

TOWARDS AN AMERICAN CRITICAL AESTHETIC PEDAGOGY AFTER AUSCHWITZ

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to critically rethink the logic of education in order to highlight its totalitarian potential. It proposes an understanding of the internal nature of conflicts present in education governed by “reason”; the same reason that had its most finished symbol in Auschwitz and that continues to distort the humanist project. Reason feeds the State, bureaucracy, technological instrumentalization, and mechanical precision, in a word: the triumph of death over hope. Critical education is an act of resistance in the construction of a society where horror and meaninglessness cannot be repeated.

It is necessary to start from a social and sociological perspective of education and pedagogy³⁷, addressing the critical study of human relations with a particular sensitivity towards the question of the human. Beyond quantitatively analyzing the prevailing educational models of today, studying macrostructural standards and guidelines of pedagogy, we must consider or recover the idea of education as an ideology, as a human project, and consider it in turn as a personalization of power, typical of a logic of domination. This approach would allow us to conceptually address the problems of American critical pedagogy from a more canonical socio-anthropological and philosophical study.

The challenges of education in the 21st century was established by Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their famous 1969 text *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, which calls us to “mock logic when it is against humanity.” This statement invites us to critically

37 In general, we will establish a difference in Education and Pedagogy. Understanding education as a phenomenon of schooling, that is, of a process that justifies itself in school failure, homogenizing and denying diversity, continuously focused on the contents (definitive answers) and not on the generation of emergent relationships, forcing the repetition of pre-established relationships, where it satisfies the reiteration of naïve questions whose answers we know and where we deepen cultural deprivation: language, ethical and political commitment. However, pedagogy would be the real educational act, the space where we favor the creation of possible relationships, infinite bonding relationships, regardless of whether they are true or false, understanding that only a few actions will be carried out according to scientific and technological advances, which we consider as true and pertinent to our coexistence. So, learning takes place through mediation, with innocent questioning, which germinates in ignorance and in the processual character, simplifying complexity, creating search criteria, investigating indications, regularities, patterns, playfully changing the criteria to see what happens. In the pedagogical act, self-organization is facilitated, which generates increasing complexity, which is not explained by its components, favoring the development of cognitive functions and mental operations of everyone.

rethink the logic of education or pedagogical models and whether they take on the challenge of founding humanity. In turn, this brief maxim could serve as a programmatic principle for any American critical pedagogical project.

Thus, the initial task is to investigate the relationship between an explicit, public, and conscious educational facade and a latent, hidden, and private educational sphere. In other words, it involves relating the conscious to the pedagogical unconscious to understand whether this darker sphere of education harbors fascist and authoritarian impulses. Today more than ever it is vital to highlight the totalitarian potential of education, which, in the global, regional, and local contexts, is enabling the rise of emerging fascist political movements in their discourses and practices. Emphasis must be placed on the so-called sociological dimension of education, which affirms the propensity of citizens to authoritarian dynamics, as something typical of the historical and cultural foundation of modernity, established in exclusion, prioritizing oneself over another, a reason and European logic over any other expression or trace of thought.

Traditionally, or classically, education understands society as a homogeneous and compact whole, typical of the Western reductionist exercise in its origin. This perspective views societal problems as arising from the intrusion of an enemy, an Other who threatens, an outsider, an irrational or antisocial, or a primitive and barbaric state. The prevailing belief is that once the enemy is educated (or eliminated), society will return to a state of justice. Thus, modern society, which emerges with reason, which materializes during the French Revolution and triumphs in bourgeois capitalism, appears to us as a structurally contradictory whole. Our community relies on the rational nature of the human being, which, paradoxically, is also the source of exclusion and marginalization. In this context, education promotes a principle of differentiation that distances us from the animalistic, inhuman, and technical aspects. Thus, the common and intrinsic aspect of a “human us” is to differentiate, exclude, and marginalize. Reason plays a crucial role in this process, as pedagogy is considered the full exercise of rationality. Consequently, it establishes a relationship of authority over the natural environment, asserting the dominance of the intellectual over the sensitive. It thus initiates a logical process of selectivity.

The challenge for a American critical pedagogy is to recognize that there is no external enemy to be eliminated, nor an alien or marginal element that invades, contaminates, or prevents us from achieving the just society we desire. Instead, it is about understanding the internal nature of these conflicts, acknowledging that the humanistic project is founded on these contradictions, and reinterpreting them based on their

historical nature, while recovering the utopian myth of a community where humans live peacefully with each other and with nature, incorporating the Other³⁸.

