



# The Language of the Art of Music: An Overview of Its History in Brazil

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## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study sought to re-visit the two conceptions of Art – pedagogical and reflective - forged throughout history and its relationship with the Brazilian aesthetic thought of resistance. From the 60's, such thinking has given a pedagogical purpose to art, charged with the task of social criticism and political engagement human emancipatory: In this scenario mainly determined by the Theater of the Oppressed, the new movies and the protest song by Milton Nascimento, Caetano Veloso, Chico Buarque, Gilberto Gil, among many others.

*Keywords: Art; culture of resistance; history.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Over time, two conceptions - pedagogical and reflective - have marked the Art's relationship with society. From the 1960s onwards, Brazilian left-wing aesthetic thought attributed a

pedagogical purpose to art, entrusting it with the task of social and political criticism of human emancipatory engagement: In this scenario, the Theater of the Oppressed, the New Cinema and music stood out protest.

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This study sought to re-visit the two conceptions of Art, thought in relation to society: Over time, they were forged as pedagogical or reflective. Walter Benjamin brought a relevant contribution to the theory of Art, analyzing the relationship between art and the public in contemporary society: Assuming that the work of art had an aura that over time has been lost due to technical reproducibility. For Adorno in the contemporary art has been used, through the products of the Cultural Industry, as well as the mass media (cinema, TV, cartoons, etc.) are characterized by him, as mediocre, alienating, conservative and authoritarian. For both, thought and language are inseparable. From the 1960s onwards, strongly marked by the dictatorial regime, left-wing Brazilian aesthetic thought assigned a pedagogical purpose to art, entrusting it with the task of social and political criticism of human emancipatory engagement. The theater of the oppressed, the poetry of Ferreira Gullar, the Cinema Novo and protest music by Chico Buarque, Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil and Milton Nascimento, among many others, stood out in this scenario.

With regard to Brazil, the establishment of the 1964 military coup subjected the country to a period marked by authoritarianism, the annulment of constitutional rights, persecutions, arrests, tortures and censorship of the media and artistic manifestations.

Around 1968, in São Paulo, a street - Maria Antônia - went against the grain, in a hostile conflict between left-wing students (Faculty of Philosophy) and right-wing students (Mackenzie University). Then it was the turn of the neighborhood, of other neighborhoods and, finally, of the whole big city. In Rio de Janeiro, and other major capitals, the situation was no different, as the military regime began to show symptoms of hardening.

The repressive character of the Brazilian Military Regime deepened with the promulgation of Institutional Act nº 5, in December 1968:

[...] houve um corte abrupto das experiências musicais ocorridas no Brasil ao longo dos anos 60. Na medida em que boa parte da vida musical brasileira, naquela década, estava lastreada num intenso debate político-ideológico, o recrudescimento da repressão e a censura prévia interferiram de maneira dramática e decisiva na produção e no consumo de canções. A partir de então, os movimentos, artistas, eventos musicais e

culturais situados entre os marcos da Bossa Nova (1959) e do Tropicalismo (1968) foram idealizados e percebidos como as balizas de um ciclo de renovação musical radical que, ao que tudo indicava, havia se encerrado. Ao longo desse ciclo, surgiu e se consagrou a expressão Música Popular Brasileira (MPB), sigla que sintetizava a busca de uma nova canção que expressasse o Brasil como projeto de nação idealizado por uma cultura política influenciada pela ideologia nacional-popular e pelo ciclo de desenvolvimento industrial, impulsionado a partir dos anos 50 [1].

Suffocated by the bonds of repression, the youth of the upper middle class in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo saw the possibility of protest at music festivals.

The lyrics of the songs classified for these festivals were subjected to censorship by the Federal Police who analyzed them and determined changes to the composers and: “[...] the phrases considered 'subversive' or of double meaning were indicated for modification, in order to avoid more drastic measures regarding their authors” [2].

Brazilian popular music festivals served as a space for the dissemination of protest songs that sought to express feelings contrary to the political regime, in an attempt to clarify the population about the political and economic problems experienced by the country.

