditional Marxist criticism and its reduction of art to its capacity for immediate political mobilization, it is possible to note a diversity of approaches in the work of members of the Institute who dedicated themselves to aesthetic issues, something that the author ignores in his reconstruction of the history of the Institute. This point would be more emphasized in the work of Rolf Wiggershaus, who underlines how, despite the distance from reductionist approaches to art and literature, the consideration of culture from its origins or class interests still lied within the scope of the Institute research and especially emerged in the texts by Herbert Marcuse and Leo Löwenthal, written in the 1930s (Wiggershaus, 1995).

It makes sense, then, in line with Wiggershaus, to speak of two models of art criticism practiced by Frankfurt authors: one more attentive to establishing parallels between works of art and the social determinations that are in some way external to them, a trait visible in Löwenthal's texts on European bourgeois literature and Marcuse's essay "On the Affirmative Character of Culture"— both closer to a critique of ideology in its traditional sense — and another of a properly immanent nature, which focuses on unveiling the work of art not by resorting to a conception of society that lies outside it but by delving into the meanings contained in the configuration of the work itself, a procedure adopted above all by Adorno (and by Walter Benjamin in his own way). Let us briefly reconstruct these two models of criticism with the aim of illuminating the differences between these procedures and highlighting the specificities of Adorno's approach compared to those of Marcuse and Löwenthal.

THE LIE THAT TELLS THE TRUTH: ADORNO'S CRITIQUE OF MARCUSE'S "ON THE AFFIRMATIVE CHARACTER OF CULTURE"

Although they operate in different ways, the two aforementioned approaches start from a materialist understanding of culture, thus opposing bourgeois cultural criticism, which, despite its various nuances, primarily conceives culture as a sphere separate from the rest of the social process. This aspect of traditional cultural criticism is highlighted by Marcuse in his analysis of the bourgeois conception of culture in the text published in the 1937 issue of the Institute journal, entitled "On the Affirmative Character of Culture."

According to Marcuse's reconstruction of the philosophy in the bourgeois society consolidation period, culture would be a nuclear piece of the bourgeoisie's praxis and worldview, conceived as a sphere not only detached from society, but also shielded from the imperatives of material life and, therefore, endowed with an unquestionable and almost celestial value: culture, in this conception, is seen as the realm of spiritual freedom, of authentic human values and ends, and is set against the social world and the harsh demands imposed by material existence, in which men's activity is curtailed by the imperatives of utility and the predominance of means. This is a dualism common in bourgeois cultural criticism, which opposes Culture as a spiritual realm and Civilization as a material process whose decisive ideological trait, as Marcuse notes, is the

> assertion of a universally obligatory, eternally better and more valuable world that must be unconditionally affirmed: a world essentially different from the factual world of the daily struggle for existence, yet realizable by every individual for himself 'from within,' without any transforming of the state of the fact. It is only in this culture that cultural activities and objects gain that value which elevates them above the everyday sphere. Their reception becomes an act of celebration and exaltation (Marcuse, 2006: 96).

According to Marcuse, the realm of culture, as a space for inner fruition and elevation, as opposed to the material process of life, based on work, profit, and the oppression of the majority of the population, could contain some critical potential since culture would bring some degree of demand for happiness beyond the suffering that predominates in material existence. However, Marcuse stresses that this potential is already limited by the fact that it is a mere ideal: instead of demanding effective change in the material relations of existence—new forms of life, work, and pleasure—this ideal remains an eternally postponed satisfaction. What Marcuse emphasizes, therefore, is that the beauty proper to culture is limited to promoting a change restricted to interiority without producing any concrete practical effects:

> Culture means not so much to a better as a nobler one: a world to be brought about not through the overthrow of the material order of life but through events in the individual's soul. Humanity becomes an inner state. Freedom, goodness, and beauty become spiritual qualities [...] Culture should ennoble the given by permeating it, rather than putting something new in its place. It thus exalts the individual without freeing him from his factual debasement(Marcuse, 2006: 103).

Considered in this way, culture becomes a form of ideological domination: by offering satisfaction to individuals without changing the material origins of this dissatisfaction, culture perpetuates the existing, exercising a role that once fell to religion, whose similar mystifying function

was unveiled by Marx in the introduction to his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843/2013).

That a critical theory of society should consider this ideological function of culture, if it wants to avoid becoming its accomplice in the obfuscation it helps to promote, is obvious. But, as Marx warned in his critique of religion, the concept of ideology designates a contradictory relationship between the objectifications of culture (ideas, works of art, theories, etc.) and reality. In other words, ideology is not purely and simply a lie but contains a moment of truth, truth understood here in the sense described by Hegel in the Science of Logic as the agreement of content with itself. Thus, religion is not only an illusion—the projection onto the spiritual plane (in the figure of God in the afterlife, in short) of what individuals would like to see realized on Earth—but it is, at the same time, an "expression of real misery" insofar as the very need for this spiritual projection shows a real lack on Earth. It is also "the protest against real misery" because, even in insufficient and alienated terms, religious ideals offer a measure of what should exist in reality, of how reality could be different and better (Marx, 2013: 147).

It is true that Marcuse considers this moment of truth contained in the bourgeois conception of culture and sees art as the branch that would best express this ideal, noting that it was only in the circumscribed sphere of art that bourgeois society enabled the effective realization of its promises: art can express utopia, fantasy, and revolt and is therefore the place reserved for the expression of "forgotten truths, over which "realism" triumphs in daily life" (Marcuse, 2006: 113). In this place of exception lies its danger for a society that needs to "rationalize and regulate happiness" (Marcuse, 2006: 114). However, the manifestation of truth in this sensible form, in the medium of the beauty of art, would contain another contradiction, explained by Marcuse in the following terms: at the same time that, because it is a promise of happiness, artistic beauty threatens the current form of our existence, a form in which happiness is denied to the vast majority of people, its enjoyment is restricted to small, clearly defined moments, in which only for a brief interval we can relax and distance ourselves from reality (Marcuse, 2006: 114).

