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Notes on individual and consciousness in Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno

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Abstract: This article discusses the materialistic bases of the concept of individual and consciousness according to the thinkers Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. Therefore, it brings the analysis of the object of psychology, the individual, through the journey of his material movement under his different expressions in history, and, with this, presents some considerations on consciousness from the perspective of the Critical Theory of Society. In this sense, it seeks to highlight the relationships between the object of sociology and psychology, recalling that society contains in its determinations, as potentiality, the movement of the particulars to the establishment of a fair whole, ensuring universality; a way from which the individual may differentiate and constitute himself in a pacified way. According to the analysis undertaken, through the investigation of the material evidence that engender the individual in history, one can understand consciousness as a social self-consciousness, that is, socially determined and expression of the formation for autonomy.

Keywords: critical theory, materialism, sociology, social psychology, formation of the individual.

Introduction

In "Preface" to the book *Temas básicos da sociologia,* Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973a) present this work as a result of the treatment given to the manuscripts that were originally destined for radio broadcast, such as lectures and conferences held by members of the Institute of Social Research. In these essays organized by the authors, the materialist movement's effort in relation to the treatment of concepts significative to sociology – and other partitioned sciences that need reflection on their objects – is evidenced by the thinkers' method of the Institute: the positioning toward the primacy of the object inside the movement of the concept based on its understanding as an expression of empirical relations, as history sediments. In this aspect, different perspectives within Western thought are approximated and distanced in order to give treatment to the concepts fundamental tosociology. Such concepts and perspectives are analyzed by the authors and name of the book's chapters: the concept of sociology; society; individual; the group; the mass; culture and civilization; sociology of art and music; sociology and empirical social research; studies of the community; prejudice and ideology.

For such characteristics, the book *Temas básicos da sociologia,* by bringing the historic genesis of different concepts, which are, in turn, the historic movement of the object (its polysemous character), is the essential source of this article, whose objective is to analyze the object of psychology, the individual, through the course of his material movement in his different expressions in history and, thus, make some considerations on the characteristics from a perspective of the critical theory of society. Aiming at discussing the materialistic bases of the concept of individual and consciousness, in accordance with Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, this article seeks to bring the formulations present in the chapters "Sociology" and "Individual" in connection with some points of the essays "Acerca de la relación entre sociología y psicología" and *"On subject and object"* of Adorno (1955/1986; 1969/1995), besides Adorno's other essays. The publications of Brazilian researchers who have based their works on those formulations also constitute the panorama of support for the elaborations presented here.

Fundamentally, the basis of Horkheimer and Adorno's thought is very similar to the historic dialectic materialism of Marx when placing itself in the object's centrality as a basis of the constitution of both the particular and the universal. In this sense, the knowledge of the material world has an objective character, because the concepts would not be an *a priori* of consciousness, as postulated in idealism, but rather expressions of the empirical relationships and objects, still in a qualitatively different state, such as abstraction. In this manner, there would not be a separation between the matter and the forms of knowledge, because all sensitive and conceptual forms also belong to the objects, of the primacy that it brings in its relationship with the subject (Adorno, 1969/1995). Such forms are the reflection of the properties and relationships that exist in those, and are thus constituted *a posteriori,* because they originate from experience and not as an *a priori* of the subject, being, in this sense, opposite to idealism. In this perspective, both the individual and consciousness, or both the object and the categories of thought, are objective in their basis, because they are empirical and historic in their constitution.

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For Adorno (1969/1995), the concepts, while designating and signifying reality, express what is most intimate in the object. Through the concepts, it would be possible to reach the essential relationships that compound this one, staying away from a perspective that assimilates only the object's appearance and mistakes it for the crystallization of the truth, an illusory search for something univocal that does not recognize the historicity of the objects and concepts. As an expression of historic truths, Cohn (2007, p. 23) indicates that the concept is not an "empty abstraction, but rather one that is concerned with the great internal processes to the society and to the tendencies that they print on it." The concept potentially brings the possibility of the accomplishment of the object; in the case of the concept of the individual, it brings in itself the objective's inscriptions (its possibility of accomplishment and its impasses) that compound it while the abstract counterpart of something empirical of the reality. In this sense, the concept is the concrete direction that reveals, by the negativity that compounds it, that which, in the object, is potential in the reality and, because of that, also reveals what impedes its accomplishment. Thus, it would be possible to indicate, through the object – in its primacy in relation to the subject –, in its historic tracks and essential determinations, what is denied to it (subtracted from accomplishment) by history. Therefore, the concept as a reflection of the reality (sediment of history), and qualitatively the other thing, – something that approaches more an unveiled reality –, brings the evidences of the very reality as it is and, also, as a potentiality. In face of how things could be configured and are not, the theory is opposite to the ideology.

