

Reception: methodological divergences between Adorno and Lazarsfeld

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the meeting that took place between Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Theodor W. Adorno, who were working together to come up with a research about music listening through the radio. The attempt to reconcile “American empiricism with European theory”, proved to be, however, impossible. During the research, the differences between Lazarsfeld’s positivistic procedures and Adorno’s dialectics became an obstacle to the project’s completion. This episode came to be one of the twentieth century most fascinating chapters on the debates about methods in communication studies.

Key words: empiricism, mediation, dialectics, radio, music.

RESUMO

Lazarsfeld convidou Adorno para, juntos, realizarem uma pesquisa sobre a audição de música no rádio. Nada deu certo, tornando a colaboração impossível. Na raiz da discórdia está a divergência entre a metodologia funcionalista de Lazarsfeld e a teoria crítica de Adorno. Este criticava no primeiro o apego à imediatez da escuta, sem levar em conta a categoria dialética da mediação.

Palavras-chave: empirismo, dialética, mediação, rádio, música

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**LAZARFELD:
FROM “AUSTRO-MARXISM” TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE
RESEARCH**

Lazarfeld was born in Viena, where he later became a militant for the socialist movement. The austro-marxism, hegemonic among leftist parties, believed that the working class would ascend to power through voting and not through social revolution. The perspective of conquering the government through voting and managing the capitalist state has put an end to revolutionary activism. The ancient militant occupied with the “agitation” and “propaganda” was substituted by a bureaucratic group concerned with management techniques. The need for information became vital in order to guide the actions of this new leftist movement, especially in what regarded the public opinion polls, which were something still new then. To know the disposition of the voters and, then, influence them became the objective of parties and trade unions.

Lazarfeld, a left wing activist, a profound connoisseur of statistics and with knowledge in psychology, took interest in public opinion polls. Pressured by the low wages of the university, Lazarsfeld created a research centre in order to elaborate marketing research, which was something new then.

In his memoirs, he remembers that his first marketing research was on “the reasons that make people choose a certain brand of soap”. This research made him convinced of the “methodological equivalence between the socialist vote and the purchase of soap” (Lazarsfeld, 1969: 279). In this sentence one can notice that sociology for him must focus on the “choice processes” and that the decision is independent from social conditionings and contents – it doesn’t matter whether it is a socialist vote or the purchase of soap: “the method became autonomous”, and, consequently, the formulation of the research becomes independent from the contents to which it is applied. The method, a scientific, and therefore, neutral one, hovers over the objects and fits them in it. With a universal passport, it allows knowledge to enter in any territory and capture the object. It is a key that opens all doors.

On the other hand, the “purchase of soap” and the “socialist vote” are equivalent: they are both free choices of the citizen-consumer, whose criteria become the primary object of sociology. Therefore, sociology doesn’t study the “social structures” and its domination forms anymore, but the “individual actions”. The success gained by the author came to the interest of the Rockefeller Foundation, which granted him with a scholarship in the United States in 1933. Two years after that, the political situation in Austria becomes worst compelling him to stay in the USA.

In 1937, Lazarsfeld is invited to study the effect of the radio on its listener

and his researches make him known as the “founding father” of the mass communication studies (Cf. Morrison, 1978).

At this point, there was great worry about the effects of mass communication media. The memories of war and of Hitler’s rise add up to issues regarding internal American politics. The election of Roosevelt, a democrat, was due greatly to the use of radio. Once the Republicans controlled the press, Roosevelt developed his campaign on the radio and surprised everyone with his unexpected victory.

American politics, from the 1930’s on, point to an unsuspected similarity that brings it closer to the “austro-marxist’s” strategy, although taking it to the limit, something certainly noticed by Lazarsfeld. The substitution of popular mobilization for administrative and management procedure, defended by the left wing in Austria, was completely carried out by American pragmatism. According to Michael Pollack:

... politics as an argumentation and mass mobilization activity is progressively abandoned and substituted for policy making, the “scientific” elaboration and the option for alternative solutions to isolated problems, an activity presented as technique and reserved for the elite (Pollack, 1979: 48).

