

El Arte de Bregar (The Art of Dealing): An Existentialism

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“La brega” unveils a multifaceted exploration of human existence, reflecting the intricate interplay of ambiguity and ethical engagement within Puerto Rican culture. This concept, with its roots in the aesthetic realm of ambiguity, beckons individuals to savor the pleasure of indefiniteness and resist the confines of historical anchorage. Drawing parallels to Kierkegaard’s musings on Don Juan, it reveals the allure of eternal longing, evading the consummation of desire and leading to existential despair. However, “la brega” is far from static; it undergoes an evolution toward an ethical phase. Here, individuals navigate the turbulent waters of reconciliation and conflict resolution, eschewing violence while embracing the boundaries of responsibility. This ethical iteration resonates with Kierkegaard’s ethical stage, where moral responsibility and courageous choices take center stage. Yet, it is vital to recognize that “la brega” transcends any simplistic notions of docility; it embodies a resilient and transformative force within Puerto Rican culture, capable of driving meaningful and impactful actions. In its nuanced exploration of ambiguity, ethics, and resilience, “la brega” offers profound insights into the intricate tapestry of human experience.

Keywords: “la brega”, ambiguity, existence, possibility, freedom, ethos

Nicola Abbagnano (1960) asserts that the fundamental characteristics of contemporary existentialism can be summed up in three points: first, the way of being specific to humans; second, the relationship of the individual with themselves and with others; and third, the relationship resolved in terms of possibility. This last aspect, in its Kierkegaardian key, which understands existence and resolves it in terms of possibility, is the one we will focus on in our reflection on the Art of Dealing. As we will see, if indeed the Art of Dealing can be considered a “way of being” in the world, we can primarily understand it through this third key of existential philosophy¹: the relationship that the subject resolves in the face of their reality in terms of possibility. But how does this connect the concept of possibility with the Art of Dealing?

The Art of Dealing is a phrase or conceptualization that Arcadio Díaz Quiñones analyzed in the essay “De cómo y cuándo bregar”, published in the year 2000 by Ediciones Callejón. With this phrase, he attempts to decipher a very complex activity in the lives of many Puerto Ricans. He analyzes the use of the verb “bregar”, which, according to him, in both Catalan and Spanish, generally means “to struggle to achieve something” (Díaz Quiñones, 2000, p. 28). However, this “something” that is achieved remains “vague”, and it is not clear how it is

This article is a translation done by Professor Dr. Alberto E. Soto López (auxiliar professor of University of Puerto Rico-Carolina) from the Spanish original manuscript.

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¹ In the 20th century (from 1870 to 1930), after a prolonged dominance of rationalism, positivism, and utilitarianism in Latin America, existentialism and vitalism made their way to Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. Carlos Rojas, in his book *Pensamiento Filosófico Puertorriqueño* (Isla Negra, 2002), explains that in Puerto Rico, we had Christian existentialists like Domingo Marrero, vitalists like Nemesio Canales influenced by Bergson and Nietzsche, and humanist existentialists like Professor Monelisa Pérez Marchand. In our view, the poetry of Julia de Burgos, for example, is partly influenced by these intellectual currents.

obtained. Etymology suggests that the root of this word comes from the Germanic “brikan”, which meant “to break”, as in English “to break” and in German “brechen”. But it is also present in Spanish, Catalan, Italian, French, and Portuguese, though with different meanings and connotations. In Italian, the noun “brigatore” is used to refer to a person who “battles” out of habit, which in Spanish would be equivalent to a “bregador” or a person who engages in the Art of Dealing.

D áz Qui ñones argues that it is a polysemous term expressed in the speech of many Puerto Ricans in different social contexts, both on the island and in the United States. The Art of Dealing and its various uses of the verb in speech (“this works” or “that would work”, “they are dealing with it”, “so-and-so doesn’t deal with it”, etc.) seem to establish ways of being, existing, and coping with the plural dynamics of existence with a particular character. Historically, “la brega” is an expression that denotes the complexity that, according to our author, has characterized the anguish of Puerto Ricans’ transition to Modernity in the 20th century. In Arcadio’s words:

Bregar is, one could say, another way of knowing, a diffuse method without showiness for navigating everyday life, where everything is extremely precarious, changing, or violent, as it has been for Puerto Rican emigrations during the 20th century and still is throughout the island’s territory. (D áz Qui ñones, 2000, p. 21)

The Art of Dealing also says:

