



## Culture as an element of language and the fight against oppression

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Maria Cristina Sagario<sup>1</sup>

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### Summary

This text will address culture in the historical process of constructing meanings, highlighting its value as a mechanism of communication, struggle and resistance. It aims to demonstrate that culture is not free from bias, but has an important role in the class struggle, being able to be an element of resistance to authoritarian projects and, therefore, also being a valuable instrument of struggle and resistance in defense of democracy. It highlights the relevance it obtained in the various Brazilian Constitutions, highlighting especially the Federal Constitution of 1988 because it emphasized culture in an expressive and forceful way in its text.

**Key words:**Culture. Constitution. Class struggle. Expressions. Rights.

### Abstract

This text will approach culture in the historical process of construction of meanings, highlighting its value as a communication, struggle, and resistance mechanism. Its objective is to demonstrate that culture is not exempt from partiality, but has an important role in the class struggle, being an element of resistance to authoritarian projects and, with that, also being a valuable instrument of struggle and resistance in defense of democracy. It will highlight the relevance that it obtained in the various Brazilian Constitutions, giving special emphasis to the Federal Constitution of 1988 for having emphasized in an expressive and forceful way the culture in its text.

**Keywords:**Culture. Constitution. Class struggle. Expressions. Rights.

### Summary

This text will address culture in the historical process of constructing meanings, highlighting its value as a mechanism of communication, struggle and resistance. Its objective is to demonstrate that culture is not exempt from partiality, but it has an important role in the fight of classes, being an element of resistance to authoritarian projects and, with it, also being a valuable instrument of fight and resistance in defense of la democracy. The relevance that it obtained in the various Brazilian Constitutions stands out, with special emphasis on the Federal Constitution of 1988 for having emphasized culture in its text in an expressive and forceful way.

**Keywords:**Culture. Constitution. Class fight. Expressions. Rights.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

When approaching the theme of 'culture and communication', it is interesting to emphasize that both are terms that can be related to many things, but, in this case, we will highlight their importance in social relations, linked to people's experiences in society.

But how important would they be to these people's lives? Although this seems like a rhetorical question, among the many possible approaches that we can take and that could lead us to a response to this questioning, we can highlight three possibilities for dialogue, which would be: investigating the importance they have for (and in) the lives of individual people, their collective and political value and their ability to influence people's lives, provoking new ways of living and coexisting in society.

Firstly, when talking about culture, it is interesting to highlight that cultural manifestations need to be observed served in its plurality. They, when expressed by various elements, material and immaterial, are capable of exposing mainly the various contradictions existing in a society.

If in many populations culture and communication are praised and valued for their educational purposes, <sup>1</sup>Human Sciences. InterAmerican University, mcsagario@hotmail.com

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historical and liberating, in others, they may be neglected and even censored, because, after all, both have elements that are possible to manipulate and be manipulated by various social actors.

It is interesting to reflect that an act of resistance expressed through culture may occur in different ways, through different types of languages, through different devices and expressions, such as: in theatrical language, through music, through poetry, in scenes of a film, in the words of a storyteller, through a dance, through literature, in short, through all the forms of communication that man can express himself and instill some feeling, modifying the initial state of the recipients of his messages.

However, it is through reflection and analysis, combined with provocative actions that trigger new points of view, that a way of acting and thinking can be modified. And, it is in this role – that of being a field conducive to dialogue, by dealing with the formation of concepts and critical sense, that universities enter. In higher education institutions there are courses whose curricula have as one of their bases the study and research of the reflections of great thinkers such as, for example, Paulo Freire, Karl Marx, Walter Benjamin, Raymond Williams, Michel Foucault and Déa Fenelon, people who introduced new concepts and who question existing concepts and customs, that is, people who, in a certain way, thought of culture as a field of possibilities. Among these courses we can mention: Philosophy, History, Sociology, Journalism and Psychology itself

For this reason, in the past and even in the present, universities have been considered dangerous spaces, not because they use weapons, but because they deal with communication, that is, because they deal with knowledge and influence people in the field of culture and society. communication, providing them with new views of the world.

In this sense, 'expressing' - expression - is the ability that people have to make themselves known through speech and gestures, their thoughts, that is, it is also the materialization of what goes on in their minds, it is an exposure of your emotions, your beliefs, fears, plans and objectives, in short, it is the implementation - verbal and non-verbal - of what can only be seen when made known to us if revealed through words and actions.