This paper has this model of criticism as its orientation, that the objectivity through the concepts corresponds to the expression of the historic moments and of the movement of the objects that, empirical and with concrete limits, may be problematized by the thought. Thereby, one tried to delimit the concept of consciousness from the understanding of society as a category of differentiation and the individual, as a social category; in these terms, consciousness would be understood as social self-consciousness, as a product of individuation.

Society and differentiation

Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b) characterize the object of sociology as more than the description of its common elements, as the relationhip between these elements and its rules. In another essay, Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c) indicate that for sociology to be able to refer to its object broadly and profoundly, it should establish dialogs with other partitioned sciences, such as psychology, history and economics. Thus, sociology would be able to protect the objective of not losing the reference to the totality of its object: the relationships and the forces that animate society and that characterize it. The authors reinforce the idea that the specificity of the science of society is in the emphasis given to its objects, which are also present in these other sciences. If society is a relationship, one can realize that its isolated elements do not constitute its object; it is only when in movement and articulation with each other that those would designate what society would be. Thus, sociology is concerned with the relationship between all these elements and the rules that determine the ways of socialization. Society is also more than the sum of its parts; it is without exception a totality that is grounded and sustained through the joint participation of the parts in the acceptance of specific functions that depend on each other (Horkheimer & Adorno 1956/1973b). Therefore, there is no society without the dependence and participation of the particulars for the organization of a coherent and rational whole: this satisfies the part by assuring the universality and collective; society would be the movement of the particulars for the construction of a fair whole.

From the most elementary education of the community to the notion of city, the union of many men is the most common and characteristic element. According to Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b), for Plato, from the coexistence between the needs of each man there is the assemblage of many needs, which may be satisfied through the functional relationships that are dependent and mutually maintained between people. Life within society would be sustained, for the philosopher, by the principle of reciprocity and dependence on the parts for the satisfaction of their vital needs, and socialization would have the division of work as a basis, enclosing the objective of satisfying the material needs of the community. Nevertheless, still according to Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b), Plato would comprehend this basis from his ideas theory, and this theory proposed an *a priori* criterion for the division of work: the basis for the activity performed by each individual (his functionality for the social whole) would be the expression of an inherent idea; the human capacities and inclinations would be the expression of an abstract principle and not aptitude socially produced. But the materialist purpose of the society would be present in Plato's ideas theory already: increasing population (quantitative factor) as a determinant factor for the qualitative changes in society. With the society's advancement, the demands for its maintenance would increase, there being the need to create new work functions. Based on these ideas, Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b) use the appearance of the warriors' class as an example, which is necessary for the warlike conflicts resultant from the city's limits growth and, as consequence, the creation of a specific class, the governing class, for regulation and keeping order.

According to Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b), the concept of society is properly dynamic, because, with regard to a more general panorama of the social life, the coordinated activity of different men always impels a cycle of development that surpasses, while a social product, its previous cycle. For the Frankfurt School authors, this dynamic refers more precisely to Herbert Spencer's theory of development of society, a sociologist who saw

the fundamental rules of the processes of socialization in integration and differentiation, and who postulated that the greater the integration of the individuals into society, the more diverse their ways of social and political organization would be and, as a consequence, the society would be more heterogeneous. Due to the growth of society and the number of its members, this integration is manifested by the necessity of cohesion and connection between its different parts, or between the different groups of its members. But, for Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b), the problem of this theory remains precisely the concern of the positivist sociologist with the formulation of general rules, hypostatizing elements that would be temporary in history (differentiation found in the principle of composition of the bourgeois society), naturalizing them as eternal principles or absolute rules. In fact, heterogeneity would correspond to a greater individual differentiation if the correlation between the progress of socialization and the division of work (increasing) was not inscribed in an opposite tendency. According to Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b, p. 38):

> This tendency opposes to the concept of differentiation: the smaller the units in which the social process of production is subdivided, with the advance of the division of work and rationalization of production, the more the labor operations subdivided in this manner tend to resemble each other and lose their specific qualitative moment. Thus, the labor of the industrial working class appears generally less differentiated than the labor of the artisan. Spencer did not calculate that the process of "integration" would make many intermediary categories that complicated and differentiated the whole superfluous, categories that were connected to the competition and the market mechanism, by what, in many of its aspects, a truly integral society is much "simpler" than that of liberalism, in its apogee period.

Based on this argument, the materialist moment of education and development of society is excessively evidenced. Conjuncture comprehends the qualitative transformations of society as essential for qualitative changes in the individual scope. Based on Spencer's theory, the greater the differences between the productive processes of certain community, the greater and more complex the individual difference between persons and peoples (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1956/1973b). One of the important materialist consequences of the theory of this sociologist is that the individual scope is completely dependent on the social fabric, both being multidetermined and directly proportional in their greatness, a fact that is not however confirmed in history in relation to the differentiation. However, with these formulations, a sociology concerned with the relationship between the part and the whole, attentive to the particular individual elements, happens to take contour and evidence.

For Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b), it would be impossible to understand the concept of society without discussing between the polarities of institutional and natural elements, because man's social existence is not a natural datum and only exists when "the coexistence between the men is mediated, objectified and 'institutionalized'" (p. 32, emphasis on the original). Still, according to the Frankfurt School authors, in Hobes, as well as for the posterior illuminati, only reason – basis of the natural law and way by which the State is legitimated –, allows for society's survival. For these illuminati, the human being is a political animal, his nature is social, not a natural datum, and could never be a political animal without education. Firstly, human beings would live without institutions – called the "natural state" –, inevitably leading to disputes over power and property, which would result in wars and conflicts, something opposite to human interests, or, in Enlightenment language, refractory to the impositions of the natural reason – a subject that demanded the use of reason from all human beings for the fulfillment of the universal rules of humanity. Then, the State would appear, assuring the tutorship of what would happen to be the principle of the bourgeois society: the property. But, as Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b) indicate, the power problem still remained as a suppression of human beings. If before the institutions the strongest one's power prevailed, it is now converted into a power of dominance exercised by the legal state – revealing implicitly the disproportion of the force of the whole in relation to the part. Using Frankfurt School authors' arguments, thinking of a society with legitimate institutions, in which freedom is preponderant, and not force, is more fundamental than thinking of a society without institutions. For Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b), institutions as human objectification would be nothing in themselves; they would appear as a way for human beings to organize life and should, as a result of their work, organize what originated them. The institutions have a practical finality, they are a means to an end; they are not the product of a natural evolution of a society, as if it presented a self-regulatory principle, and they are not always an expression of a universal and undetermined idea. The objects that compound society do not need objectives; their finality is the protection of interests and human life. The science of society as a critical science remains therein, by countering what in fact is aimed in the social organization to what the institutions should effectively perform in the accomplishment of a fairer society:

> When the thought on the character and nature of society loses track of the tension between institutions and life, and tries to solve the social in the natural, it does not orientate an impulse of freedom regarding the pressures from institutions but, on the contrary, corroborates a second mythology, the idealized illusion of primitive qualities that would truly refer

> to what appears through social institutions . . . the romantic criticism to institutions, subtracted from the connection of social dialectic, sinks into the dissolution of all protective guarantees of what is human, into chaos and, finally, into the total absolutization of the naked Institution, of the pure and simple dominance. (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1956/1973b, p. 32)

When sociology is limited to the generic propositions in relation to its object, it also loses the tension that supports its scientific positioning as a criticism to the conflicting elements of the relationship between individual and society, and it is convenient to insist with Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b, p. 36) "that the concept of society precisely encompasses the unity of the general and the particular, in the total and reproducible correlation of men." Understanding the different objects of society, as well as the study of its institutions – moments of important mediation between man and society – has as purpose – inside a critical understanding of sociology's object –, the realization of human life. Thus, the understanding that the science of society has a dynamic object must be critical: in contraposition to the different tendencies in history to consider society as the sum of its parts or as a detailed study of its general rules, it is fundamental to understand society as being inseparable from the particular's units. In Adorno's (1955/1986) conception, society, since its first indications, always had – immanent to its historic objectivity – human freedom and happiness as a rational objective, and it owes its origin and sustenance in history to these aspects. In other words, society should prize the realization of the part by the realization of the universal; for this purpose, the dialectic part and whole (that is constitutive) should compose, in this way, the dialectic of social theory.

In the midst of this argument, the bases of the constitution of the individual are delimited: the materiality of social life, given that society is, in the terms here worked, a condition for differentiation. For Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c), if it is the society that can fulfill and assure the satisfaction of needs and interests of the parts, then it is a rational and fair society that allows the constitution of the individual – and for these authors, sociology would be a partitioned science that is fundamental (but not the only one) for one to understand its contradictions. As Cohn (2007, p. 25) exposes in the preface to the Brazilian edition of the book *Introduction to sociology,* the science of society should have the claim of a guiding principle whose finality is "to convert mere life into life respectable to be lived as its intent and, in addition, allow the proposal, to a limit, of the idea of human species (and of society while free association of men) as a practical aim for social knowledge."

In this context, Cohn (2007) argues that Adorno designates the concept of society as an objective force of mediation and, in these terms, is understood as a category of differentiation: neither as something that is already constituted (datum of nature) nor as a simple name in identity with the thing – as if a static element hung over society, whose formulation of universal rules would be plausible and the very finality of sociology. According to Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c, p. 53), both concepts, individual and society, are reciprocal:

> The individual, in a broad sense, is the opposite of the natural being, a being who is certainly emancipated and apart from simple natural relationships, who is from the beginning referred to society, in a specific way that, for that reason, retires to his own being. . . . The interaction and the tension of individual and society summarizes, largely, the dynamic of the whole complex. . . . One could object that the sociological consideration tends, once more, to reduce man to a mere generic being, albeit a generic being of elevated order, making him, at this level, an impotent representative of society. This objection is ponderable and must be taken into consideration; the pure concept of society is as abstract as the pure concept of the individual, as well as the one of eternal antitheses between both.