It is a specific way of knowing how to deal with something, of understanding its subtle mechanisms. Those who deal with it skillfully handle something with wisdom, whether it is a world of things, a world of people, or language itself. Dealing with perfection is certainly an art. (D áz Qui ñones, 2000, p. 21)

In this way, over the course of the 69 pages of his essay, he tries to demonstrate that “The Art of Dealing” is an activity associated with the idiosyncrasy of many Puerto Ricans. Idiosyncrasy is a word derived from the Greek “idios”, which refers to the singular and the personal, and “synkrisis”, which refers to temperament. The phrase “The Art of Dealing” seeks to name a particular temperament, linked to the character and characteristics specific to a community that, as he suggests, result in part from a concrete historical experience or a relationship with history that can be described as harsh and violent.

He says about dealing:

It is a pragmatic dimension that distinguishes the Puerto Rican use and has positive and negative implications that deserve further reflection. This third and very frequent “dealing” is what interests me the most; it touches on the most intimate aspects of individual existence and on the most political aspects of life in the community. It starts from a calculating reason that allows one to play without knowing in advance how the game will end. In other cases, it refers to a strategic knowledge that provides resources to mediate in order to soften antagonisms, and even to cover them up. It is a very practical line of conduct that makes it possible to survive with some dignity, even if it is theatrically simulating that something has been resolved. It has the precision of imprecision, and the range of images generated by this ambivalence is remarkable. (D áz Qui ñones, 2000, p. 32)

When we have chosen existentialism to think about the Art of Dealing as described by Arcadio, we are referring to one of the specific meanings that the term “existence” took on in 20th-century philosophy based on the reading of Kierkegaard’s works. We restrict its use to the “way of being of humans in the world”, with themselves and with others, within the complex web of relationships that derive from this “way of being” in terms of possibility. Existence comes from the Latin “ex-sistere”, composed of the prefix “ex” (outward) and the verb “sistere” (to take a position, to stand firm), implying an outward stance toward the world. Staying true to this meaning, we are not concerned here with whether there is a “Puerto Rican-ness” or Puerto Ricans who indeed

act in a realm of facts or in an endeavor called “la brega”. We assume that the “Art of Dealing” described by the Princeton professor is a valid premise or material that deciphers a “way of being”, an “ethos”, and a morality of those individuals who are thrown into the world of life, the world of phenomenal action (the Art of Dealing), within a specific culture, in this case, Puerto Rican culture.

This “way of being” to which we refer is determined or determinable, in the sense of Kierkegaard, where the discussion is not about the existence of humans as such—the human animal is a being that exists and is aware of it—but about how the Art of Dealing in our case is a specific form of existence particular to “Puerto Ricans” who, in the context of their relationship with themselves and the world, relate to “reality”, that is, to “their reality”, in a special way. We can say that these subjects of the Art of Dealing relate to their world in terms of a struggle that centers on the realm of possibility, the world of possibilities. The Art of Dealing, dealing, is a human action that remains sufficiently open, and thus, it establishes in its concept the realm of possibility and its ambivalences. If we accept that dealing is the world of open possibilities, then it is a term that encompasses the anxiety that comes with the realm of freedom among possible alternatives. In the face of this, dealing unfolds and is deciphered between doubt and ambiguity. The dealing described by Quiñones in the previous quote reflects tensions that revolve around the complexity of perhaps a specific morality, at times ambiguous, open, and doubtful. It was Kierkegaard who introduced “possibility” into Western tradition as anxiety in the face of freedom, and thus, the distressing role of “doubt”. Sartre later in the 20th century, influenced by the Danish philosopher, understood this freedom in part as a condemnation inherent in the “Being” of the human being. Possibility is an ontological condemnation. The notion of dealing refers to the activities of those immersed in the art of dealing and who face the freedom of possibilities and, with it, the doubt about clarifying the boundaries and limits of the horizon of action. According to Levinas, Kierkegaard’s most novel contribution to Western philosophy was the possibility of arriving at truth through the constantly renewed tearing of doubt. Doubt would be evidence of an authentic experience of someone (in our case, a dealer or subject of dealing) who is situated in the truth of the immanent. Although the dealer from the immanent has the belief or pursues the transcendent, they are aware that the transcendent “Truth” always remains elusive. Faced with this, the attitude that befits the dealer is the humility to know that they are in the realm of uncertainty, that is, a pursued truth that is not triumphant (Levinas, 2005). This denotes a certain absence of a strong, firm, total, and final authority. But it also contains a sense of virtue, character, and wisdom of a deep understanding of the humble nature of the truth. The dealing described by Arcadio reflects this tension of doubt marked by ambivalences and ambiguities, but it also denotes the dignified resistance of the Puerto Rican people in facing the limits imposed by their historical development.

