

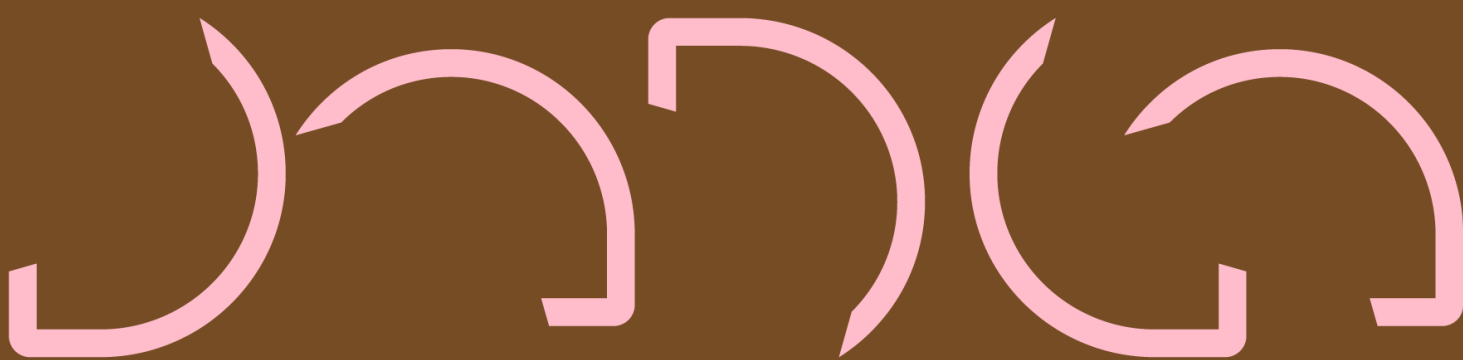
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## Art and culture -

Necessary and urgent separation

Sandro Borelli

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## RESUMO

Este ensaio aponta as adversidades decorrentes de um entendimento predominante no ambiente social de que a Arte se trata apenas de mais uma ramificação da Cultura, oficializada e burocratizada pela gestão pública, aceita e compactuada pela sociedade civil. Além disso, apresenta a arte da cena, mais especificamente a Dança cênica profissional, como uma categoria de trabalhadores escondida na heterogeneidade cultural da sociedade contemporânea. Por conta deste apagamento, expõe a necessidade de anunciá-las de formas separadas tendo em vista a abrangência gigantesca de significações que a cultura evidencia. Também apresenta as diferenças entre dança como manifestação simbólica e histórica de um povo e a cênica, que tem o potencial de quebrar paradigmas culturais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE Arte; Cultura; Dança; Política.

## ABSTRACT

This rehearsal points out the adversities arising from a predominant understanding in the social environment that art is just another branch of official culture. It also presents the art of the stage, more specifically professional stage dance, as a category of workers hidden in the cultural heterogeneity of contemporary society. Because of this erasure, it exposes the need to announce them separately because of the gigantic range of meanings that culture reveals. It also presents the differences between dance as a symbolic and historical manifestation of a people and theatre, which has the potential to break cultural paradigms.

KEYWORDS Art; Culture; Dance; Politics.

# Art and culture - Necessary and urgent separation<sup>1</sup>

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### **First act**

There is a very common and powerful statement in public management, in Brazilian politics and in the scholarly environment that culture is an intangible heritage of great importance to the nation. It has become a jargon. Yes, but so what? It's impossible to deny a statement that even seems obvious in some aspects. However, this evidence is made up of narrow, dubious and shady labyrinths. A certainty with somewhat fragile foundations.

It seems obvious that when the word culture is announced at solemn moments, in environments of political power, in the academic space or in a broader social sector, it is given a tone of sovereignty and pleasure, to the point where it can resemble human facial poses in today's photographs. It has become the norm for everyone to smile demonstrating a feeling of happiness and well-being that, more often than not, they are not experiencing at the moment of the click - a theatrical performance that is strange to say the least, not to say farcical, even ridiculous.

