PIAGET, DISNEY E O EDUENTRETENIMENTO: POR UMA PSICOLOGIA TRANSPESSOAL DAS ORGANIZAÇÕES

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Resumo

A Psicologia Transpessoal das Organizações preocupa-se com o desenvolvimento de indivíduos que podem crescer em equilíbrio físico, emocional, intelectual e espiritual ao longo de sua vida. Ela compartilha muitas posições de Piaget sobre equilíbrio dinâmico, sobre adaptação através da assimilação e acomodação, sobre autonomia e sobre a necessidade de respeitar o estágio de desenvolvimento da criança. Também compartilha o interesse de Disney pela literatura infantil e folclore como um caminho para a autodescoberta. Usando teses propostas por R. Steiner, M. P. Hall e os teóricos do Eneagrama, a teoria piagetiana e as suas distinções técnicas são assimiladas para analisar o fenômeno da influência global da Disney. É dada especial atenção às questões do adultocentrismo, do etnocentrismo e da apropriação, substituição e banalização comercial multiculturalista das tradições ancestrais. Apesar das melhores intenções de Walt, o eduentretenimento se mostra como uma espada de dois gumes com potencial para fazer mais mal do que bem se os cidadãos forem marginalizados a ponto de não serem mais livres para criticar, boicotar ou de resistir ao conteúdo que lhes for imposto pelos grandes conglomerados midiáticos.

Palavras Chave: Walt Disney; Jean Piaget; Rudolf Steiner; Organização; Taoismo.

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PIAGET, DISNEY AND EDUTAINMENT: TOWARDS A TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY OF ORGANIZATIONS

Abstract

Transpersonal Psychology of Organizations is concerned with the development of individuals who can grow in physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual balance throughout their lifespans. It shares many of Piaget's views on dynamic equilibration, on adaptation through assimilation and accommodation, on autonomy, and on the need to respect the child's developmental stage. It also shares Disney's interest in children's literature and folklore as a path to self-discovery. Making use of theses proposed by R. Steiner, M. P. Hall, and Enneagram theorists, Piaget's theory and technical distinctions are assimilated to analyze the phenomenon of Disney's global influence. Particular attention is given to the issues of adultcentrism, ethnocentrism, and the commercial multiculturalist appropriation, substitution and banalization of ancestral traditions. Despite Walt's best intentions, edutainment shows itself to be a double edged sword with a potential to do more harm than good if citizens are disenfranchised to the point of not being free to criticize, boycott or otherwise resist content that is foisted upon them by major media conglomerates.

Keywords: Walt Disney; Jean Piaget; Rudolf Steiner; Organization; Daoism.

Introdução

Insofar as the lifeworld[2] of childhood is concerned, Walt Disney (1901-1966) and Jean Piaget (1896-1980) are certainly among the most influential figures of the 20th century. However, there are regretably few studies exploring the possible relations between them. This may be due in part to the fact that their main interests almost did not overlap or articulate with each other clearly. While Piaget, UNESCO-IBE Director from 1929 to 1968, described himself as an epistemologist with a major interest in developmental cognitive psychology,

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[2] The phenomenological notion of the "lifeworld" (in German, *Lebenswelt*) refers to human subjective experience, be it individual or social. It cannot be reduced to a materialist description of social reality in precise scientific concepts.

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Disney was a leading media innovator and artist-businessman. Their lifeworks have nevertheless exerted a major and lasting impact on education worldwide. The aim of this essay is hence to make the most of their influence on moral and spiritual education as a common ground to build a bridge between them.

To provide a deeper approach to the concept of edutainment, however, an explicit discussion of spiritual orientation is unavoidable. The view favored here considers persons as beings endowed not only with a human body displaying emotional, moral and intellectual faculties, but also with a potential access to a spiritual dimension (Dao or Logos) that may remain for the most part limited to intuitive, sub-verbal, and subjective experience. Although scientific materialists may disagree with the inclusion of spirituality, this view is consistent with most world religions and spiritual orientations, which is important for cultural and educational purposes. In particular, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's (1831-1891) Theosophy opened up valuable possibilities for inter-faith dialogue on the side of *Dakshinachara* (Right-Hand Path) because of its at least partial compatibility with most socially established belief systems. Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) made a significant contribution to education by emphasizing holistic development at Waldorf schools. Manly Palmer Hall (1901-1990) revived Neo-Platonism by publishing major reference works and giving public lectures. George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866-1946) has become better known recently because of the enneagram of personality developed by Latin-American authors Oscar Ichazo (1931-2020), Claudio Naranjo Cohen (1932-2019) and others. C. G. Jung's (1875-1961) Analytical Psychology made an indispensable departure from Freudian sexualization of the libido and its symbolism, having for several decades provided the main moral and theoretical support available to psychologists interested in transpersonal approaches. Despite continued resistance, J. Piaget succeeded in achieving considerable respect in the scientific

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community for his stage theory of cognitive and moral development. E. Husserl (1859-1938), advanced the phenomenological approach to philosophical problems by means of essential insight (*Wesensschau*), renewing Aristotelian Ousiology. L. Wittgenstein (1889-1951) made possible the linguistic turn concerning the understanding of concepts. J. Habermas (1929-) developed a Critical Theory of communication that defended spiritual emancipation in the multilingual lifeworld (Lebenswelt) against the encroachment of systemic dehumanization in modern Anglophone society. Fritjof Capra (1939-) played a major role in disseminating Daoist thought both to the lay and the scientific public by publishing *The Tao of Physics, The Turning Point* and other notable books. One could go on citing significant contributions by several other authors that have led to the establishment of a Transpersonal Paradigm in the human social sciences.

However, this essay is philosophical. It provides, in natural language, a description from a certain perspective, in other words, an interpretation. Just like any other view, a (not "the") Daoist perspective can be offered up, made available, suggested, or even urged upon others, but neither imposed nor logically demonstrated. It is an interpretation that may be taken into consideration if the interlocutor is disposed to do so. The justification or foundation of the (vague) notions, the (precise) concepts and the (immanent-transcendent) essences used to construct a perspective depends on the goodwill of others. It cannot be demonstrated by pure logic alone and obtained by intellectual assent, as it would ultimately lead to an infinite regress. The speech act by which we introduce a notion, concept or essence into a Wittgensteinian language-game requires a rather rhetorical plea or appeal to our conversational partner, which makes it highly fallible. Husserl's *Wesensschau* provides a useful epistemological model to approximate the Gnostic intuition of essences that are nonetheless metaphysical as well. The Dao cannot be verbalized in concepts of discursive reas-

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on. It can be intimated in vague, sub-verbal notions by the novice, though. What the Daoist master does, is to progress by lifelong spiritual training to a psychosomatic alignment that makes essential insight (Wesensschau) possible. In this state of Enlightment by the immanent-transcendent Dao, the master grasps essences and may try or not to verbalize them as concepts to share wisdom with humanity. However, a symbolic language has been generally prefered in most esoteric traditions. So although both notions and essences belong to sub-verbal intuition, they lie at opposing poles of a continuum of mystical experience and development.

