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* Inaugural conference held at the International Colloquium *Distopias e clínica do social*, held at the Fluminense Federal University, from May 8 to 10, 2023.

ABSTRACT. This essay intends to circumscribe in the recent Brazilian social tradition the problem of far right-wing populism, in a resumption and repetition of what happened in the nefarious times of the military dictatorship. For this, we analyzed the debt established by Brazilian society towards the dead, insofar as the crimes committed by the dictatorship were not judged. In addition, this debt refers to other existing debts in Brazilian society, referring to the slavery tradition, as well as gender related patriarchal relations.

Keywords: debt; violence; melancholy.

RESUMO. O inconsciente é a política: sobre as distopias na sociedade brasileira contemporânea. A intenção deste ensaio é circunscrever na tradição social brasileira recente a problemática do populismo de extrema direita, em uma retomada e repetição do que se passou nos tempos nefastos da ditadura militar. Para isso, vamos destacar a dívida estabelecida pela sociedade brasileira para com os mortos, na medida em que os crimes realizados pela ditadura não foram julgados. Além disso, tal dívida remete a outras dívidas existentes na sociedade brasileira, referentes à tradição escravocrata, assim como as relações patriarcais no registro do gênero.

Palavras-chave: dívida; violência; melancolia.

DOI - <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1809-4414-2023-001-t>

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1 PREAMBLE

The fundamental intention of this essay is to *problematize*¹² the concrete conditions of possibility for the return in Brazil, through elections and democracy, of an extreme right political discourse, thirty years after the end of the Military Dictatorship and the related establishment of the Democratic State of Law, for the institution of the Constitutional Convention in the late 1980s. Indeed, the election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018 was unexpected and surprised everyone, not only in Brazil but also in the international community, as everyone assumed in unison that Brazilian democracy had already been definitively and effectively consolidated for many years so that any democratic, political and ideological setback would be effectively unthinkable.

In addition, what was unexpected in the presidential election in question intensified and stood out even more as Bolsonaro was a congressman of little importance in the Brazilian political scene at the time, thus occupying a frankly secondary place as a federal deputy in the Brazilian parliament. Until that moment, he stood out only negatively, mainly for promoting small and large scandals in the parliamentary scope, with ideological characteristics of an evident extreme right wing nature, but without this implying in its exemplary punishment, for obvious ethical reasons, thus being protected aggressively and shamefully by their peers.

However, the electoral victory of far-right politics in Brazil with Bolsonaro was the Latin American version of a broader and more global populist process, which started initially in Eastern European countries such as Hungary and Poland, and which has dangerously threatened the democratic order in the international space since the new century. Trump's election in the United States was another worrying sign of the spread of far-right political discourse in an effectively democratic Western country.

The present essay intends to make a genealogical reading of the discourse of Brazilianness, in the theoretical perspective outlined by Foucault in his resumption of the discourse on genealogy in Nietzsche's philosophy, to undertake, then, the interpretation of Lacan's late formulation, according to which "the unconscious is politics".

2 Far-right political speech

Thus, through a discourse characterized by evident civilizing regression – in which pre-modern guidelines in the field of customs were frontally pursued in a broad, general, and unrestricted way –, Bolsonaro government undertook the systematic deconstruction both of the Brazilian State and society at the same time, in the different registrations of health, education, culture, religion, relations between genders, racial relations, and public safety, in a deliberate political project. Thus, it sought to authorize the liberalization of the sale and possession of firearms by the civilian population in the name of a supposed self-defense of Brazilian citizens, to further privatize the precarious Brazilian system of public security, and gradually and decisively remove from the Brazilian State the imperative of the *monopoly of force*³, which has marked the modern political tradition of the West since the seventeenth century.

At the same time, the death of segments of the Brazilian population was ostensibly promoted with the genocidal policy carried out during the recent covid-19 pandemic, thus opposing the sanitary and scientific policies nationally and internationally established in the field of public health, such as the broad vaccination and proven scientific and properly tested medicines, which had the disastrous consequence of the death of seven hundred thousand people. Globally, this was a death rate that was second only to that of the United States during the pandemic, where President Trump also adopted similar anti-scientific practices, with the equally genocidal consequences known to all.

In addition, the political project in question also genocidally threatened the existence of the original peoples, as well as the ecological guidelines that guided Brazilian environmental policies for many decades, in line with the international community until then.