In this way, as culture is a form of expression, it can cover all aspects of people's lives, however, it will not be a neutral and static element, rather, it will receive direct and indirect action from different social influencers who dictate norms and establish customs.

Among cultural influencers we can mention, for example, religions with their rites and rituals; even the way in which people relate to work, many of which are passed on to their children through their parents and ancestors in the form of a profession, the habits of a region or country, all of which imprint forms of behavior on people.

The word culture “[...] maps in its unfolding the historical change of humanity itself, from rural to urban existence, from pig farming to Picasso, from the tiller of the soil to the splitting of the atom” (EAGLETON, 2011, p.10). It can be modified by different elements of a historical period and, as a result, will reflect on the exchange of experiences to be shared, on the forms of expressions of a time or even on the memories to be preserved.

Déa Fenelon (2006), when talking about culture, argues that there are several important elements included in a cultural manifestation, among them, social experience, highlighting that culture is a field in which contradictions are made explicit and where the class struggle, which are part of human life in society, emerge and become evident. She argues that culture is, therefore, “[...] memory, work, politics, customs, symbols, values and, finally, [...] everything that men create and attribute meaning to. (FENELON, 2006, p 07)

Therefore, attributing meanings is one of the functions that will guide cultural actions. However, 'meanings' can be implicit in cultural practices and be reproduced without there being a reflection on them, without there being a understanding the reasons why certain elements are preserved and perpetuated while others are neglected. As a result, many cultural actions undergo resignification, changes that deconstruct their initial meanings.

It is important to perceive culture as a modeling element, and although it is linked to traditions, according to Williams (1979), they lead us to a 'pre-modeled' present time, guided by social actions that were conceived in the past.

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What we have to see is not just “a tradition”, but a *selective tradition*: an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaping present, which becomes powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification. (WILLIAMS, 1979, p. 118 – Emphasis added)

For this reason, Khoury (2006), when talking about the power that dominant forces exercise in society to the point of often nullifying and/or minimizing the meanings of actions that were initially constructed under a historical and social process, comments that these forces they deconstruct the original meanings and spread new values in their place, using language as an instrument of persuasion and conviction:

[...] recognizing and respecting groups and communities based on the ways in which they are part of social life means, as we said, legitimately incorporating their forms of communication and expression, understanding their own meanings in social dynamics. [...] This requires dealing with narratives without forgetting that we reflect on culture linked to issues of hegemony, being attentive to the ways in which power decides what should and should not be incorporated the big tradition” and its articulations in this sense. (KHOURY, 2006, p. 36 and 37)

Therefore, talking about culture is also talking about subjects who have their identities determined by forces that act in the social world with apparently unpretentious actions, but who use this strategy so that they can perpetuate themselves in power.

Therefore, cultural practices need to be observed not only as actions devoid of intentionality or motivated by the simple act of wanting to preserve past traditions or entertain people. But, first, they need to be observed as instruments for the progressive incorporation of new ways of living and coexisting in society.

Over time, new forms of expression are incorporated, giving new meanings to the beliefs and values of a society, selective and selected expressions that lead to the conformation of society towards the objectives of the dominant forces that, acting in this way, hide and they deny the class struggles that divide society.

## 2 DEVELOPMENT

Every day, from the time we wake up to the time we go to sleep, we come into direct contact with many elements of culture. It can be in coffee with a bagel, in the music we choose to listen to, in the prayers we say and even in the way we dress and behave, our life will always be guided by some aspect that has been passed on to us culturally. Each country and/or community will have its own culture and this will dictate the way in which people behave.

It is interesting to note that the word culture itself has, over time, acquired different meanings. Originating from Latin, from the Latin verb *colere*, it was directly related to planting, that is, agricultural cultivation. With this, an analogy can be made between the land to be cultivated, productive, with its opposite, which would be deserts, spaces empty of plantations, that is, of crops. Therefore, culture would be something to be planted and that would germinate and bear fruit in society. Furthermore, just like in agriculture, where the fruits of planting are harvested after a period, in culture - as a social activity - it would not appear overnight, but it would need to be cultivated.

In this sense, Eagleton (2011) he also comments that there is a contradiction in relation to the semantics of the word culture, where those who cultivate the land, generally small farmers, are people with less academic instruction, therefore, they are classified as being 'less educated' people, while people Those who live in the city are perceived as being 'more cultured' people.

Another meaning of the word culture was related to the Latin term *cultus*, which for religious people concerns “cults”, that is, the gods, the sacred and the moments dedicated to worship (EAGLETON, 2011; CHAUI, 2008). Thus, culture is related to rituals, that is, the repetition of practices in people's daily lives or at pre-established moments.