Because of the limited nature of the aesthetic experience of happiness, Marcuse attributes to art a comparatively lower critical potential than that of idealist philosophy since the beauty, or, if you like, the sensible appearance proper to art—unlike the truth for which theory is oriented—would be compatible with the maintenance of horror in reality. In Marcuse's words, "true theory recognizes the misery and lack of happiness prevailing in the established order. Even when it shows the way to transformation, it offers no consolation that reconciles one to the present" (Marcuse, 2006: 117). Thus, although artistic fruition provides a certain "private break from reification," a realization—always fleeting—of the longing for human happiness,

this impulse to happiness, potentially disruptive in a social order that tries to contain it, is nevertheless reversed into something at the service of the existing since the appearance of happiness art provides generates a real effect of satisfaction which, in turn, would contribute to a certain spiritual relaxation and consequently to the acceptance of the existing order. This is what Marcuse calls the "miracle of affirmative culture": the fact that people can feel happy even when they are not. In the author's words:

> The truth of a higher world, of a higher good than material existence, conceals the truth that a better material existence can be created in which such happiness in realized. In affirmative culture, even happiness becomes a means of subordination and acquiescence. By exhibiting the beautiful as present, art pacifies rebellious desire. Together with the other cultural areas it has contributed to the great educational achievement of so disciplining the liberated individual, for whom the new freedom has brought a new form of bondage, that he tolerates the unfreedom of social existence (Marcuse, 2006: 120).

It is in this consolatory operation that Marcuse locates one of the focuses of the affirmative character of art, which leads him, at least at this point in his work, to consider philosophy as an activity more in tune with an emancipatory project than art[2].

Just as for Marcuse, for Adorno, it is essential that culture is neither considered an unquestionable value nor that we forget that its origins are indelibly tainted by social antagonisms. In "Cultural Criticism and Society" (1949/1998a), Adorno draws attention to the fact that, by assuming the separation of culture from material life, the bourgeois concept of culture erases the traces of barbarism on which culture is based, namely the split between intellectual and manual labor, i.e., the fact that the existence of a group of people who can carry out intellectual work and enjoy the products of culture depends on the existence of another part of society which is only responsible for manual labor. That is why, for Adorno, culture and criticism appear as inseparable poles since culture only holds a grain of truth when it tacitly and unconsciously points to the insufficiency of the existing, a latency which, in turn, it is up to criticism to make manifest. An idealistic and naive defense of "Culture" and "Art" as realms of spiritual elevation, therefore, strips them of their critical potential, transforming them into mere objects of enjoyment and consumption. In this way, the apologetic cultural critic takes part in the fetishization of culture—Marcuse is absolutely right to insist on this point.

Beyond this common warning, however, significant differences exist between Adorno's view of culture and that set out by Marcuse in the essay in question, as per a letter written by Adorno to Horkheimer on May 12, 1937. In it, Adorno states that by taking the affirmative *character* of culture as his

object, rather than its affirmative *concept*, Marcuse would have essentialized the content of culture—and especially art, taken as a homogeneous whole:

> I think he would have got much further and that it would have been more suited to him, if he had stayed with the *concept* of culture, its emergence and function, and an analysis of the way in which that function developed into so-called 'cultural criticism' in other words, if he had examined a precisely defined concept in the history of ideas in a materialistic way. As it is, however, he falls into areas which should only be approached with the utmost caution, and indeed even then with the utmost rigour (Adorno *apud* Wiggershaus, 1995: 221).

More precisely, Marcuse's characterization of culture seemed to Adorno to have been taken from the aesthetic theories of a specific historical moment, Weimar classicism but transformed into something like the essence of culture in bourgeois society. Because of this generalization, Marcuse would find himself in a difficult position to account for works of art from other historical moments in which the classicist ideals of artistic beauty and harmonious form, which he pointed out as the center of the ideological quandary of art, are absent. In this sense, Adorno raises as counter-examples to Marcuse's critique not only modern works such as Baudelaire's poetry, Schoenberg's compositions, and Kafka's novels and short stories but also a work from the 18th century itself, *The Dangerous Liaisons* by Choderlos de Laclos. As this small list of dissonant works suggests, Adorno's point was to question the totalizing characterization of art as simply a realm for the beautification of life and inner elevation which, with the evasion it provides, helps to perpetuate real exploitation and suffering.

Against Marcuse's universalizing view of art, Adorno argues that it is important to carry out an immanent critique of works of art, i.e., to look at works on a case-by-case basis, understanding the singularity of each configuration. According to him, it would be necessary to ask whether even the works of artists from the period focused on by Marcuse, such as those by Goethe and Beethoven, had no contradictory relationship with the concept of beauty formulated by the aesthetic conceptions of their time. It is as if, for Adorno, artistic activity, as praxis, exposed the socially founded fracture between theory and practice, intellectual work and manual labor, conception, and execution. For this reason, as Wolfgang Leo Maar notes, Adorno emphasizes the need to look at

> the inner contradictions proper to artistic realization in specific works, which appear only in the particular historical approach: precisely in its specific praxis, bourgeois art would expose the rupture between theory and practice so that the content expressed by its greatest artists would not always be a direct and immediate expression of the existing 'concept' of culture (Maar, 2006: 24; free translation).

Only in this way would it be possible to access the content of truth and knowledge that Adorno considers being the most important element of art, neglected by Marcuse in his essay:

> It seems to me that art has a whole level—the decisive one—which he completely overlooks: namely, the level of *knowledge and discovery*, in the sense of what cannot be achieved by bourgeois science. 'Roses scattered through life'—this sort of thing is really only good enough for the sixth form; and the dialectical counter--motif, that the art of an unpleasant reality provides a contrast with the ideal, is far too flimsy even to come near the decisive results of art. This corresponds to the tremendous naivety with which he accepts certain sensualist aspects of contemporary mass art as positive (Adorno *apud* Wiggershaus, 1995: 221).

Therefore, Adorno's reproach refers to the fact that, by making the ornamental aspect the essence of art and emphasizing the role of this satisfaction (an idea to which Adorno ironically refers by the expression "roses scattered through life") in the process of restoring contradictions and affirming the existing, Marcuse would lose sight of the content of truth and knowledge contained in works that strain the harmonious notion of culture of his time[3].

Marcuse's critique of culture is in line with what Adorno calls the transcendental method. This type of criticism sees artistic or scientific works from a point of view external to the culture: interest in the object is secondary to the task of locating it in the space of superstructures, i.e., rather than a question of properly penetrating the object, it, above all, establishes the correspondence between a given work and the class interest to which it corresponds. This method could be approximated to a critique of ideology in its traditional sense (*rough*ly understood as a false universalization of ruling class ideas) and would find its academic and neutralized version in Mannheim's sociology of knowledge[4]. Its traces can also be found in projects such as Lucien Goldmann's sociology of literature and, although centered on reception, Bourdieu's sociology of taste in *The Distinction* (1979).