If we start from the assumption that human beings produce culture as soon as they leave the mother's womb, because they immediately begin to relate to their neighbors and the environment around them, as well as living together in groups, it would be obvious to see that human beings and culture are inevitably accomplices. They will be involved in a complex network of knowledge acquired in order to establish the conveniences necessary for life. It would be a kind of trace being produced daily during their brief passage as a physical presence in the world. Furthermore, because of its breadth and countless symbolic meanings, it is pertinent to state that Culture and its results have always been involved in many contradictions, from the subtle ones to the more blatant. It has been like this, routine crises produced by humans since the dawn of humanity. It has to be said that civilization and culture

are consequences and, in making this statement, it has to be considered that the process of civilization took place precisely in order to contain the natural human tendency towards violence. Behavioral rules emerged. "A great step forward was taken the day the

men understood that, in order to better torment each other, it was better to get together, to organize themselves in society" (Cioran, 2011, p. 83).

In this way, it is only fitting to understand that the path taken by civilization (evolution), also through permanent conflicts, has taken place through the incessant production of habits, customs and behaviors that have been built up day after day since the first *homo habilis* was known.

When we point to the body/individual as a protagonist or place where culture is generated, knowing that this same thinking being produces experiences of the most varied consciousnesses, the conflict is on.

For some reason, Culture is heralded in an illustrious way, as if it were a powerful lady, worthy and holder of the most diverse titles granted by another noble lady called humanity, where everything that is generated through the relationship between the two becomes civilizational advances or valuable inheritances with no tangible existence. Not always, because it's about the production of knowledge of the most varied magnitudes, where several targets are aimed at the same time. It's a kind of open-air market with various promotions for all tastes - a dizzying diversity, where everything that seems to be, may not be.

The mere fact of producing knowledge can mean constant crises. In other words, it's understandable to define culture also as the result of human intervention or predatory action. There is no good or evil, simply consequences. The result of this constructed wisdom will be displayed at every moment, and it is impossible to hold it back.

Being alive, among other considerations already mentioned here, can be understood as constant emanations of desires and wishes, as well as an attempt to placate nature's immutable designs of being born, living and inevitably dying. In this vein, we can say that culture is the body's natural impetus to remain alive after its disappearance and a cluster of clues left by itself during its trajectory.

We don't know by whom, an almost unique understanding has been created that cultural manifestation is an intangible heritage of great value to a people. A banner built to confirm any freedom of civilization. Why not compare it to Ares, a god from Greek mythology related to war and brutality?

Because of these social constructions, which have been built up over time, the conclusion reached was that Art, which must necessarily be produced by the body in order to exist, would be linked and subordinated to Culture. I allow myself to be controversial about this.

### **Second act**

There are controversial issues that I believe should be discussed. If we take into account that culture is an endless framework of human relationships that affect their surroundings at all times, this will mean a result pointing in all possible directions, in other words, it will always produce essential elements for connections or bonds between humans, but this doesn't only mean civilizational advances, but often chaos.

Sigmund Freud (2010, p. 60) gives us a great perspective on being alive and its implications:

The reason for this aggressive inclination, which we can perceive in ourselves and rightly assume in others, is the factor that disturbs our relationship with our neighbors and forces culture to spend. As a result of this primary hostility between people, an acculturated society is constantly threatened with ruin.

Culture can very well be understood as a *Pandora's Box* where, according to Greek mythology, all the evils of the world are inserted inside, having left only *hope*, trust in something positive, nothing more. In these practices are also included various forms of violence, from the subtle to the more explicit, meaning that where there is hope, there is also violence. In other words, if civilization was conceived for a reasonable coexistence between humans, with the necessary establishment of rules for its operation - a set of blocks to desire, it can be said that culture also demands social suffering. "Therefore, the next cultural requirement is that of justice, i.e. the guarantee of that the legal order once established will not be violated in favor of an individual" (Freud, 2019, p. 57).

When associating body/culture, the arts must be announced and highlighted, because a society that doesn't realize the importance of the experiences and learning of the sensitive body for the body arts will be condemned to generate a mass of compacted bodies, intolerant of social diversity, dehumanized and, consequently, objectified.

In *God and the State*, Mikhail Bakunin (2015, p. 78) gives us a beautiful insight into art.