Then, emerges “a new type of research which intends to abolish the limits between political and scientific activity, the policy sciences” (idem, ibidem). The social reformation, disseminated by the New Deal, launched millionary funds for empirical researches whose priority was “activities of collecting data and of translating the empirical researches into administrative prescriptions” (idem, ibidem).

This is the context in which emerged the importance of publishing methodology manuals and its consequent proliferation. Sociology shouldn’t only emancipate itself from philosophy, but it should also provide specialists in rational management for administration and business companies (Picò, 1998: 19).

This pragmatic and apparently neutral spirit contaminated sociology and was exported to the rest of the world. Lazarsfeld, in the 1950’s and 1960’s, was a key figure in this intellectual “Marshall Plan” that created, according to Pollack, a “scientific multinational” – the analysis of society’s structure, accused of being “ideological”, were substituted by “neutral” and “rational” techniques of sociological empiricism. The theory of society once again gave space to statistics.

ADORNO AND THE DEFENSE OF DIALECTICS

In the text in which Adorno remembers his exile in the United States (1995), he observes that there are two different forms of understanding method in sociology. The European tradition brings closer together method and “epistemology”. In this regard, Durkheim speaks of the “rules of the sociological method” and Weber conceives his typologies. The American empirical tradition, engaged in cutting the strings with philosophy, understands method as “research technique”, formal proceedings used in empirical researches.

The divergence between Adorno and Lazarsfeld regards this difference in comprehending the method in human sciences. In various passages of his vast work, Adorno thought about the American experience in order to point out its differences in regard to empirical procedures. We must now point out these differences.

Adorno is conscious that the defeat suffered by the European conception of methodology is an inevitable tendency of modern capitalism, so well exemplified by the empiricism that ruled in the United States. In his words, the victory of the positivist oriented sciences over speculation “was also a result of theories of development or of reality itself against which the voluntary affirmations that are in the opposite direction have no value” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1973a: 122).

When he returned to Germany, after the exile, Adorno came across the current thought which regarded sociology as a “science of the spirit”. At this point, he partially defends the American empiricism, considered to be a more adequate method to portrait a society in which men have been reduced to numbers.

And, more than that, the human behavior endowed with sense, as it was seen in Max Weber, would have ceased to exist in the manipulated society in which the action of men became only a reaction to stimuli. The empiricism here appears as the “mirror of the Medusa” of a society “simultaneously atomized and organized according to some abstract classificatory principles: the ones of administration” (Adorno, 1973b: 124).

Nonetheless, Adorno brings to light the subjection of thought to empirical reality, a thought that is limited to duplicating reified reality instead of separating itself from it in order to carry out a criticism of the existent. These characteristics stood against the “speculation” (the dialectic reason) as well as against the classical sociology. Hence the adherence to facts and the renunciation of research of the “social sense”, of the “essence” of the phenomena studied.

This desire for objectivity to be guaranteed by the facts, however, does not come into being.

The empirical research, says Adorno, winds up fixing itself only on opinions

expressed in the answers to questionnaires. This way, “the conditions in which men live, the objective functions they carry out in the social process, are substituted by their subjective reflex” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1973a:124).

Collecting data and the statistic treatment cannot apprehend social tendencies, but only freeze them in the insufficient averages. The presupposition which states that science is measurement reproduces the own limit of mathematics: it is abstract and it says nothing of the social truth. Statistics, says Adorno, “cannot establish what is a pressure group and only the thought on the effective distribution of the strength relations inside society can offer information about it” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1973a: 125).

The empiricist aspiration for objective knowledge, on the other hand, ends up being restricted to the objectivity of the method and not of the studied phenomena. A category such as “conservatism”, says Adorno, is defined “by means of certain numerical values of the answers to the questions determined during the research and proposed by it”.

Therefore, “it sanctions the priority of method over object”. We are, therefore, before “an instrument of investigation that decides, in view of its own formulation, what is the object – in short, a vicious cycle” (Adorno, 1973b: 125). This way, the predominance of aspects of methodology over the ones regarding the contents is established.