In this Brazilian political and social context, repressive and retrograde at the same time, there was an ostensive increase in violence against women, including the vertiginous increase in rape and femicide, as well as the violent death of transsexual and homosexual populations, due to the government incentive of both structural male chauvinism and the archaic social and moral assumptions of the patriarchal tradition.

Evidently, this set of political practices and related ideological discourses in the registration of customs was undertaken in open conjunction with the alliance established by the Brazilian State with neo-Pentecostal religions – which supported Bolsonaro since his election –, in a way to dangerously delineate a future theological-political horizon for the Brazilian State, with markedly pre-modern characteristics.

As a result, Bolsonaro thus authorizes himself to enunciate directly and without hesitation, in the political confrontation of political forces of the extreme right with the progressive, democratic, and leftist forces in Brazil, that it is effectively about the ever-repeated apocalyptic struggle of Good against Evil, with the aim of definitively and absolutely purifying Brazilian society from the "communist" Evil that has pervaded it for so long.

Finally, Brazilian social precariousness and misery intensified dramatically and exponentially, with the political-economic

¹ FOUCAULT, M. *Dits et écrits*. Volume IV. Paris: Gallimard, 1994.

² DELEUZE, G.; GUATTARI, F. *Mille Plateaux*, Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2. Paris: Minuit, 1980.

³ WEBER, M. *Economie et société*. Paris: Plon, 1968.

project literally established in the Bolsonaro government and without counterparts of protection for the popular classes, so that the greatest result of the totality of this process was the scandalous return of Brazil to the UN hunger map, from which it had been excluded during the first Lula government as President of the Republic.

At the same time, the social security and labor relations reforms guided by the Brazilian State did not find significant resistance and opposition in civil society and political society, contrary to what happens today in French society in public demonstrations against the social security project promoted by the French presidency, to which the vast majority of the population of that country is opposed, according to recent public opinion polls.

In this way, this clearly demonstrates the passivity established in Brazilian society, with the violence instituted in Bolsonaro's political practices and rhetoric since the beginning of the new government in 2018, which was systematically guided by stimuli of hatred towards opponents and which was translated by the installation of the so-called *office of hate* in the dependencies and the heart of the Executive Power, in the Planalto Palace.

Therefore, our fundamental question in this essay is the question of why Brazil, as a country and society, opted for the return of a far-right political regime in 2018, even if Bolsonaro was later defeated in 2022 by Lula in the presidential election. After all, the presence of the far-right discourse still structurally permeates Brazilian society today, if we consider the high level of voters that Bolsonaro had by his side during the last election, as well as the parliamentary representation of the political far-right that was elected in the last election, both in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate.

Consequently, it is essential to properly interpret what is still happening in Brazilian society in its relationship with the far-right in the political and ideological registers, so that a repetition of the return of far-right politics in a presidential election does not occur in the future, as catastrophically happened in 2018.

In this context, the present essay aimed to answer and problematize this impasse in its fundamental formulations and arguments presented, seeking to problematize, in the specific field of Brazilian society, the late formulation enunciated by Lacan, which then surprised everyone in the French and international psychoanalytic field: *the unconscious is politics*.

3 Torture and melancholy in Brazilianness

Thus, in order to initially describe the historical and social field where this issue was constituted – to then apprehend the concrete conditions of possibility for the return of the political discourse of the far-right in Brazil, thirty (30) years after the end of the military dictatorship–, it must be stated that unfortunately, Brazil did not emerge from the *Anos de Chumbo (Years of Lead)* of the military dictatorship in the same way as some neighboring countries in South America, as was the case of Argentina and Uruguay, where justice was effectively carried out against the fascist state policies deployed in the years of their military dictatorship.

Indeed, in Argentina, the exemplary *punishment* of murderers and torturers at the time of the dictatorship took place, including the high echelon of the armed forces and political power of the country, as well as happened in a similar way in Uruguay, based on seriously conducted judicial processes. Much later in the 21st century, in a related way, Chile is also trying to do the same in recently times, seeking to definitively bury the Constitution that originated from the disastrous dictatorial times of Pinochet, which caused so much harm to Chilean society, which was duly evidenced and placed in question by the popular rebellions that preceded and led to the progressive results of the last elections.

However, the least that can be said is that, unfortunately, things did not happen this way in Brazil. Far from it, since the general conciliation between the radical opponents of the left- and right wings was the fundamental tone that directed and regulated the Brazilian exit from the dictatorial process.