Sociology cannot give up thinking of society as something apart from its more particular elements, since there is reference to the individual in the concept of society. The individual, as an object of sociology and psychology, has the potentiality to overcome the very thing from which it originated. It is only from the moment that the individual (the originated one) may be superior to society, that the first gives sense to the latter and society is realized: in the effective accomplishment of the potential of differentiation (Adorno, 1966/1986). And it is also in this way, genuinely, that "the more the individual is reinforced, the more society's strength increases" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1956/1973c, p. 53).

In this sense, for Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c), it is in the union of several that a whole may be constituted for the satisfaction of what is basic and vital for each one; a motive that is already present in Hegel, for whom the satisfaction of individual needs is only possible through joint and dependent work, as reciprocally maintained relationships, because the satisfaction of one's totality of needs is a result of the work of all; and also in Marx, in the acceptance that the joint and socially divided work is what allows the growth and development of peoples and society, which in turn assures, when returning as richness socially produced by work, the possibility of satisfaction of all needs of the parts.

Thus, the individual cannot be individual when alone, since he needs the others to maintain himself as a species, but the materialist sense of society as a joint constitution of man has a consequence that is even wider than the understanding that without men there is no society. Without men, as seen, there is no society; however, there are no men without the latter, materialist purpose that has the primacy of the object as its basis, there is no subject without

object, given that it is the object that constitutes it, the subject is always something, and something always refers to something external to it, "if the subject is not something – and 'something' designates an irreducible objective moment – then, it is nothing; even while 'actus purus', it needs the reference of an agent." (Adorno, 1969/1995, p. 188, emphasis on the original). In this sense, if society is that which guarantees the bases of the constitution of the individual, it should be a coherent and rational means. Such a notion was already present in Plato and Aristotle, for whom man can only realize himself in a fair society; and Hegel, for whom man can only acquire his rights in a fair society (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1956/1973c).

Individual and social constitution: the possibility of consciousness

Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c) remember that the theme of the individual is rare in sociology, and that, when addressing itself more to the study of extra and interindividual relationships, it would tend to consider the individual as something that is exhausted in himself. The individual would be a given and irreducible nature and, thus, biological and psychological sciences or philosophy should be in charge of his analysis. For the authors, even philosophy, whose work of critical reflection is immanent, has considered the concept of the individual as an extra social category for a long time. In its turn, the tradition of the philosophical thought of the 19th century remained connected to the conception that has its origin in Descartes, of considering the primacy of the individual self, of the being rooted in himself and self-sufficient in his reason. Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c) consider that, in philosophy, an idealist notion of the concept hung over the individual and over what would designate the subjectivity – reason, thought and consciousness. In regards to the concept of individual, it was always in proximity to what would be self-sufficient, as something closed and centered in itself, the individual would designate a being that has in himself a unity whose characteristics and particularities are applied only to himself and that are not similar to other individualities. Still, according to the authors, the individual would be, as Boécio's definition, what cannot be divided, a being whose unity is related to a spirit unity, sufficient and complete in himself.

Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c) still indicate that the human notion of singular individual has in Duns Escoto, representative of Scholasticism, one of the first expressions in medieval philosophy. For them, it is at this moment that the national states struggled against the medieval universalism and took root as the pillars of bourgeois society; before that, one could not talk about an individual as something singular, such as the notion that exists in modernity, in which this would not be only an expression of the community and with a little or no individual autonomy. This argument may also be found in Rouanet (1993/2003), when the author indicates that in traditional societies, men exist only as part of the collective, as part of the clan, polis, fief or nation. According to Rouanet, in the ancient regime, for instance, the possibility of self-development – economic autonomy - was limited to the privileges of the class (in this case, the nobility), which is amplified with the ascent of the bourgeoisie, turning the liberal ideology into the social basis of both individuality – occasion in which the individual could configure himself empirically – and individualism, which collaborates for the development of the capitalist economic model.

The concept of the individual, however, as understood in modernity, only can be thought of as a reality in the mid-18th century. According to Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b), the individual is something of late origin, the occasion of his development, his evidence in history, may be found since antiquity and in the most diverse civilizations; however, the man designated as singular, autonomous and a self-conscious individual could be only thought empirically, and as concept, at the moment in which the renaissance, as well as the Enlightenment ideals, arose. Also for Rouanet (1993/2003), only with Enlightenment and Liberalism could man, for the first time, refer to himself as individually independent of his community or religion, and exists from his own demands and with universal inalienable rights for happiness and self-realization.

For Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c, p. 53), the proper form of the individual is possible only for the mediation of the free market, "in which men are free and independent economic subjects. The more the individual is reinforced, the more society's strength increases, due to the relationship of exchange in which the individual is formed." However, at the same time in which the economic autonomy generated the conditions for the individual autonomy – both necessary to the formation of individuality –, it is reinforced by the ideological necessities of Liberalism, a vision of a self-sufficient man and who, for this reason, could sell his labor.

In the interim, according to what Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c) argue, the theory of monads of Leibnz offers an important model for the appearance of capitalism in modernity. The historic evidence of the appearance of the individual, as that one with economic autonomy have, in the theory of the monads, may be the greatest expression of the notion of man of the increasing bourgeois society in the 19th Century. Nevertheless, this theory tries to explain human nature as something abstract, distant from a concrete conception of its constitution. In Leibniz, the monads would not communicate with each other and what man is would only be the manifestation of an idea constituted *a priori*, an expression of the universal that contains it. The determinant objectives of the individual being would not be sought after in society, his subjectivity would not be constituted nor modified due to contact and communication with the exterior, but because of an internal implied to all monads, which would assure his unity and differentiation; the individual would be a natural category, immutable in relation to the exteriority, but mutable in

relation to himself for having an internal self-regulating principle.

Still, it is necessary to emphasize that, for Adorno (1955/1986), seeing the monad as a false conception regarding the constitution of the individual being is also true under the perspective of his material force in society, whereas men understand themselves as monads, since they do not have consciousness that the individual – and themselves as potentiality of the unrealized singularity – is a social mediation. But, if on the one hand Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c) characterize that, in these terms, the relationships between the individual and society happened to be central theme of philosophy concerns in individualistic times – indicating that it turned into a type of society science, whose concern with the theme that refers to the internal composition of the individual obtained importance and depth –, then on the other hand, they insist that differentiation is only possible through participation and communication with others, since, given the previously described understanding, to be different it is necessary, at first, to refer to an equal and, then, be distinguished from the others. Inspired in this discussion, the Frankfurt School authors point that:

> Human life is, essentially and not for mere casualness, coexistence. With this affirmation, one casts doubt on the concept of the individual as fundamental social unity. If man, on the basis of his existence, is for the others, who are their peers, and if only for them he is what he is, then his last definition is not one of primary indivisibility and oneness but, likewise, one of participation and necessary communication with others. Even before being individual, man is one of his peers, he relates to others before referring to himself, it is a moment in which he lives, before reaching, finally, his self-determination. (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1956/1973c, p. 47)

Referring to the pre-capitalist philosophical concepts, there is the attempt to consider the individual as an extra social category, irreducible in himself and, therefore**,** absolute and indivisible. However, these concepts put the very condition of existence of the individual into contradiction, because they deny his fundamental condition in relation to society and his instances of mediation: in this concept, the concept of individual excludes the concept of society from himself (Pucci, 2011), which denies the very conceptual viability of the first. Nevertheless, given the socially endorsed ideology that men are independent among each other, the consciousness of an independent self is both false (because it does not correspond to what in fact is the individual) and true, because this notion of independence between the individual and society is a social product, an ideology that exercises objective force on individual determinations. For Adorno (1955/1986, p. 48, our emphasis) "society has impressed on him (the individual) the isolation and he participates in his destiny as a social condition." In these terms, considering the individual as an entirely natural category, without taking his social nature into account, would be to deny his condition as an historic being, since his nature is not referred to as product of conditions of production of his existence either.

As was covered with the concept of society, for Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b), the idealistic tendency to consider the human subjectivity as an abstract principle is already present in the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, and also in its opposite, since it is also possible to realize in them a progressive impulse of the understanding of the importance of society and the association with others for the individual constitution. The Frankfurt School authors indicate that Plato and Aristotle considered man as a naturally social being; they understood that man could only be entirely realized in the *polis,* the existence of the community is what generates the possibility of the individual, because, as already explained, man would realize his nature only in a fair society. However, the polis would be understood as an *a priori* idea – a fundamental datum, an expression of the spirit. In this sense, human nature would not be socially produced and determined by historic conditions, but rather by a reflection on the idea present in the *polis*, a universal and undetermined idea. In this moment, Resende (2007) also indicates the acknowledgment of man's social nature lacking the understanding that he is naturally historic, because he is socially produced by the determinations of production of his existence and not as nature based on the classical metaphysics – an extension of an idea of the community's spirit.

Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973b) emphasize that, in Comte's positivist sociology, this important notion of constitution of man by society is recovered – which will be inherited by dialectical materialists such as Karl Marx and will be constituted as criticism to the natural conceptions by the formation of individuality. The thesis, according to which the individual, would possess a fundamental natural unity and that his social nature would be something ontologically secondary – i.e., at first, the individual is developed as human person, to then relate to society – is false as well. Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c, p. 52) reiterate that such a conception of biological individuation does not correspond to what individuals effectively are, but rather an abstract and undetermined theory, for them "the very natural existence of the individual is already mediated by the human gender and, consequently, by society." In this sense, they also reiterate – in a footnote – the idea of Swedish zoologist Adolf Portmann, who stresses the essential distinction of human beings in relation to animals: the fact that the physical existence of the first presupposes society. In this perspective, the social individual surpasses and, at the same time, contains the biological individual (Pucci, 2011). Thus, human nature is, and only can be, by society; the human being was not born as an individual, but is constituted and obtains substance in his relationships with others. Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c) confront a passage that is extremely important to this investigation,

in which the individual does not correspond to something that is, strictly speaking, a biological entity and, in a broader sense, is not only an entity whose nature is social already there, but one in which the individual appears due to the possibility of reflecting on the self:

> The individual appears, in a certain way, by establishing his self and elevating his being-for-itself, his unicity, to the category of true determination. Before, the philosophical language and the common language indicated all this through the expression of "self-consciousness". It is only the individual who differentiates himself from the others' interests and points of view, who makes himself a substance of himself, who establishes self-preservation and his own development as a rule. (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1956/1973b, p. 52)

For Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c, p. 52), this reflexivity (capacity to take himself as object of the thought) presupposes a "self-consciousness of the singularity of the self", an unrealized singularity, but one that is found as a potentiality in society. For the Frankfurt School thinkers, this social self-consciousness, as it makes references to himself as a singular person – a self able of naming himself as different and differentiating himself from the others' interests – is necessary, firstly, in order to make reference to an other – his peer. The definition of man as a person, that has in Cicero and in the classical theater the meaning of social mask for the first time, is valuable for the discussion regarding the individual, because before man is able to refer to himself or to have consciousness of himself, he must represent determined roles of others different than himself and, only in this manner, in relation to the others, a particular man is formed:

> As a consequence of these roles and in relation to his peers, he is what he is: son of a mother, student of a teacher, member of a tribe, practitioner of some profession. . . . He who wanted to dispense with this functional character of person, in order to seek his unique and absolute meaning in each one would not be able to reach the pure individual, in his indefinable singularity, but only a summarily abstract point of reference. . . . Inclusively, the person is, as a biographical entity, a social category. The person is defined only in his vital correlation with other people, which is what precisely constitutes his social character . . ., and it is only in relation to the context that the social mask of the character is also an individual. (Horkheimer & Adorno 1956/1973c, p. 48)

For Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c, p. 52,emphasis on the original), the "philosophical concept of 'self-consciousness' surpasses the 'abstract' individual and takes him to social mediation." As previously touched upon, every self-consciousness is a social self-consciousness, which implies, necessarily, understanding the individual as socially mediated and not in other way, a movement contrary to what presupposes the theory of monads or liberal ideology, since "the belief of radical independence of the individual being in relation to the whole is nothing more, in turn, than a façade." (pp. 52-53).

This monadological behavior stimulates individualism, the closure of the individual in himself, which if, on the one hand discourages the communication and the differentiation, then on the other produces tension and delineates its untruth as historic potency, in the confrontation with the impotence of such condition. The individual personified in liberal ideology, who, on occasion of his supposed freedom, can sell his labor, has the conviction, according to Crochík (2001), that when each one takes care of his own interests, society is strengthened. However, it is as collectivity – not as authoritarian manifestation of masses, which reduces the "individual, implicitly, to a mere exemple of gender" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1956/1973c, p. 51) –, with the union of the individuals in the inalienable search for happiness, through realization of rational and universal human interests, that society is developed with rationality, whose practical finality is assured: the individual self-conservation without threats, freedom and happiness that can come only from a fair social organization (Adorno, 1955/1986). It is only in this context that the individual, as a social category, may be developed. In an argument reinforced by Franciscatti (2002), by also indicating, based on Adorno, that both freedom and happiness coincide in their realization and express to live life beyond mere survival, distinctions of the human being that, in the entanglement of the universal with the particular, depend on the objective task of thinking of the forms of oppression, of the search for a social organization that performs the differentiation, the education of the individual.