The empiricist proceeding is characterized by its extreme generality and it presents to us an image of a homogenous society without internal cracks or contradictions, in which general overcomes specific and all opinions become equivalent. This leads to a duplication of a “unity of an individualistic society” which takes “the scattered and unequal interests of individuals to the unitary formula of their opinion” (idem: 86).

Empiricism with this atomist proceeding can, at the most, reach general classificatory concepts, without being able to arrive at the dynamics that rules social life. In order for this to happen, dialectics, wishing to break from the false isolation of atom-individuals and from the corresponding view of an abstract generality, claim totality – a concept that structures reality and thought.

For empiricism’s pragmatic thinking, to speak of “totality”, is to refer to an abstraction, to a metaphysical philosophers’ jargon. However, it is not difficult to understand in fact that a totality exists and how it imposes itself in our daily life. Adorno himself offers us an example. He says: in order to know what a workman is, one needs “before” to know what a capitalist society is. An immediate look only ascertains that the individual is a workman. But, as such, he does not distinguish himself from others, like a slave or a servant of the soil, characters of a proslavery and feudal world. On the other hand, this workman

does not distinguish himself from an autonomous worker in capitalist society. Only by previously knowing the totality (of the capitalist society), in which wage labour is the rule, one can define exactly what is a workman.

The difference regarding the positivist empiricism becomes evident. In it, the research advances from the slightest elements, the “social actors”, the parts, in order to reach, through ordinance and classification of the material, knowledge. According to Adorno, this is the result of “a knowledge that denies the structure of its object to pay homage to its’ own methodology” (idem: 123).

Dialectics, on the contrary, aims at explaining the connections between the parts and the whole and does that in an opposite direction from positivism. The priority of the whole over the parts does not mean that the whole is a previously given fact, motionless, a fixed figure. This is about comprehending that society is a “process” and because of that, it can not be understood “immediately”. The bound between Adorno and Hegel is evident when the author criticizes the “immediateness”. Hegel, in a famous passage of *The Philosophy of Religion*, states that “there is no immediate knowledge” and that mediation is not an artifice of the thought, but an element which constitutes and integrates reality.

Lukács of *History and Class Consciousness*, another important source of Adorno, says that “... the category of mediation as a methodological lever for surpassing the simple immediateness of experience is not, therefore, something imported from the exterior (subjectively) to the objects (...) it is “a manifestation of its own objective structure” (Lukács, 1974: 182).

It is with this spirit that Adorno formulates his ideas for a sociology of art. If it studies the relations between art and society, it must not isolate any aspect, such as the effect of the art work on the receiver, once the effect is “just a moment in totality”. Therefore, Adorno says:

... the effects of works of art and of spiritual formations in a general sense are not something absolute and final, they would be sufficiently determined by referring to the receiver. On the contrary, the effects depend on innumerable mechanisms of diffusion, social control and authority and finally they depend upon the structure of society, in which its contexts of operation can be examined. These effects depend also on the states of consciousness and unconsciousness – that are determined socially – under which the effect takes place (Adorno, 1986: 108).

The relations between “mediation” and “immediateness” are in the centre of the differences that made the collaboration between Adorno and Lazarsfeld

impossible, because when claiming the simultaneous study of the links that compose totality (the “structure of society”), Adorno subscribes to the concept of mediation understood “rigorously in the Hegelian sense”. This way, he finishes: “the mediation is in the thing itself; it is not something added between the thing and other things to which it is brought closer” (idem: 114). Listening to music, according to this thought, is not an act that can be isolated by analysis: it is an experience mediated by social experience as a whole.

THE PRINCETON RADIO RESEARCH PROJECT

Understand the reaction of the listeners to classical music played in radio stations is the central aim of the project that brought Adorno and Lazarsfeld closer, from 1938 to 1941.