As Adorno's censure of Marcuse's essay points out, this style of criticism dissolves particular works by a totalizing conception of culture, reducing them to mere epiphenomena and excluding from consideration any direct experience with the works. This is what Adorno calls "topological" thinking, which places the object in the social space without, however, penetrating its essence, which Adorno criticizes in one of his true overstatements: "topological thinking, which knows the place of each phenomenon but does not know the essence of any, has secret affinities with paranoid systems, deprived of any contact with the object" (Adorno, 1998a: 24). This model of classificatory criticism, taken to the extreme, shows itself as irrational since it leads to the condemnation of all culture, conceived "paranoically" as a system of socially necessary illusions at the service of the ruling class.

In Adorno's view, this type of cultural criticism, insofar as it remains a critique of ideology, itself becomes ideology since "to accept culture as a whole is already to remove from it the leaven of its own truth: negation" (Adorno, 1998a: 19), a negation that appears in a determined way only in each particular work of art that lives up to its concept. In an aphorism from *Minima moralia*, Adorno criticizes this one-sided view of culture and points to the social truth that can be found in works that, insofar as they are configured as a negation of material reality (which is based on the lie of the free exchange of equivalents), erect a critique of what exists:

> One of the central motifs of cultural critique since the immemorial is that of the lie: that culture produces the illusion of a society worthy of human beings, which does not exist; that it conceals the material conditions on which every human is constructed; and that by seeking to console and assuage, it ends up preserving the bad economic determinacy of everyday existence. This is the notion of culture as ideology, which at first glance the bourgeois doctrine of violence and its opponent, Nietzsche and Marx, seem to have in common. But precisely this notion, like all hand-wringing against the lie, has a suspicious tendency to itself become an ideology. [...] If one calls material reality the world of exchange, and culture that which refuses to accept the domination of such, this refusal is indeed illusory so long as the existent continues to exist. But since the free and equal exchange is itself a lie, whatever denies it stands at the same time for the truth: lies accordingly become a corrective on the lie of the world of commodities (Adorno, 2008: 39-41).

Culture thus appears as a lie that tells the truth or a truth that presents itself in the form of an illusion[5]: dialectically, if culture is a lie that at the same time denounces the real lie, then it points to the truth, i.e., it is a true illusion. If this is true, then the most productive critique, rather than a judgment that comes "from outside" culture and opposes it, revealing it as ideology, must consist of new knowledge produced from the friction of the contradictions in cultural objectifications. In this way, the critique of culture seems to be a necessary step toward liberating the moment of truth contained in artistic and cultural manifestations. In essence, Adorno's critique of culture strives to reveal the sterility of the dualism that opposes externalist analysis and internalist analysis of the objects of culture because only by delving into the works can we reveal what lies beyond—but not outside—them: society. In this sense, Adorno's model of criticism balances itself between the belief that the objects of culture contain a content of social truth that can be revealed by interpretation and the awareness that such interpretation will only be successful if it escapes the limitations imposed by an uncritical enthronement of culture.

If the immanent bourgeois critique disregarded the fact that culture was a moment in the material process of society, the correction, for Adorno, could not be the opposite procedure, traditionally adopted by the Marxist

critique, which reduced culture to a mere epiphenomenon of the economic base, relegating it to a subordinate role. Hence the importance of the immanent procedure, which resists this reduction as it "takes seriously the principle that the untrue is not ideology itself, but its claim to coincide with reality[6]"(free translation). In this sense, immanent criticism seeks seriously consider each theory and each work as a concrete particular, susceptible, as such, "to function as an index of the universal. The particular, far from being seen as irrelevant, is the way in which criticism, looking inside its object, manages to access the whole," to use Rouanet's (2001: 104; free translation) words. It must look for the interpretation that seeks the meaning of the works, the contradiction between their objective idea and the pretension that this idea is reality, thus pointing to the consistent and inconsistent moments of each work. Rather than only pointing out the limitations of culture, it transforms this recognition into something that illuminates reality itself because, as Adorno points out, "it pursues the logic of its aporias, the insolubility of the task itself. In such antinomies criticism perceives those of society" (Adorno, 2008: 23).

Hence Adorno's assertion that, for dialectical criticism, a cultural achievement is successful not when it reconciles objective contradictions in the lure of harmony but when it negatively expresses the idea of harmony by imprinting contradictions on its innermost structure. "Confronted with this kind of work, the verdict 'mere ideology' loses its meaning" (Adorno, 2008: 23). At the same time, culture is always stuck with the limit already pointed out by Marcuse: by itself, it is unable to suspend the contradictions it expresses. Even the most radical theoretical or artistic work is limited by the fact that it is only a reflection on or an expression of the contradictions posed in reality.

Combining the immersion in the object proper to immanent analysis and the awareness of its relationship with the social whole presupposed by transcendent analysis, Adorno's dialectical critique is also tributary to the perception of a change in the functioning of ideology since Marx formulated the terms of the critique of ideology in *The German Ideology*. To put it briefly, if Marx opposed the mystification of reality contained in the idealist affirmation of a priority of consciousness over reality, Adorno considers that in late capitalism the materialist affirmation that consciousness is determined by the material base had changed its meaning, ceasing to be a demystifying exercise and becoming above all an instrument for justifying the existing by preventing the opening up of a thought that failed to conform to the given. In this new logic, ideology, rather than primarily functioning by concealing reality in the form of a mystifying theory, for example, would consist of the gesture of affirming the existing as the only possible world. From the mismatch between ideal and reality, which Marx criticized in idealism, we would now be in a historical moment in which the positivist attachment

to immediate data taken in isolation as the ultimate reality and its propaganda in favor of the existing would predominate:

> All phenomena rigidify, becoming insignias of the absolute rule of that which is. There are no more ideologies in the authentic sense of false consciousness, only advertisements for the world through its duplication and the provocative lie which does not seek belief but commands silence (Adorno, 2008: 25).

It is also for this reason that Adorno believes that the task of cultural criticism should be, after the liberal phase of capitalism, not so much to try to trace cultural phenomena back to their supposed interest groups but to try to decipher the elements of what he calls the general tendency of society that manifest themselves in these cultural phenomena, by which, of course, the interests of the most powerful are realized[7]. Thus, Adorno criticizes the procedure of the traditional critique of ideology which, having spread even to the bourgeois social sciences, is more concerned with the classification of ideologies in terms of their class origin rather than properly criticizing them and understanding their objective content:

> Today, "ideology" means society as appearance. Although mediated by the totality behind which stands the rule of partiality, ideology is not simply reducible to a partial interest. It is, as it were, equally near the entre in all its pieces (Adorno, 2008: 21).

