

Instrumentalising the discourse of fear: media pastors and the pre-election of 2014

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Abstract

In times of plurality of ideas and moral values, some religious leaders seek to reaffirm themselves as sources of true morality and to combat any kind of thinking that could destabilize their “*modus operandi*”. In view of that, pre-election periods often become a propitious moment for religious engagement in the political debate with the intention of influencing the vote decision of the faith. In this sense, the objective of this work is to analyze the forms of political engagement, by two media pastors – Silas Malafaia and Marco Feliciano – in traditional media and social networks. We will present their positions in the face of progressive lines traditionally linked to the Left and the Workers’ Party, and their political proposals based on Messianic and Salvationist principles. Our hypothesis is that the discourse of fear is employed by these Neo-Pentecostals pastors as a way of maintaining order, dictated by the religion they join.

Keywords: Mediatization of religion. Culture of fear. Neopentecostals. Elections 2014. Conservative thinking.

Religion, politics and the fear speech

Recently, we have experienced a strong presence of religious leaders in politics. Many authors try to understand this shift that politics has been undergoing, from the private life to the public environment, for example, Habermas (2006), Burity (2001), Dantas (2011), Zabatiero (2008), Machado (2006), Cunha (2017). These studies provide us an important conclusion about this phenomenon, which has been named by some as the *deprivatization of religion* (MARTINO, 2016; CASANOVA, 1994). These show that there has been a migration of the religious practices and the values of the intraecclesial relations to the

public debate, in the search to impose said values to the other members of society. In Brazil, this deprivatization process becomes stronger with the creation of neofundamentalism, a movement with political and religious purposes, already identified by Oro (2016), who aims for the defense of faith; not by isolation of the classical fundamentalism, but through the imposition of values in its political acts. According to Cunha (2017), the “neo” is applied due to the increase in visibility of conservative leaderships, which are representatives of the new times in a scenario in which the strengthening of conservative policies in Brazilian politics, especially in the elections. A form of action this group takes, which we intend to demonstrate through this study, is the argument of the promotion of fear as a weapon for domination and guidance of votes.

Fear has always been present in social relations as a factor of political cohesion and power structure, specially related by philosophy and cultural history. In Machiavelli (1969), fear is portrayed as the driving force of human actions, being used to control and direct the prince’s actions. The renaissance author breaks the epistemological paradigm that treats politics as an independent field, with its own demands, confirming that the regent’s objective is to retain power and all of his actions are for such purpose.

Hence, from the examples set by historical works, such as “The Prince”, the author will identify the qualities and actions, which the regent should have and make in order to cease and retain power. *Virtú* and *fortuna* shall appear as key concepts in the author’s analysis, the former can be perceived as wisdom while the latter as historical circumstances; leaving it to the regent to possess them wisely to remain in power, something which is not necessarily based on religious or moral foundations.

In turn, Hobbes (1979) perceives human nature as wicked and always subjected to war or a conflict between all. One of the most politically instrumentalized fears arises from this: the fear of death. This is the basis for the social contract, which will lead to the formation of a sovereign state, which exchanges the guarantee of the follower’s lives for the option of freedom. However, fear does not come to a halt, even with the contract. Fear becomes a tool for the state, forcing a mental structure in which the hope for a better life supports the maintenance of authoritarian governments. In this dynamic, religion has great potential for contingency (HOBBS, 1979). Overall, it is understood that fear turns the regent, with the intention to protect his subjects from external or internal threats, absolute in terms of power (KEHK, 2007, p. 95).

In the religious scope, fear diversified. Even though it is intrinsically connected to the opposition and profanity, which are interpretations of a reality conceived by fantasies and insecurities: I want to remember that fear is one of the sources of fantasy and invention, a large part of which originate from the mysterious and the holy (KEHL, 2007, p. 91). In this way, the demonization of the “other” becomes a fundamentalist actualization, because it opposes the secularization and the retraction of the level of importance of the holy in society’s life (ORO, 1996), in which Weber (1991) names the disenchantment of the world.

Therefore, just as fear can be manufactured by a political system to stimulate the obedience of the citizens in certain societies (CHAIA, 2014), it can also be used by religion with similar purposes. In many instances, religion feeds on the confusion between the reality of an event and its predecessor in experience, leaving it to religion to seek interpretations for the phenomenon in question (LIMONGI, 2007). Furthermore, in societies that retain the oral transmission of information falls to the way the narrative is reported by the media, both social media and the press, it is not surprising to find that this manufacturing of fear has Churches with as a large distributor, as Glassner (2003) states, focusing specially on facts which are not feared by themselves, but are amplified by determined leaderships.

In this manner, we will seek to comprehend the way in which Silas Malafaia and Marco Feliciano, two media pastors, instrumentalized the communication means, specifically social media, to diffuse a speech based on fear and in elements, which symbolize messianism and Salvationism.