Art individualizes, in a certain way, the types and situations it conceives; through the non-flesh-and-blood individualities, and therefore permanent and immortal individualities, it has the power to create, it reminds us of the real, living individualities that appear and disappear before our eyes. Art is therefore, in a way, the return of abstraction to life.

The implications don't stop there, there is also a narrative that has been created inserting the arts in a place of erudition, and therefore colonization, called Fine Arts, which doesn't match the popular. It is possible to diverge and point out another conception of this concept, as I consider it to be plastered, because it is directed at only one specific point. "Cultural development seems to us to be a peculiar process experienced by humanity in which many things seem familiar to us" (Freud, 2010, p. 48).

It is implicit that culture does not and should not have a commitment to art because it is constantly building relationships, facts and consequences, in other words, being alive implies a chain of production of cultural manifestations and death solidifies it.

If culture is everything that results from the human relationship with the environment, therefore it will be neither better nor worse, but different revelations added together to become a kind of collective consensus. Depending on the place, it will be possible to accept a kiss on the mouth between two men or two women, or even a violent repulsion towards the same act. While in social interaction everything is possible, tensions will be permanent due to conflicts between wills and desires.

According to Sigmund Freud (2020, p. 20):

And finally, the groups have never yearned for the truth. They demand illusions and can't do without them. They constantly give what is unreal precedence over what is real; they are almost as intensely influenced by what is false as by what is true.

### Third act

I will take a more specific look at dance as a professional and work sector because I work in this artistic area and because it is an extremely physical and emotional activity, as well as being inserted or imprisoned in this spectrum, or dungeon, called culture.

There's no denying that dance as a cultural manifestation is extremely significant in the evolutionary process of society, as it appears at various moments in the construction of the individuality of each human being. Every people have its own way of expressing itself through the body, with the historical and symbolic aspects being decisive. Each society has its own way of organizing itself.

The power of this expression can be seen, for example, in the results of the 2006 survey by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)<sup>3</sup> - of the 16 artistic activities identified in the country, dance was the second most practiced (56.1%), only behind handicrafts. It's not surprising, as there's a popular phrase created by no-one knows who, and repeated exhaustively to this day, that

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<sup>3</sup> Available at:  
<https://agenciadenoticias.ibge.gov.br/agencia-sala-de-imprensa/2013-agencia-de-noticias/releases/13361-asi-ibge-investiga-a-cultura-nos-municipios-brasileiros>.  
Accessed on: 11 June 2024.



Brazilians have a natural gift for dance. This repetition has reached other frontiers to the point where it has entered the imagination of almost every tourist who steps foot here.

Who isn't enchanted by the popular dances produced in the various regions of Brazil? Symbolic bodily emanations built by ancestors, kept intact to this day, which preserve, in the smallest details, bodily movements as a result of lived histories.

From North to South, different ways of feeling and expressing through the rhythmic movement of the body - dance. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Friedrich Nietzsche (2011, p. 41) demonstrated his passion for this art: "I could only believe in a God who could dance".

In *A Dança*, Klauss Vianna (2005, p. 105) also shows his impressions:

But if dance is a way of existing, each of us has our own original, unique and distinctive dance and movement, and it is from there that this dance and movement evolves into a form of expression in which the search for individuality can be understood by the human collective.

Despite the fact that they are two icons, one of Western philosophy and the other of Brazilian dance, who affirm their truths and would be difficult to refute - in fact, that wouldn't even be the main purpose of this essay - nevertheless, there is a possibility of proposing a political and aesthetic break, or an essential liberation of Art in relation to Culture.

This brings us to the main question: are culture and art the same thing? Is the artist's creativity to carry out his craft in the same place as what is understood by behaviors and a set of multiple knowledges? It's worth remembering that the word "culture" has its origins in the Latin *Colo*, which means I inhabit, I cultivate, and over time, it has come to be understood as the ideas and traditions of a people. What does the artist have to do with it?

The artist must decide whether or not to dialogue with these references above exposed. It's a place of full autonomy.

Why is Culture used in an ambiguous way, as well as linking Art to it? These are incomprehensible questions that deserve to be updated. I'll go further: a break is needed.

It's true, art can produce culture, but not all culture should be considered as art. Art is the space of the power of absolute subjectivation that builds new reflections, and different sensations in those who witness it. Perhaps that's why authoritarian powers treat art as an enemy.