Consequently, traditional pedagogical dynamics are characterized by identifying an enemy. From the moment authority is exercised, a structurally conflictive situation begins to be accepted. An enemy is created, personified, and imagined as the source of all conflicts. In the best-case scenario, the enemy is attributed an eccentric personality, experiencing a kind of fracture between the external and internal worlds. The enemy's inner nature is perceived as pure, projecting evil onto the external world. Thus, educational obsessions and pedagogical paranoia arise—a form of attempting to externalize the evil by projecting it onto others. Isolating an individual or a group and blaming them for the world's problems equates to concealing the genuinely conflictive elements of modern society by medicating, imprisoning, excluding, separating, and normalizing them.

The last century has radically compelled us to acknowledge that the concept of education operates within a modern paradigm, centering around the “goddess” of reason. This is typical of an Enlightenment project that, however, is fully realized or materialized in the figure of Auschwitz. Auschwitz, as a symbol, represents the splendor of reason, the consolidation of the European educational model, culture, and modern society. Yet it also introduces the notion of human history as a continuous catastrophe and depicts modern society as an oppressive totality, embodying the totalitarian and repressive nature of technique, technology, and science. In the eyes of technical reason, everything is revealed. We often recall Walter Benjamin's image of the angel of history observing progress as a heap of ruins and corpses with each step³⁹. Today, we

38 It also seems that Hegelian totalization, the system, is beginning to dismember. On this horizon, beyond classical humanism or existential despair, a new humanism begins to take shape: the humanism of the other man. A humanism that is more concerned with the hunger and misery of others than with safeguarding the property, freedom and dignity of subjectivity itself (Levinas, 1974).

39 There is a painting by Klee entitled *Angelus Novus*. An angel is seen in him, apparently at the moment of moving away from something on which he is staring. His eyes are wide open, his mouth open and his wings outstretched. The angel of history must look like that. His face is turned to the past. In what appears to us as a chain of events, he sees a catastrophe, which throws ruin upon ruin at his feet, heaping them incessantly piling them up. The angel would like to stop, awaken the dead and put back together what has been destroyed. But a hurricane blows from paradise and swirls on his wings, and it is so strong that the angel can no longer fold them. This hurricane irresistibly drags him into the future, to which he turns his back, while the pile of ruins grows before him to the sky. This hurricane is what we call progress (Benjamin, 2008).

take for granted the inhuman nature of the Holocaust, but it must be noted that it was not a result of passionate hatred or emotional, natural, or animalistic forces, but rather a horror that emerged from reason, from modern technique, from the most human aspect we had established. Auschwitz represents the death of humanity by human hands⁴⁰.

Education after Auschwitz thus becomes the paradigm through which we must interpret the distortion of the humanist project. The extermination camp, with its stringent rules and its dehumanizing aspect, graphically represents the idea of an oppressive whole that crushes the individual, the human subjectivity. It is a concrete historical image that comes from a metaphor of totalitarian society. The prisoner who wanders soullessly through the extermination camp assumes the symbolic role of the human condition⁴¹. Auschwitz is an event that, in its inhuman complexity, remains ineffably human, too human.

Let us then agree that the Nazi extermination, the holocaust, is not just another historical event. What happened in Germany between the late 1930s and 1945 is completely singular. That is why all attempts to reduce the Holocaust to a historical drama, to just another episode in the histories of wars, represent a trivialization of the historical

40 (...) The end of man is the return to the beginning of philosophy. Today one can only think of the emptiness of the disappeared man. For this emptiness does not deepen a lack; it does not prescribe a gap that must be filled. It is nothing more, nothing less, than the unfolding of a space in which it is finally possible to think again (Foucault, 1968).

41 Primo Levi refers to the emblematic figure of the "Muslim": All Muslims who go to the gas have the same story, or rather, they have no history (...), they have been overwhelmed before they have been able to adapt; have been defeated before they begin (...). Their life is brief, but their number is immeasurable; they are the Muselmänner, the sunken ones, the foundations of the countryside, they, the anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and work in silence, the divine flame extinguished in them, too empty to truly suffer (...) One hesitates to call them alive: one hesitates to call death their death, before which they are not afraid, because they are too tired to understand it. They are the ones who populate my memory with their faceless presence, and if I could enclose all the evil of our time in an image, I would choose this image, which is familiar to me: an emaciated man, with his head bowed and his shoulders bent, on whose face and in whose eyes not a trace of thought can be read (Levi, 2002)

tragedy of humanity. The challenge in education is to ensure that Auschwitz does not repeat itself. A pedagogy of horror is needed that does not trivialize human actions ⁴².