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Later, culture became related to arts and wisdom; However, it was said that a person was 'cultured' when she had relevant academic knowledge or knowledge in the arts appreciated by the elite. In this way, not all people would be considered cultured, for example, a person without academic studies, but who had a deep knowledge of plants, would not be labeled 'cultured', as popular wisdom was - and still is - less valued than

academic knowledge. Regarding this perception, it is interesting to note that this thought goes back many years in the past, to the period of the French Revolution, in the 18th century:

At first, culture came from a normative conception, in which 18th century thought was placed as the central idea, which was singularity, that is, based on the philosophical current of the Enlightenment, bringing a perspective of progress, education and evolution, focusing on a human universalism and the distinction between people and classes; the arts, literature, letters and sciences received the word culture previously to indicate an action of instruction, of regulation of its specificities. Later, this conception changes and becomes interpreted as the state of mind that possesses education, the individual who has culture. (ALMEIDA, PICCIN, 2021, p. 3)

Thus, based on this vision that originated in a historical moment, in the French Revolution, it was spread that a person was 'cultured' if they managed to absorb and practice the greatest amount of knowledge from the so-called erudite culture, however, it is worth highlighting that This concept was not limited to that moment, it survived time and, even today, this conception still exists on the part of many people.

We realize that society is not homogeneous, rather, it is divided into classes and each of these classes disseminates and values actions that are relevant and significant to them, that is, in society there are several cultures. As a result, there are different academic studies on the role that these cultures play in people's lives individually and collectively. However, there is a consensus on the roles essential that cultures play as an instrument that, on the one hand, can be used to oppress, but on the other, can be a mechanism of resistance and liberation. Marilena Chauí (2021), in her book "Cultural citizenship: the right to culture", comments that

Yet that the culture came to mean the materially determined field of symbolic forms and ways of life in a society, the social division of classes as a distinction between "cultured" and "uncultured" has become predominant. With it: 1) culture and the arts were distinguished into two main fields: the erudite (or elite), typical of intellectuals and artists of the dominant class, and the popular, typical of urban and rural workers; 2) when thought of as productions or creations of the national past, forming the national tradition, popular culture and art are called folklore, constructed by myths, legends and popular rites, regional dances and music, crafts, etc.; and 3) high art began to be constructed by the productions and creations of fine arts, consumed by a literate public, that is, people with a good level of education, good taste and consumers of art. (CHAUI, 2021, p. 15)

Thus, on a daily basis, people are surrounded by different forms of cultural manifestations without many being aware of it. However, in the social field, there are still cultural prejudices that separate some cultural manifestations from others, preventing many of them from being available to everyone. They divide culture into: 'people's' culture also called 'popular' – related to folklore - and 'elite' culture called 'erudite' – related to the fine arts.

## 2.1 THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE IN THE BRAZILIAN MAGNAS CARTA

The history of Brazil is very recent compared to the history of other countries. Furthermore, our culture was created with the collaboration of various peoples, we inherited from the indigenous people, Africans and Europeans many of the customs and traditions that they brought to the so-called "New World".

Therefore, it is interesting to assess whether culture has received much or little attention from the State by checking the reference made to this topic in the Brazilian Constitutions. From the 18th century to the present, Brazil has had seven Charters

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Magnas, the first of which was promulgated at the time of the empire and the other six during the republican regime. Are they:

- 1 – Political Constitution of the Empire of Brazil, of March 25, 1824. (BRAZIL, 1824)
- 2 - Constitution of the Republic of the United States of Brazil, of February 24, 1891. (BRASIL, 1891)
- 3 - Constitution of the Republic of the United States of Brazil, of July 16, 1934. (BRASIL, 1934)
- 4 - Constitution of the United States of Brazil, of November 10, 1937. (BRASIL, 1937)
- 5 - Constitution of the United States of Brazil, of September 18, 1946. (BRASIL, 1946)
- 6 - Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, January 18, 1967. (BRASIL, 1967)
- 7 - Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, October 5, 1988. (BRASIL, 1988)

When we analyze the importance that culture obtained in the different Governments that governed the country, we will see that in the construction of a national culture, there were periods in which it was valued less or more, a fact that largely depended on the historical and political moment that Brazil experienced.