Adorno argues that immanent critique is from the start more dialectical than transcendent critique but to remain so it has to constantly relativize itself, understanding that it alone is insufficient to deal with the object and calling into question the very distinction between a critique that violates the object from the outside and another that examines it from the inside, this distinction itself being a symptom of reification of thought[8]. For Adorno, critical theory must overcome the antinomy between speaking from a position external to culture to put it as a whole in check or being dominated by the criteria that culture itself has crystallized. It is up to dialectical criticism not to hypostatize culture but to position "its mobility in regard to culture by recognizing understanding the latter's position within the whole": "Without such freedom, without consciousness transcending the immanence of culture, immanent criticism itself would be inconceivable: the spontaneous movement of the object can be followed only by someone who is not entirely engulfed by it" (Adorno, 2008: 19).

Only in this way can criticism expose the contradiction of culture: the fact that it affirms the existing while denouncing its insufficiency. Dialectical criticism, therefore, "it can subscribe neither to the cult of the mind nor to hatred of it. The dialectical critic of culture must both participate in culture

and not participate. Only then does he do justice to his object and to himself" (Adorno, 2008: 25).

This emphasis on the content of knowledge and discovery provided by art—a type of knowledge of a different order to that immediately accessible to science—reveals one of the strongest impulses of Adorno's aesthetic reflection: his questioning of the antinomy in bourgeois thought since at least the 17th century, namely the dualistic opposition between science as the place of truth and art as the sphere of illusion[9]. Although Adorno recognizes that the separation of the artistic sphere from the scientific sphere is a historical result of the rationalization process inherent in Western civilization, at various points in his work his criticism of this view, which conceives of art as being averse to any notion of truth, is clear.

Historically, Enlightenment philosophy would have sided with science and disconnected art from any relationship with reason, relegating it at best to the role of a pedagogical or moral convincing tool. Art, when it was yet to be taken for something purely illusory, only served to illustrate, in a didactic and sensitive way, the moral and political positions that preceded it. For Adorno, the view of art as a realm of irrationality, a domain purely of the unconscious and a universe in which the criteria of logic fail to apply, is a pre-philosophical view, which his thinking will oppose. In this sense, he still follows Hegel, whose course on Aesthetics warned against the view that art was just "Sunday fun," detached from the real world and the things that really matter, putting in its place a view of art as one of the historical-philosophical moments of the manifestation of truth, its manifestation in sensible form[10].

THE SOCIAL IS THE FORM: ADORNO'S CRITIQUE OF LEO LÖWENTHAL'S SOCIOLOGY OF LITERATURE

Adorno's censure of Marcuse's transcendent critique of "Culture," taken as a fixed essence, finds a complement in Adorno's critique of the sociology of literature developed by Leo Löwenthal. It is worth remembering that within the division of labor that existed at the Institute for Social Research, under the leadership of Max Horkheimer, the study of literature was initially the responsibility of Löwenthal, who was in charge of this task from the beginning of the 1930s until the final years of the decade. Only later did he turned his attention to understanding so-called mass culture and literatures. In other words, before this turning point, the materialist discussion on art and culture within the Institute was yet to be permeated by Adorno and Benjamin's reflections in this field, expressed, for example, in the first texts they published in the Institute magazine in the 1930s: "The social situation of music" (1932) by Adorno and "The work of art in the age of its technical reproducibility" by Benjamin (1936)[11].

Generally speaking, Löwenthal's analyses followed the same commitment to criticize idealist notions of culture as Marcuse's essay discussed above. In the first text he published in the Institute journal, "On the Social Situation of Literature" (1932), Löwenthal set out in a programmatic way the tasks of a historical-materialist sociology of literature and criticized the idealist conception of the literary phenomenon adopted by traditional German literary criticism and the economism of a vulgar materialist approach, stressing that an analysis of culture, rather than reducing it to a mere mirror of the economic structure, should aim to understand the process of mediation that operates between the economic structure and the various manifestations of cultural life[12].

To achieve this task and support a theory of history and society, Löwenthal chooses the psychology of the artist as the fundamental mediation between society and the work of art, highlighting the importance of the indications provided by Freud on the origins and functioning of the artistic imagination in "The Poet and Fantasy" (1908). By studying the psychology of the author, it would be possible, according to Löwenthal, to describe the psychic processes by which "the cultural functions of a work of art reproduce the structures of the societal base" (Löwenthal, 1989: 45)[13].

Reading other of his texts makes it clear that the sociology of literature proposed by Löwenthal considers an analysis of particular works, evaluating their themes, motifs, manifest content, and formal aspects. Regarding the latter, Löwenthal notes, for example, how the same form can have very different social meanings depending on the context that forges it. Thus, procedures such as dialogues or the use of memory as a narrative structure will have different meanings in different eras. Also in a commentary on the encyclopedic form of Balzac's and Zola's novels, Löwenthal states that the form of each of these authors' cyclical novels reveals something both about "the author and his place in class society, as it does about the theoretical and moral position he adopts toward the social structure of his time" (Löwenthal, 1989: 46). Despite these considerations, the emphasis on the author's position in the class structure as a fundamental explanatory factor for understanding literary works leads Löwenthal to define the task of the sociology of literature, to a large extent, as "an investigation of ideologies" (Löwenthal, 1989: 45).

A good example of this investigation of ideologies can be found in the article "Knut Hamsun: the prehistory of authoritarian ideology," published in the Institute journal in 1937[14]. Hamsun (1859-1952) was an author who enjoyed great international recognition in the 1920s and 1930s—he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1920—and who was highly valued by progressive, liberal, and even socialist readers and critics. Marcuse himself had a very favorable opinion of the author. Löwenthal wrote this article in part to elaborate on his disagreement with Marcuse (Wiggershaus, 1995: 218).

Löwenthal's critique of Hamsun's works is based on a sociology of social classes and the method of the critique of ideology. The central argument of the text is that the bourgeoisie's conception of nature changed over the course of the 19th century: if its liberal period characterized the relationship of the bourgeois class with nature by an active and optimistic position that had confidence in the progressive human domination of nature, the bourgeoisie later internalized a pessimistic vision in which nature appeared as a powerful force in the face of an impotent humanity that was submissive and devoted to natural forces, a position that Löwenthal associates with the resignation of the petty bourgeoisie in the face of the progressive concentration of the economic power of capitalism in its monopolistic phase.