This Art of Dealing, as per Arcadio’s analysis, possesses a significant historical thread that predates the military invasion of 1898 and the establishment of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. He connects it not only to the colonial history under the United States but also to ancient practices that precede written records and constitute centuries of oral tradition. Let us delve into this: “...brega refers to old concealment practices from remote times of the maroon society, a rural world that developed on the margins of the colonial state, a society marked by great hardships and sudden displacements, ruled by smugglers and pirates” (Díaz Quiñones, 2000, p. 21).

Thus, he argues that there is evidently the weight of several centuries worth of historical circumstances that extend far beyond the recent colonial relationship with the United States. We know that other thinkers like Pedreira, Marqués, among others, have drawn attention to this “way of being” referenced by the term and have assessed it from different perspectives, highlighting its apparent lack of character and virtue, what is called

“docility”. What we can admit thus far is that the verb described by Arcadio as “brega” portrays and encompasses a part of a “way of being”, a social and cultural “ethos” in the face of existential circumstances unique to the Puerto Rican people. In his words, “Perhaps there is no more decisive word for recognizing and acknowledging, and for differentiating a distinctive value of collective subjectivity, as well as the splendors and miseries that drive it” (D áz Qui ñones, 2000, pp. 20-21).

The word “bregar” in Spanish is an intransitive verb that appears to allude to the intricate framework within a particular collective subjectivity. It is this meaning that existentialism refers to as philosophy, with its theme centered on the analysis of this “way of being” that, from its collective dimension, also impacts the singularity of the individual. This existentialism is said to be inaugurated by Kierkegaard, where existence corresponds to subjective reality, excluding mere groups or collectivities, and does not equate to the truth of a “concept” or mere “conceptualization” of the “real”. The pure abstraction that seeks conceptualization will never coincide with that existence or that vital “way of being”, which, in this case, includes dealing. Therefore, from this perspective, the human being, the subject who plays a central role in dealing, has something decisive and visceral in the face of their existence, something that is not reducible to a “concept”, and they must find the experience of their own truth. It seems that dealing is a very vibrant term that encapsulates the contrast between collective dealing and the role of subjectivity.

In this regard, Kierkegaard says in his journal:

“Truth—he says (Journal, I, p. 28; Tagebucher, I, A, 75)—is truth only when it is truth for me.” Truth is not the object of thought, but the process by which a person appropriates it, makes it their own, and lives it: “the appropriation of truth is truth” (Werke, VI, p. 164). (Abbagnano, 1994, p. 163)

Considering this passage, the question we ask is: Does the Art of Dealing encapsulate the unique way (i.e., a subjective truth) that a collective has adopted in response to its historical existence? If dealing is a way of being, can we say that this way of being thrives in ambiguity?

Arcadio describes the tensions of dealing as follows:

Someone who deals well does not necessarily possess a coherent set of ideas, but intelligence and technique, practical knowledge or great dialogic ability. It is a system of decisions and indecisions—a complex of definitions, interpretations, and prohibitions—that allows one to act without breaking the rules of the game, to dodge the blows dealt by daily life, and in some cases, to shrewdly extract favorable possibilities from the limited available spaces.

In the Puerto Rican usage, dealing refers to a code of implicit laws that allow action, and with subtlety and discretion, they challenge absolute positions. (D áz Qui ñones, 2000, p. 22)

In both passages, reference is made to the finesse or skill of action in a challenging daily context where it is about establishing “possibilities” outside of “absolute positions”, which are also possibilities. It involves making decisions and indecisions, the possibility of one thing or another, this, or that, bearing the weight of uncertainty and leading to pessimism or hope, closure, or openness. It is reasonable to think that the “Art of Dealing” expresses as a concept a specific existential weight due to these tensions of Being, “to be or not to be”, “one thing or another”, framed by a historical experience of an island invaded by more powerful military forces. Arcadio sees in the phrase “ten con ten” from the poetry of Pal és Matos “Tun Tun de Pasa y Grifer á” as analogous to dealing, both of them marked by their attempt to understand a sui generis ambivalence of Puerto Ricans. Arcadio writes about this: “‘Ten con ten’, he notes in the glossary, means ‘to rely on one thing and then another, to be unsteady, to keep swinging’” (D áz Qui ñones, 2000, p. 35).