Indeed, in Brazil, a great political agreement was instituted guided by the imperative of *broad, general, and unrestricted amnesty* that formally would be aimed at the two poles of the political spectrum, but which effectively protected only the torturers (police and military) at the expense of those tortured and persecuted by the military regime since political activists were previously punished and punished for the illegitimate violence of the (dictatorial) State, in the various forms of death, physical mutilation, exile, suicides and the wide and radical destruction of families.

In addition, even though several political prisoners and exiles later received financial compensation for what they suffered and lost by the dictatorial regime, promoted by later democratic governments, the torturers were not effectively judged or duly punished for their actions, thus remaining unpunished.

Importantly, along with this, the named *Commission of Truth*, institutionally established by the government of Dilma Roussef, was marked in its public hearings by fundamental impasses, since the torturers, when they attended the hearings, were often silent, or even they were absent. In any case, the official installation of the said commission, which indirectly clashed with the imperatives established in the process of national conciliation of broad, general, and unrestricted amnesty, ended up progressively breaking the foundations of the government in question, later leading to the impeachment of the President Roussef, among other reasons.

This serious destabilization produced in the Brazilian democratic process, which effectively resulted in a (white) parliamentary *coup d'état*, without the participation, of course, of the military, ended up leading to Bolsonaro's election in 2018, in a disastrous and unexpected way.

Nevertheless, Bolsonaro's election following the far-right political and ideological discourse must be recognized as the unequivocal consequence of the breach of the democratic pact, which ended up leading to the loss of Dilma Roussef's

mandate from the post of Presidency of Brazil.

Therefore, in Brazil, *justice* was not effectively done, it is the least that can be stated, since the multiple crimes carried out by the military dictatorship were jointly covered up by the political power and the Brazilian State, in a way that Brazilian society has since passed so to function with these corpses and skeletons in the closet. However, such corpses and skeletons exhaled stinky odors that began to contaminate and asphyxiate the Brazilian social space.

Such corpses and skeletons were not then effectively buried, thus remaining in the condition of living dead and *unburied dead*, parodying the title of a post-war play by Sartre,⁴ so that neither the proper *funeral rites* nor what Freud called the *work of mourning*⁵ in the psychic record were performed. Finally, the unburied dead remained like the unburied dead, eternally turning over in their tombs.

As a result, from the totality of this process on the agenda, if the work of mourning was not duly carried out by Brazilian society, a *melancholy mark* begins to spread in the Brazilian imagination⁶, so that a *melancholy* that is also broad, general, and unrestricted began to spread since then in the relationships and social bonds existing in Brazilian society.

Finally, we consider that all of us are bereaved, because our dead were not effectively buried, thus brutally withdrawing their respect as human beings, and thus not recognizing their proper ethical dignity.

However, this is not all, since, associated with the structural melancholy in question, *deadly violence* is also disseminated in a related way, *which also in a broad, general, and unrestricted way has dangerously spread* structurally since then in Brazilian society like a fuse of gunpowder always ready to explode, as we will see below.

4 Refused death and violence

Thus, as we said, the torturers were duly protected, remaining in the police and military institutions as regular civil servants, as if nothing *tragic* had happened in Brazilian society during the military dictatorship. At the same time, a portion of the police also started to set up private companies dedicated to *Public Security*, *initially* in the neighborhoods of the Brazilian elites in the country's large cities.

The process of privatization of Public Security in Brazil began in this post-dictatorial social and political context, where police officers from the basements of the dictatorship would be at the forefront of such initiatives. Thus, militias began to be constituted, so that the militiamen who have spread throughout Brazilian society since then come from the police apparatus, as is well-known.

With the privatization of Public Security, our homes began to be barred and fenced off, so that, since then, our homes and buildings have become similar to prisons, regulated by militiamen (policemen) with their security companies, mainly at the elite's neighborhoods in large Brazilian cities.

This process was reiterated in acts guided by the assumption that urban crime and violence would be on the rise and that it would be necessary to attack them frontally. Still, in this same historical context, the slogan was constituted in Brazil that "a good bandit is a dead bandit", or else, the aphorism that "to our enemies, we must literally apply the force of the law, but for friends, on the other hand, all benefits would be possible".

