

Hegemonic Culture and Power, the Survival of Other Cultures

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Abstract

This work briefly exposes the power relations that exist between economic elites with culture and arts, making a situational analysis of the cultures that exist outside the hegemonic culture, the same ones that mostly represent the majority of societies. In addition, there are problems that arise from these relationships; such as the media at the service of power and the economic groups that they represent; As part of this, reference is also made to social media and the fictitious democratization of cultural diffusion. The final part of this work presents the current situation of other cultures and their survival during the time of COVID 19 and its consequences in the area of culture and the arts.

Keywords: Arts, Culture, Communication, Power

A. Introduction

When it comes to writing about *culture*, who takes that risk; knows, or should know, that such a realm is a complete universe *per se*; in such a way that the intrepid one who assumes the intimate incitement to write the word *culture* and dares to face a blank page to express himself on that totality, runs the risks of any explorer; because it is possible to start this text by saying that this cosmos called *culture* never ceases to recreate and procreate itself, therefore it is of great importance to relate the different areas of a society to understand in an approximate way what the term culture entails.

The possibilities to define the concept of culture are vast, there is

an extensive bibliography that seeks to define the concept to which we refer, such as the book *Culture. A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* by the authors Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952); but in a certain way this, and all the bibliographies on the subject open the doors to many other questions that are generated by all that this idea represents. And this is one of the biggest challenges when we have to propose definitions about something as multiform and diverse as culture, because if we look for a way to simplify the idea, it would be possible to propose certain words, which represent concepts that, when they interact with each other, could

be say, that would be an outline of what culture is; which would be the closest thing to a dictionary definition.

Despite coming to seem like an attack against all the authors who have tried to define the concepts of culture through hard work, there is a key point that must be emphasized: culture defines itself, if it is possible to use the term, as a transversal line through the societies and peoples that build them.

But culture and its definitions are a topic that is very far from what is intended to be treated in this article, because defining this concept is not what concerns us for now, the intention of this work is more related to the roles of culture and its relationship with the power system that govern societies, or a globalized society.

B. Elite Culture and the Other Cultures

Talking about the Marxist concept of class struggle, it is generally taken for granted that this concept applies to all fields of a society in which two classes mainly

inhabit, who exercises power in society and who obeys; therefore, the class struggle is relegated, or granted, to certain specific social spheres within which this power struggle is more palpable, such as the area of economics or politics.

Culture and arts within this struggle appear as a result and not as a means, this could be said from the generalized perspective of society, which gives an ornamental value to the arts, in general to culture, giving them an ornamental value, inaccurate value due to the fact that it is not quantitative, if not qualitative.

But that qualitative value that arts and culture have are understood in their real dimension by those who, within the class struggle, exercise power, and for this reason they have invested throughout the history of humanity in generating and preserving a class of culture and arts that represent them, as Tolstoy states:

‘Not only is work consumed to satisfy this need for art, but innumerable human existences are sacrificed in its favor every day. Hundreds of thousands of people use

their lives since childhood to know how to move their feet and legs quickly, to quickly play the keys of a piano or the strings of a violin, to reproduce the appearance and color of objects, or to subvert the natural order of the sentences, and join to each word another word that rhymes with it. And all those people, who are most of the time honest and have a natural capacity to indulge in all lineages of special and brutalizing occupations, become what are called specialists, beings of petty intelligence and puffed up with vanity, incapable of appreciating the serious manifestations of life, and incapable of any other aptitude than that which implies quickly shaking the legs, hands or tongue' (Tolstoy, 2012).

So, here is the question, what art and culture is Tolstoy referring to? There is a culture that has all the economic support that derives from power, it is this culture that represents the aesthetic and cultural values of an economic and political elite that rules societies, whether it is visible or not. It refers to the fact that this elite can be within the

conventional strata of power such as the government; or on the contrary, a kind of invisible power that governs from "unconventional" spaces of power such as companies or banks, generally from financial institutions that control the states by means other than regular democracy.

There is an elite culture (Aharonián, 2000), which, as we have said previously, represents the power groups, but for which these elites have invested much of their fortunes in establishing as the ideal of culture; conservatories, concert halls, publishing houses, restaurants, fashion houses, etc. Every cultural expression worldwide has established a cultural model to follow that is dictated by these elites, because it is imperative to say that cultural models are an advanced weapon in the processes of colonization and cultural conquest, as Coriún Aharonián has warned us in many ways.