Auschwitz contains an element that must always be brought to the forefront: the cold planning, the image of a calculated, surgical, programmed extermination. It was reasoned and conceived in its fullest extent. What the Nazi Holocaust brought to modern education was the bureaucratic and indifferent nature of mass murder. This is what Hanna Arendt referred to as “the banality of evil” in her acclaimed 1964 book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*⁴³. Imagine the modern educator as that cold, calculating individual, concerned with and dedicated to the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Education, efficiently carrying out the orders of the authorities. The ultimate horror had emerged from technological instrumentalization, from the mechanical precision with which modern capitalist mass society was constructed. Let us briefly envision the educational space as akin to the extermination camp.

42 The demand that Auschwitz not be repeated is the first of all those that must be put to education. It precedes any other so absolutely that I do not think I should or have to substantiate it. I cannot understand why so little attention has been devoted to it so far. In the face of the monstrosity of what happened, substantiating it would have something monstrous. That so little awareness has been taken of this demand, and of the questions and issues that go hand in hand with it, shows, however, that the monstrous has not penetrated people enough. This is still a symptom of the persistence of the possibility of repeating what happened if it depends on the state of consciousness and unconsciousness of people. Any possible debate on educational ideals is vain and indifferent in comparison to this: that Auschwitz should not be repeated (Adorno, 1998)

43 (...) When I speak of the banality of evil, I do so only on a strictly objective level, and I limit myself to pointing out a phenomenon that, during the trial, became evident. Eichmann was neither an Iago nor a Macbeth, and nothing could be further from his intentions than “to turn out to be a villain”, in the words of Richard III. Eichmann had no motives, except those shown by his extraordinary diligence to make his personal progress. And, in itself, such diligence was not criminal; Eichmann would have been absolutely incapable of assassinating his superior in order to inherit his position. To put it in plain words, we can say that Eichmann simply never knew what he was doing (...). No, Eichmann was not stupid. It was only pure and simple thoughtlessness, which we can in no way equate with stupidity, that predisposed him to become the greatest criminal of his time. And if this deserves to be classified as “banality”, and may even seem comical, and even with the best of intentions it is not possible to attribute to Eichmann diabolical depth, it is also true that we cannot say that it is something normal or common (...). Indeed, one of the lessons of the Jerusalem trial was that such detachment from reality and thoughtlessness can do more harm than all the evil instincts inherent, perhaps, of human nature. But it was only a lesson, not an explanation of the phenomenon, nor a theory about it (Arendt,

The enormous task of American critical pedagogy is to recognize that, in the field, the traditional modern pedagogical space, the individual is stripped of their last and poorest remnant, their singularity. The fact that in the camps individuals no longer died as individuals but as human beings directly affect education, as it enabled the complete integration of the humanistic project into the logic of modern scientific instrumentalism. In education, in the camp, people are leveled, polished, until their perfect nullity. We must literally think of the educational space as the place where individuality and subjectivity are exterminated. Moreover, Auschwitz confirms the philosophical notion of pure identity as death.

Once this image is drawn, Auschwitz appears as a point of no return. The imperative task and challenge of American critical pedagogy is to ensure that Auschwitz does not repeat itself. The concerning and alarming fact is that we are referring to an ongoing phenomenon, one that occurred a century ago.

On the other hand, education after Auschwitz has demonstrated its ability to fully exploit all the possibilities offered by technological and bureaucratic progress, and thus also by the state apparatus of which European democracies were proud. The modern state, procedural bureaucracy, scientific technique, and development have advanced together, but what they have produced is not progress in freedom, but rather the development of death and meaninglessness. The only thing that can be done, now more than ever, is to resist. The very idea of education must be seen as an act of resistance, an action to ensure that Auschwitz is never repeated.