Hamsun's work is interpreted by Löwenthal as an expression of this pessimistic and masochistic view of the world and the greatest expression of this would be the valorization of rustic life and proximity to nature present in the author's books. While Marcuse saw this element as a legitimate protest against the alienating conditions of urban life, Löwenthal stresses that Hamsun's appreciation of nature, rather than pointing out the coercions in urban life, condemned civilization as a whole:

> The motif of peace is rare in Hamsun's writings; its use here as the key to the blessings of rustic life could perhaps be interpreted as a legitimate protest against urban conditions. When, however, a protest in the name of a seemingly higher idea becomes a wholesale condemnation of civilization, when it does not discriminate between marketplace manipulation and family life, between the newspaper and artistic creations, between anxious restlessness and emotional pleasure, between the futility of mere distraction and the earnestness of serious reading—all of which Hamsun spurns with equal rancor—then we are not dealing with alert social criticism, but with anti-intellectual resentment (Löwenthal, 1957: 195).

Hamsun's glorification of life in nature as an alternative to urban life in society had anti-intellectual overtones insofar as it implied a rejection of reason as a compass for human action and an escape from the social responsibilities of individuals. Löwenthal associated this submission of individuals to nature, which manifested itself in the themes, motifs, characters, and cyclical rhythm of Hamsun's prose, with a propensity for reverence and submission to a higher power, central elements of the fascist ideology.

According to Löwenthal, Hamsun's work shows how nature ceases to be an object to be understood and controlled scientifically and technically, in line with liberal confidence in scientific progress, and becomes a force superior to men, to which they submit and even identify mystically, seeking in it a meaning for existence that they no longer see in society and history. While liberals envisioned a reconciliation between man and nature in the future, Hamsun proclaims this reconciliation to have already taken place, only here, the meaning of human life would lie in its "roots," in "blood and soil"

(Löwenthal, 1957: 199); unsurprisingly, according to Löwenthal, the mythical traits in the fascist form of domination. Löwenthal's analysis also highlights the passivity of Hamsun's heroes: rather than individuals in the full sense of the word, they are mere appendages of the natural process. The figures of the vagabond or the bohemian in his novels, express no marginal and critical position of society acting in the name of self-determination and freedom—Cervantes' or Ibsen's heroes' values, as Löwenthal observes—but show a wholesale rejection of social life in favor of a veneration of natural laws and brute force: "Hamsun's peasants are not individuals; they are aspects of nature, and his apparent admiration for them is not a love of man, but a reverence for domination of nature over its inhabitants" (Löwenthal, 1957: 203).

In Löwenthal's reading, the worship of nature in Hamsun takes place at the same time as a condemnation of modern urban society in all its aspects: industry, public officials, the natural sciences, the teaching profession, the corporation, intellectuals, etc. are all sources of dissatisfaction for the heroes in Hamsun's literature. Industry, for example, would be criticized not in its relation to more general aspects of capitalist society, such as the predominance of the incessant and empty valorization of value, but as a source of accommodation and emasculation in the inhabitants of the city by providing easy access to goods that previously involved great effort to manufacture.

For Löwenthal, Hamsun's total rejection of liberal values was crowned by a radical anti-intellectualism: the optimistic attitude, the concern for public life, and the search for knowledge of reality, values that underpinned confidence in the relevance of each member of society in the liberal perspective, were replaced by a view of the world as something incomprehensible and uncontrollable and of human experience as intrinsically mysterious, whose meaning could only be found in nature. Nudism, astrology, and dietary fashions would be expressions of this. In the words of Löwenthal, in Hamsun's work, "man would seek to draw form nature the meaning he cannot find in society" (Löwenthal, 1957: 216).

Sociologically, Löwenthal associates this anti-intellectualism in Hamsun's literature with a decline in the importance of education, culture, and science for the European middle classes at the beginning of the 20th century: perceived as distant from the most pressing material issues, these activities came to be seen as empty endeavors, a luxury pastime for the privileged. Anti-intellectualism therefore had a direct link to the disillusionment of a large part of society with progress and its material benefits. Faced with the perception that they were of little importance to social processes, these social strata were left with the consolation of clinging to a metaphysical meaning to life taken as a natural process, a consolation which, according to Löwenthal, turned against the consoled insofar as it led them to a passive acceptance of the existing relations of domination.

A few comments deserve to be made about Löwenthal's analysis. Firstly, it emphasizes the content of Hamsun's works to the almost complete detriment of a look at literary form. It is as if Löwenthal treated literature as a historical document: it would be a source of knowledge about the intimate sphere, subjectivity, mentalities, and conceptions of individuals at a certain time, areas that would be inaccessible by traditional historical documents. This in itself is not a problem since a content-based approach to literature can be of interest in certain situations as Löwenthal's own analysis demonstrates. However, a one-sided view of this kind also implies a certain impoverishment of literature as a source of knowledge since its properly artistic dimension, i.e., its form, is disregarded or insufficiently considered. This can be seen, for example, in the way Löwenthal treats aspects such as the plot, the characterization of characters and the ideas conveyed in Hamsun's work, which are taken at face value as if they came from a non-artistic discourse[15].

Furthermore, since Löwenthal's approach is very much based on the psychology of the author as a mediating instance between society and the work, rather than on form, the worldviews of the author and that supposedly expressed in the work almost completely coincide, i.e., the meaning of the work derives almost entirely from the intention of its author. Löwenthal reduces Hamsun's literary works to their manifest content (understood literally) as if they were a direct expression of the author's ideology—proto-fascist, in this case—to the point of Löwenthal later referring to Hamsun's approval of Nazism as a testament of the accuracy of his interpretation of the author's work.

What Löwenthal's sociology leaves in the background is the properly artistic dimension of literary works, in which the meanings are much more ambiguous and need a formal interpretation to elucidate them, an elucidation which remains always partial. In this sense, Löwenthal would, rather than making an immanent critique of the works, contrast them with extra-aesthetic normative criteria, which revolve around the theoretical and political correctness of the social situation configured in the work. In this way, his interpretation bypasses the contradictions crystallized in the works—in the sense that Adorno emphasized in his critique of Marcuse—and tends to result in an expression of the author's own conception, which is far too narrow, of what art should be: basically, a progressive political stance on the post-liberal ideology of monopoly capitalism[16]. The function that Löwenthal assigns to art is thus very close to the one that theory should perform: to correctly apprehend the world.

Adorno pointed out the limits of Löwenthal's approach in an April 1937 letter to Horkheimer. Referring specifically to the case of Hamsun, Adorno draws attention to the difficulty of interpreting his work, which would require a very careful analysis since it would be "terribly easy to show that Hamsun

is a fascist but more difficult to make this insight into a fruitful one, and most difficult of all to save Hamsun from himself" (Adorno *apud* Wiggershaus, 1995: 188). In other words, what Adorno seems to be saying is that perhaps Hamsun is more than just a regressive worshipper of nature; perhaps his work also gives form to the suffering of the individual in a society in which human beings and nature—including human beings' own nature—are alienated, and nature has become a pure object of scientific control and domination. All this despite the author's outspoken political positions.