But on the other hand, there are those *other cultures*, those which are outside the direct interests of the elite culture, the cultures that generally belong to societies, peoples,

nationalities and groups that do not occupy spaces of economic or political power, those that are recreated by means of tiny resources and of which their preservation depends directly on the interaction with their environment, those cultures that are not static or monolithic; and it is these characteristics that make these other cultures the creative germ of societies, because these are the ones that generated the traditional cultures of the peoples, the same ones that are born from popular expressions that are maintained through time until they become a transcendental part of each society.

Therefore, understand the expression *Other Cultures* within this context: what the system and its elite culture do not consider as part of its project of cultural conquest, which becomes a counterpart of the hegemonic culture (Gupta et al., 2018).

C. The Hegemonic Culture as an Ally of Power

The concept of hegemony of power is widely developed by

various authors in various fields, mainly in economics and politics, as stated above, and one of these examples is found in Human Scale Development by Manfred Max Neef (Max-Neef et al., 1991); closer to the cultural area the concept is developed in the same way by several authors, for the purposes of this work we will put as an example of the concept of cultural hegemony the work of Stuart Hall entitled *The West and the Rest: Discourse of Power* (Gupta et al., 2018) that addresses in Chapter VII, an important analysis of the relationship between power and its ways of maintaining discourse through the control of institutions, the economy and the means of disseminating information.

As we have previously denoted, culture is a complex system of expressions related to the human being and its way of developing expressions within the framework of sensitivities, the same one that Coriún Aharonián manifests has possibilities that the system fully recognizes, but those who elaborate the field process no:

‘Cultural "universality" was

invented to impose the dominance of bourgeois Western Europe over the rest of the world. Of course, the "universal" is always what the imperial metropolis produces and imposes in order to unite and - if possible - unify its domain. And for a long, long time, imperialism has known that culture is not harmless, even if it tries to make its subjects believe. It knows that, on the contrary, culture is very important: that through culture they ultimately decide instance the victories or defeats of history'. (Aharonián, 2000)

It is essential to break down the text of Aharonián to understand the role of culture in this battle for power:

The term "universal" supposes that everything is important, but behind the word "universal" there is a web of power and capacity for implant a cultural system over others; How? Only cultures that have the ability to positioning themselves within a universal spectrum have the capacity of showing themselves to the rest, otherwise they tend to be part of a precarious local

consumption and production in the best of cases, or if they do not go to the disappearance.

Aharonián specifically speaks about the dominance of bourgeois Western Europe, three categories that are fully met when we speak, for example, of the so-called classical music, the same that has successfully carried out the work of cultural conquest on a universal level, if we set the question What capital city in the world does not have a symphony orchestra?

As part of the cultural conquest there is the creation of imaginaries that propose the superiority of the hegemonic culture, nationalisms based on the superiority of the colonizer or the conqueror; with the economic conditions established in favor of power and the balance always against the others, with history in favor of the winner of that class struggle: clinging to the imaginary of superiority-inferiority is not a difficult thing, choosing those defined by Aharonián as subjects, have at least the crumbs of power.

D. The Media, A Transcendental Part of Cultural Hegemony

There is an issue of great importance when we talk about power and the way in which it affects all areas of societies and is related to the media; Worldwide, traditional media such as radio and television are in charge of a tiny number of companies, as Picazo (2019) states '70% of the global communication offer is in the hands of only six large media groups'. Then, for all that we have exposed previously, the conclusion is simple, the media belong to the hegemonic culture; They are the most effective way to establish cultural patterns in societies due to their diffusion capacity.

At present when we talk about social media as an alternative possibility to traditional media there are several pros and cons around, the fact is that the possibility of showing themselves to the world is greater, the creators of other cultures apparently have the ability for their creations to find a diffusion niche based on what alternative media of

diffusion offer.