The horror of extermination has placed the concept of pedagogy itself in a dilemma, since it is in Enlightenment thought, with its proclamations of liberty, equality, and fraternity, that the concept of reason is forcibly imposed on all emotional, touching, or sensitive aspects. It is the reason of the defeated that violently establishes the Enlightenment logic, applying abstract and rigid categories to everyday activities, such as progress, development, and evolution. Thus, the bureaucracy of the regime enslaved human behavior and oppresses desires, emotions, and sensations. Therefore, education today cannot continue to act in this way if it does not want to remain within the dialectic of Enlightenment and continue to repeat (and tolerate) barbarism.

It is necessary to break the cycle of the eternal return of violence and for education to begin to behave compassionately with what it wants to form. We will have to redefine what it means to be human. Theodor W. Adorno presents us with the image of the constellation, where it is easy to observe the configurations of reality without imposing a

forced constriction upon them. It seems that pedagogy today, centered on the logic of the indexed paper market, represents the configuration of reality.

Therefore, a possible form of resistance for American critical pedagogies is the return to the aesthetic experience in the educational act. Traditionally, aesthetics is regarded as a discipline that deals exclusively with artistic and natural beauty. This places us in the immeasurable task of addressing the aesthetic experience in the educational act as an initial reflection on the nature of pedagogies, their critical meaning, and their position within American culture. Education would be understood primarily as a product capable of saying something about the culture that created it, rather than as an object to be studied from the point of view of its reception. American critical pedagogy is a form of knowledge that allows to read against the light the reality in which the very idea of education has been constructed. Therefore, if we acknowledge that the educational act arises from an aesthetic experience, it liberates the idea of education from doctrinal (authoritarian) constraints and acquires an autonomous character and a protest against the oppressive society. Its free and autonomous figuration of pedagogy would be capable of revealing its inhuman nature. The modern capitalist society, which represses the individual through production and consumption, and which, in the last century, generated the massification of the individual and the loss of subjectivity, has made the aesthetic experience merely a function of the cultural industry that has standardized, normalized, and structured all possible artistic enjoyment, reducing it to a formula of standardized evaluations based on established competencies.

American critical pedagogy must assert its own structural freedom and, in doing so, reveal the oppressive and contradictory nature of the hegemonic modern society. In the aesthetic experience, it is not possible to interpret educational content univocally and immediately; rather, it tasks us with presenting the situation of an alienated and massified world, but it does so in the light of its own formal freedom. Ultimately, this is the only promise of happiness left for pedagogy. Education in the 21st century must engage with the dynamics of an oppressive society while simultaneously demonstrating the possibility of escaping from it. It cannot act as if everything were fine; it must take the suffering of the world seriously and, consequently, indicate the possibility of escaping the pain it imposes. This would entail adopting a form of negative dialectics as a teaching methodology, which involves a procedure where, following an initial reciprocal negation, some form of reconciliation occurs. Thus, negation is followed by affirmation.

Classical education presupposes that reality has reached a state of reconciliation where the oppositions of dialectics have been definitively resolved. This is under a positive dialectic that fails to adequately consider the negativity of the real. Therefore, the great challenge for American critical pedagogy is to build itself from a negative dialectic, from a thought where understanding the world never presumes to be closed. It must challenge the oppressive totality in which the individual is crushed by the social system. What must be opposed is an education that places the negative character at its very center. The oppositions that reality encounters cannot be conceived as resolved. On the contrary, one must insist on their real opposition.

This pedagogical thought renounces imposing reality and instead attempts to restore the authentically concrete nature of reality. The educational objective is to give life to a reconfiguration of the values of the Enlightenment, redirecting the phenomena of the world towards rationality. The first step, therefore, is to recognize that objects of knowledge, educational contents, do not resolve their essence once conceptually understood (competency acquisition). This concept of education means acknowledging the insufficiency of the scientific understanding of the world. The science of education, when viewed as a comprehensive explanation of the world, reveals its own limits. An economy based exclusively on mathematical laws, a sociology based only on quantitative research, a psychology that limits itself to empirical study of the brain correspond to repressive disciplines that avoid the difficulty of studying phenomena in their concreteness or blurring of universals.

Therein lies the challenge for American critical pedagogies: to continually critique contemporary cognitivist trends that aim to explain all human elements through empirical study. For example, consider the recent boom in neuroscience, which seeks to conceive emotions exclusively as the result of material interactions within the human brain. We are not denying the value of empirical findings of these disciplines; we are rejecting the practice of reducing all human and significant elements to a series of mathematizable relationships. American critical pedagogy works to develop an educational awareness that always recognizes something qualitative that escapes quantitative conceptual understanding, and it is precisely this quality that makes humanity, human. Negative dialectics thus seeks to reveal the opposing nature of reality to thought and to recognize the impossibility of comprehensively understanding the real in a totalitarian manner.