Retaking the formulations of Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973c), the individual is the social mediation and it is only the individual who is conscious of himself; a self-consciousness to name himself as an object of his thought is necessary; however, the man is self-consciousness only in relation to other self-consciousness, since he is made only with others. In this sense, the concept of consciousness that one intends to draft here is also important, as is the concept of mediation: the consciousness presupposes mediation – there is no individual without mediation and, in the same way, there is no consciousness without the individual. It also presupposes, according to the previous argument, that these mediations are fair: they require that the part (the individual) be the finality and not the means of a functional society of means and ends and; if there is no consciousness without necessary mediation with others, let it be in the participation and communication with the different, and not as isolated monads. However, according to Adorno (1969/1995, p. 193), "objectivity can only be discovery through a reflection on each level of

history and knowledge, as well as on that which each time is considered as subject and object, and on the mediations." Based on this formulation, Zanolla (2012, pp. 9-10) also calls attention to how mediation brings with itself the contradictions of society, of the system that creates it:

> Since mediation is the possibility to identify reality, the relationship between subject and object is determined by the social and political system. Thus, this determination presents the contradictory reality by the objectification of the structural conditions given. . . . As the objective universe determines the social relationships, it is necessary to recognize the primacy of the object over the subject, or rather, the social impositions in the face of the alienating condition that inverts the meaning of the mediation and takes the risk to celebrate the objectification of the subject.

The individual may be understood only as being mediated by the object and, in the same way, one knows the individual only when his determinants are known. In this sense, what is internal to him, his subjectivity, is objective, since that is determined by the object and it is in this eternal relationship that it is constituted. However, it is fundamental to notice that, for Adorno (1969/1995), if mediation is a mutual relationship between subject and object, it is due to the object taking itself as an object of the reflection, but such capacity/potentiality is subtracted from it in these social conditions. This relationship is determined by the social system that, in turn, depends on how the objective conditions of the individual are organized. In the meantime, the primacy of the object makes it possible to understand the contradiction of the formation by the mediation with objectivity, because it understands the subject as being determined by it and, as the subject is formed amidst a society that feeds and perpetuates the injustice – without configuring itself as mediation for satisfaction of men's needs –, its subjectivity brings these same conditions with itself, in specific psychological forms and expressions.

Final considerations

To finalize, and revising the aforementioned, society, because it is a rational system, has the potential to establish the relationship between its constituting parts, having the cooperation between the particular beings as a model. The concept of society also refers to the way of organizing the different functions and human attributions in order to satisfy their needs, bringing the possibility of variations as social organization of work, which may be divided so that the joint force of several is greater than the force of one alone. To bear the increasing demands of society, the peoples create ways of regulating their relationships, they create institutions, property and law, and everything makes a complex whole. Society is configured as a system in which this whole is supported, something like a net that would maintain the beings that are connected and dependent on each other. As a way of life, society should be configured as a space in which everyone would not have to struggle for strict survival. However, if society has the human life and the accomplishment of its nature as its finality, in a society whose relationhip between means and ends is inverted, the men are the means for this very system to be maintained in its irrational rationality. In this sense, in the context of the societies analyzed by Horkheimer and Adorno in their essays, a life is impossible for the individual that is not based on sacrifices (Crochík, 1999). This is because the struggle for self-preservation has not only not been overcome, but happens to have been be intensified, imposing a forced adaptation to society on the individuals – which is anachronistic from the point of view of the material basis performed in history, because it already would allow such overcoming.

Thus, the progressive impulse to develop society accompanies, immanently, the tendency to self-dissolve society, the individual and his consciousness. Even though there is historic evidence that may demonstrate a principle of socialization that provides the individuation – differentiation principle –, such elements are repressed and, sometimes, understood as invariable sediments of society. Without the individual there is no consciousness, since when talking about the individual it is necessary to talk about a being that has conditions of self-determination; therefore, a consciousness is necessary, because one determines only who, by taking himself as object, is conscious of the objects as mediated in the formation of his individuality, as true determinations. If these mediations are not fair at all, it is fundamental to understand how they are processed along history; self-reflection on the contradictions of their constitution is necessary (Adorno, 1959/1996). With this, it is practicable to indicate the limits of society itself, which, by promoting individuality, is the same that, by principle, dethrones it (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1956/1973c).

The separation between the individual and society – criticized in this paper on several levels – is ideology: it contributes to stimulate the isolation between men, reinforcing the falsity that is the psychological monad and the mistaken perception that the transformer praxis is impossible, since the existent one is already, for this perspective, naturalized. According to Crochík (2011, p. 259), "the consciousness of social mediation is necessary to interrupt the individual's monadological character" and the individual consciousness of the constitutive aspects of interiority – which establishes it –, could serve, for the author, as resistance to the social appearance – which is necessary for the perpetuation of domination –, which would enable a social action that was directed as resistance to the irrational characters that are present and objectified in society and culture.