In fact, reading Hamsun's work throws water on the mill of Adorno's criticism of Löwenthal. If Löwenthal is correct in his descriptions of Hamsun's works, the meaning of his judgment, however, seems hasty. It is true that the protagonists of the Norwegian author's novels are *outsiders* and antisocial, that the time of his narratives is circular and not progressive and that urban life is antagonistic to the main characters or nature appears in his novels as a refuge. But this fails to necessarily mean that the meaning of these elements in the literary work can be transposed immediately as a position toward reality.

Furthermore, Löwenthal's analysis leaves out fundamental aspects that would allow for another reading of the novels: Hamsun's emphasis on the psychology of his characters—the novel *Hunger* (1890), for example, is almost entirely composed of the flow of thoughts, feelings, and fantasies of its protagonist—anticipates the importance that the exploration of psychic life would gain in modernism. Moreover, the narrative focus of the novel, written in the first person, which, throughout the narrative, blends with the focus of the characters the protagonist meets and describes and generates a hypnotic effect for the reader that is very close to a surrealist atmosphere. Also contributing to this sensation is the tempo of the narrative, which constantly fluctuates between past and present, leaving the reader in a state of drift and confusion that resembles that of the hunger-stricken protagonist. It should also be noted that, at all times, the protagonist is dealing with the coercions imposed by bourgeois society and its conventions, which is expressed not only in terms of the plot but also in the protagonist's relationship with socially governed time. However, to the extent that he neglects to analyze these aspects in their aesthetic significance, concentrating instead on the manifest content of the novels, Löwenthal reduces Hamsun, whose emphasis on formal experimentation can characterize him as an anticipator of modernism, to a merely regressive writer.

In favor of Löwenthal's sociology of literature, one must consider the fact that he takes literary works in themselves as the object of study. This was something often absent in the German academic context, as pointed out by Adorno in a later text, "Theses on the sociology of art[17]" (1965/1994), in which he questions the rigid separation established between sociology and art criticism. In this separation, while sociology, according to the current conception, would deal with the circumstances of production and consumption

of works of art, criticism, in turn, would focus on the meanings configured by the works. Adorno questions this division, arguing that, rather than belonging to the objects to be known, it consists of a methodological imposition external to them. Here, it is interesting to note how Adorno's reservations regarding the strict delimitation of the boundaries between sociology and art criticism derive from his concept of society and his understanding of how objects are always socially mediated:

> The division of labor between disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, and history does not reside in its object but is imposed on it from the outside in. [...] The demand for interdisciplinary methods applies to sociology in a very special way since it, in a sense, extends to all possible objects (Adorno, 1994: 110; free translation).

As such, no *a priori* reason could exempt sociology from interpreting the meaning of a work of art; it could and should deal with *all* the aspects that involve the relationship between art and society, including the artistic form itself. The understanding of works of art would be unable, therefore, to be carried out only by a type of empirical sociological research aimed at investigating the reception of works of art, for example. This would imply considering that works of art are exhausted in their subjective effects, which would limit access to what Adorno sees as fundamental in understanding the artistic phenomenon, namely the question of the objective meaning of the works, which, in turn, is where the core of their social significance lies:

> There is incomparably more to extract from them than can be perceived by a procedure that would like to bracket (to use the neo-German jargon in vogue) the objectivity and content of the works. Exactly what it puts in parentheses has social implications. That's why the spiritual definition of artworks needs to be included, positively or negatively, in the approach to the contexts in which they operate. Since works of art are subject to a logic other than that of concept, judgment, and conclusion, a certain shadow of the relative adheres to knowledge of concrete artistic content. However, from this relativity in the supreme aspect to the *a priori* negation of any objective content, there is an enormous distance, so great that it can be considered fundamental (Adorno, 1994: 111; free translation).

In Adorno's view, therefore, the sociological investigation of art should include two complementary areas of analysis: on the one hand, the determination of the work of art by the socially organized form of its distribution and consumption; on the other, the question of the social content that can be extracted from the work itself. We would then have, on the one hand, a sociological analysis that would deal with institutional aspects, such as the functioning of the culture industry, the specificities of institutions linked to art and, on the other, one that would deal with the work of art itself. Thus, the work of art should be considered both as a socially determined activity, contrary to what the so-called formalist critics defend, and in its

aesthetic autonomy, a dimension that is underestimated by sociology. Moving away, therefore, from the claim of axiological neutrality in sociology, Adorno maintains that a sociology of art that pretends to be critical must also include discussion of the quality and value of works of art, just as art criticism must be based on the findings of sociology, if it is to refrain from being just a dogmatic reiteration of value judgments: "if the sociology of art is disinterested in this [the immanent social content of works of art], then it misses the deepest relationships between art and society: those that crystallize *in the* works of art themselves" (Adorno, 1994: 112; free translation).

However, Adorno stresses that sociological criticism of artistic works should consider the work as a whole without dissociating its content from its form. In other words, it would be necessary to consider that the meaning of a work of art cannot be extracted from its content alone. This would be a limitation of Löwenthal's approach: if he takes the work as the unit of analysis, he nevertheless focuses above all on the content of the works, thus coming closer to its commentary rather than its criticism. It is a procedure that mainly looks for positive correspondences, parallels, i.e., the presence of social and historical issues in terms of content in the work. Löwenthal's difficulty in adequately dealing with a novelist such as Hamsun, whose formal experimentalism makes the difficulties of his method more evident, is no coincidence.

The assertion of a social content immanent in works of art, in turn, raises the question of how these two things, art and society, are related. At this point, it is necessary to recognize the importance of young Lukács' works for Adorno—I am referring in particular to the reflections on literary forms formulated in books such as *History of the Development of Modern Drama* (1908) and *The Theory of the Novel* (1916), in which Lukács establishes and substantiates a relationship between literary forms and history. In an excerpt from his work on modern drama, Lukács stresses that form is "the truly social aspect of literature" and, with this relationship, he draws attention to the limits of the traditional sociology of literature, pointing out that its greatest flaw is that it is limited to searching for and analyzing "the content of artistic creations with the aim of establishing a direct relationship between them and certain economic conditions" (Lukács, 1992: 174; free translation).