The subject had then capital importance: on one hand, radio was still something new and, therefore, a challenge for sociologists; on the other hand, 60% of radio programs at the time were occupied by music. This explains the interest of the Ford Foundation in financing the project and, with it, trying to raise funds with broadcasting companies. This conjunction of factors exemplifies the marriage of interests between economical corporations and academic knowledge.

How to research the reaction of listeners of classical music transmitted on the radio? The common procedure of empiricist sociology was followed: a group of people is elected and submitted to tests. Lazarsfeld invented a machine, the Program Analyser, in order to detect and measure the reaction of the listeners. The listeners, put in an experimental situation while they listened to music on the radio, “immediately” manifested their reaction. The machine contained two buttons: likes e dislikes, which were activated during the listening in order to show like or dislike. Then, the listeners were interviewed and invited to verbalize their opinions.

This is the setting in which Adorno is asked to collaborate. With the purpose of understanding the failure of the assignment one needs to remember that the epistemological differences led the authors to face in opposite directions one of the central elements of the communication process: Lazarsfeld gave priority to the “reception”; Adorno, to the moment of “production”.

RECEPTION AND IMMEDIATENESS

Adorno cannot accept the immediate empirical fact (the listener’s reaction) as a starting point for the communication studies and, even less, that one should dismiss the presence of a theory of society for interpreting the facts.

By thinking this way, Adorno believes that the immediate fact (in this case:

the listener's reaction) is not a starting point and must not be the arrival point of a research either. The reaction of the listener is something "conditioned": presupposes totality and all its mediations, that is, a society which is historically determined.

This way, one can understand Adorno's rejection of Lazarsfeld proposals. The relationship between individual and radio or television, according to Adorno, cannot be seen as an immediate relationship. Therefore, the research must not restrict itself to this first moment (the immediate one) because this is a false beginning – this is the result of a process, of a group of mediations. There are plenty of mediations behind this speaking object, the radio.

On the other hand, man as a social being is not "alone" in the presence of the machine. The totality (society) is present to mediate this relation between individual and machine, society and machine and individual. Society makes itself present in the individual, inside one's unsuspected intimacy. It conditions one's attitude before the music transmitted on the radio.

For Adorno, the research shouldn't begin with the individual and his or hers immediate reaction, for this reaction is neither immediate nor spontaneous, but determined by various factors; it should trace conditionings and mediations which enables to explain the listeners' reactions. The empirical fact captured immediately (the listener's reaction) does not explain itself – it is mediated and mediator. In order to study it, registering its immediateness is not enough, turning it into a fixed fact.

The listener's behavior cannot be isolated: it reflects "great schemes of social behavior" which are, in their turn, conditioned by "society's structure". In order to capture the listener's behavior, a general theory which incorporates all mediations is needed. Adorno, then, suggests a "social theory of the radio", a study about the "physiognomy of the radio", and not mere inquiries on the opinion of listeners as intended by Lazarsfeld.

When speaking of physiognomy the ideas of Lombroso immediately come to mind. By physiognomy, this author understood the study of mental properties through the physiognomy of the individual. A criminal shows physical evidences that would explain his behavior. According to this determinist view, which is no longer credited for, in the assassin's own brain one can verify the inclinations that lead to homicide.

It was about studying, through phrenology, the complexion of the brain in order to discover the secret of human behavior. This way, the coincidence between exterior and interior, the body and the soul, the objective physical element observed by the criminalist, and the subjective aspect, the psychic tendencies, is confirmed¹.

1. The idea that says «the face is the mirror of the soul», or, the appearance and essence coincide with each other, cannot be accepted by dialectics.

Umberto Eco, with his well-known sense of humor, reminds us that, in Hegel's Phenomenology, the author rose against this vulgar determinism, observing in an amusing passage that "natural phrenology does not only think that a perspicacious man must have behind his ear a protuberance as big as a fist, but also that his unfaithful wife must have, not in herself, but in her legitimate spouse, frontal protuberances". According to Eco, the philosopher tried to denounce "how the discourse on skull and phrenology could lead a race or individual to be marked forever, without considering actions and variations of history" (ECO, 1989: 49-50).