Science, on the contrary, requires intersubjectively controlled concepts so that statements can be meaningfully verified or falsified. For Daoist philosophy to become scientific, its notions and essences would have to be translated into operational concepts. This would be only conceivable a priori if all persons involved had already attained inner Enlightenment, which is unlikely. It is also important to distinguish Daoist philosophy from the narrowed down concept of modern Western Philosophy, which after Descartes, for the most part neglects the body, deifies the intellect, denies the emotions, makes half-hearted, bumbling attempts to prove the existence of God, and ultimately despairs of ever finding a rational meaning for life. The ancient concept of Philosophy was broader both in the East as in the West, and encompassed the good life in both theory and practice. Academically, under the influence of Scientism and Positivism, the mystical and existential dimension was relegated to the history of Philosophy, Phenomenology and Continental Philosophy. This disenfranchisement of the ancient concept of Philosophy should be resisted from both within and outside academic circles, as it leads to an unacceptable impoverishment of the subject. But besides that, while the debate rages on, to avoid confusion between ancient and modern concepts, Blavatsky's concept of Theo-

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sophy would be helpful. Indeed, it makes historical sense. Medieval Philosophy (Theology) provided rational analysis of faith and revealed truth. Modern Philosophy (Kant in particular) sought to clear the rational foundation for Science, morality and the arts. Theosophy rescues the ancient concept of Philosophy and its relation to spirituality and the good life. One should, however, be free and able to pursue all of these approaches academically. Therefore, this essay is theosophical in its defense of the ancient concept of Philosophy, nothing more, nothing less. Moreover, it is Daoist in that it seeks to affirm the spirit of Lao Tzu and to draw wherever possible inspiration from the sacred and wise teachings of the *Tao Te Ching*.

The relevance of the concept of edutainment for any pedagogical conception should be obvious except to the most Stoic and masochistic advocates of the "no pain, no gain" principle. The importance of pleasant first experiences to provide a positive imprinting while learning cannot be overstated. But what is edutainment? The term's first recorded use by Walt Disney dates from 1954. However, he was engaged in producing educational entertainment since 1922, when Kansas City Dentist Thomas B. McCrum commissioned a ten minute film promoting dental hygiene titled *Tommy Tucker's Tooth*. Throughout World War II and after, Disney developed a relationship with the U.S. government to produce propaganda, educational and nonfiction movies, including the *True-Life Adventures* series. On the one hand, edutainment may be simply understood as a subgenre of entertainment that could raise a claim to educational value. On the other hand, the concept of edutainment blurs classical distinctions such as those between *otium* and *negotium*, leisure and work, education as opposed to technical training, and the moral understanding of dignity or degradation as applied to both work and leisure. The very notion that edutain-

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ment could be taken seriously as an educational approach begs several problematic questions about students' social condition.

In this essay, Piaget's concept of *schème* will be presented to sustain the more complex concept of a script within the larger framework of the enneagram of personality. These theoretical constructs allow us to interpret edutainment experience both structurally (synchronically) and developmentally (diachronically). Piaget understands the grasp of consciousness (*prise de conscience*) as the child's conceptual awareness of the schematic process by which she attained her goal. A *schème* is basically an assimilated cognitive ability attributable to a subject by an external observer on the basis of specific observed behavioral patterns. A script is a longer, drawn out behavioral sequence that will involve several *schèmes*, such as "making friends" or "going to a Disney store," but it may present itself to the subject also as an expectation. Understandably, exposure to Disney content such as Cinderella-like narratives is meant to generate such lifelong expectations in most enneagram personality types and affects their self-realization as persons. Piaget's concept of centrism or centration will then be needed to point out and discuss a few well documented vulnerabilities in The Walt Disney Company's corporate behavior, which have exposed its inability to accommodate to children's perspectives (adultcentrism) and to foreign cultures (ethnocentrism). This of itself raises such grave moral, spiritual, and even political issues that they clearly merit more attention than, say, a semiotic analysis of a particular piece of edutainment content. It is at this point that theosophic insights, such as Manly P. Hall's vision of America as a sponsor of world democracy and Rudolf Steiner's diagnosis of the conflict between Ahrimanic materialism and Luciferian spiritualism, may be brought to bear to add a transpersonal dimension to the discussion of edutainment. The main challenge, from both a Piagetian and a Daoist view, is to strike a dynamic balance

(equilibration) that avoids the opposed pitfalls of puritanical demonization of corporate edutainment or its naive endorsement. At the end of the day, the decisive criterion is whether edutainment content hinders or not the person's access to the immanent-transcendent Dao. In general, if our behavior promotes materialistic estrangement from enlightened existence and transcendent experience, it is spiritually harmful. A basic point of a spiritualized education should also be to teach us to overcome the desire for instant gratification, to accept pain when it is necessary so as to avoid suffering and degradation. If these minimal conditions are not met, parents should, as citizens and consumers, be free to associate to create better alternatives to corporate or, for that matter, state education.

1 Piaget: From Schèmes to Self-Realization

Piaget's appreciation for the role of cognition in human development has stood the test of time when compared to other early 20th century approaches that emphasized observable behavior or unconscious affects. Rather than just gathering and analyzing statistical data, his formidable project was to develop a theory that could explain why transitions from certain cognitive structures to others were logically necessary while maintaining continuity. Piaget's experience with Psychoanalysis had made him rather skeptical on the possibility of a scientific investigation of affective structures. In his view, there were no such things. Structures, understood as systemic wholes, were intrinsically rational and could be attributed to subjects on the basis of external observation made during tests or interviews. Contrary to claims made by misguided critics, he did not neglect affectivity, but rather admitted that it could color and influence cognitive development both for better or for worse. Piaget's cognitivist perspective is acknowledged by consumer psychologists doing research on marketing to children because they need to understand how children develop the capacity

to recognize brands and products, which goes beyond the mere activation of their affective mechanisms. As Jansson-Boyd (2010) puts it,

> It is worth noting that in more recent years researchers have found that Piaget's stages are not entirely correct in that some aspects of cognitive development happen slightly earlier or later than he originally proposed (...). However, the general idea of Piaget's cognitive development remains intact and is worth paying attention to when marketing to children. (JANSSON-BOYD, 2010, p. 160)

R.C. Webb (1999) explains how schemata and scripts enable subjects to build meaning and organize their consumer memory into categories that can undergird reasoning and inform behavior. He defines a schema in the following manner:

> Schemas are basically complex categories, which include a host of related attributes, beliefs, and even expected actions along with a simple concept. The notion of the "schema" was introduced by Bartlett (1932) and Piaget (1936) and is commonly used to refer to mental structures that have a dynamic or relational aspect to differentiate them from simple concepts (...). Thus, schemas are clusters of associations often built by experience, though sometimes built simply for recall, around our simple concepts. (WEBB, 1999, p. 54-55)

Marketing research is interested not only in concepts or categories, but rather in schemata because they will guide consumer behavior. In the Piagetian tradition, however, an important distinction is made between *schèmes* and *schémas*, as explained by G. Cellérier and J. Langer:

> [...] the term schème (plural, schèmes) is used to refer to operational activities, whereas schéma (plural, schémas or schemata) refers to the figurative aspects of thought's attempts to represent reality without attempting to transform it (imagery, perception and memory). Later in this paper the author says, "... images..., however schematic, are not schèmes. We shall therefore use the term schemata to designate them. A schéma is a simplified image (e.g., the map of a town), whereas a schème represents what can be repeated and generalized in an action (for example, the schème is what is common in the actions of 'pushing' an object with a stick or any other instrument)." (PIAGET, 1970, p. 705)

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This muddle is long-standing. H.G. Furth (1967) drew attention to the fact that English translations of Piagetian works often confused *schème* with *schéma*, thus generating improper associations which, in turn, led to a misunderstanding of what the Swiss psychologist had actually said. To clarify this, Furth referred to a passage by Piaget and Inhelder in their work on the mental image in children:

> Concerning Piaget's use of the apparently overlapping term "figurative scheme," the recent book on the mental image (Piaget & Inhelder, 1966b, p. 431) makes an interesting distinction between a figurative schema and an operative scheme. A figurative schema is recognized as the symbolic-imaginative support for a knowledge that is directly focused on the figurative aspect of an object, for example, in spatial concepts. The spatial image is then a true schema or schematic outline, while the intelligent structure from which this schema derives can be called a figurative scheme. / English versions of Piaget's books do not consistently translate the French *schème*, although most commonly it is translated as schema, so that the above distinction could not easily be articulated. (FURTH, 1967, p. 822)

Webb's use of the term 'schema' seems sufficiently close to Piaget's concept of *schème*, though, which is what really matters. To avoid confusion, then, we shall refer to a Piagetian *schéma* as a figurative representation.