Although it seems obvious that art is a type of social practice, it may be worth referring the reader to Adorno's notion of the relationship between art and society in the final chapter of *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (1968), in which he offers his concept of "mediation." In various theories that set out to think about the relationship between art and society, this is thought of mechanically in terms of the impact of the social structure on the work or phenomenologically, as if it were a case of drawing a correlation between two different levels of experience. But, for Adorno, the promise that the sociology of music (and here we can think the same goes for the sociology of art and

literature) should fulfill is "the social deciphering of musical [or artistic, or literary—my addition] phenomena as such, an insight into their essential relation to the real society, into their inner social content and their function" (Adorno, 2011: 362).

His argument in the chapter takes up the differentiation in "Theses on the Sociology of Art" between art understood as a social institution and the formal structure of works of art. According to his reasoning, the social content of the work is mediated by the institutional dimension, which depends on the social structure in which it operates and whose organization shapes the production and reception of art in a given context. The important thing is that it is the concept of mediation that enables Adorno to move away from the model of the economic base and the ideological superstructure, which tends to lead to a theory of reflection in art. Adorno, on the other hand, conceives of works of art as a form of production, that is, of human work, socially mediated, thereby also shattering the romantic illusion of the artist as an isolated genius:

> The subjects on whose faculties the material form of production always depends are historically concrete, formed in their turn by the total society of their time; they are not absolutely other subjects than the makers works of art. [...] Their work, even the artist's most individual one is his own consciousness, is always constitutes 'work in society'; the determining subject is far more of a total social subject than privileged brain workers in their individualistic delusion and arrogance would like (Adorno, 2011: 373)[18].

Adorno uses the concept of mediation in a Hegelian sense, according to which mediation is in the thing itself, i.e., it should not be taken as something to be added between the thing and what it is approximated to. In the case of art and cultural products in general, the idea is that moments of the social structure impose themselves on the very construction of the work of art and the sociology of art should not be limited to asking how art is situated in society and how it acts on it but should seek to recognize how society itself and its antagonisms are objectified in the works.

Therefore, Adorno finds a dialectic in which aesthetic production is a specific type of spiritual production with relative autonomy and, at the same time, part of social and economic production. This balance between thinking the work of art as a social product and as an object endowed with immanent meaning, whose discovery is not made by comparing its content with reality, but by delving into the artistic object itself, is emphasized by Adorno when he refers to the metaphor of the windowless monad, taken from Leibniz:

> The relationship between the work of art and the universal concept is not a direct one. If I had to express it clearly, I would borrow a famous metaphor from the history of philosophy. I would compare the work of art to the monad. According to Leibniz, each monad represents the universe but it has no window; it represents

> the universal within its own walls. In other words, its own structure is objectively the same as that of the universal. It can be aware of this to varying degrees. But it has no immediate access to universality; it doesn't look out, so to speak. Whatever one thinks about the logical or metaphysical merits of this conception, it seems to me to express the nature of the work of art most adequately. Art cannot make concepts its 'theme.' The relationship between the work and the universal becomes deeper the less the work deals explicitly with universalities, the more it is obsessed with its own isolated world, its material, its problems, its consistency, its mode of expression. Only by reaching the pinnacle of genuine individualization, only by doggedly pursuing the goal of its concretion, does the work of art truly become the bearer of the universal (Adorno, 2012b: 652).

CLOSING REMARKS

The comparison between Löwenthal and Marcuse's approach and Adorno's (inspired by Benjamin) allows us to discern a crucial difference between, on the one hand, explaining the social injunctions that influence the making of a work of art or understanding its content in terms of a direct correspondence with reality and, on the other, uncovering the truth content of a work, inseparable from the totality that it formally configures. For a sociology of literature that does not wish to avoid the question of what the literary works it intends to investigate say about society, it is worth remembering that this type of question was once on the horizon of concern for a social scientist who was very far from being a radical supporter of "negative criticism" such as Adorno. In a commentary on the relationship between subject and object in Mauss' work, Lévi-Strauss states that the sciences should be guided by an integral explanation of their objects, which considers both their own structure and the representations by which we apprehend their properties, in other words, both the objective aspect and the, so to speak, subjective aspect of a given phenomenon. Thus, according to him, chemistry, for example, would have to explain not only the shape and distribution of the molecules of a fruit, but also how its unique flavor results from this specific molecular arrangement (Lévi-Strauss, 2003: 25). This would be even truer for the human or social sciences, whose objects are both thing and representation. Despite the culinary content of this analogy, perhaps Adorno's reflections can offer inspiration for a sociological approach to literature that breaks the deadlock between internalist and externalist criticism of literary works and, above all, that is not afraid to face the bittersweet taste of works of art worthy of the name.

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NOTES

* This text is a modified version of the first chapter of my PhD thesis, entitled "*O vermelho e o negro: literatura e crítica da sociedade em Theodor W. Adorno*" (2021), the result of a research carried out at the Graduate Program in Sociology at the University of São Paulo under the guidance of Prof. Ricardo Musse, and which received financial support from Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education (CAPES). I would like to thank the reviewers of the journal *Sociologia & Antropologia* for their criticisms and suggestions were of great help in improving this study. The final text published in English is a translation by the author of an article she originally wrote in Portuguese. Most of the quotations were extracted from the English editions of the consulted references, except when they couldn't be found. The original article, in Portuguese, will be available for those who prefer to read it in that language at: https://usp-br.academia.edu/AnouchKurkdjian

1 See Lukács (2010).

2 Marcuse's position on the relationship between art and truth would change over the years, partly under the influence of Adorno, as evidenced by the 1977 book The Aesthetic Dimension, in which Marcuse incisively critiques orthodox Marxist aesthetics and attributes to the properly aesthetic, formal dimension of art a potential for openness and imagination with considerable political echoes.

3 In a letter to Benjamin, Adorno notes the influence of the sociological component in Marcuse's position, saying that only a generation that had not beenformed by a close experience with art could abandon it so categorically. See letter 74 from Wiesengrund-Adorno to Benjamin 25.04.1937 (Adorno & Benjamin, 2012a).

4 For Adorno's critique of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, see Adorno (1998b).

5 Whereas vulgar positivism could be thought of as a factual truth that tells a lie.

6 As Rouanet rightly observes: "In short, criticism, as immanent, has to detach the moment of truth from ideology and denounce its falsity at the same time. But what is false in ideology is not its content but 'the

pretense of corresponding to reality.' The veil that interposes itself between consciousness and society at the same time expresses society, by virtue of its very nature, as a necessary veil" (Rouanet, 2001: 105; free translation).

7 It should be noted that this does not mean that, for Adorno, post-liberal capitalist society is not a society organized into classes, but that when classes no longer appear as such, a critical theory must consider this change instead of dogmatically or unreflectively reproducing Marx's class theory. On this question, see Adorno (2020).