The artist needs to be understood as a maker of art, that is, to create from his understanding of culture, to make a counterpoint to it or to build another one, the creative environment allows it. What we see are two opposite directions, but a hegemonic discourse has been produced and amalgamated in the society in general where art and culture are the same thing. What about the stage artist who produces and lives from his production? The one who creates the stage dramaturgy, organizes a complex rehearsal structure, which is usually physically and psychologically exhausting, and the one who thinks up and manages the choreography, lighting, costumes and musical score? Are they part of this vast range of possibilities?

Few people may know that the first organization representing the working artistic class was founded in the country on 19 August 1918 under the name Sindicato da Casa dos Artistas<sup>4</sup>, and its first president was Leopoldo Fróes. Three years after the publication of the Unionization Law, made official in 1934, the first SATEDs (Union of Artists and Entertainment Technicians) began to emerge. In 1985, the SPDRJ (Union of Dance Professionals of Rio de Janeiro) emerged. From then on, dance workers began to organize themselves into cooperatives (there is only one in the country, in São Paulo), associations, forums and civil class movements.

Even with these brief historical political actions described above, the totalizing discursive bias is still that they are cultural

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4 Available at: <https://www.satedrj.org.br/>. Accessed on: 11 June 2024.

constructions. Because of this ambiguity, it has become feasible to compare those who produce art with those who farm, in the company of those who think about the city, its streets, houses, buildings and parks, sports are also in this place, and various other activities. This patchwork includes racism and structural sexism, ageism, hatred of the LGBTQIAPN+ population and many other manifestations. Who hasn't heard of rape culture?

Possibly because the artist doesn't produce manufactured products on an industrial scale, seen as material goods for large-scale consumption by the population, but rather knowledge, reflection, a sense of belonging, something nonconcrete, that's where the big problem lies. For a considerable portion of society, immaterial goods would be pure abstraction for those who have nothing to do. The estrangement is total.

The tools used by artists in their constructions make them strange beings to most people. It's historical, for a large part of the Brazilian population that artistic class is made up of whores, faggots, vagabonds, potheads, lunatics, libertines, suckers on the teats of the Rouanet law, etc.

It's worth making an argument that relates to what I'm saying here: in Brazil, we've always had a problem that plagues a considerable portion of the population: *hunger*. Recently, it's been renamed *food insecurity* to perhaps soften the meaning of this scourge. Yes, it's unacceptable, but there's a famine just as tragic: the deprivation of art within society. The Brazilian people have been starving for art since the European colonizers arrived here. There is an understanding that I consider very pertinent, which is that this nation was designed, from the very beginning - more precisely from 1500 onwards, by a crude elite that lived and still lives here today - to be just a heap of people with no notion of a nation, that's all. And this is how the *mongrel complex* came about, which is nothing more than culture, an expression presented in 1958 by Brazilian journalist Nelson Rodrigues in the sports magazine *Manchete* (p. 51-52), which meant the pure and simple acceptance of Brazilian inferiority in relation to the European and North American continents.

## Act Four

Dance, of all the arts, is the place where the body, through its senses, creativity and skills, achieves a different kind of fulfilment compared to other artistic areas and suffers the consequences of this. Because of the taboo exposure of the body, which is necessary for its execution, a common sense has been built up in people's imaginations, orchestrated by family and religious conservatism, that the dancing body is possessed by the devil and the desire for sex. The result was its disapproval. The most that was tolerated was, and still is, classical ballet and some dancing in churches, preferably by women. What's more, for many, dancing is not a profession, at most a passing amusement, and for many others, it's synonymous with sin. Even today, a boy who wants to learn dance in order to become a dancer will probably be discouraged from doing so, creating worries within the family. The first tendency will be to link his intentions to some psychological problem involving his sexuality. If these activities continue to be carried out by the boy, they will have to be ignored at family gatherings. The good citizen should have a rigid body, the nuances will be considered feminine. As for the girl, no problem, she'll be free to practice for a while, then she'll have to choose her path in life - to get married and look after the offspring that will come, preferably as a discrete housewife.