Our methodology follows those brought forward by Yin (2009), referring to the analysis of a study in critical case, when it can represent a relevant contribution to the formation of knowledge and theories for the future of the field in question, acting as a base for explanations and significant generalizations (YIN, 2009, p. 27). Therefore, the methodological triangulation was adopted, which can combine qualitative and quantitative techniques as a support to the collection and analysis of data, which arise from 1. Descriptive statistical data; 2. Documental analysis; 3. Discourse analysis.

The messianic and Salvationist political discourse develops in an informative ecosystem where contents work together in the contents of the traditional press, social media content and the daily interactions, for example, in religious sermons and religious cults, which can be confirmed by the case study of Malafaia and Feliciano.

Similarly, Magali Cunha (2017) presents a detailed study, which bases the necessity to understand the religious leader's actions in social media, mainly their large reach. These leaders, realizing that the internet is an appropriate battlefield to fight the traditional media and their products, search to disseminate their idea through them. Magali Cunha (2017) starts from the idea that we can see in the current context of the reactionism driven by the evangelical neoconservatism of new processes which share information on the media as weapons in the "war against enemies of the family", with social networks being a fertile environment for this.

With the rise of the neofundamentalism movement around 1990, the relation between religion and politics changed in Brazil (ORO, 1996). Evangelic, traditionalists and fundamentalists, which were apathetic to the political participation, began to seek ways of consolidating hegemony projects based on the defense of their religious values and in the opposition to plurality of ideas typical to the progressivist way of thinking that created an uncertain condition in relation to the beliefs and way of living (BERGER, 1994). With this

intent, religious leaders began to act in the political sphere through a conservative agenda, as defenders of a defender of a given order reinforced by the constant fear.

With this intent, certain religious leaders started to act in the political environment, armed with conservationist¹ agendas, which, on one hand is the counterpoint to the plurality and diversity identified in the progressionist field, and on the other, instrumentalizes itself in the defense of a given order through constant fear.

In this scope, our premise that the conservative activism came forth in an odd moment in democracy – the preceding of the formation of public opinions that materialize through the vote – in the case discussed here, the period prior to the 2014 elections, marked by an intense popularization in the streets and online.

In this manner, a principal strategy was the search for the scheduling²² of the traditional media, or the counter scheduling, for the involvement in social networks, a fact which alludes to the thought provided by Bourdieu (1997, p. 28 – Our translation):

An important aspect of political disputes, similar to the daily exchanges or in the global scale, is the capacity to impose principles in the world's vision, lenses which make people see the world in specific ways (the young, the old, the foreigners and the French). When imposing these divisions, groups are formed. These mobilize and, when doing so, they can give the impression that they exist, exerting pressure and gaining advantages.

The ideas put forth by the pastors in question, incorporated to the support, as well as the opposition to *PT*, present visions of the world which are extreme in their duality, and recall some old terms typical to the Cold War days and which already instigated fear in the population, like communism and dictatorship. The dissemination of these speeches aimed to put the audience into a state of fear regarding the continuation of the rule of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT)* (Workers Party).

However, the flux of contents is not limited to the different media platforms (JENKINS, 2008), but reach the streets, mutating even into car stickers, for example, the *banner* “fora Collor” (out with Collor) was adapted to “fora Dilma” (out with Dilma). Furthermore, it dislocates into a certain temporal flux in which there is the activation of political memories, meaning, when connecting the images of “fora Dilma” to “fora Collor”, a connection between the 2014 period and the Collor period, marked by the inflation and corruption imposed by the president in question. Like this, there is a connection between the culture of fear dialectically

1 Many attempts were made to influence the political agenda. We cite, as example, the case of the materials against homophobia which were to be distributed by MEC, during Fernando Haddad's time as pastor, and was referred to by evangelicals as *gay kit*. Past the debate about sexuality in schools which was harshly criticized by them as gender ideology during the 2014 elections. Recently, in 2018, these themes returned to the agenda, reinforcing a hate approach which can subsidize fear. It becomes relevant to note that the presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro, in an interview to the *Jornal Nacional*, presented this *gay kit*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVGQ2vzJW7E>. Accessed on: 7 may 2019.

2 According to Azevedo (2004), the media aims to provide visibility and give prominence to specific themes in detriment of others in a specific period, like this, the means of mass communication subject themselves to a categorization of these people and themes.

operated in symbols and speeches, which are political consequences from which society remembers their experiences (SOUZA; LAMOUNIER, 1990).