8 "Finally, the very opposition between knowledge which penetrates from without and that which bores from within becomes suspects to the dialectical method, which sees in it a symptom of precisely that reification which the dialectic is obliged to accuse" (Adorno, 2008: 24).

9 Hence a statement such as that by Susan Buck-Morss, who sees this as a central feature of Adorno's (and Benjamin's) critical theory: "Perhaps their most important contribution was to redeem aesthetics as a central cognitive discipline, a form of secular revelation, and to insist on the structural convergence of scientific and aesthetic experience. They thereby challenged a fundamental dualism of bourgeois thought, the binary opposition between scientific 'truth' and art as 'illusion,' which had characterized bourgeois thinking since the seventeenth century. Their intellectual careers demonstrate the promise and also the dangers of trying to reconcile these two cultures" (Susan Buck-Morss, 1979: xiii).

10 It would not be an exaggeration to say that Adorno's emphasis on attributing a kind of knowledge about the world to the work of art owes a lot to his dialogue with Walter Benjamin and the way in which this author articulated the issue, especially in his first texts. If, in more general philosophical terms, Benjamin's importance for Adorno occurred above all with the so-called epistemological preface to the book Origin of German Tragic Drama (1925) — a point already much discussed in the secondary literature — regarding the critique of artistic forms, The thesis on The Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism (1919) and the essay on "Goethe's Elective Affinities" (1922) were of the utmost importance to Adorno, works in which Benjamin discusses the problem

of the need for criticism of works of art and its justification, trying to combine the centrality granted by German Romanticism to the idea of criticism with the importance of considering works of art in their particularity, defended by Goethe. For an in-depth commentary on the dialog between Benjamin and Adorno regarding this, see: Gatti (2009).

11 Regarding this, Wiggershaus notes: "Through his articles in the ZfS [*Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*], Benjamin became the point of a crystallisation in a pattern of relations in which he and Adorno, in a kind of tense solidarity with one another, faced Marcuse and Löwenthal, who were critics of ideology. It was a confrontation between a philosophy of history formed by experiences of modernity in aesthetics on the one hand, and a historical-materialist application of classical idealist conceptions of art, on the other" (Wiggershaus, 1995: 196).

12 Martin Jay characterizes Löwenthal's analyses as being situated halfway between the literary criticism of orthodox Marxists, such as Franz Mehring, and the idealist alternative formulated by New Criticism. If literature, for Löwenthal, resisted reduction to a simple reflection of social life, it was nevertheless legitimate to see art as an indirect reflection of society. See especially chapter 6 of Jay (2008), "Aesthetic Theory and the Critique of Mass Culture".

13 The original version of this text was published in the Institute journal under the title "Zur gesellschaftlichen Lage der Literatur".

14 Löwenthal (1937). An almost identical version of this article appeared as a chapter in: Löwenthal (1957) 20 years later. For a brief overview of Löwenthal's work, see, for example, the seventh chapter of Jay (1986).

15 It is interesting to note that the debate between Adorno and Lukács on literary modernism, most discussed in the secondary literature, will revolve around this same question: in this sense, Löwenthal's censure of Hamsun's work is very similar to Lukács' criticism of the "decadent" literature of writers such as Kafka, Joyce, and Beckett.

16 The discussion around the characterization of the post-liberal capitalism of that period was central to the

Institute, whose aim was to discern the extent of the transformations that capitalism was undergoing at the turn of the century, as well as the rearticulation between the economy and state power that occurred in this new phase. On this debate, whose central figures were Franz Neumann and Friedrich Pollock and which impacted the development of Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialectic of Enlightenment, see Section II of Puzone (2016) and Regatieri (2019).

17 Adorno (1994).

18 Of course, the way each artist mobilizes the techniques and contents available to carry out their intellectual work shows singularities, but this already means that they are implicated in a social dimension since these techniques and forms are socially created throughout history.

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28-29

IMMANENT CRITIQUE (EN)COUNTERS TRANSCENDENT CRITIQUE AND VICE-VERSA: ADORNO'S DIALECTICAL LITERARY CRITICISM

Abstract

This study addresses Theodor W. Adorno's dialectical literary criticism and shows how it arises from the critique of an alternative model of literary (and cultural) criticism, closer to the critique of ideology in its more traditional sense in texts from the 1930s written by two other authors affiliated with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, Herbert Marcuse and Leo Löwenthal. In addition to describing Adorno's view of these two ways of approaching literary objects and calling attention to their yields and limitations, this study emphasizes how Adorno's criticism dialectically conducts the immanent critique of artistic forms to its opposite extreme, reaching, by a deep dive into the particular of the works, their most general meaning. This enables the author to overcome a certain impasse that is configured in the dichotomy between internalist and externalist criticism of literary works, insofar as his model of literary criticism considers the contradictory character of art in modern capitalist society: neither mere ideology that simply restores domination nor a sphere preserved from social contradictions, but a sphere that, in its relative autonomy, comprises a social truth.

Keywords

Theodor W. Adorno;
Critical theory of society;
Sociology of literature;
Literature and society;
Marxist aesthetics.

A CRÍTICA IMANENTE (EN)CONTRA A CRÍTICA TRANSCENDENTE E VICE-VERSA: A CRÍTICA LITERÁRIA DIALÉTICA DE THEODOR W. ADORNO

Resumo

Este artigo trata da crítica literária dialética de Theodor W. Adorno e mostra como ela se erige a partir da crítica a um modelo de crítica literária (e cultural) alternativo e mais próximo da crítica da ideologia em seu sentido tradicional, presente em textos da década de 1930 de outros dois autores vinculados ao Instituto de Pesquisa Social em Frankfurt: Herbert Marcuse e Leo Löwenthal. Além de expor a visão de Adorno acerca dessas duas formas de abordar o objeto literário, chamando a atenção para seus rendimentos e suas limitações, destaca-se como a crítica desenvolvida por Adorno conduz

Palavras-chave

Theodor W. Adorno;
Teoria crítica da sociedade;
Sociologia da literatura;
Literatura e sociedade;
Estética marxista.

dialeticamente a crítica imanente das formas artísticas até seu extremo oposto, alcançando, por meio do mergulho profundo no particular das obras, o seu sentido mais geral. Isso permite que o autor supere certo impasse que se configura na dicotomia entre críticas internalistas e críticas externalistas das obras literárias, na medida em que seu modelo de crítica literária leva em conta o caráter contraditório da arte na sociedade capitalista: nem mera ideologia, que simplesmente repõe a dominação, nem esfera preservada das contradições sociais, mas âmbito que, em sua autonomia relativa, contém algo de verdadeiro a respeito da sociedade.