This pendulum motion that Arcadio alludes to concerning dealing and “ten con ten” signifies the tense activity where the “anguish” of indecision in the face of possibility resides. It is an anxiety about the reality of existence, not just in the apparent impossibility of resolving the challenge of a political future, which takes on special prominence in the form of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (ELA), but also in the most insignificant daily decisions, inside and outside institutions, where ambiguity is the prevailing tone and character in the face of possibilities. Dealing operates in ambiguity, fostering habits that tend to avoid finality. This complex activity may represent what existentialism describes as the ongoing confrontation between the value of subjective existence and the authorized and abstract “Reason” grounded in the authority of Truth. Faced with this, the indeterminate, the ambiguous, ambiguity, while it could be judged as an easy stance that sidesteps the harsh weight of consequences and “responsibility”, carries, in our view, the weight of the anguish of embracing a possibility that eliminates all others. This ambiguity, already forged in an “ethos”, is sustained by a vague hope of being able to “progress” without choosing, moving forward in the realm of the indeterminate. It peeks at possibilities but avoids the anguish brought about by the limitations of a final decision, which, in any case, reaches and determines it. In Kierkegaard’s language, this anguish is generated by possibility (future possibilities) and the freedom to choose between “one thing or another”, “this or that”, and their respective cancellations, which bring the threat of “nothingness”, called “nothingness” because it is not a thing but rather indeterminate, in the future, and we do not know what “it is”. Therefore, Kierkegaard calls it the anguish of nothingness because it is not identifiable. This anguish resembles fear, but it is distinguished from the fear that knows what it fears. This anguish does not know what it is facing. Thus, according to the Dane, it is an anguish of “nothingness”, and the subject experiences it as an abyss that opens, when facing a disjunction and feeling the anguish of freedom (Kierkegaard, 2016).

In this sense, the Art of Dealing invites us to ponder. Dealing, as an activity, embodies existence as a continuum of possibilities that never exhaust themselves in any station but constantly reproduce themselves at every moment without settling into stability and security of any determination. It is as if the dealing described by Arcadio has a dialectic that stagnates in the infinite contrast between thesis and antithesis without giving way to a “synthesis”. It remains open to possibility, without clarifying the limits. It is the humble quality of the truth that Lévinas pointed out in Kierkegaard’s thought, where the transcendent truth never emerges clear and totalitarian. This opposition between alternatives is an existential dilemma present in the aesthetic, ethical, and religious stages that a subject undergoes in Kierkegaard’s proposal, making the dialectic² of existence perpetually ambiguous (Bilbeny, 1992, pp. 527-528).

The concept of “la brega” thus seems to have its initial movement in what we have called “ambiguity”, and within it, a dimension that holds an aesthetic quality, clinging to the apparent pleasure offered by indefiniteness. Wanting to advance in the indeterminate or the unconditioned (“lo incondicionado”) carries a certain pleasure. This initial movement of ambiguous “la brega” can be understood as the disjunction between the alternative of settling in time, perhaps historically, and, on the other hand, the possibility of remaining in the evanescence of experiencing apparent resolution in the moment, believing that it evades time. This stage of “la brega” appears

² According to Norbert Bilbeny, this is a dialectic in the Platonic sense, not the Hegelian sense. Abbagnano clarifies in the philosophical dictionary of 1996 (FCE, p. 317) that Platonic dialectic is not a deductive and analytical method but an inductive and synthetic one, a method of division. For instance, starting with “man is an animal” and the consequent division of “the animal is mortal or immortal”, it does not follow that “man is mortal”, but only that “man is mortal or immortal”. The purpose of this dialectic is not deduction but rather the investigation itself, aimed at clarifying all the possibilities of the object.

to choose the former of the two, thus avoiding temporality or, in other words, evading any definitive commitment to a decision and thus also to “history”.