If men, in the conditions of coexistence intensified through the participation and mutual communication, organize themselves to produce the material conditions that sustain and determine their existence, they can also

generate a society that brings the objectification of the possibility of constitution of the individual and their consciousness. If the individual is social mediation, the consciousness is formed in the mediation with the objects of culture and, then, brings the objectivity of the human relations with itself. For this reason, consciousness may be understood, in an ample sense – since it is formed by the object, a culture produced by the mutually determined social work for the satisfaction of needs –, as that which contains the universal of the human experience in the particular sphere. It is worth mentioning that this is not an abstract universal, but rather a consequence of the social praxis, of the relationship of men among each other and with the nature, an experience objectified in the products and relationships of the human work. Thus, consciousness brings with itself, as a potentiality inscribed in history, the tracks of this materiality as self-acknowledgment of its social determinations, a type of microcosm that condenses the universal in the particular unity, and communicates with it. However, as this potentiality has been obliterated by the objective conditions of this society, in the progress of the domination and of the alienated work, consciousness has a low capacity to establish communication with the universal – in both its falsity and its true potentiality. Thus, consciousness is understood as a social self-consciousness, as a formation for autonomy, because it is in it that one could recognize, and better it would be if in fairer conditions, that the transformation of nature – that generates the culture and the society – constitutes its own nature referred to the history, as an historic nature. It is not in any other way, unless in the self-consciousness of their nature, of their formation amidst the social and individual determinations, in the universal and particular tension, of what and in what mutilates them, that men can modify history and, in this manner, themselves, as a movement towards autonomy and emancipation.

Notas sobre indivíduo e consciência em Max Horkheimer e Theodor W. Adorno

Resumo: Este artigo discorre sobre as bases materialistas do conceito de indivíduo e de consciência para os pensadores Max Horkheimer e Theodor W. Adorno. Para tanto, trata de analisar o objeto da psicologia, o indivíduo, pelo percurso de seu movimento material em suas diferentes expressões na história e, com isso, tece algumas considerações sobre a consciência a partir da perspectiva da Teoria Crítica da Sociedade. Nesse intuito, busca-se evidenciar as relações entre o objeto da sociologia e da psicologia, lembrando que a sociedade contém em suas determinações, como potencialidade, o movimento dos particulares para o estabelecimento de um todo justo, garantindo a universalidade, meio pelo qual o indivíduo pode se diferenciar e se constituir de modo pacificado. Conforme as análises realizadas, ao percorrer os indícios materiais que engendram a formação do indivíduo na história, compreende-se a consciência como autoconsciência social, isto é, determinada socialmente e expressão da formação para a autonomia.

Palavras-chave: teoria crítica, materialismo, sociologia, psicologia social, formação do indivíduo.

Notes sur l'individu et la conscience chez Max Horkheimer et Theodor W. Adorno

Résumé: Cet article présente une discussion sur les fondements matérialistes des concepts d'individu et de conscience pour les penseurs Max Horkheimer et Theodor W. Adorno. On présente une analyse de l'objet de la psychologie, l'individu, à partir du parcours de son mouvement matériel dans ses différentes expressions dans l'histoire et, ainsi, on construit quelques considérations sur la conscience à partir de la Théorie Critique de la Société. Dans ce but, on veut mettre en évidence les relations entre l'objet de la sociologie et de la psychologie, en souvenant que la société a, dans ses déterminations, comme potentialité, le mouvement des particuliers vers l'établissement d'un tout juste, en garantissant l'universalité, moyen selon lequel l'individu peut se différencier et se constituer pacifiquement. À partir des analyses entreprises, en parcourant des vestiges matériels qui engendrent la formation de l'individu dans l'histoire, on comprend la conscience comme une auto-conscience sociale, c'est-à-dire, déterminée socialement et expression d'une formation pour l'autonomie.

Mots-clés: théorie critique, matérialisme, sociologie, psychologie sociale, formation de l'individu.

Notas sobre el individuo y la conciencia en Max Horkheimer y Theodor W. Adorno

Resumen: En este texto se describen las bases materialistas del concepto de sujeto y conciencia para los pensadores Max Horkheimer y Theodor W. Adorno. Con este fin, trata de aportar el análisis del objeto de la psicología, el sujeto, a través del recorrido de su movimiento material en sus diferentes expresiones en la historia y, por lo tanto, presenta algunas consideraciones sobre la conciencia desde la perspectiva de la Teoría Crítica de la Sociedad. De esta manera, se busca poner de relieve la relación

entre el objeto de la sociología y la psicología, recordando que la sociedad tiene en sus determinaciones como potencial el movimiento de los individuos para el establecimiento de un todo justo, garantizando la universalidad, medio por el cual el sujeto puede distinguirse y constituirse de modo pacificado. Conforme los análisis llevados a cabo al pasar por los indicios materiales, que engendran el sujeto en la historia, entendemos la conciencia social como la autoconciencia social, es decir, socialmente determinada y la expresión de la formación de la autonomía.

Palabras clave: teoría crítica, materialismo, sociología, psicología social, formación del sujeto.

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