The subject of education, the absolute subject—let us consider the student—that education began to conceive more or less with Descartes and culminated in Kant, is none other than the distorted reflection of what happens in modern reality. The

20th century has shown us that the subject (the individual and concrete student) is reduced to the object of objective social dynamics. In the pedagogical act, there is an oppressive totality that reduces the student to a function of the economy, production, and consumption, and interposes an educational system that merely attempts to simulate improvement, progress, development, evolution, or the logical path and scientific development.

Aesthetics has a direct link with politics. Secondly, we conceive aesthetics as the set of sensitive forms mediating between reality and our perception of reality. Aesthetics deals with how we perceive reality through a series of forms that shape it, with forms that mediate our perception of reality. In this sense, pedagogy is always an aesthetic intervention because it mediates the ways we perceive reality⁴⁴.

In this sense, working with aesthetics in American critical pedagogy would enable us to understand the forms of intervention through which we build our relationship with the past. An aesthetic approach in education should engage with the forms of memory beyond artistic forms, addressing the forms of perceiving the past, and moving in the field of memory disputes. Thus, American critical pedagogy is conceptualized as a field in dispute, continuously disputing representations of the past. Education after Auschwitz is a field in conflict where different ways of thinking, perceiving, and representing the past are constantly emerging. Pedagogy never refers to a fixed space but rather to a space in perpetual conflict. Engaging with aesthetics allows us to configure a space of

44 Politics comes when those who “don’t have” time take the time necessary to set themselves up as inhabitants of a common space and to demonstrate that their mouths perfectly emit a language that speaks of common things, not just a cry that denotes suffering. This distribution and this redistribution of places and identities, this partition and this distribution of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of noise and language constitute what I call the division of the sensible. Politics consists in reconfiguring the division of the sensible, in introducing new subjects and objects, in making visible what was not, in listening as beings endowed with speech to those who were considered nothing more than noisy animals. This process of creating dissent constitutes an aesthetics of politics, which has nothing to do with the forms of staging of power and the mobilization of the masses designated by Walter Benjamin as “aestheticization of politics”.

The relationship between aesthetics and politics is then, more specifically, the relationship between this aesthetics of politics and the “politics of aesthetics”, that is, the way in which the practices and forms of visibility of art intervene in the division of the sensible and in its reconfiguration, in which they cut out spaces and times, subjects and objects, the common and the particular. (Rancière, 2005)

conflict with the current forms of education and pedagogy. It enables us to reflect on the past and its relationship to the present. Education is fundamental there.

In turn, American critical pedagogy offers a series of possibilities to focus on the symbols of modernity and provides the basis for critically intervening in our community spaces, such as the state, health, or education. Today, we are given an opportunity for critical dialogue with the past, to intervene and mark those symbols of instrumental reason in the landscape of what we consider normal. Thus, pedagogy allows us to create spaces for discussion, to initiate small acts and participatory dynamics where society can debate around these symbols of the past that shape our present.

Our focus will precisely be on the forms of pedagogy in the construction of educational policies as social frameworks that regulate and normalize our daily lives. We will examine the roles of various actors or social movements that produce pedagogy and that, in some way, dispute the terrain of education according to state policies. Therefore, American critical pedagogy is manifested today in popular actors, in collectives, associations, and/or assemblies, which are fundamental to the exercise of daily life and survival, especially when the State has abdicated the possibility of implementing a truly progressive and communal pedagogy. Upholding the mandate that Auschwitz should not repeat itself compels us to observe and learn from social movements, from those engaged in pedagogical struggles, who contest the educational space and fight for the representation of formal education. American critical pedagogy challenges us to consider the place of the public space, to question the sensitive forms that mediate our perception of reality and to examine the different ways in which education is politically disputed. Thus, pedagogy is understood as a modification of these sensitive forms. American critical pedagogies are all those interventions that modify or transform subjectivity and our relationship with the past. They also prompt us to consider a new concept of democracy, beyond the traditional emphasis in developing a new concept of justice through education. American critical pedagogy highlights the urgent need and the enormous challenge of creating a radical democracy, rather than the illusory democracy we currently experience. The central point is how pedagogy can contribute to the construction of this radical democracy.