However, another interpretation may be possible in relation to the dictatorship and the festivals: [2] consider that “[...] the festivals were 'allowed' veiled by the dictatorship, as a way to hide their repressive image ”

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a trend of popular protest in defense of freedom of expression broke out among French youth and reverberated around the world. In South America, where many countries lived under the military regime except for the dictatorships imposed by the army, the only way of protest militancy found by the youth was music of great national impact.

## 2. CONCEPTIONS OF ART THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Throughout history, two great conceptions, pedagogical and expressive, guided the

understanding of Art [3]. Many philosophers have written about art, interpreting it sometimes from a pedagogical perspective, sometimes from an expressive perspective. Among these many philosophers, in this chapter we will pay special attention to Walter Benjamin and the issue of technical reproducibility.

Such conceptions - pedagogical and reflective - were inaugurated respectively by Plato and Aristotle. In this regard, [3] considers that,

A concepção platônica, que sofrerá alterações no curso da História sociocultural, considera a arte uma forma de conhecimento. A aristotélica, que também sofrerá mudanças no correr da história, toma a arte como uma atividade prática.

The first considerations about Art were elaborated by Plato (437 BC - 347 BC), one of the main Greek thinkers and who deeply influenced Western philosophy [4].

For Plato, art is situated at the lowest level of knowledge since it is the imperfect imitation of sensitive things, since sensitive things, in turn, are imperfect copies of intelligible essences or ideas. In "The Republic", for example, Plato exposes the pedagogy of a perfect city [3].

Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC), Plato's disciple and rival, also elaborated considerations on Art [4].

In rivalry with Plato, the Aristotelian conception takes art as a practical manufacturing activity. For [3], the Aristotelian conception starts from the difference between the theoretical and the practical, resulting from the difference between the necessary and the possible, taking art as a practical manufacturing activity.

Situating art as a practical manufacturing activity, Aristotle inaugurates its reflective conception; a concrete art, at the service of man. However, this philosopher also contributed to consolidating the pedagogical role of art, particularly in the tragedy:

Aristóteles, na Arte poética, desenvolve longamente o papel pedagógico das artes, particularmente a tragédia, que, segundo o filósofo tem a função de produzir a **catarse**, isto é, a purificação espiritual dos

expectadores, comovidos e apavorados com a fúria, o horror e as consequências das paixões que movem as personagens trágicas. Essa função catártica é atribuída sobretudo à música [3].

Aristotle's ideas lasted for many centuries. In the 19th century, these ideas were enriched by two major contributions, namely:

1º) The discussion on the social utility of the arts - particularly architecture and;

2) The statement about the playful nature of art, which has come to be considered a game, creative freedom, drunkenness, delirium and the desire for affirmative power in life. It is the contribution of Nietzsche, for whom art is "a state of animal vigor", "an exaltation of the feeling of life and a stimulant of life" [3].

The pedagogical conception of art reappears with Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804), a German philosopher who was born and lived his whole life in the city of Königsberg, Germany [4].

For Kant,

[...] a função mais alta da arte é produzir o **sentimento do sublime**, isto é a elevação e o arrebatamento de nosso espírito diante da beleza como algo terrível, espantoso, aproximação do infinito [3].

Hegel validates the pedagogical conception of art by reaffirming its educational role, which is carried out in two successive modalities, related to moral education and the purity of form. Thus, Hegel's artistic pedagogy,

[...] se efetua sob duas modalidades sucessivas: na primeira, a arte é o meio para a educação moral da sociedade (como Aristóteles havia mostrado a respeito da tragédia); na segunda, pela maneira como destrói a brutalidade da matéria, impondo-lhe a pureza da forma, educa a sociedade para passar do artístico à espiritualidade da religião, isto é, para passar da religião da exterioridade (os deuses e espíritos estão visíveis na Natureza) à religião da interioridade (o absoluto é a razão e a verdade) [3].