The relations between appearance and essence are strongly present in the dialectic tradition and they reproduce themselves in the attempts to compose a “physiognomy” – being that of the radio, as Adorno wanted, being that of the cities, as shown in Walter Benjamin’s studies about Paris.

The idea of creating a physiognomy was an important topic in the 1920’s and 1930’s. Adorno refers to the studies of psychoanalysts Sándor Ferenczi and Siegfried Bernfeld, but forgot to cite Brecht, who, in his theorization on the epic theater, gave to *gestus* a central role.

In Brechtian theatre, the gesture was the moment when the “social” manifested itself. In each age, said Brecht, there is a specific gestural language which is present in human behavior. Brecht separates the automatic gesture, a mere gesticulation (scratching your head, chasing away a fly) from the social gesture, the one “that is relevant to society”, “that leads to conclusions about the situation of society”². This is not, however, a natural determination, as it is in phrenology, but an artistic artifice that concentrates in facial and body expression the social interests suddenly shown at the character’s visage – an involuntary revelation of a truth.

The expression “physiognomy”, as used by Adorno, is set over against the naturalist phrenology and “psychology” because it does not wish to limit itself to the individual, but, like his predecessors had done, unite “objective and subjective elements”. One of Adorno’s sources is Benjamin’s studies on Paris. However, contrary to Benjamin, when he speaks of physiognomy he is not thinking about the “image”, but the “sound” transmitted by the radio through the “expression” of the radiophonic voice. This particular object, the “radio voice”, is seen as a mirror that reflects, involuntarily, the contradictions of society. The «physiognomy of the radio» must explain the «face» as an expression of the «soul» – subjective factors, apparently immediate and visible, and the hidden factors, the objective factors of the industrial gear of capitalist society. Adorno’s objective is to show that «the voice of the radio», this private object of research, hides/reveals a false totality. Given that, the author does not want to limit himself to the study of the material offered by the radio, but to capture the “characteristics of the radio-phenomenon as it is, deprived of any private or material content” (Adorno, 2006: 77). A simple example: an individual walks into his room and the radio is on. He, first, “listens to the sound before being capable of being aware of the content of the transmission” (idem: 78). Adorno’s procedure is similar to that individual’s procedure, since it comes across the radio phenomenon the fact that it is «talking to the individual», before he can understand the meaning of the transmitted material.

The «radio voice» is his own voice, says Adorno. It is the researcher’s

2. About gesture in Brecht’s theater, see Bornheimer, 1992: 281-283 e Jameson, 1999: 125-178.

task to understand how this filter affects the listener, which is different from Lazarsfeld, who wanted to start the research by interviewing listeners and collecting their opinions. To focus the study on the «radio voice» is the path to understanding not only the particularities of this mean of communication, but also to elucidate social forces and processes that are «behind» the observed phenomenon, «behind» the radio and which guide its speech.

Nothing could be more opposite to Lazarsfeld's project. The «clearness» pursued by empiricism is substituted by the «shadows» of speculative reason. The categories that guide the physiognomic analysis remain in a zone of penumbra and indetermination, fact which shocked Adorno's interlocutors. These categories are not defined a priori, in a crystalline and systematic way, because, according to Adorno

... we do not systematize what has to be disordered. We do not want to order what has to be disordered. We do not want to harmonize what has to be discordant. Our group of categories may have contradictions, but we assert that these contradictions are not flaws of an approach (...) we assert that these contradictions in categories express the contradictions of the studied material and, in the last instance, contradictions of our society (Adorno, 2006: 147).

This systematically unsystematic thinking, in its refusal of «identity», comprehends, therefore, the field of categories itself. These are not supposed to duplicate what is real, but, on the contrary, penetrate in its appearance and reveal the hidden social truth. Great part of the categories mobilized by the author follows Benjamin's work – physiognomy, aura, technical reproductiveness etc. Not by chance, in the beginning of his research on radio, Adorno sent him a letter asking about the hearing models he had developed in Germany, in the beginning of the 30's.