Alongside this, police officers (militiamen) also began to occupy the slums and communities on the outskirts of large cities, to chase drug traffickers. However, what they did, as is known, was to exploit all the services of the popular classes, ostensibly charging bribes to usurers. Finally, militia members also began to associate with drug traffickers, thus forming groups of narcotic militiamen in the slums and communities of the largest Brazilian cities.

Consequently, communities and slums became the permanent and privileged object of systematic police invasions, with the deliberate intention of arresting drug dealers and gangs, but which resulted, as is known, in great carnage for the lower classes. In this context, ordinary residents, women, the elderly, and children are mortally targeted by this deliberate act of violence against the lower classes and lose their lives. It is as if being poor and living in the *favelas* in Brazil automatically puts the individual in a socially *periculosus* position so that their citizenship status enters a state of suspension, in which their death and extermination are thus authorized by the State authority.

Since then, violence and death against the poor and black populations have increased enormously in Brazil, as well as violence and death against women, homosexuals, and transsexuals. All these attacks and decimations were inscribed in the Brazilian cartography with the spread of militiamen, there is no debt left, but this process increased dramatically during the Bolsonaro government, as this type of urban violence was encouraged to the extreme, even by the authorization to kill propagandized by the Brazilian State, with the release to kill and the widespread permit to carrying firearms.

Therefore, we can state and recognize that this increase and dissemination of urban violence in Brazilian society, guided by the Brazilian State and by the police officers authorized to kill, is unequivocally the *consequence* and *effect* of the deaths carried out and not effectively recognized and assumed in the *Years of Lead* of the military dictatorship.

In effect, Brazil created a *debt* to the dead who were not recognized and who were not welcomed by the demand for

⁴ SARTRE, J. P. *Mortes sem sepultura*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1968.

⁵ FREUD, S. Deuil et mélancolie (1917). In: FREUD, S. *Métapsychologie*. Paris: Payot, 1970.

⁶ *Idem*.

justice for the crimes carried out by the dictatorship, so that if the said debt is systematically *rejected* (Freud)⁷ and even *foreclosed* (Lacan)⁸; it returns, therefore, duly in return in an indirect way, by the persecutory guilt and by the violence disseminated in the social space.

5 Repetition, tragedy, and farce

Thus, to properly interpret the debt in question, it is necessary to evoke Marx's famous formulation in the work entitled *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*⁹, in which the author enunciated, in an elegant and cutting way at the same time, an original reading of history, fundamentally marked by *repetition*, in which the registers of *tragedy* and *farce* are specifically opposed in such repetition, respectively.

In this perspective, according to Marx, history happens initially as a tragedy and later presents itself as farce, in an unexpected way. Indeed, if the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars were modulated by tragic times, on the other hand, the populism of Louis Bonaparte would effectively be inscribed in the register of the farce.

Likewise, if the Brazilian military dictatorship was a tragic event, due to the destruction it promoted and the undermining of human rights, on the other hand, the return of far-right political populism with Bolsonaro would be an event of the order of farce. Indeed, about this, we cannot forget that Bolsonaro is a representative of the basements of the military dictatorship, and this is what was reproduced as a farce with the constant threats of a military coup repeatedly enunciated by Bolsonaro, who tortured us all during his daily speeches against democracy.

6 Debts, unconscious and politics

However, the Brazilian debt concerning those killed in the Brazilian military dictatorship is the tip of the iceberg of other fundamental debts that structurally pervade Brazilian society –that is, the extension and vertiginous increase of misery in the popular classes, as well as the enjoyment of wealth and benefits of the elites and upper middle classes, and the *structural racism*, in which blacks are treated as second-class citizens. Without forgetting, of course, Brazilian structural chauvinism (*machismo*), which highlights the ostensible marks of patriarchy in Brazil and exposes women frequently to *rape*, *harassment*, and *femicide*, and *inscribes* them in the unconscious in Brazil, so that widespread and permanent violence in Brazilian society would be the ostensive sign of such debts present in the Brazilian unconscious.

Finally, we can affirmatively state that, through the different modalities of debts in Brazilian society, the unconscious is politics in Brazil.

Received on: may, 20 2023. **Accepted on:** may, 20 2023.

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⁷ FREUD, S. Le fétichisme (1927). In: FREUD, S. *La vie sexuelle*. Paris: PUF, 1972.

⁸ LACAN, J. *Les psychoses*. Paris: Seuil, 1990.

⁹ MARX, K. *O 18 de Brumário de Luís Bonaparte*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2011.