The body is still taboo in Brazil, a place that is extremely guarded by others and still insensitive to new meanings, where the forbidden reigns over its natural creative and reflective vocation. A good example of this is the physical constitution of women seen as an object of desire at Carnival, one of the country's biggest cultural events. But the social rite continues - the more covered, compact, automated and, above all, submitted, the more accepted it will be.

The culture of the hidden, automated and uncreative body is of interest to the state, because this will make it easier to keep the established norms intact, which must be obeyed. The dancing body opens the floodgates of the senses so that the collected libido can flow through the pores of the repressed and will generally be

associated with catharsis, which the hypocritical conservative, because of his repressed emotions, will understand as libertinism.

It's a fact that in the political and partisan environment, dance professionals are seen as *different*. The leftwing tries to understand its importance for the population and accepts some contact, but doesn't understand the great impact that this artistic activity would have on the formation of the individual from childhood; the rightwing thinks it's irrelevant, while the far right sees them as enemies to be slaughtered.

Despite the fact that there are a significant number of workers in this area in the country, they are historically precarious due to the informal nature of the work market. Most of them work without any legal employment relationship, which victimizes them year after year, forcing them to work in other sectors when they reach old age, without any social security support from the state. It is important to emphasize once again: being a dance worker means being part of a production chain that does not generate manufactured or industrialized products, such as screws, springs, cars, fridges, bridges, buildings, etc... but generates goods that are essential for the country, such as reflection, sensitivity, citizenship, belonging and diversity, among many other things.

What about professional stage dance? A category with thousands of invisible workers in the cultural heterogeneity of the contemporary society. Being a professional in the art of dance also means being an agent of social transformation. Another serious problem: despite all the artistic, pedagogical and sensitive power that emanates from these bodies that experience dance daily as a profession, they are still not recognized as an effective working class in Brazil, and it's not even a regulated activity. Yes, being in the audience experiencing a dance performance can have the same scope or meaning for a student as being in a primary or secondary school classroom.

It has to be said, despite the barren and precarious terrain in which dance professionals find themselves, there are organized

political movements of civil society in the country, such as the aforementioned Cooperatives, Trade Unions and Associations.

The National Dance Forum (FND) is an excellent example to cite in this article. The FND is an association created in 2001 as a result of the political emergency arising from the interference of the Federal Council of Physical Education in the area of dance teaching. Made up of artists from all corners of the country, it was responsible for creating and articulating the bill that is currently before the Chamber of Deputies in Brasilia - the Dance Bill - PL 4768/2016 (regulating the professional practice of dance in the country). This bill was authored by Valter Pinheiro, a former Bahian senator from the Workers' Party, and was unanimously approved by the Federal Senate in 2016. It is currently before the Chamber of Deputies.

Figure 1 - Senator Lídice da Mata (PSB-BA). Rapporteur of the Social Affairs Committee (CAS) on the approval of [PLS 644/2015](#).

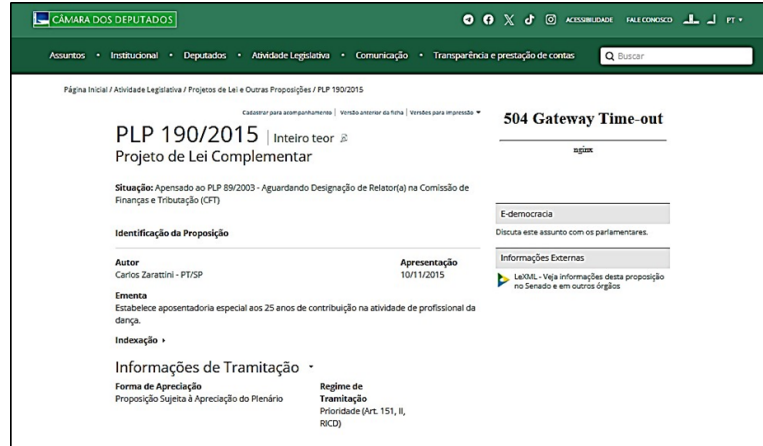


Source: Photo by Geraldo Magela, 2 March 2016/Agência Senado. Available at: <https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2016/03/02/comissao-de-assuntos-sociais-aprova-regu-lamentacao-dos-profissionais-da-danca>. Accessed on: 1 June 2024.