Regarding Benjamin's theoretical legacy, some aspects must be pointed out. His theory on technical reproductiveness basically refers to visual arts and, especially to cinema. This theory is vital for Adorno's argumentation, but could not be directly applied to music, because this one is not based on technical reproductiveness. In music, the «original» is not more authentic than its reproduction, since music only exists when reproduced. But, the radio deforms the music's original sense. Thus,

3. Cf. Muller-Doohm, 2003: 370. The author clarifies that these hearing models were developed in analogy with Brecht's epic theater. “his objective was educational and he wanted to fight against the mentality of consumption regarding the new mean of communication”.

Adorno observes that the authenticity Benjamin has attributed to visual arts in respect to the original

... must be attributed to live reproduction in music. The free reproduction has its «here» – in the concert room and in the opera – the true moment in which it is performed. And what Benjamin calls the «aura» of the original certainly constitutes a part of the live reproduction (...) we believe that «its» authenticity, or aura, disappears in music due to mechanic reproduction. The phonographic record destroys the «now» of live performance and, consequently, also its «here» (Adorno, 2006: 141-2).

«The defense of live musical performance», then, opposes itself to its reproduction on the radio; the technical reproduction is not a neutral one, since it interferes in the act of listening to music itself. Hence, the subjectivity of the listener is not free and, therefore, must not be the starting point of a research, since it is previously shaped by objective factors.

Adorno's most frequent example is Beethoven's symphony. Instead of asking the listener what are his opinions about the symphony that played on the radio, Adorno asks himself, before doing anything, what «is» a symphony, what characterizes one. According to his point of view, what characterizes a symphony is the “contraction of time” – “the impression that the music lasts only for a moment”, when actually it lasts twenty minutes. This is explained by the internal structure of the composition. It appears not as a totality “in which each part derives from its own meaning only in relation to other parts, but, it becomes a fast sequence of atom-like sections, each one more or less perceived in isolation”. Beethoven's symphony, in its movement, is a totality, the unit of a plurality, the plurality of a unit. What matters here is the comprehension of this integrated flow. We could add that Beethoven is not a good «melodist», since, as Adorno affirms, “the entirety is everything; the part, the melody, is relatively unimportant” (idem: 92).

This characteristic led many authors to compare symphony and drama, is theorized in Lukács' Theory of romance. Like drama, “the essence of the symphony aims at a intensive totality, in the instantaneous focus of an «idea», more than the extensive totality of life unfolded in the empirical time” (Adorno, 1979: 127).

All these structural characteristics of the symphony disappear on the radio, since the «radio voice» dissolves the music, decomposing it in loose parts. The listener, who is isolated, adapts the volume of the radio to the conditions of his small room. Thus, he does not throw himself into the music, on the contrary, he tries to «conduct» the sound. The strong sounds, which announce something in the symphony and produce an impact in the listener, are tuned

down. So, the quantity and intensity of the sounds are altered, affecting the internal articulation of the symphony's structure. The absence of «intensity» – one of the characteristics of symphonic music – disappears and, with it, the «contraction of time» also disappears. The listener loses the relation that exists between the part and the entirety and is surrendered to details. The «intensive totality», which characterizes drama and symphony, gives place to the «extensive totality» – music, says Adorno, still referring to Lukács's book – becomes an «epopee».

The contraposition between live music and its reproduction on the radio is present throughout the author's reasoning. One of the pointed out aspects refers to the radio's intention of being a perfect reproduction of live music, keeping its «aura» intact. This is a «pseudo-immediateness» provided by the impression of a simultaneous time between the performance of the music and its listening on the radio. Music, observes Adorno, when recorded, submits itself to technical imperatives: the sound of the record is mediated by sound engineers, according to merely technical, and non-musical, criteria. Then, «radio voice» presents us a music that is, at the same time, a symphony and something different. Finally, the listener's act of handling the radio produces a new interference, a new mediation. There is a great difference between listening to live music in a concert room and listening to it in a living room or bedroom. The act of listening in the concert room puts the listener near by the orchestra and «inside» the music. It is a living relation, a unique and unrepeatable life experience. The radio breaks this communion between the listener and live music, and creates distance between listener and music, which has plenty of consequences.