This conception of education emerges from the advent of a new type of power today: bio-power, bio-politics—a form of power that does not focus on monitoring the legal existence of individuals but on managing the biological existence of populations. Pedagogy is the clear manifestation of the other dimension in the exercise of traditional power, it is the result of a set of political procedures aimed directly at the human species' body, at controlling biological life. This power is exercised by establishing control

modalities that regulate conditions affecting birth rates and mortality, health levels, and life expectancy. All modern education is anchored in biopolitics, which means that at some point, states tend to consider the regulation of biological life as a matter for State intervention. American critical pedagogy directly raises the problem of the Modern State to regulate bodies and control lives through discipline, and that in order to increase capital productivity, contagions, epidemics, and pandemics must be avoided.

However, biopolitics was taken to the extreme in the Nazi concentration and extermination camps. In this radical event, it meant an extreme point of modern life. The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben explains how the Nazi concentration camps were spaces of intense biopolitical experimentation, areas where the most extreme forms of body control were tested, where the separation of the body from subjectivity was organized. In the concentration camp, a phenomenon occurred where prisoners, humans, were so nullified in their condition, so destroyed in their personal constitution, that they were reduced to mere body, pure biological matter—people who had been stripped of all subjectivity, all identity. The prisoners were malnourished bodies that continued to function biologically, but where there was no longer any trace of the self⁴⁵. Yet, this extreme point of biopolitics also speaks to a logic inherent in fascist and totalitarian systems of modernity, related to the expression of radical control over the body and how power attempts to intervene in bodies.

45 The bare life into which these men were transformed, however, is not, however, a natural extra-political fact, which the law must limit itself to verifying or recognizing; it is rather, in the sense we have seen, a threshold at which right is at all times transmuted into fact, and fact into law, and in which the two planes tend to become indiscernible. The specificity of the National Socialist concept of race – nor the particular vagueness and inconsistency that characterize it – is not understood if one forgets that the biopolitical body, which constitutes the new fundamental political subject, is neither a *questio facti* (e.g., the identification of a certain biological body) nor a *questio iuris* (the identification of a certain norm to be applied). but the product of a sovereign political decision that operates based on an absolute indifference between fact and law...

The birth of the concentration camp in our time appears, therefore, in this perspective, as an event that marks in a decisive way the very political space of modernity. It occurs at the moment when the political system of the modern nation-state, which was based on the functional link between a certain location (the territory) and a certain order (the state), mediated by automatic rules of registration of life (birth or nation), enters a lasting crisis and the state decides to assume directly among its own functions the care of the biological life of the nation...

The concentration camp, which has now been solidly installed in it, is the new biopolitical nomos of the planet. (Agamben, 1998)

It is interesting to understand how biopolitics generates a factory of docile subjects for neoliberal power, docile for capital. These subjects are afraid, isolated from their community, and associate all political participation with violence, and therefore forbidden in education. That is why it is attractive to think about how power intervenes in bodies in concentration camps in the past and to project how today's education produces modifications in subjectivity and intervenes in our lives, how biopolitics are implemented in bodies, and to determine what these new concentration camps are—spaces where extreme violence is exercised.

The aesthetic experience and the negative dialectic in education thus represent this process of unveiling. Education after Auschwitz highlights how the dominion that thought believes it exercises over the object, or that science believes it exercises over nature, is merely a reflection of the dominion that social reality exercises over human beings. Humanity has always pursued dominion over nature, inevitably leading to the domination of man over man.

Finally, in the words of Rodolfo Kusch:

In this sense, aesthetics subverts history, or rather, improves it as it traces the formal in the past and in relation to the present, as Nietzsche wanted. It is history as the aesthetics of the past and this as a drain of the fullness lived in the past as a myth, which becomes necessary in a present without purpose like ours. The racial distance that separates us from the Indian makes this problem doubly fruitful, precisely because it is the opposition between a geographical commitment and an acquired, although desirable, formality. It is to search in the past for the geographical experience of America under the assumption that it could mean a precedent for this irruption of the American in politics, social life, or culture. Moreover, an aesthetics of the American could mean a geographical integration of the American. (...)

An aesthetics of the American cannot be reduced to an analysis of the forms and the given because none of this has real consistency among us. Only the reestablishment of the obscure in our art to restore our aesthetic health has real significance. Otherwise, we will have a sick art (Kusch, 2000). [Translated quote from its original in Spanish]

Otherwise, we would have a sick pedagogy.

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