Proving that there are political activists and organizers in this area, in 2015 the São Paulo Dance Professionals' Work Cooperative played an important role in devising and structuring a pre-project law that, if approved, will cover the entire working class in the area in the country. This is the complementary bill currently before the Chamber of Deputies, authored by federal deputy Carlos

Zarattini, also from the *Workers' Party*, which deals with special regime of retirement in Brazilian dance - PLP 190/2015.

Figure 2 - Print screen of the Chamber of Deputies Portal.



Source: Available at:  
<https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=2053471>. Accessed on: 1 May 2024.

In 2023, on December 5th, in the Chamber of Deputies in Brasilia, thanks to the political movement of the National Dance Forum, which included the participation of professionals from all corners of the country, the Parliamentary Dance Front was officially created, a historic moment for the category. It required 214 signatures from elected magistrates to be made official. A milestone in relations between the artistic and political classes. This newly created political organization has deputy Carlos Zarattini (PT-SP), president; Áureo Ribeiro (Solidariedade-RJ), 1st vice-president; Fernanda Melchionna (PSOL-RJ), 2nd vice-president; Jandira Feghali (PCdoB-RJ), 3rd vice-president; Alice Portugal (PCdoB-BA), 4th vice-president; Laura Carneiro (PSD-RJ), general secretary.

Figure 3 - Parliamentary Dance Front.



Source: Photo by Gabriel Paiva, 5 Dec. 2023/Portal Câmara dos Deputados. Available at: <https://ptnacamara.org.br/carlos-zarattini-preside-a-frente-parlamentar-em-defesa-dos-profissionais-da-danca/>. Accessed on: 30 May 2024.

Although there is a mobilization, it is *still* insufficient due to the size of the country and also the lack of political awareness of a large part of dance makers in Brazil, probably due to a somewhat old-fashioned romanticism that the category has so far held on to - some believe that the artist is a special being. Today, there is a phrase that has become known as a justification put forward by many artists: "Those who produce dance in this country are in search of survival, so they *don't have time* to align themselves with political struggles". In this respect it is legitimate, but it is pertinent to point out that adversity - whatever it may be – is, can and should be fuel for struggles, so although plausible, this discourse weakens the mobilizations to the point of often being a pretext for prostration. "Go and fight for me, I'll give you my full support". This is still a prevailing thought.

Another question arises: are those who are mobilized because they have time on their hands or are they favored by the system?

In a way, the state is grateful: the fewer artists who are active, the less political awareness will be produced, and it is known that a society with a high standard of reflection is unlikely to be misled by power. The nation's last president, who is recognized as



being on the far right, and his followers, made what I'm saying here clear. Artists were considered the enemies to be exterminated.

Although public management generally doesn't realize it, dance has been an important source of income and thousands of direct and indirect jobs in our country. In addition to the performers, there are lighting designers, musicians, costume designers, producers and technicians are essential to the construction of a stage show, not to mention the commerce around the theatre that also benefits from it. Even so, for the majority of the Brazilian population, dance is just a way of expressing the body's contained and repressed pleasures through movement. This kind of understanding has only reproduced a reduced view of what it (Dance) really potentiates.

Little notice is taken of the professional in this art, the one who produces it with their physical-psychic body. This activity, seen in the eyes of a large majority of the population as "glamorous" and full of stereotypes, is in fact extremely stressful for the workers who perform it, as they are subjected to intense daily technical and physical training in the exercise of their functions, and injuries are constant. In other words, too much technical complexity is involved to be seen or understood only as culture.

I'll make a digression: the art of Dance is full of *artisans* who are the ones who produce authentic *crafts*<sup>5</sup> to be adorned on the ceiling of Culture. Why not compare them to a Phoenix that rises from its ashes at every moment? The raw material used in their creative constructions exhaled from the body makes the dance artist an idealist of illusions, a maker of utopias and chimeras, but also of nightmares and harsh, perverse realities. The tragedy of everyday life is almost always commonplace, but if brought to the stage, it will

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<sup>5</sup> Artisans is an architectural term meaning "ornaments framed in vaults and ceilings". Available in: [https://www.infopedia.pt/artigos/\\$artesaos-or-artesoes#:~:text=The%20two%20forms%20may%20be,if%20tetos%20adornados%20com%20artes%C3%B5es](https://www.infopedia.pt/artigos/$artesaos-or-artesoes#:~:text=The%20two%20forms%20may%20be,if%20tetos%20adornados%20com%20artes%C3%B5es). Accessed on: 3 July 2024.

take on unimaginable proportions. In other words, the stage is an implacable inquisitor of the hypocrite.