To analyze this initial stage of “la brega”, which I call ambiguous and aesthetic, let us turn to an explanation provided by Norbert Bilbeny about Kierkegaard. He clarifies the sophisticated hedonism of the character of Don Juan in Kierkegaard’s *Diaries*, who becomes fixated on his aesthetic pursuits:

In sensual genius—in the “musical eroticism” of our Don Juan—the aim is to prevent the possession of the desired object from destroying desire. The desired must merge with desire itself, lest we abandon the perpetually open possibility of the desired object (GW, I, pp. 79 ss.). (Bilbeny, 1992, pp. 527-528)

Don Juan is a great seducer and exists in Kierkegaard’s first stage of life, which he calls the aesthetic stage, and he has not progressed to the subsequent two stages of further development: the ethical and the religious. In this context, “la brega” or the Art of Dealing, in its ambiguous form, is not only ambiguous out of habit but also for aesthetic reasons, in the sense that it wishes to linger in the pleasure of possibility, maintaining an ever-open freedom. It is ambiguous and aesthetic because it seeks to rest perpetually in the beauty and pleasure of contemplating an unfulfilled desire. That is, it finds greater pleasure in merely feeling and giving way to “desire” without committing to the limits of consummation. For Kierkegaard, the character of Don Juan, in his *Diario de un Seductor* (The Seducer’s Diary), despite being a great seducer, not vulgar but even intellectual, due to his highly poetic and sophisticated style of dwelling in the ephemeral value of pleasure, he brushes against “the spiritual” or “the religious” and ends his journey with melancholy and profound despair. He realizes that although he has tried not to settle into the “temporal” by remaining in the “intemporal” offered by the ambiguity of infinite possibilities, time has ultimately caught up with him, limited him, and defined his activity. Don Juan fails in his pursuit of the “infinite” promised by the pleasure of desire because reality has limited him, and desire has lost all its stimulating power. Possibilities have ended up paralyzing him, and Don Juan closes himself off to any new possibilities, for he now knows that they will not lead to “enjoyment” but once again to despair.

If we were to accept this as a possible analogy for understanding what the ambiguous and aesthetic moment of “la brega” would be, we can say that the historical trajectory as a collective that Arcadio mentions in the Art of Dealing could have the paralyzing aspect that Don Juan feels. Maintaining ambiguity in the face of possibility can be a form of paralysis that, although simulated, fosters an attitude of defeat or pessimism in the face of the power of “reality”. It is a vague false sense that “nothing is moving” beneath the surface; therefore, there is no solution or decision to make. Reality has lost the power to stimulate the subject who is thrown into it and does not want to actualize any possibility.

This perspective on “la brega” and Don Juan helps us understand the perceived inability to fully assume the responsibility of a defined political destiny, anchoring oneself with all its consequences in A or B, “one thing or another”. It is interesting that in the speeches of the nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos, great emphasis is placed on the insistence that “the moment of supreme definition” would come. According to Abbagnano, Kierkegaard is the philosopher who most vigorously introduces into Western tradition the world of life as “possibility”, emphasizing the paralyzing and negative value of it. It is “doubt” that penetrates from freedom. This, in contrast to Kant, who saw the positive aspect of possibility, as for the German, real or transcendental possibility is the foundation of human capacity, which, though limited, finds in those limits its effort towards realization. This is the foundation of liberty.

How can we know in each stage of the historical trajectory whether we have opted for that moment we call ambiguous and aesthetic in “la brega”? Or, on the contrary, if we have moved to the second moment, the ethical one, where autonomy and responsibility are affirmed? Abbagnano’s explanation of Kierkegaard’s existential philosophy, which resonates with our interpretation, is revealing in this regard:

For this reason, faced with every alternative, Kierkegaard feels paralyzed. He himself says that he is “a test tube for experimenting with existence” and that he combines within himself the extreme points of all opposition. “What I am is nothing; this gives me and my character the satisfaction of preserving my existence at ground zero, between cold and heat, between wisdom and foolishness, between something and nothing, like a simple perhaps” (Stadien auf dem Lebensweg, Trans. Schrempf-Pfleiderer, pp. 246-247). Ground zero is perpetual indecision, unstable equilibrium between opposing alternatives that arise in the face of any possibility. And this was undoubtedly the tear in the flesh to which Kierkegaard refers: the impossibility of devoting his own life to a specific task, of choosing between opposing alternatives, of recognizing himself and becoming a unique possibility. For him, this impossibility translates into the recognition that his own goal, the unity of his own personality, lies precisely in this exceptional condition of indecision and instability, and that the center of his self-resides in not having a center. (Abbagnano, 1988, p. 163)

Kierkegaard understands human nature as a curious phenomenon: Human beings are freedom (choosing between paths), and in the face of this freedom, they generate the “anguish” of nothingness and despair *La Enfermedad Mortal* (The Sickness unto Death) (Kierkegaard, 2008). When experiencing anguish, one becomes aware of one’s “freedom”.