For [5], in the reflexive modernity in which man lives - different from the enlightenment or

sociological conception -, he is a decentralized subject who lives in an identity crisis, since old identities are continually being replaced by new identities. In this perspective, the author starts from three conceptions of subjects constructed and assumed throughout the historical process that determines identities, namely:

- The Enlightenment subject: One who was centered, having an individualized conception in which the essential center of the "I" corresponded to his identity;
- The sociological subject: The one who broke with this conception as he went through transformations of ideas, thoughts, from where he started to interact with society and,
- The postmodern subject: One who breaks with the sociological conception, when he is disturbed by structured and institutional changes, assuming different identities at different times.

Hall [5] calls this phenomenon of sociological rupture an identity crisis, in which the central structures and processes of modern society are shaken by references that are based on the social world. This phenomenon, called by the author of decentralization, has positive characteristics, as it dismantles stable identities from the past, but opens up new possibilities of being created, producing subjects no longer as fixed and stable identities, but fragmented subjects, with open, contradictory, unfinished identities, always in process, as well as their own history.

Thus, [5] understands that in this time in which we live, marked by globalization, the identity crisis is inevitable. Thus, we understand that it is the function of the school to create with the students a space for valuing their cultural heritage and for that, we consider the theory of places of memory - as proposed by [6] in which the theory of places of memory was formulated and developed from the seminars given by Nora at the École Pratique de Hautes Études, Paris, between 1978 and 1981, being published in "Les Lieux de Mémoire", a work composed of four volumes. Referring to the French national memory, Nora, in this work, considers it important to inventory the places where the memory - which is increasingly threatened to disappear, still remains incarnated, thanks to the will of men and despite the passage of time. For [6] symbols, parties, emblems, monuments,

celebrations, praise, dictionaries and museums are places of memory.

Thus, [5] understands that in this time in which we live, marked by globalization, the identity crisis is inevitable. Such a state of crisis allows subjects new positions of identification, making identities less fixed and unified, but open to the new, without giving up their culture, making it possible to learn new knowledge, in this process that is irreversible - called globalization, open to diversity. Thus, we understand that it is the function of the school to create with the students a space for valuing their cultural heritage and for that, we consider the theory of places of memory - as proposed by [7].

The theory of places of memory was formulated and developed from the seminars given by Nora at the École Pratique de Hautes Études, in Paris, between 1978 and 1981, being published in "Les Lieux de Mémoire", a work composed of four volumes. Referring to the French national memory, Nora, in this work, considers it important to inventory the places where memory - which is increasingly threatened with disappearing - still remains incarnated.

The concept of places of memory, as conceived by [6] was the guiding principle of the report. The theory of Places of Memory was formulated from the seminars conducted by Pierre Nora between 1978 and 1981, at the École Pratique des Hautes Études - in Paris. From 1984, under his direction, the edition of "Les lieux de mémoire" began, a work that, starting from the observation of the rapid disappearance of French national memory, proposed the inventory of the places where it still remained in fact incarnate, thanks to the will of men and despite the passage of time. For [6] symbols, parties, emblems, monuments, celebrations, praise, dictionaries and museums are places of memory.

The idea of heritage is confused with that of legitimate law. The bibliography of science that aims to study the material and spiritual culture of a people is full of examples of cultures, in which material goods are not characterized as objects apart from their owners. These goods do not always have a symbol of usefulness. In some cases, they serve manual purposes, but at the same time they absorb magical-religious and social meanings, which have been called "total social facts". However, these goods, of an economic, moral, religious, magical, political,

legal, aesthetic, psychological and physiological nature. They integrate, in some way, moral extensions of their owners, and these, in turn, are inseparable parts of social and cosmic totalities that go beyond their condition as individuals.

Regarding culture, [8] concludes that,

[...] cada sistema cultural está sempre em mudança. Entender esta dinâmica é importante para atenuar o choque entre as gerações e evitar comportamentos preconceituosos. Da mesma forma que é fundamental para humanidade a compreensão das diferenças entre povos de culturas diferentes, é necessário saber entender as diferenças que ocorrem dentro do mesmo sistema [8].