*Schème*s can be regarded as the building blocks upon which adaptation operates. Piaget's concept of adaptation is often presented in a misleading simplified form, as a dyadic alteration between assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation itself is described as a process of internalization, in which external content provided by sense perception would be somehow integrated into the mind under construction. It is crucial to clarify that for Piaget the a priori cannot be pure, static and pre-formed as Kant imagined it. The a priori undergoes genesis. It develops in a dynamic interaction with the natural and social environment, going through stages. External stimuli trigger the construction

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of the mind's cognitive structures, which in turn make linguistic meaning possible. The a priori is thus impure, but always formal. There is no such a thing as "a priori content. " The impurity of the a priori does not make it "material" in the Kantian sense. For this reason, assimilation actually means that innate reflex mechanisms and initial schemata adjusted by accommodation to external demands are consolidated as forms rather than absorbed as mental content. It is better to understand adaptation as a 5-step process: (1) beginning from innate reflexes, (2) they accommodate to initial external contact (Accommodation I); (3) these initial accommodated schemata are assimilated or temporarily consolidated (Assimilation I); (4) assimilated schèmes suffer new external pressures to accommodate, *schèmes* go through further transformations, such as differentiation and integration (Accommodation II); (5) new *schème* formations are assimilated (Assimilation II). Schematically: [Innate reflexes] → [Accommodation I] → [Assimilation I] → [Accommodation II] → [Assimilation II] and so on.

Jack Block (BLOCK, 1982) proposes a revision of Piaget's developmental concepts to bring them to bear on the theory of personality. In his view, assimilation and accommodation could be kept more apart and understood as two distinct adaptive strategies that occur in alternation but not simultaneously. Block suggests that assimilation be understood as the employment of *schèmes*, which to me does not do justice to its implied meaning of consolidation. If assimilation is schematizing in the sense that schemata are being constructed, then their use or application would be a further instance, happening after their consolidation. Except for that detail, most of his proposed revision is worth adopting.

> To summarize the conceptual suggestions made thus far: assimilation and accommodation, instead of being defined as inextricably fused, have been definitionally separated. A mixing of theoretical metaphors in Piaget's writings has been argued by me to be confusing and misleading, especially in the way play and imitation often are construed.

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> Restricted (but also I believe more specifically implicative) definitions of assimilation and accommodation as alternative strategies of adaptation have been offered. Assimilation is to be viewed as the invocation by the individual of existing adaptive structures, schemes, or scripts to process experience; accommodation is to be viewed as the shiftover by the individual to the formation of new (and the re-formation of old) adaptive structures, schemes, and scripts to process experience. Schematizing (assimilation) and schemata modifying (accommodation) are very different adaptive modes. The motivational functions of both assimilation and accommodation are to advance or to restore psychological equilibria, to equilibrate or to reequilibrate. The defining feature of equilibration is the integration of otherwise discrepant experience, understandings, and actions. Assimilation and accommodation, separately and in helical, perhaps quite rapid but also perhaps quite slow alternation, serve to equilibrate the individual. Piaget's asserted but unused idea of an equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation has been set aside. Instead, it is posited (as Piaget sometimes suggested) that the assimilative mode has a built-in priority over the accommodative mode, so that the individual confronted with discrepancy first will seek to equilibrate via assimilation, moving on to the accommodative mode only when, given the individual's existing structural parameters and limits, assimilative efforts have not achieved sufficient integration of the disparate and regnant elements requiring understanding. (BLOCK, 1982, p. 286-7)

Following Piaget, Block recognizes the fact that any disruption of equilibrium will challenge the individual's equilibrium. If the disruption is minor, *schèmes* can dynamically adapt by assimilating qualitative differences. However, if the disruption is severe, accommodation is needed to re-structure the individual's *schèmes*. In his view, this brings forth the issue of anxiety and dysphoric arousal within the structure of personality.

> Assimilation, the use of existing structures for the organization of experience and action, is the first line of adaptation (or defense) for the individual in attempting equilibration. When assimilation fails, the individual is destructured or disorganized, that is, is without effective assimilative structures. Thus disequilibrated, the individual is dysphorically aroused. To the extent an assimilative structure is central or fundamental to the individual's adaptive personality or cognitive system, the disequilibration resulting from its insufficiency and failure can be expected to result in intense and agitated dysphoric arousal. (BLOCK, 1982, p. 291)

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This is also a reasonable proposition by Block that is relevant when considering challenges Disney material poses to children with diverse personality structures.

Piaget's conception of the mind as a cognitive subsystem that is ultimately biological tries to do justice to the phenomenon of adaptation as the result of the individual organism's capacity to establish a dynamic equilibrium (homeostasis or equilibration). In this process, the grasp of consciousness (*prise de conscience*) refers to the ability to achieve verbalized awareness of one's own *schèmes* and operations (or reversible schemata). It is related to abstract reflection (*abstraction réfléchissante*) in that structures are required from our own actions, and not just from handling things. In this way, Piaget creates his own kind of Phenomenology, which is not necessarily unreconcilable with that of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. Piaget's Phenomenology, however, is not static, but developmental (psychogenetic), and does not mistake essences for facts established by experimental Psychology.

As a conscious process, equilibration cannot be a strictly individual kind of self-regulation, but is unavoidably embodied in a social, cultural, linguistic and spiritual environment. Reliance on Significant Others (G.H. Mead) may be indispensable for the individual to overcome inner imbalances. This is particularly clear in cases of fixation on a specific aspect of a material object (centration) or in the perspective of the 'I' (cognitive egocentrism), as opposed to the 'me' (G.H. Mead), which can only emerge as a self after becoming aware of an Alter, Other or Non-Self (Fichte).

Piaget's concept of the grasp of consciousness was broadened by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1921-1997) in his concept of "*conscientização*" to include awareeness of social, economic and political exploitation in the banking

model of education. It can also be profitably related to Humanistic Psychology's concern for self-realization (Maslow & Rogers), provided that we keep Piaget's model of schème adaptation to maintain consistency.

Having taken the Piagetian concept of a schème as a starting point, Webb then proposes the concept of a *script* (already mentioned above by Block) which consists of schemas that "are more extensive and involve action over time" (WEBB, 1999, p. 56). Scripts include memory of past experience and expectations towards the future. Going to have dinner at a restaurant, for example, will require that we follow a sequence of actions such as entering, choosing a table, taking a seat, ordering the meal, and so on. Scripts structure our consumer experience and explain our frustration when they fall through. Webb claims that words, concepts and brand names can trigger scripts in us. It should be noted that the concept of script has been also used by Bruner (1987), Berne (1972) and Harris (1967). Dowling (1981) argued that a Cinderella complex of dependency was instilled in women by parents who insistently repeated a script that taught them to spend their lives waiting for a male savior.