Figure 1 – Comparison between the cover “Fora Collor” and the sticker “fora Dilma”



Font: Book “*Fora Collor o fenômeno em decomposição*” (Out with Collor, the decomposition phenomenon) (1993) and the sticker “fora Dilma” (2014). Notice the double “l” is used appropriately when referring to Collor’s name. This visual connection was forced for Dilma, since her name is spelled with only one “l”.

The use of fear is not new when it comes to religious-political campaigns. Pierucci and Mariano (1992) suggested that evangelic joined the Collor campaign due to their dislike for Lula. The first scenario that would be made possible would be the implementation of Communism, which would limit the religious freedom, and the second would be the regain of the Catholic Church’s supremacy, mainly due to the connection between *PT* and the *Teologia da Libertação e das Comunidades Eclesiais de Base* (Theology of liberation and the base ecletical communities). In the same manner, in 1994, evangelical leaderships stated publically that in the case of Lula’s victory, he would close the doors of evangelical churches, an attitude from the president at the time, which is reinterpreted by Marco Feliciano in the new political juncture. Since the pastors supported the candidacy of Dilma Rouseff in a movement that would bring *PT* and certain evangelical leaders closer which would remodel the 2012 elections.

It is important to say that even though they supported Lula, there was the maintenance of the salvationalist principles characteristic to their statements. Hence, in a meeting of with pastors, an image that was previously distributed through them was changed substantially since 2014:

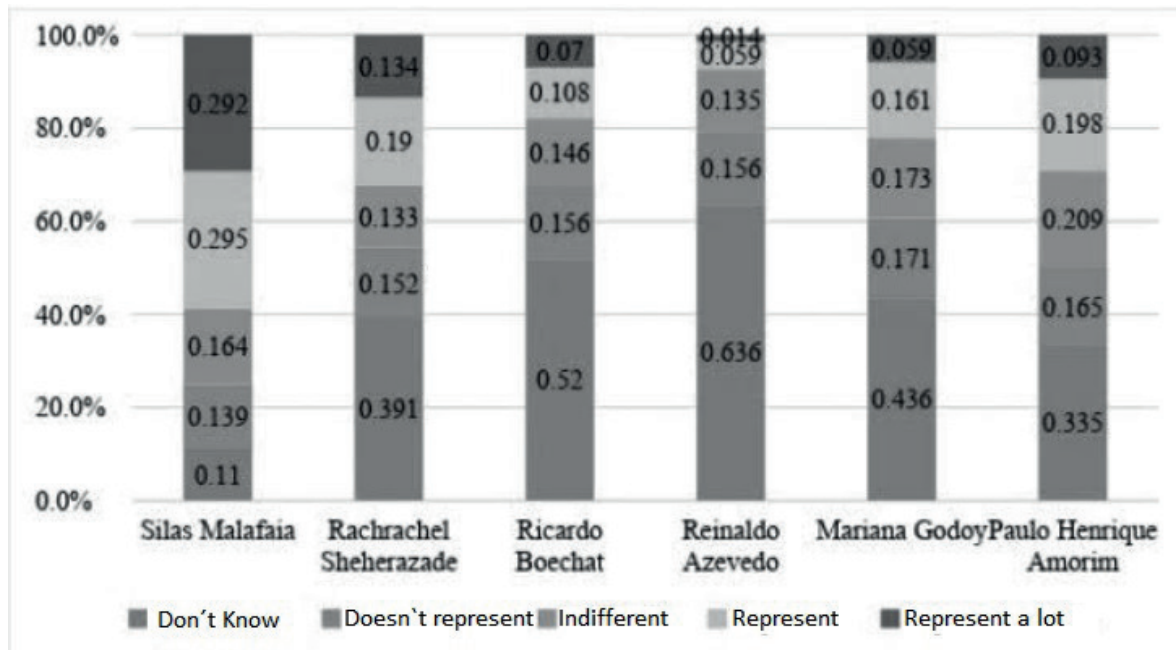
The story of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, in these last 8 years, has touched the entire world. His figure is no longer seen only as a president, but as a messiac figure, not compared to Christ, but as someone who would bring hope to the people. [...] I was one who preached at the time and strewed through the cults

in Brazil, because I would hear and, as a parrot, would repeat, “PT will close the churches of Brazil!”. [...] Eight years ago, Lula was the devil, but Lula was elected, no churches were closed and the country grew [sic.]³

The religious-political speech

To analyze the use of fear through the speeches of the electoral campaign of 2014, two characters were chosen, which are part of the neofundamentalist movement. The criteria for selection was based on the research done during the *Marcha para Jesus*⁴ (March to Jesus), in 2016, in which the results obtained indicated that Silas Malafaia was identified by the interview evangelic as the media character that best represented them, while Marco Feliciano was the most representative political figure. In the graphs below, we can observe the level of representation of these and other characters