Therefore, one thing is the music's aura, its unique performance in a concert room, another thing is its mass reproduction, its transmission through the radio. The classical music, transformed into a large-scale consumers good, suffers a vulgarization process. Radio programmers only choose the easiest plays, since they are more accessible and can be consumed without great auditory effort. This is one of the themes which Adorno frequently tackles in his texts: the «auditory regression», the incapability of listening to new things that are really new. The «bigoted» ear feels good when recognizing the sounds: the chorus it already knows, the repetition of clichés etc. One listens to a passage and, automatically, «deduces» the rest: the lazy ear, therefore, protects itself from new things and from the «threats» to the vulgarization to which it is used to. Musical programmers, in their turn, only reinforce vulgarization: from symphonies, they choose only the passages considered to be easily digested and the new classical music (atonal and dodecaphonic), much appreciated by Adorno, is never presented, since it goes beyond the public's «average taste».

Democratization of classical music and the intention of elevating the cultural level of the public through it are a fraud.

A distant listener is a distracted listener. At home, the listening is frequently interrupted: the telephone rings, the children ask a question, the listener gets up to get a beer on the fridge etc. This distraction only reinforces the listener's regression – his/her incapability to concentrate exclusively on music and, so, to fully feel the musical experience, that «auratic» and unique moment.

Adorno's participation in the project about music on the radio resulted in a series of essays that were added to other materials which remained in the archives of the University of Columbia. Many foreign authors had access to these materials⁴. In Brazil, the researcher Iray Carone kindly provided me a copy of her still ongoing research.

Adorno's central ideas, however, are summarized in the dense essay, "A social critique of radio music" and recaptured in many other texts he wrote while the project was still going on⁵.

The research on radio, according to Adorno, should have seen "the limited sphere of the radio as a kind of model or microcosm containing all the problems, antagonisms, tensions and tendencies that may be found in society as a whole" (Adorno, 1938: 2, apud Carone, 2003: 85).

This «limited sphere» in a circumscribed object, such as the radio, is not something immediate that can be studied alone. It is a «microcosm», a sub-totality in which all mediations («problems, antagonisms, tensions and tendencies») of global society are present.

Against Lazarsfeld's empiricist orientation, Adorno proposes another path for the research, as Iray Carone reminds us:

1. an analysis of the radio production in general, which means, of the radio industry;
2. an analysis of the most specific features of radio programs, specially of reproduction of music on the radio, in order to evaluate how the technology of the industry affects the quality of the music that is transmitted;
3. an analysis of the reception or most common reactions of listeners guided by previous knowledge and based in hearing-conditioning factors;
4. perspectives in the general function of music on the radio, which means, regressive and progressive tendencies regarding the use of the radio in present and future society (Carone, 2003: 85).

4. For example, Buck-Morss, 1983: 343-346; Muller-Doohm, 2003: 363-383; Wiggerhaus, 2002: 263-273; Jay, 1984; Morrison, 1978; Hohendahl, 1992; Levin e Linn, 1994.

5. Adorno's texts had been published in various magazines during World War II, which has certainly contributed to the difficulty researchers found, for many decades, in having access to them. Finally, Suhrkamp publisher, compiled them in the book *Current of music. Elements of a radio theory*. They are: *Radio Physiomics, A social critique of radio music, Analytical study of the NBC music appreciation hour, Musical analyses of hit songs, The radio voice, Memorandum on lyrics in popular music, Experiment on: preference for material or treatment of two popular songs, The problem of experimentation in music psychology, Note on classification, On the use of elaborate personal interviews for the Princeton Radio Project, Some remarks on a propaganda publication of NBC, Thesis about the idea and form of collaboration of the Princeton Radio Research Project.*

This sketch of research shows us the dimension of Adorno's view. If the radio is society's microcosm, studying the radio means establishing all its connections (mediations) with society. What matters is not what the radio shows, but what it «reveals». And what it reveals is, evidently, the whole society – the «totality» which is present in this «private» object. Radio is not evidence, a fixed point that explains itself. It is a capitalist company, linked to sponsors, announcers, to public authority etc. Hence, the music that is presented needs to be thought about within this general context. We are not facing an immediate relation between the listener and the radio, but inside a «system» that embodies and contaminates everything.