Is this a reality? If we look at the template of programs in the cultural sphere offered by the traditional media, we are going to realize that in the cultural sphere mostly, by not using the qualifier null, the possibility that one of these media allows new creators, producers and interpreters make known new cultural forms is impossible; Radio and television since the early 2000s have been focused on reproducing successful models of cultural production. Programs of multinational networks is what fills the programming grids of most television channels, and those that are left out of that is because they do not have the capacity to economically cover the rights of these programs, so they generally choose to: remain in its old model of cultural production, which generally ends in a crude representation of folklore; or recreate your economically accessible copy of a hit show on international networks.

Social media are a reflection of what happens in traditional

communication media, because these still continue to set the standard on what has to be programmed in audiovisual media; If we carry out a serious search within social networks about the author's creations within these, we will verify that the original productions continue to be relegated; and therefore local productions are going to reflect the global context of global media productions, the examples of this are many.

On addition, the control of social medias, as everything, is in charge of the hegemonic system, and that fact determines that there is an intention to allow or not to show different content, the networks are based on subtle forms of censorship that control what users watch (DW Documentary, 2021), therefore the cultural products of non-hegemonic or counter-hegemonic cultures do not have the capacity to globalize, because simply with algorithms, that subtle form of censorship, they do not go beyond the virtual borders of their locality.

E. State of Culture Before- During the 2019 Pandemic

Human History presents clear evidence that there are periods of abundance and periods of scarcity in all areas of societies; Generally, periods of abundance are recorded in history books, but there are transcendental stages despite being stages of scarcity that are also recorded.

As far as arts and culture are concerned, the 20th and 21st centuries have been marked by fundamental aspects for all societies worldwide: economy and technology. The economy since the industrial revolution has managed to establish a capitalist model that without limits has placed economic enrichment as its main

objective, regardless of the consequences of these forms (Max-Neef et al., 1991). On the other hand, for technology, it has been the time in the entire history of humanity that has achieved the greatest technological advances, and of course all these advances are for the direct benefit of economics.

Culture as a result of this alliance between economy and technology during the 20th and 21st

centuries, has managed to obtain a fictitious democratization of access to artistic creation tools, fictitious because globally there is still a majority of people who cannot access tools of artistic production such as musical instruments, audio tools, etc. demonstrating that this difference in economic classes is almost a rule of the game and mainly affects the countries now called *developing countries*.

This is the direct form of the relationship between culture and the economy, but there is something else, the way in which marketing concepts have been establishing rules on cultural products and have been reducing their creative and qualitative capacity for the benefit of the ROI (Return on Investment) concept (Plewa & Friedlob, 1996). Cultural products become market goods, not only for the public that consumes them, but mostly for those who invest in arts and culture as a business.

The clearest example of this can be seen on the YouTube platform: when making a simple analysis of global trends, we find that

within the top 100 positions there are only pop music artists with an average of 50 million reproductions. If this analysis is carried out by means of specific artists who are outside the pop genre and who represent the opposite of the first in the lists of this platform, the only thing that we will find will be numbers that show how uneven is the reality that the hegemonic culture faces in opposition to those other cultures.

F. Conclusion

The history of this century has been marked by a momentous event: the ravages of COVID 19 have been around 2 years that have demonstrated the fragility of the societies we inhabit. In the case of culture and the arts, they have

simply highlighted the situation outlined in broad strokes during this article: hegemonic culture, hand in hand with ruthless capitalism, has control of the media to disseminate its products, while other cultures struggle every day to keep their expressions and traditions alive.

Although this may sound daunting, it should be noted that this is not new, and this is what we mean when it is argued that the pandemic has simply made visible the problems that the inhabitants of art and counterculture have overcome for a long time; Therefore, the situation has only forced us to understand a new environment for the creation and diffusion of cultural products that exist outside the hegemonic culture.

It is imperative that these cultural actors, who have the concepts and ideas on the peripheries of the elite culture, enter and appropriate the spaces that the democracy of their localities allows; that processes of the revitalization of popular and local cultures are built, regardless of the forms and ways. We need popular cultural actors within educational institutions, state and private spaces; that generate terrains for cultural creation for the majority of society and that break with the paradigm of a culture of the elites for the elites.

‘There are rules of the game that are established, with which we

are going to have to play; we have to get to know them, we have to learn first to play within them so that we can later play with them’ (Aharonián, 2000)

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