In the first Brazilian Constitution of 1824, the word culture appears only once, and, in this mention, Pereira (2008), comments that the word culture appears in the same sense as agricultural cultivation, in the etymological understanding of '*cultum* [...]', he quotes: "Synonymous with farming, the notion of culture appears added to the ideas of "industry, work and commerce", which further reinforces the manual meaning of "working the land" (PEREIRA, 2008, p.6)

Furthermore, Saldanha (2020) also comments that it caused strangeness to the Portuguese who came to Brazil coexistence with black Africans and indigenous people, they believed that in the colony there were no 'remnants of civilization', and for this reason, at that time the cultural shock was inevitable. However, "This cultural mix became part of the routine of the new residents who quickly tried to import musicians, painters, writers and a multitude of artists, as well as works of art and to create institutions of a cultural and artistic nature." (SALDANHA, 2020, p. 02). With this action, it is clear that Europeans believed they belonged to a more civilized "world" and that their cultural practices were more relevant and valuable than those of other peoples with whom they needed to live here in colonial Brazil.

In Brazil's second Constitution, that of 1891, the word culture does not even appear. However, it is worth highlighting that during this period Brazil experienced moments of great social and political transition, there was, for example, the signing of the abolition of slaves and the change in the form of government from monarchy to republic.

In the 1934 Constitution, in our third Magna Carta, the words: culture and cultural appear four times. In its meanings of the word culture are expanded and a general culture is cited. In its Article 148 it states that:

It is up to the Union, the States and the Municipalities to favor and encourage the development of sciences, arts, letters and of *culture in general*, protect objects of historical interest and the country's artistic heritage, as well as provide assistance to intellectual workers. (BRAZIL, 1934 – Emphasis added)

This Constitution brought important changes and advances in relation to education, in which primary education became to be mandatory and free and, in addition, female suffrage became accepted. However, this constitution had the shortest duration, remaining in force for just three years.

The 1937 Constitution was the fourth Brazilian Constitution, in which the word culture appears twice, where we can highlight Art. 52, which highlights national culture. For Pereira (2008), this "[...] opens the doors to a social perspective that aims to highlight a certain "official culture", which erudite opinion makers are endowed with, eliminating possibilities of diversified identities according to different contingencies" (PEREIRA, 2008, p.7)

The 1946 Constitution makes five references to the word culture. However, it is important to highlight that it was during this period that the Military Coup occurred, in 1964, under the government of then president João Goulart. As a result, there were several changes in laws that were "[...] mediated by a series of institutional acts, amendments to the constitution and other normative instruments used by the government. Faced with this fact, the Magna Carta began to receive a series of amendments that distorted its character." (SAGÁRIO, 2015, p. 29)

Without delving into this very broad topic, it is worth remembering that during this period various control and surveillance mechanisms were created, particularly regarding culture. Everything was watched widespread through plays, radio, television, music and even literature.

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During the period of the military dictatorship in Brazil, which lasted two decades (1964 to 1984), the Service of Censorship and Public Entertainment (SCDP) directed at regional bodies and the Censorship and Public Entertainment Division (DCDP). At this time, censorship of culture was the reflection of an ideological apparatus and an authoritarian regime that aimed at his permanence in power, including different types of censorship: censorship preventive, censorship coercive and punitive censorship. (BERG, 2019)

Soon after the coup, the military unleashed strong repression only on those sectors of cultural production that maintained some type of link with politically organized popular movements – as was the case with the Popular Culture Centers, created by the National Union of Students. After editing

from AI-5, however, they began to repress and censor all types of cultural activity. [...] the objective of the dictatorship was also to silence the voice of society and to compromise the quality of citizens' political, emotional or intellectual formation. In some cases, it could even be tempted to conclude that she wanted to establish a true "cultural vacuum" that, in practice, would help create a state of indifference among the masses regarding the country's own immediate destiny. (FRANCO, 1997, p. 77 and 78)

Therefore, art was used as a form of awareness, of resistance, of dialoguing with people about what was happening, with this, there was a need to silence cultural agents and nullify the spaces that promoted reflection on everything that was happening. happening. Therefore, history records that it was a very sad and dark period for social and cultural movements in our country.

## 2.2 Culture after the promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution

However, two decades after the beginning of the military coup, the military let power in March 1985. And, after that, there was the formation of a Constituent Assembly (1987/1988) which included a great social mobilization aimed at drafting a new Magna Carta for Brazilians. And, due to the participation of various segments of society in its writing, the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988 was also recognized as a "citizen Constitution".