As a result of these considerations, concludes Adorno, to give to a distracted listener a device in which he will, during the listening, press the likes or dislikes button is an absurd procedure. Adorno proposed another direction: interviews done «after» the listening, in order to capture not anymore the «immediate» reaction, but to make the individual verbalize, think about his/her impressions.

This is a difficult theme. «How does the listener listen?» and «how to express in words the real musical experience?», asks Adorno. This is a challenge for the researcher. How to use verbal expression in order to explain sensorial experiences?

How to «translate» verbally musical sounds? In initiation to music courses, the students are taught the difference between «analytic listening» and «synthetic listening». «Analytic listening», the one an individual with musical education has, decomposes the elements that form music and responsible for its effects. So, he can say that music is structured from a certain tonal field, which develops itself from scales, that the beat is ternary etc. But what can a non-expert say? Different from the musician, he makes a «synthetic listening» – he listens to music as an indistinct block that produces certain effects. The difference between the listener with musical education and the non-expert is that the first one sticks to the internal structure, in the immanent elements that produce the «emotional expression» music composers aim at; on the other hand, the non-expert is restricted to the «emotional effects» caused by music and its stimuli.

In his works on classical music, Adorno has closely studied the «emotional expression». As for the «emotional effects», the texts he wrote about jazz presented some hypothesis which he, later, continued in his proposal for studying the radio.

In order to capture the «emotional effects» caused by the listening of classical music on the radio, Adorno intended to carry out detailed interviews.

It was not about capturing the immediate impression, as Lazarsfeld and his device wanted to do, but to understand the «rationalizations» of the listener «after» the enjoyment of music. What this speech would reveal? It would reveal that perception is mediated by the interviewee's world view: all his/her values, prejudices, frustrations etc. emerge in the discourse. If the analysis of the radio as a company comprehends the «objective» aspect, the speech of the interviewee reveals his subjectivity, his psychology demanding an explanation as well. Adorno intended to search the arsenal of psychology in order to understand the interviewee's discourse and, then, «describe the psychological process». According to him, the use of life stories has an important role in tracing

... the influence of cultural and individual factors on one's personality. So, we considered the individual habits of a radio listener, not only aspects of his/her personality, but also those factors that shaped his/her personality, which are especially important for studying the radio (Adorno, 2006: 633-4).

For Adorno, the «emotional effects» do not have any relation with the music's immanent structure. On the contrary, they express the unconscious instincts of individuals. In the essay *On jazz*, Adorno interpreted jazz as a conformist and schematic music that provoked «emotional effects» that intended to be signs of rebel, but, in fact, express a

«sadosomochist» behavior, an acceptance of the order.

We are not going to discuss here this controversial interpretation that generalizes the rich experience of the history of jazz. We are only going to remind ourselves of the kind of preoccupation that guided Adorno's proposal. During the research on radio, he read letters fans sent to newspapers aiming at discovering «the neurotic symptoms» present in the argumentation. Remembering that fan and fanatic have the same root. The letters, according to Adorno, offer abundant material for psychological analysis, since, more than being a musical appreciation, they demonstrate the «neurotic symptoms». The social scientist's observation about music, therefore, should not remain restricted only to the immediate relation between the listener and the radio emission. This relation is not immediate and, for this reason, it provides a starting point for understanding the physiognomy of the radio: the «subjective sphere» (the seemingly spontaneous reaction of the listener) and the «objective sphere» (the social structure that needs to reproduce itself and does it through the programming of stimuli on the individual's subjective sphere).

Therefore, these ideas of Adorno were incompatible with the administrative research he had been invited to join...**M**

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