By promoting its theme parks as the happiest place in the world, Disney generates such scripts to the highest degree. Moreover, it molds the figurative representations of children around the world possibly even before the pre-operational period (from ages 3 to 7), when unconscious symbolism is being formed. Thus, Webb raises an important issue with scripts understood as the diachronic realization of *schèmes* in consumer narratives.

However, *schèmes* and scripts can only make proper sense within the framework of a theory of personality. Webb references the concept of *persona* by Nisbet and Ross as a component in the cognitive process of constructing consumer categories:

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> Another type of schema commonly used in our inferential process is that called persona by Nisbett and Ross (1980), after the name for the cast of characters in a play, the dramatis personae. (…) we all know this because we spend so much effort on our image. Clothes are chosen to make a statement, and cars are chosen to express who we think we are or who we wish to be seen as. We choose products to match our desired personas. Hence, advertising often suggests that its product will create a particular persona for its user. Personas are another form of the same process of forming categories and then responding to the category. (WEBB, 1999, p. 57)

While this concept of persona is undoubtedly important for some personality types, it may not be so for all. What Riso & Hudson (2003) and Chestnut (2013) describe as Enneagram Personality Type 3 matches Webb's persona-oriented cognitive consumer profile, though. Chestnut explains that the Type or Point 3 personality construct is an archetype based on Jung's concept of persona and reminds us of its original meaning as an actor's mask. Usually called "the Achiever," Type Three individuals are extraverts particularly adept at pursuing high performance lifestyles and experience social recognition as an intense reward. They are able to put their feelings aside and concentrate on fulfilling tasks to the best of their ability. This brings them success, but may also lead them to general exhaustion, burnout and a loss of connection to inner meaning. Of the nine Enneagram personalities, it best embodies the American ethos that influences much of our contemporary world:

> We also find the Three archetype in American culture in the emphasis on the values of "the market:" the importance of packaging, advertising, and selling products; the central focus on "winning" in a competitive environment by attracting the most customers; and the driving force of profit maximization through prioritizing work and corporate interests. / The "American Dream" as a "rags to riches" story of upward mobility through hard work, demonstrated by the acquisition of conventionally agreed-upon symbols of success (a house, a nice car, a vacation home), also reflects the core themes of this archetype. In the US mass media, the superficial attractiveness of things is emphasized, and depth is often sacrificed. / The Three archetype can thus be seen at the societal level in all cultures in which competition and winning are emphasized, and in mercantilism generally, where marketing and sales efforts are a central component of social interaction. The archetypal themes associated with the Three Point can especially be

seen in the corporate world, where the focus is on competing and working hard in pursuit of success in the form of popularity, profits, and coming out on top. (CHESTNUT, 2013, p. 290-1)

In Japanese culture, the post-WWII concepts of *honne* (a person's true feelings) and *tatemae* (façade, persona), in addition to the phenomenon of the *hikikomori* (persons who withdraw from society) may be related to the social imposition of a Type Three template on individuals of other personality types, who understandably cannot take the pressure to accommodate in the Piagetian sense. In all countries where discrimination of some kind occurs (race, gender, religion, language, etc.), Type Threes struggle harder and may be denied full recognition and obtain only limited social integration as outsiders in the workplace but not on the street. Discrimination is made manifest already by differential treatment, even if respectful and considerate. In such cases, Achievers will have to contend with the impossibility of ever meeting external discriminatory demands. This leads to crisis, as social validation is indispensable to sustain Achievers' motivation. The next Enneagram Type, number Four, named "the Romantic," can help balance Achievers if they function as a "wing." In Enneagram Theory, each of the nine personality types are placed in a circle so that the neighboring and opposite numbers have traits that are relevant to growth or stress. This ingenious arrangement allows persons who identify with a specific number Type to visualize how their traits connect to traits of other personality types. By going around the whole dial of the Enneagram, we can become acquainted with the whole range of known human personalities and how they interconnect. The Type Four Romantic is typically concerned with his or her own identity, meaning and authenticity. This philosophical inclination is not wholly alien to a Type Three Achiever, but may have remained undeveloped. By interacting with each other, Achievers can learn from Romantics how to find deeper meaning, while Romantics can learn from Achievers to give less attention to their feelings and focus more on executing tasks. However, there is a

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generally acknowledged bias against Romantics in American-influenced socie-ties, including East Asian.

To Piaget, who was probably a Type Five "Investigator" if there ever was one, this Type Three concern for success manifested itself in constant ques-tions from parents and researchers interested in accellerating cognitive deve-lopment. He was so persistently badgered on this issue during his lifetime that he called it "the American Question." Together with his right-hand man, Viet-namese psychologist and pedagogue Vĩnh Bang (1922– 2008), he argued for the need to adjust educational content to the students' developmental stage. David Elkind (1931-), author of *The Hurried Child*, sought to bring this issue to the at-tention of the public, warning it about the counterproductive effects of pushing students way beyond their possibilities of accommodation. Regrettably, the sta-te of American Child Psychology, then steeped in dehumanized Behaviorist assumptions, left a lot to be desired.

> The curriculum reforms of the 1960s opened still another route for the discovery and appreciation of Piaget's work. When the curriculum builders looked to American child psychology for child-development principles that might guide their efforts, they found precious little that was of use. Data on learning gleaned largely from experiments with rats, or with children but using concepts and apparatus designed for animals, had little to offer those who wanted to teach children ma-thematics, science, and social studies. The curriculum builders were forced to look beyond American shores for guidance. (ELKIND, 1976, p. 20)

Lynott and Logue (LYNOTT; LOGUE, 1993) criticize the hurried child thesis by pointing out its lack of accuracy, both qualitative and quantitati-ve, and the negative bias in Elkind's stress test, which assumes that all children suffer the same effects from life events. Reviewing social data, they conclude that hurried child literature romantically distorts the historical record on chil-dhood, neglects differential experience of non-middle class children, excludes reference to stable or positive trends, among other flaws.

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> Contrary to the claims of these authors, the evidence indicates that there has been no large-scale destruction of childhood and adolescence. While this does not deny that problems of drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, gang warfare, and the like exist and need to be taken seriously, it does call into question the alarmist view that childhood has disappeared in contemporary American society. For the vast majority of American children, the "hurried child" is more myth than reality. (LYNOTT; LOGUE, 1993, p. 288)

Granted the empirical shortcomings of the hurried child thesis at the time, it is important that one distinguish between the concept of childhood and childhood itself as a phenomenon in the world. Empirical evidence cannot be used to decide whether the concept of childhood is legitimate or not, as this is a normative epistemological issue. Lynott and Logue ignore the philosophical dimension of Elkind's argument, which is that our culture ought to demarcate a space for children so that they have time to properly accommodate before being exposed to adult media content. *In The Porning of America*, Sarracino and Scott (2008) detail the mainstreaming Black Tantric sexual practics over the internet from the mid-1990s onward, after Lynott and Logue's 1993 paper. One can only wonder whether today they would still stand by their claim that the current destruction of childhood and adolescence is a myth.

Underlying Piaget's American Question is the historical role of the United States of America in the world. In 1944, philosopher Manly Palmer Hall articulated an Alexandrian Neo-Platonic view of America as a major undertaking by ancient enlightened organizations to bring about a world democracy, a beacon to the nations. This would come into being by a multigenerational effort to perfect human beings from within, by educating them to honor and live by the universal principles of altruistic spirituality. Morever, he claims that the universe, not unlike the Dao, would have a pre-determined purpose that would lead us from subjection to liberation. Individuals and nations would be well advised to respect this universal teleogical plan if they intend to survive.