It was from reflection on the importance of cultural assets on the part of various groups forming society that the National Congress became aware and it included in the new charter, in a forceful and affirmative manner, issues relevant to the preservation, promotion and valorization of cultural heritage. national culture. As a result, an entire section was created just to address this topic.

In this section, called Culture, the State appears as the guarantor of everyone's access to culture and also says that culture is a right for everyone. Culture is cited in its plurality – in cultures – and, unlike the period of dictatorship, The State would be responsible for supporting, valuing and disseminating all cultural manifestations. In this way, in a forceful way, material and immaterial culture, as a wealth and as an asset capable of building economic and social wealth.

Section II

Of culture

**Art. 215.** The State will guarantee everyone the full exercise of cultural rights and access to sources of national culture, and will support and encourage the appreciation and dissemination of cultural manifestations.

§ 1 The State will protect the manifestations of popular, indigenous and Afro-Brazilian cultures, and those of other groups participating in the national civilizing process.

§ 2 The law will provide for the establishment of commemorative dates of high significance for the different national ethnic segments. [...] (BRAZIL, 1988)

However, it is also worth remembering that a few years before the promulgation of the last Constitution, in 1985, shortly after the end of the military dictatorship, there was an important initiative for culture under the administration of the then president of the republic, José Sarney, who was chosen president of the republic through direct vote, he promoted the creation of the Ministry of Culture (MinC), which previously, since 1953, was associated with education in the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC).

However, even with all the relevance attributed to the existence of the Ministry of Culture "[...] there are governments that chose for its closure, as with presidents Fernando Collor de Mello, in 1991, Michel Temer, in 2016, and Jair Bolsonaro, in 2019." (SANDY; STADLER, 2020, P. 02) Each government will present its reasons, however, the objectives are the same, that is, they aim to undermine the expressions that culture can raise as a mechanism of struggle and resistance.

In 1990, during the government of the then president of the republic Fernando Collor de Mello, the Ministry of Culture was demoted to a Secretary of Culture and linked directly to the Presidency of the Republic, without political strength and with an irrelevant budget. (SAGÁRIO, 2015)

Subsequently, culture goes through another emblematic moment when, after the *impeachment* by Dilma Rous-

seff, the then interim president Michel Temer extinguished temporarily the MinC and reintroduced it to the MEC.

However, shortly afterwards, due to pressure from social and cultural, here established it again as the Ministry of Culture with the intention of “calming tempers”, separating it again from the Ministry of Education. (BARBALHO, 2018)

However, in 2018, when he was elected president of the republic, during the Government of Jair Messias Bolsonaro, a lot changed in relation to culture, as it once again began to be seen as a threat.

Culture has been at the center of political debate with the rise of the extreme right in contemporary Brazil, with the attempt to control it being one of the pillars of government policy. The election of Jair Bolsonaro was accompanied and remains connected to constant invective against the so-called “cultural Marxism”, “gender ideology”, racial “victimism” and diplomatic “globalism” in the most varied spheres, making the flirtation blatant with the return to censorship and authoritarianism in cinema, music, theater, education, policies aimed at black people, indigenous people, the LGBTQI+ population, people with disabilities, women, etc. (SANTOS; SILVA; ASSUNÇÃO, 2021, p. 2)

Thus, even if governed by a Constitution called “citizen” and after several advances for the benefit of culture, an important social element to be valued and preserved, it is possible to see that culture still represents a threat, it is an element to be monitored, controlled and censored. For these reasons, it is an important object of study and analysis for today's researchers, functioning as a thermometer capable of measuring temperature and diagnosing diseases that paralyze and can even kill democracies.

In universities there has been a climate of vigil and censorship, just as it was in the past. And, one more time, culture in its various forms of expression he has served as a field of resistance to authoritarian projects and silent. Therefore, studying culture as a field that reflects the social and its class struggles is of benefit to public administrations that aim to follow their paths based on freedom of expression, for the benefit of new knowledge and democracy itself.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Social issues are very relevant and constantly undergo profound changes. As a result, culture, which is an abstract element of human coexistence, will undergo changes, and it is at this point that scholars of this topic need to turn their attention. It is necessary to look for the reasons why traditions are built, modified or replaced, but it is interesting to find out mainly the reasons why some remain and the interests of those who will serve them. As can be seen, culture is a field capable of making positions explicit or hiding them depending on the historical moment in which we observe it. For this reason, we need to build activities in which cultural actions can be used to our advantage, as an educational instrument that strengthens dialogue and democracy.

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