As we can see, Kierkegaard defines existence as a way of being constituted by the relationships between humans and themselves and, the world presents itself as a set of possibilities, with no guarantee of realization. Therefore, the subject relates to the world with the characteristic of anguish, to themselves with despair, and then to God with paradox. According to our interpretation, this perspective on existence developed by the thinker from Copenhagen has a revealing and analogous character when considering the descriptions provided by Díaz Quiñones of “la brega”. There is something in this “way of being” of Puerto Ricans in “la brega”, in its ambiguous movement, which can be understood as the indecision and instability described by Kierkegaard regarding his own life in the face of alternatives. And, according to him, we are faced with a metaphysical and ontological condition of the human being. This very subjective situation and the biographical reason of this philosopher, though from a different and distant social and political context, frame a way of being that aligns with the anguish and uncertainty experienced by the subject behind “la brega” when is habitually indecisive about possibilities. From this perspective, the “ethos” of the Art of Dealing or El Arte de Bregar suggests an existentialist attitude in a Kierkegaardian key, even though there may not be an awareness of this. Its typology of an ambivalent attitude towards the freedom of possibility reveals a particular existentialism.

However, this does not mean that we affirm “la brega” is reducible to weakness or docility or that it remains stuck in the realm of doubt. As we will see, the concept is complex and has other movements towards strength and the dignity of persevering within the limits imposed by action in factuality. Kierkegaard would say that, from the aesthetic movement, “la brega” has transitioned to the ethical stage.

In the following passage, we understand that Díaz Quiñones illustrates this shift towards the ethical aspect of “la brega”:

The strategy of “la brega” consists of bringing together what had seemed distant or antagonistic until that point. It is a position from which one acts to resolve very polarized conflicts without violence. In that sense, it implies creating space in an uncertain terrain and addressing decisions with a vision of what is possible and desirable. Crucially, it also implies knowledge and acceptance of limits. (Díaz Quiñones, 2000, p. 22)

In this passage, “la brega” is described as a strategy for reconciling and resolving what is polarized or in conflict. In Italian, the verb “brigare” is suggestive, as it has etymological proximity to “lidiar” or “guerrear” and carries the sense of “acting astutely”. This connotation in Italian is closely related to the “struggle” or “war” inherent in the Puerto Rican concept of “la brega”. In the cited passage, one must confront the wide sea of possibilities and the possible while also having an awareness of limits and desires. In this mode, “la brega” lands from ambiguity into the realm of responsibility and reaches an ethical moment because it has imagined the consequences and is ready to assume them. We say that this version of “la brega” is conscious of its limits when it finds itself in a power relation, especially between highly unequal opposites, although it does not exclude other balances. The party that feels weaker in the power struggle relationship tends to reconcile and accept the limits that “la brega” has established. This would be the inverted form of the previous situation or movement that we pointed out earlier, which remained open and perplexed in the face of “possibility”, unwilling to specify boundaries.

The subject who lives this form of “la brega” in this second stage, the ethical one, has a moral existentialist praxis that involves deciding with consequences for their own life. It already contains the assimilation of responsibility and acts in accordance with the limits imposed by “la brega” in the world of their life, placing themselves in this adjustment outside abstract possibility. The subject has accepted the limits of their “la brega” and confronts them with a certain humility but with a vitality that allows them to persevere in being. “La brega” here remains a way for the subject to relate to themselves but also a wisdom with which to confront greater powers. It intuits that, in the immanent world, one only accesses humble truths.

Then historically, it would not be correct to claim that Puerto Rican “brega” or El Arte de Bregar (The Art of Dealing) of the Puerto Ricans is a concept that portrays a case of a collective in mere political docility or submission. We have ample memorable examples in history where the vigor, courage, and vitality of “la brega” have played leading roles and accepted the limits and consequences of their political activity.

The first and second moments or movements of “la brega” (the aesthetic and the ethical) also have an underlying element that sustains their realization: art as the product of this struggle. The anguish of possibility finds its outlet in the creative power, such as in music, where it confronts its limits and deciphers the decision. In artistic musical and poetic composition, it nurtures its strength, leaves behind ambiguity, assumes its stance, and claims a future. This would be the stage of the ethical and the poetic, a dimension worthy of further investigation.

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