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> Our world is ruled by inflexible laws which control not only the motions of the heavenly bodies, but the consequences of human conduct. These Universal motions, interpreted politically, are impelling human society out of a state of autocracy and tyranny to democracy and freedom. This motion is inevitable, for the growth of humans is a gradual development of mind over matter, and the motion itself represents the natural and reasonable unfoldment of the potentials within human character. / Those who attempt to resist this motion destroy themselves. To cooperate with this motion, and to assist Nature in every possible way to the accomplishment of its inevitable purpose, is to survive. (HALL, 1944, p. 5)

However, he also admits in his Preface that the agents of this project are motivated by private interests, have not yet overcome selfishness, and lack a spiritual conception of human beings.

> Our postwar reconstructors – ours, if not by our selection, at least with our consent – are not outstandingly qualified for this broader task. Few indeed are the statesmen and politicians who have any conception of man as a spiritual being. (HALL, 1944, p. 4)

A case in point would be the establishment of academic institutions. Ratcliff and Tau (2018) explain the interest of the Rockefeller Foundation in financing Piaget's International Center of Genetic Epistemology (in French, Centre International d'Épistémologie Génétique, or CIEG) as a way to reconstruct post-WWII scientific thought aligned with its political and economic interests.

> The cultural policy of the Rockefeller Foundation, whose scholarships and funds for Europe reached $250 million annually during the 1950s, was one of the pillars for the reconstruction of Europe. These programs were an extension of the Marshall Plan through a commitment to the private sector. There are many studies that have reviewed the use of this soft-power or neo-imperialism, in the struggle against the Soviet influence and *the dismantling of any alternative that would disturb the constituted hegemony and the economic order sought*. In this situation, organizations such as the Rockefeller Foundation were the financial support (...), in part, for the intellectual recovery of Europe, through the creation or restoration of laboratories, institutes or other centers of knowledge. Among these was the CIEG. (RATCLIFF; TAU, 2018, p. 1228-9, my emphasis)

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In light of geopolitical developments in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, it would appear that Manly Hall missed the insight of Rudolf Steiner's (1919) vision of an intensification of materialist forces, which he personified in the figure of Ahriman. Superficial observation of recent world events, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, suggests an apocalyptic scenario of end times or Kali Yuga rather than the emergence of institutions that could, if not universalize, at least generalize human freedom and perfection as Hall had hoped. Instead of promoting human development, Malthusian oligarchies and global organizations have spread fear, imposed lockdowns and in general shown themselves incompetent to bring about any kind of democratic new world order that remotely benefits humanity. While it may be forgivable to indulge in wishful thinking by seeking a silver lining in these dark times, Steiner's diagnosis suggests that we turn inward and seek to establish an equilibrium (symbolized by Christ, accessed through Virgin Mary or Goethe's Divine Feminine, and possibly by the Dao) between the current prevailing Ahrimanic materialism and the Luciferian hyperspiritualized enlightenment that came about 6 millenia ago.

> To form a right conception of the historical evolution of mankind during approximately 6000 years, one must grasp that at the one pole stands a Luciferic incarnation, in the center, the incarnation of Christ, and at the other pole the Ahrimanic incarnation. Lucifer is the power that stirs up in man all fanatical, all falsely mystical forces, all that physiologically tends to bring the blood into disorder and so lift man above and outside himself. Ahriman is the power that makes man dry, prosaic, philistine — that ossifies him and brings him to the superstition of materialism. And the true nature and being of man is essentially the effort to hold the balance between the powers of Lucifer and Ahriman; the Christ Impulse helps present humanity to establish this equilibrium. / Thus these two poles — the Luciferic and the Ahrimanic — are continuously present in man. Viewed historically, we find that the Luciferic preponderated in certain currents of cultural development of the pre-Christian age and continued into the first centuries of our era. On the other hand the Ahrimanic influence has been at work since the middle of the fifteenth century and will increase in

strength until an actual incarnation of Ahriman takes place among Western humanity. (STEINER, 1919).

At this point it would seem that we have reached the confines of prophecy and abandoned science altogether. However, by continuing to dismiss spiritual insights such as Hall's or Steiner's as pure nonsense, we keep following the Ahrimanic path to geopolitical self-destruction. At the very least a reconnection and alignment with the Dao is necessary to re-establish a healthy somatic spirituality that resists dehumanization. Scientific materialism, in failing to make sense of the sacred, cannot provide sufficient foundation for human edification. When humans conceptualize themselves as self-glorified apes and reject any transcendent source, be it internal or external to themselves, that provides validation, human dignity as a sacred value is irretrievably lost. Deprived of any spiritual source, archaic tribal mechanisms studied by evolutionary psychologists become the main option for human self-understanding. In this way, Steiner is correct to point out the Ahrimanic character of scientific materialism. He is also right in bringing to our attention the neglected Luciferian dimension of the Aryan past shared by the nations descending from Noah's sons Shem, Ham and Japheth. This may explain the dangerously overspiritualized Aryan mystique (Gobineau) and the often unconscious cult of whiteness and blondism that still torments the contemporary world. It would seem to be an archetypal obsession which humanity has yet to learn how to deal with.

In particular, Manly Hall's vision of America leading a political project of world democracy has not only been perceived, but actually experienced as neo-colonialist oppression, a far cry from universal social justice. In their notorious critique of Donald Duck, Chilean autors Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart sought to unmask the hidden ideological intention behind Disney's media empire.

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> … Disney ... has often been exposed as the travelling salesman of the imagination, the propagandist of the "American Way of Life," and a spokesman of "unreality," But true as it is, such criticism misses the true impulse behind the manufacture of the Disney characters, and the true danger they represent to dependent countries like Chile. The threat derives not so much from their embodiment of the "American Way of Life," as that of the "American Dream of Life." It is the manner in which the U.S. dreams and redeems itself, and then imposes that dream upon others for its own salvation, which poses the danger for the dependent countries. It forces us Latin Americans to see ourselves as they see us. (DORFMAN; MATTELART, 1971, p. 95)

From Dorfman's and Mattelart's perspective, Manly Hall's dream is not just a delusion, but an oppressive deception, because it follows through Rousseau's paradox of compelling people to be free. Latin Americans and other peoples are told what they should aspire to and are denied the right to preserve their traditions. Hall's dream, perhaps beautiful in itself, becomes a nightmare when force-fed through Hollywoodian propaganda and entertainment.

According to semiotician Eero Tarasti (2000), however, Dorfman's and Mattelart's book is too political, technically outdated, and it underestimates the schemata that underlie and explain Disney's global success.

> From a contemporary point of view, their book tends to come off as extremely moralistic finger-pointing. Naturally, behind Disney stands a huge, rationalized entertainment industry, but it is impossible to explain the success of Disney's products by mere capitalist exploitation. There must be something in the semiotic mechanism of the product, something in the message itself, that has an almost universal appeal and persuades people to believe in it. If we could explain the property that enables the functioning of a message in any society, we could reveal something essential about the success of American culture. This last has often been called a "culture of experience," but it is better described as a "culture of persuasion." (TARASTI, 2000, p. 172-3)

2 Disney: The Limits of Edutainment

The Walt Disney Company is famous for its cultural icons and is also perceived as one of the most family-oriented corporations in the world. Working in the children's sector, which by its very nature is perhaps the most sensi-

tive in the market, Disney cannot afford to have its brand or image tarnished in any way. However, in a money-based society corrupting entertainment becomes structurally necessary so that everything can become part of a business transaction. Given this context, the edutainment concept should not be unduly complicated. Put simply, from a marketing perspective, using the sales pitch that entertainment and merchandise for children teach them something or turns them into creative mini-gods adds perceived value to the product. There is little if any evidence or theory to back up the claim scientifically. It is reasonable to suppose that exposure to Disney content does exert some influence, for example, by stimulating children to imitate behaviors they see as being rewarded or that go unpunished. However, as we saw above concerning the controversy on the hurried child, the attempt to measure the psychological impact of Disney media on children is epistemologically problematic.