It must also be considered that in the current pedagogical conception, there is an indissolubility between education and culture,

[...] porque a educação como formação e instrumento de participação precisa partir das potencialidades do educando e motivá-lo à criatividade própria. A cultura constitui o contexto próprio da educação, porque é motivação fundamental para a mobilização comunitária e quadro concreto da criatividade histórica [9].

The LDB prescribes that, among other knowledge, the teaching of Art and History are mandatory curricular components, at the different levels of fundamental education, in order to promote the awareness and cultural development - local and universal - of the students. According to the referred law, teaching should value the students' extracurricular experience and, such subjects Artistic Education and History, was in agreement with the recommendations of the National Curriculum Parameters (PCN), since:

[...] É fundamental que a escola assuma a valorização da cultura de seu próprio grupo (...) buscando ultrapassar seus limites, propiciando às crianças e aos jovens pertencentes aos diferentes grupos sociais o acesso ao saber (...) relevantes da cultura brasileira no âmbito nacional e regional como no que faz parte do patrimônio universal da humanidade [10].

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[...] se a noção de espírito nos pareceu ligada à de propriedade, inversamente esta se liga àquela. Propriedade e força são dois termos inseparáveis; propriedade e espírito se confundem [11].

But after all, what is an aura? For Benjamin aura he is "a singular figure, composed of spatial and temporal elements: The unique appearance of a distant thing, however close it is" [12].

In traditional societies, in the experience of the work with the public there was a distance and reverence between each work of art and the observer: That work was unique. Thus put, Benjamin refers that in those societies the work of art, being unique, had the value of worship:

A unicidade da obra de arte é idêntica à sua inserção no contexto da tradição. Sem dúvida, essa tradição é algo de muito vivo, de extraordinariamente variável. A forma mais primitiva da inserção da obra de arte no contexto da tradição se exprimia no culto. As mais antigas obras de arte, como sabemos, surgiram a serviço de um ritual inicialmente mágico, e depois religioso [12].

Over the years many technical advances have made it possible to reproduce the work of art, which meant the gradual destruction of its aura. Among these technical advances, in the middle ages, woodcutting stands out and in the early nineteenth century lithography, as forms of illustration of everyday life. Woodcutting enabled drawing to become reproductive and lithography for the first time allowed mass production as in woodcutting, but in the form of ever new creations [12].

However, Benjamin considers that the great possibility of art reproduction will only come from the invention of photography:

Pela primeira vez no processo de reprodução da imagem, a mão foi liberada das responsabilidades artísticas mais importantes, que agora cabiam unicamente ao olho. Com o olho apreende mais depressa do que a mão desenha, o processo de reprodução das imagens experimentou tal aceleração que começou a situar-se no mesmo nível que a palavra oral [12].

Photography opens space for a new form of art reproduction: cinema that was initially silent, since the technical reproduction of sound started after photography.

Cinema emerged as a collective creation, since a film to be profitable would have to reach an audience of millions of people worldwide. Thus,

Nas obras cinematográficas, a reprodutibilidade técnica do produto não é como no caso da literatura ou da pintura, uma condição externa para sua difusão maciça. A reprodutibilidade técnica do filme tem o seu fundamento imediato na técnica de sua produção. Esta não apenas permite, da forma mais imediata, a difusão em massa da obra cinematográfica, como a torna obrigatória. A difusão se torna obrigatória, porque a produção de um filme é tão cara que um consumidor, que poderia, por exemplo, pagar um quadro, não pode mais pagar um filme. O filme é uma criação da coletividade [12].

However, the author considers that even before the technological advances that enabled the massive reproduction of works, art has always been reproducible,

O que os homens faziam sempre podia ser imitado por outros homens. Essa imitação era praticada por discípulos, em seus exercícios, pelos mestres, para a difusão das obras, e finalmente por terceiros, meramente interessados no lucro. Em contraste, a reprodução técnica da obra de arte representa um processo novo, que se vem desenvolvendo na história intermitentemente, através de saltos separados por longos intervalos, mas com intensidade crescente [12].