Dance professionals have the potential to be great social transformers, despite the fact that we have a society imprisoned by conservative concepts, with the body as the main target of hypocrisy and sin.

It's possible to prospect and ensure that the harsh reality of the body that thinks, creates and acts through scenic movement, whether it's a scene on or off a theatre stage, only has a one-way ticket, there is no return ticket. It's always been like this, being a dance artist in this country has meant constantly punching a knife, as well as being imprisoned, ironically, in a dungeon that, as I've explained here, can be called Culture.

It's historical and cultural - despite the thousands of workers who work in this area in the country, the category faces a perverse informality in their jobs, resulting in a lack of any kind of social security support from the state, forcing them to work until old age so they don't starve to death. This has been the naked *reality*. Despite all the creative, educational and working power that emanates from these bodies, they are still not recognized as a productive category. There is no industry that produces dance to be sold in a supermarket or *in a mall*, so the *status quo* remains intact because no social meaning has been developed for it. In other words, culture stifling art, specifically dance, is a fact.

### **Act Five**

Art can and should be fueled by counterculture, paradigm shifts, a place where not everything that seems to be, may not be, depending on the point of view of those who appreciate it. What is established and already conventionalized will not always be useful tools. A place where there is no common God - where good and evil, life and death must be inseparable lovers. There is no right or wrong, which is why dance is or should be fundamental, because it naturally fosters diversity of thought. "Superior men, the worst thing you have

is not having learnt to dance: to dance above your heads! What does it matter that you weren't happy?" (Nietzsche, 2011, p. 339).

Another important point that could merit future reflection for those who may read this text, may not be motivating: there is a tendency that invariably when the crucial problems of dance in Brazil are discussed, the issues almost always fall into the pedagogical sphere and its breadth as a popular expression. Yes, there should be convergence on these issues, as they are of the utmost importance, but the revolution would take place precisely in applying it as a real artistic practice, in all its potential. Teaching dance in all its expressions in the country's public schools would be substantial in terms of developing the concept (essence) of democracy in all its breadth, and would be strengthened even more if it were applied right from the earliest age group of the Brazilian population. An initiative of this magnitude, as well as contemplating a fundamental right for children and young people to have wider access to this art in the school environment, would certainly broaden the understanding of the nation and the Democratic Rule of Law in the national civilizing process. Dance, truly taught at school from an early age, would drive a radical transformation in certain political, social, economic and cultural structures in the country. The sensitive and creative body would be the common thing, revealing the differences between dance as a symbolic and historical manifestation of a people and the stage dance, which has the potential to broaden sensitivity and reflective construction, as well as being a profession.

In spite of all the interpretations set out above, these understandings of the subject expose a chronic problem for the artisans of the limelight, simply an erasure in the discussions of the real meaning of the role of the artist on the scene, the one who thinks, creates and acts. In other words, the artist has usually been seen as an outsider at meetings of *cultural representatives*, because the agendas they bring are very little understood and, at best, perceived as out of context. The way I see it, the enclosure of the dance maker and other areas of art is a *modus operandi* that has

already been exhausted in major debates, such as, for example, at the last National Conference on Culture, held last March in Brasilia, where identity agendas were mentioned a lot, in fact, becoming the main reason for the meeting. Once again, the arts, especially dance, were practically left out due to lack of knowledge or interest. The ironic and comical side of all this is that right after the exhaustive discussions were over, there were musical performances by professional musicians and singers for a joyful dance fraternization among the various social bubbles present.