The purpose of this essay is philosophical, so it leaves to the reader the judgment as to what is proper for children, but tries to examine two threats, adultcentrism and ethnocentrism, which are worth paying attention to because of their structural and not merely conjunctural character. Adultcentrism (term coined by Jean Piaget) consists in the tendency to underestimate the child's view and impose our adult perspective on phenomenona. Besides 'adultcentrism,' other terms sometimes used are 'adultmorphism' and 'adultism.' The latter term carries the strongest political connotations of prejudice and discrimination. 'Adultcentrism' shall be used because it is more common than 'adultmorphism' and because its approach is clearly epistemological. The relation between adultcentrism and adultism is possible but not necessary. As adults, we tend to be centered in our mature cognitive perspective, which will tend to distort our perceptions of children's cognitive performance. However, this does not necessarily imply that adults cannot try to avoid adultism as a bias. On the

contrary, becoming aware of adultcentrism can be critical to overcome adultism. Ethnocentrism is characterized by the preference we give to our culture of origin, creating a bias of perspective that induces us to understand the culture of the other as having less value. Both are universal and are recognised as fundamental methodological problems in the social human sciences. In an applied pedagogical context, they become threats to efficient action because the epistemological subject tends to forget itself and deny its own biases, believing it can represent the world as something purely objective and absolute.

2.1 Adultcentrism: The Disney on Ice (1999) and Frozen (2013) Cases

Adultcentrism manifests itself as the inability of the adult to exchange roles with the child and to capture and appreciate his or her perspective. It can be opposed to child-centrism, which interprets adult behavioural *schèmes* by reducing them to infantile motivations, thus creating a simplified distortion that would ignore the complexity acquired during later development.

Psychoanalyst Bernard Robinson (ROBINSON, 1997) treats the relationship between adultcentrism and child-centrism as a dialectical political game. On the one hand, the adult-centered perspective is paternalistic and authoritarian, regarding children's abilities negatively as incomplete or insufficient (it highlights that the child cannot yet do this or that). The children remain condemned to minority status. Their humanity is inferior and subordinate. There would even be an animalization of the child, as Robinson explains:

> En effet l'inconvénient de cette perspective adultocentriste c'est qu'elle occulte ce en quoi l'enfant est déjà pleinement humain, et non partiellement ou progressivement humain. Son animalité en développement, ou son animalité en achèvement n'empêche évidemment pas

> que l'enfant parle comme un humain, utilise des outils comme un humain et invente des règles comme un humain. (ROBINSON, 1997)[3]

Child-centrism then emerges as the extreme opposite perspective, in which the child is prioritized over the adult. This gives rise to a concern to treat child linguistic and behavioral schemata from a perspective closer to that of the child itself, not that of the adult. The negative description of children's limitations is converted into a positive record of their achievements. The result, Robinson explains, is that the child is humanized. The child becomes a person, different from the adult, but at least equal in some rights. However, the danger that Robinson sees in child-centrism lies in the use of this child-adult equality, or even elevation of the child over the adult, to justify the neglect of children's needs. In practice, he claims, what happens is that by treating children as adults we relieve ourselves of the duty to educate and socialize them.

To balance these two extremes of adultcentrism and child-centrism, Robinson proposes the formula "the child is in the adult and the adult is in the child." On the one hand, we must recognize that the child is human from the beginning with regard to the use of signs, tools and norms. On the other hand, we cannot demand from children reflective and social skills that they can only develop with the help of adults. We have, he rightly argues, a duty to take responsibility for the training of new citizens.

As far as Disney is concerned, it should be noted first of all that adultcentrism was avoided by Walt from the outset, when he used Harold Lloyd's pre-show technique in 1928 for the short film *Steamboat Willie*. This preview was attended by children and Walt Disney closely observed their reaction to the

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[3] "Indeed, the disadvantage of this adultocentric perspective is that it obscures what makes the child already fully human, and not partially or progressively human. His developing animality, or his animality towards completion, obviously doesn't prevent the child from talking like a human, using tools like a human, and inventing rules like a human." (ROBINSON, 1997, my translation)

film. There is no doubt that without this willingness to rescue the child's perspective, we would have had from Disney a mere Ford-like imposition of products that would perhaps meet the expectations of parents, but not those of children. Therefore, an accusation of adultcentrism is groundless even more so because its rejection is part of the very formula of Disney's success.

As a methodological problem, however, adultcentrism never ceases to be present for adults, and the control of this bias should be a constant concern of the researcher, especially in the study of child-adult dialogue. At least two instances can be mentioned in which this theoretical-methodological concern was proven to be relevant in practice.

In late 1999, Andy Mooney, head of the consumer products division, noticed, while watching his first *Disney on Ice show*, that many girls wore improvised princess clothes that were not Disney products (ORENSTEIN, 2006). After that, Mooney began research for the creation of the Disney Princess franchise launched in January 2000. Currently, the annual profit from the sale of these products is in the order of billions of dollars.

In November 2013, with the spectacular success of the film *Frozen*, Disney was unable to meet demand until a year later, generating numerous complaints. Beyond the logistical aspect, the unpredictable character of this success reveals adult gaps in understanding of what pleases children. It is important to remember that many of the cultural industry's products follow well-established standards and formulas due to their commercial success. Despite this standardization, *Frozen's* hit songs, especially "Let it go" by the character Elsa (an Enneagram Type 4 personality), pleased the children so much that they not only memorized them, but would not stop singing them, generating a mania and tormenting their parents (the media called the phenomenon "Frozen

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fatigue"). *Frozen's* director, Jennifer Lee, went as far as to publicly apologize to parents for this inconvenience (HUNT, 2014).

However, this very apology can be understood as an example of paternalistic adultcentrism. More reflection is needed on the causes for children's fascination with the hook of "Let it go" and even on how the relationship between sisters Anna (an Enneagram Type 6 personality) and Elsa may have enabled them to deal with their own family issues. The problem with the apology is twofold. If, on the one hand, the mechanisms of child enchantment are already adultcentrically misunderstood, on the other hand, when they as it were "accidentally" happen to work very well, they create a supposed "collateral damage" for parents, who are more customers than users. Adultcentrism appears in double dose when the director of the film dismisses the children's fascination as a mere inconvenience, but considers that triggering it is amply justified in the name of the search for success and profit. It then becomes hard to avoid the perception that magic is being used without contributing to healthy child development. Thus, the idea of combining entertainment and education endorsed by Walt Disney begins to show its limitations in his corporate successors, reviving archaic fears that were played upon in the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

It is important to remember that the child-adult communication is asymmetrical. According to Prescott (1987), children (1) learn appropriate acts of argumentative speech early; (2) assimilate the underlying discursive rules and argumentative roles early, and are able to employ them to defend their points of view; (3) can mobilize only simple argumentative structures, but are able to respond appropriately to complex arguments; and (4) attribute a leading role to adults as mediators and judges in child-child and child-adult disputes. More recently, Bova (2015) shows that to confront the opinion of an adult, the

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child will not appeal to the opinion of another child, but to that of another adult. Asymmetries of this kind must be taken seriously. Kavanagh (2013) calls attention to the lack of concern for child-adult asymmetry in Organization Studies. Among other things, the weight of adult authority means that the child remains in a subordinate or subaltern (Gayatri Spivak) position and therefore lacks the capacity to assert his or her point of view. An unscrupulous corporation can easily take advantage of this, especially if it has the consent of parents on its side. Recognizing this asymmetry of child-adult communication is indispensable not only to identify and correct organizational flaws that impair business efficiency, but also to defend the rights of children as stakeholders and future citizens.