In "The work of art in the age of its technical reproducibility" there is no reference to television as an instrument of mass communication: It must be considered that the referred essay was published in 1936 and that Benjamin's death occurs in 1940. Only for to clarify, the large-scale commercialization of the television tube took place from 1945.

Over time, art, once unique, has evolved from its ritual function to the place of the object of mass communication. In this process, art has lost its aura and, increasingly reproduced, it is based on politics. In Benjamin's opinion, the end of this aura meant a possibility of artistic liberation for a European society marked by fascist and totalitarian movements; historical context in which the present essay was written:

Com a reprodutibilidade técnica, a obra de arte se emancipa, pela primeira vez na história, de sua existência parasitária, destacando-se do ritual. A obra de arte reproduzida é cada vez mais a reprodução de uma obra de arte criada para ser reproduzida. Mas no momento em que o critério da autenticidade deixa de aplicar-se à produção artística, toda a função social da arte se transforma em vez de fundar-se no ritual, ela passa a fundar-se em outra práxis: a política [12].

For Benjamin, the serial reproduction of a work (the many copies of a negative of a photograph, for example) generates, as long as the techniques are observed, a politicization capable of molding the critical sense of the one who observes the copy, from which he is not distinguished the original. The transformation of art, in Capitalism, into an instrument of destruction and oppression is not due to the reproducibility of the work of art, but to its undue appropriation by the referred capitalist system. Theodor Adorno, a contemporary and intellectual partner of Walter Benjamin at the Frankfurt School, also made a notable contribution to the theoretical field of Art. Born Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund-Adorno (1903 - 1969), Theodor Adorno was a philosopher, sociologist, musicologist and composer. Classical music and the cultural industry, among others, were objects of study by Theodor Adorno. If he had not been a philosopher, Adorno would certainly have been a musician: he had a particular interest in this artistic expression; his musical initiation took place in childhood - stimulated by his half sister,

a talented pianist -, he took classes in composition, in his adolescence and, as a young adult, at the University of Frankfurt (now Wolfgang Goethe University) in addition to musicology, studied philosophy, psychology and sociology. In the field of music, Adorno considers that it, although similar, is not a language, as it does not have a system of signs:

A música assemelha-se com a linguagem na qualidade de seqüência temporal de sons articulados, que são mais do que meros sons. Eles dizem algo, frequentemente algo humano. Dizem tão mais enfaticamente, quanto mais à maneira elevada estiver a música. A seqüência de sons converteu-se em lógica: existe certo ou errado. Porém, aquilo que foi dito não pode se depreender da música. Ela não compõem nenhum sistema de signos [13].

For this author, in contemporary times art has been used, through the Cultural Industry, as a way to “deceive by the appeal of happiness conveyed by the mass media [14]. Cultural Industry products, as well as mass media (cinema, TV, cartoons, etc.) are characterized by Adorno as mediocre, alienating, conservative and authoritarian. For Adorno, technical rationality is the rationality of the domain itself. The Cultural Industry would be another way of expressing modern totalitarianism. The idea of the death of art converted into a commodity of capitalism.

Benjamin and Adorno, intellectual partners of the Frankfurt School, had many points of confluence, but also many points of divergence when it came to Art Theory. For both thought and language they are inseparable. Benjamin's ideas move through the question of the death of the aura, that is, the loss of the unique object character of the traditional work of art. Adorno refers to the death of art in capitalist societies, as they convert culture into merchandise.

### 3. CONCLUSION

In this context, the theater of Augusto Boal, the poetry of Ferreira Gullar and José Paulo Paes, the Cinema Novo and protest music by Edu Lobo, Chico Buarque, Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Geraldo Vandré and Milton Nascimento

emerged on the Brazilian scene, among many others.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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