What can be seen is that there is an *ignorance* that is entrenched in the prejudice that still prevails today when it comes to the arts, which goes beyond the conservative political field and even affects the progressive field to a large extent. Logically, in the official public sphere, people speak with apparent knowledge of the subject, not all of them, when it comes to health, housing, security, education, labour, etc., but when it comes to the arts, the question arises. Very rarely has art been on the political agenda in the plenary sessions of the people's house, and when dance is mentioned, the problem is magnified. "What do these weird people actually do?" It must be the most frequent question asked by a parliamentarian, but the most that can be achieved, even logically, is that it is one of the most important cultural manifestations in the country. That's what they manage to say.

It's very common, culturally speaking - I've experienced it myself at times in my life - for an artist to be asked: "What is your profession?" when opening a credit card. When they answer: "Dance artist", they hear the reply: "I see, but what do you work with?".

There is an age group, perhaps over 40, who must have heard their mothers say the following repressive phrase many times in childhood, and sometimes from their own fathers: "I'm going out, if you do *art* here at home, you'll be punished". In

In other words, be obedient and you won't be punished. What is the objective meaning of this statement? Art as a synonym

for disorder, and therefore outside the norm. In other words, the relationship between the body and freedom has always been considered a danger to conservative family structures. In other words, art being understood and used as an instrument of threat, in a way, tyrannical in the *coziness* of the family. This proves that creativity frightens conservative power, as it could result in an open door to the unknown that would give rise to the risk of lack of control and, consequently, the emergence of possible new realities.

What's more, let's just say that it's an emblematic phrase that could very well be connected to today's contemporaneity. "Cultural development seems to us a peculiar process experienced by humanity in which many things seem familiar" (Freud, 2010, p. 48).

### **Last act**

It's urgent. That a new, fair and true presentation be made whenever Culture is announced, that would indicate Culture and Art, if not made in this way, the break between the two must happen. Unlike these historical protocols constructed and preserved by society, Art takes a different route from what is normally referred to as a civilizing principle. Art is sovereign because, like it or not, it submerges itself in the source of antagonisms to reappear metamorphosed into other signs. It must reject and question established ethical values, in other words, counterculture is its indispensable food for survival. I'll go one step further: the body arts have the capacity to transgress this place even further, because the body is what drives them. In this environment, the betrayal of rites will be constant, the dead will only be vestiges, good and evil will be confused all the time. Hell will be necessary for other paths, God can be a farceur, he must be stripped bare at all times.

The only way to rectify this memorable mistake is to create a Ministry of the Arts, with its own budget, and exclusively qualified employees, why not from the arts, working exclusively in their positions. The Funarte (National Arts Foundation), created in 1975 during the military dictatorship, would become a secretariat of this

ministry, it is worth remembering that it was only set up as a foundation linked and subordinate to the MinC (Ministry of Culture).

Divergences can turn into convergences at any moment, they are the fuels that guide humans until they perish and leave their mark on the social environment. Culture is exactly that - a driving force that moves to different places, nothing more than the consequences of human action, often predatory. Built for the purpose of being a common good? Let's say not, because human interests are and always have been diverse. As mentioned earlier, something like a *Pandora's Box*. And what exactly is the art inside it? Most likely hope, which I re-signify as utopia, created to be pursued, never achieved. "Without the hope of even greater pain, I could not endure this one, even if it were infinite" (Cioran, 2011, p. 66).

### Lowering the curtains at the Limelight

Figure 4 - Scenic dance. Image from the show *Gargoyles*, with Cia Carne Agonizante.



Source: Photo by Domingos Quintiliano, 2004. Performers: Renata Aspesi and Roberto Alencar. Available at: <http://www.ciacarneagonizante.com.br/>. Accessed on: 8 July 2024.

Whoever refused to dance ended up suffocated by Harpocrates<sup>6</sup> and thus remained in the eternal silence of ignorance; moreover, Dionysus separated him from the drink of intoxicating and

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<sup>6</sup> Greek mythology. God of Silence.

worldly liquids that would free him from the hypocrisy of the well balanced.

Possibly, if some incautious person happens to read this essay, they will say: "a radical vision" or even "*nec caput nec pedes*" (Latin: without a foot or a head). Without any problem, life continues to be ephemeral and the body collects a series of successive mistakes and inevitable failures. A Sisyphus, interpreting a martyring and tragic choreography, going back and forth to nowhere.

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