2.2 Ethnocentrism: The Eurodisney Case (1987)

The initial conception of Disney theme parks was to create a tourist attraction near the studios in Burbank, California, but, like almost everything at Disney, it took on a life of its own, developed and spread throughout the world. After the success of Disneyland in 1955, Walt Disney World Resort in 1971 and Disneyland Tokyo in 1983, the corporation started to look for a suitable place to set foot in continental Europe. The two most promising alternatives were Spain and France. Disney's negotiators had several advantages. Not only could they boast a solid track record of success, but the rivalry between the two potential host countries made them compete to provide facilities for the establishment of the theme park. In this eagerness to attract Disney, nation-states typically are willing to use public funds to provide the necessary infrastructure for theme parks, which generates suspicions of corruption.

The choice for France, as Newell (2013) explains, was already decided beforehand, as Walt Disney wanted to honour his French ancestors (the name 'Disney' is an anglicisation of D'Isigny). The then executive president Mi-

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chael Eisner had spent his childhood there and had friendly relations with Jacques Chirac. Robert Fitzpatrick, an academic fluent in French, was appointed executive director of Eurodisney in 1987, with the expectation that his linguistic competence would generate goodwill on the French side.

The Eurodisney case shows, however, that linguistic competence, while necessary, is not sufficient for successful leadership and negotiation without assimilation and accommodation of organizational schemata. Local and organisational culture need to be fine-tuned and language is only an indispensable starting point for this. In the Eurodisney case, the Disney negotiators' self-confidence was perceived as arrogance by the French public. The lack of familiarity with the local culture of Marne-la-Vallée, traditionally agricultural, led planners to overestimate the attractiveness of the jobs they would offer in the theme park. In addition to labour problems, logistical, political and cyclical problems also arose. Disney's ethnocentrism was made manifest too by its resistance to allow alcohol consumption in the park and by its refusal to rename the attractions in French terms. As Newell notes, ethnocentrism in international negotiation means that one party regards its culture as superior and tries to impose its standards, while the other party resists and tries to impose its own.

The financial loss with the opening of the French park only began to be reversed after Fitzpatrick was replaced by Philippe Bourgignon in 1993. Among the new measures Bourgignon took were regular meetings with officials (two breakfasts a week), accommodation to French job categories and work timetables. According to Newell, by listening to employee demands and re-establishing a French working environment, Bourgignon significantly improved Eurodisney's intra-organisational communication.

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In its external communication, the French executive director prioritized the satisfaction of European clients, showing sensitivity to their interests through special discounts, targeting parents with advertising, opening offices in several European countries and promoting diverse packages. This accommodation to European schemata and scripts did not, however, alter Americanized merchandising at Eurodisney, because the initial assumption that European visitors would prefer more sophisticated designer products than shirts and caps proved to be false. The same occurred in the food sector with fast food, while alcohol consumption was permitted as a concession to local culture. This is important because it shows that Eurodisney's initial failure cannot be attributed solely to a supposed xenophobic or anti-American attitude by Europeans. The maintenance and even the emphasis on typical American merchandising catered to European consumers' expectations and scripts.

It should be noted, however, that despite these accommodations implemented by Bourgignon, it was only from 1995 onwards that Eurodisney became profitable, and that without emergency funds from the head office and the substantial investment by Saudi Prince Al-Waleed Bin Tahal, who was willing to acquire a 24.5% stake, the enterprise would have suffered a humiliating bankruptcy.

2.3 Language-Perception Manipulation

From a linguistic point of view, Disney produces specific jargon (DISNEY, 1967) that not only facilitates internal communication, but also prevents guests from eventually getting scared in an accident, for example. Employees are all indistinctly called "cast members," from the cleaners and maintenance workers of the parks to the managers to the hired artists. Visitors are called guests, and everything in sight is called a show. If the backstage is revealed, it's called a bad show. If cast members break the rules and remove their costu-

me in sight of the guests, the bad show justifies their automatic firing. Disney jargon thus creates an alternative interpretation of reality that is somewhat manipulative. In the manual for Disneyland employees, the section "Disneyland Terms" explains the new language to the future employee.

> Disneyland's a land of its own, separated from the outside world by a protective earthen wall we call a "berm". We have our own Disney ways ... and a language of our own. [...] We don't have "guards" to keep people out. On the contrary, we have SECURITY OFFICERS who are here to serve and protect both guests and personnel. Uniforms are for the Army where things must be ... well ... "uniform". We wear COSTUMES. We hope it doesn't come as a shock ... since you'll get paid every week ... but you don't even have a job. The fact is that you play a ROLE in our Disneyland show. (DISNEY, 1967, p.18)

Social commentators like Umberto Eco (1990) and Jean Baudrillard (1981) have talked about hyper-reality at Disneyland, pointing out the paradoxical combination of escape into fantasy (escapism), the mechanization of entertainment, and the extreme detail and artificiality of its attractions. It is also important to remember that the rules for "cast members" can be considered dehumanizing because they regulate their body language (the Disney smile, posture, gestures). Given this degree of language and perception manipulation, the degree to which edutainment is educational at all could be called into question.

2.4 Transpersonal Critical Theory of Organizations: Moral-Spiritual Concerns

As a company involved with products aimed at children and youth, the level of scrutiny to which Disney is subjected is high, because in spite of the secularization of Jewish-Christian society and the resulting loss of a clear and consensual criterion of the sacred, the welfare of children is a central concern to most parents. Capitalism fosters liberal attitudes regarding consumption and lifestyles, but it is difficult for parents to entirely avoid petty bourgeois (or

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middle-class family) social values that are to some extent conservative Judaeo-Christian.

The term 'corruption' as defined by Transparency International means 'the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.' In this sense, Disney is rarely affected by accusations of undue influence upon public agencies, although they can occur in the case of theme park constructions, as they occupy huge areas, demand vast infrastructure and affect the environment and local culture. The population and its representatives really need to consider the costs and benefits generated by tourism before the park is built.

However, as Newell (2013) shows, Disney enjoys such prestige that by entering into negotiations with the French government to create Eurodisney it was able to gain important advantages with relative ease. The company's negotiators were well informed about French legislation and chose the Valley of Marne because it was outside the jurisdiction of the Mayor of Paris. In this way, they were able to negotiate directly with the French central government.

Journalist Carl Hiaasen, a Disney critic, reports two cases in which the company's power might cross the line. The most important is the creation of the Reedy Creek Improvement District (HIAASEN, 1998). This district was created by Florida lawmakers from all the land purchased by Walt Disney's agents during the 1960s granting considerable autonomy to the company. According to Hiaasen, although legally distinct, in practice everyone in Orlando knows that Reedy Creek and Disney are the same thing. In the district, Disney becomes responsible for public services at Reedy Creek and is authorized to collect taxes, create a cemetery, school, police and fire department, criminal justice court, international airport and even a nuclear power plant. Reedy Creek represents a privatisation of the state. Richard E. Foglesong (2001) agrees that the economic

development deal with the state of Florida allows Disney to act either as a private or as a public entity, according to its corporate interest.

The second case mentioned by Hiaasen is that of the city of Haymarket, Virginia, where a theme park on the history of the United States, Disney's America, was going to be built. In November 1993, Disney lawyers demanded more than US$200 million in state funds for transportation improvements and an additional 75 million from the county for water, sewage treatment and landscaping. Not only the high costs, but also the arrogant way in which these requests were presented increased the resistance of the local community, concerned not only with an overwhelming influx of tourists, but also with the proximity of the park to the Civil War Memorial. In the end, the project was abandoned. Again, one cannot call this corruption, but it displayed how a corporation exert pressure to impose its interests on the public.

A book by Peter and Rochelle Schweizer (1998) uses the term 'corruption' in its (sub)title (*Disney, The Mouse Betrayed: Greed, Corruption, and Children at Risk*), but the authors' concern is more moral than financial. Disney critics often hope to find acceptance among readers worried about the possible presence of questionable content in the company's products. They usually start by speaking well of Walt Disney, and then go on to describe Michael Eisner as the villain who unscrupulously raised the price of theme park tickets and even acquired the Weinstein brothers' controversial production and distribution company, Miramax.

Other authors, such as Henry Giroux (1999), prefer to focus on Disney's cultural policy. According to Giroux, global media corporations are dangerous not only because they can mask their corporate agenda by appealing to innocence, fun and purity, while distorting and appropriating traditional cultu-

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res. Besides that, they represent a threat to democracy because they control information and monopolize the regulation of public space.

According to Foglesong, in trying to provide a governance solution to modern urban problems, Disney consultants developed a reformist agenda to remove what they considered to be their main obstacles: traditional property rights and elected political representatives. Both capitalism and democracy are inconvenient for Disney because they prevent the concentration of effort. In Foglesong's words, "The Disney solution was centralized administration—benign, paternalistic, based on expertise." (FOGLESONG, 2001, p. xii). Schweizer and Schweizer conclude that, especially after Eisner, "Disney has become a company that seems all too willing to take amazing risks with its customers, employees, and reputation." (SCHWEIZER; SCHWEIZER, 1998, p. 275).

Could this bring about, as Jewish Critical Theorists Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin feared, the nightmare of fascism? According to Alain de Botton, Adorno declared Walt Disney to be the most dangerous man in America.[4] According to Miriam Hansen, Benjamin's concern that Disney's animation technology could help to spread fascism was vindicated because Adolf Hitler was a fan of Mickey Mouse. Despite official bans from the National Socialists, Disney content circulated freely during World War II, to the point that Mickey could be seen painted as a mascot on German fighter planes (HANSEN, 1993). More recently, the famous actress Meryl Streep, in her speech to the National Board of Review, accused Walt Disney of racism, anti-Semitism and sexism, and was then soon supported by Abigail Disney, the artist-entrepreneur's grandniece (BEAUMONT-THOMAS, 2014).

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[4] Unfortunately, de Botton does not provide the reference for this statement.

For Jürgen Habermas, the major representative of the Frankfurt School's second generation of Critical Theory, family and community life belong to what Husserl called the "lifeworld" or "world of life" (in German, *Lebenswelt*), which is experienced subjectively, in a distinct sphere as that of burocratic systems of economic, political, legal, military, etc. functions, which follow a so-called instrumental rationality, in which means are optimized to accomplish ends. In the lifeworld, meaning is built by communicative action according to an ethics of discourse. Systems are needed only to sustain or mediate meaning in the lifeworld. In modernity, however, Habermas sees a tension between the systemic level and the lifeworld level, as the former overwhelms the latter. In the words of the German sociologist:

> Am Ende verdrängen systemische Mechanismen Formen der sozialen Integration auch in jenen Bereichen, wo die konsensabhängige Handlungskoordinierung nicht substituiert werden kann: also dort, wo die symbolische Reproduktion der Lebenswelt auf dem Spiel steht. Dann nimmt die Mediatisierung der Lebenswelt die Gestalt einer Kolonialisierung an. (HABERMAS, 1981, p. 293)[5]

Although Habermas does not mention Disney, to the extent that family life is being dominated by systemic mechanisms in which profit and power prevail, colonization of the lifeworld is taking place. If parents feel obliged to hire Disney services to prove the love they have for their children in the latter's perception, then an instrumentalisation of affective bonds will have occurred. Acts of consumption cannot substitute the affection that parents owe their children. The colonization of the lifeworld, as theorized by Habermas, can be understood as a type of corruption because it empties spiritual meaning and substitutes the communicative and consensual logic of the lifeworld by the instrumental rationality of social systems.

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[5] "In the end, systemic mechanisms suppress forms of social integration also in those areas, in which consensual coordination of action cannot be substituted: hence there, where the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld is at risk. At that point the mediafication of the lifeworld takes on the form of colonization." (HABERMAS, 1981, p. 293, my translation)

A further possibility, offered up by Jean Baudrillard, lies in understanding the corruption caused by Disney as the infantilization of adults through the game of simulacrum and manipulation of reality. Pursuing profits, other companies take advantage of the fascination of the Disney brand, and put out fake products for these adults, infantilized parents.

> L'imaginaire de Disneyland n'est ni vrai ni faux, c'est une machine de dissuasion mise en scène pour régénérer en contre-champ la fiction du réel. D'où la débilité de cet imaginaire, sa dégénérescence infantile. Ce monde se veut enfantin pour faire croire que les adultes sont ailleurs, dans le monde <<réel>>, et pour cacher que la véritable infantilité est partout, et c'est celle des adultes eux-mêmes qui viennent jouer ici à l'enfant pour faire illusion sur leur infantilité réelle. (BAUDRILLARD, 1981, p. 26)[6]

In sum, while the concerns of Critical Theorists of Organizations certainly deserve to be taken note of, they are often either faith-based, such as Ferraiuolo (1996) and Pinsky (2004), or guided by Marxist historical materialism, such as Frankfurt School Critical Theory. Both are dogmatic. A transpersonal approach that is not only open to spiritual experience, but that recognizes the connection to inner transcendence of the Dao or Logos as the main critical standard to determine dehumanization is needed for emancipatory social commentary. This Transpersonal Critical Theory of Organizations can as of yet only be hinted at, and hopefully this essay will contribute to its future development.

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[6] "Disneyland's imagery is neither true nor false, it is a deterrent machine set in motion to regenerate in counterfield the fiction of the real. Hence the weakness of this imaginary, its infantile degeneration. This world wants to be childish in order to make adults believe that they are elsewhere, in the "real" world, and to hide that true childishness is everywhere, and it is the adults themselves who come to play the role of children to delude themselves about their real childishness." (BAUDRILLARD, 1981, p. 26, my translation)

Closing Remarks

Piaget and Disney are the two of most important forces that shaped our understanding of childhood in the 20th century, albeit in very different ways. Education, with or without entertainment value, shall remain a daunting task for parents, communities and nations. To meet this challenge, sensitivity to children's stage of development and freedom to make proper adjustments, regardless of state requirements, is of paramount importance to avoid bad outcomes. Parents, as citizens, have the right and duty to associate and to speak out against education and entertainment they perceive to be inadequate for their children. Multinational corporations and the state can never be assumed to have children's best interests at heart. However, parents should be mindful that children's needs are particularly complex and that as adults our bias may make things harder than they need to be. Regardless of religious filiation, parents may want to ponder whether scientific materialism is really as spiritually neutral as it is claimed to be, and whether it is the best philosophy to educate children and to form complete human beings in a healthy society that lives by something definite it can worship as sacred.

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