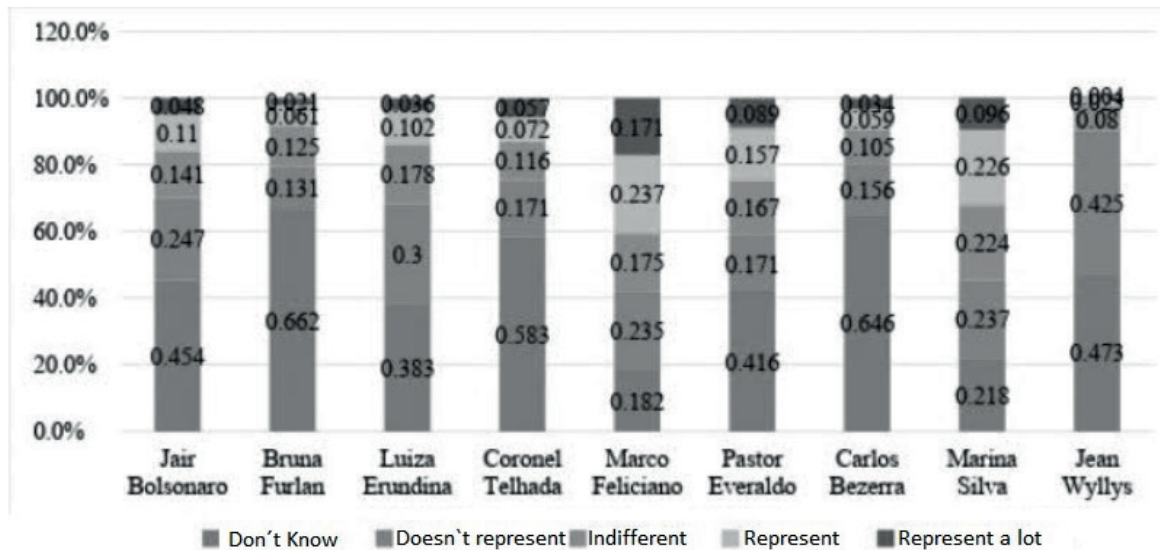
Graphic 1 – Representation of the characters in the media



Source: MIRE, research *Marcha Para Jesus* (Research March to Jesus) 2016.

³ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Go6rD4xGli8>. Accessed on: 5 jun. 2017

⁴ The *Marcha para Jesus* is an event held internationally by evangelic churches and it is headed by the Igreja Renascer em Cristo (Reborn in Christ Church), which brought together the 25th edition of 2017 million people in the region of Luz, in Sao Paulo.

Graphic 2 – Representation of political characters

Source: MIRE, research *Marcha Para Jesus* 2016.

Adding the categories *represents* and *represents very well*, we have the following results: Silas Malafaia (58.7%) and Marco Feliciano (41.8%). On top of this, we should consider that both are media pastors and members of the church *Assembleia de Deus* (God's Assembly). According to IBGE Institute (2010), 5.7% of the Brazilian population has mentioned that they belong to this group; this makes it the biggest religious group in the country, excluding Catholicism. Before these facts, it becomes evident why the investigation of this public and leaders is relevant.

Firstly, before we present some religious speeches, it is necessary to note who these characters are and the symbolic elements they carry in their language. Both are famous pastors, highlighted by their remarked by their charisma, voice and good articulation in the media. Having captivating presences in shows and talk shows in open TV, they have had countless opportunities to address themes such as homosexuality, abortion and drugs, in other words, all themes that are relevant to the neofundamentalist conservationist agenda. Regarding the theological question, they utilize almost the same resources to convince their public and direct the debate. One of the symbolic elements used was analyzed by Preuss (2015) as prophetism, or the term prophet, which is responsible to the divine message, according to the Hebrew-Christian theology. This message is usually a criticism, denouncing the dominant classes and with a charge of hope to those who are oppressed. With this, the prophet assumes the role of the spokesperson of God, in defense of the population.

The allusion to the prophet role is recurrent in the preaching of Malafaia. In many sermons, he refers to himself as the “prophet of God”. This fact has drawn our interest ever since the start of our research, as we can visualize a connection between the use of the term and the position that the presenter takes to legitimize his political stance in the occupation of the public television space (PREUSS, 2015, 108 – Our translation).

Preuss (2015) also mentions that Silas Malafaia uses the stereotype that portrays the evangelic as innocent or naïve as a pillar for his speech, to place himself in the role of helper of the illumination of the followers, to instruct them, to alert them, these being the attributes of the prophet character. In this manner, Silas Malafaia is one of the “prophets” that announces the arrival of this “heavenly kingdom”, in other words, it is time for change in society. According to the author’s research, Silas Malafaia seems to aim for new followers, as well as votes for the evangelic representatives and more visibility in the public television space.

Marco Feliciano also uses the same resources mentioned in the study conducted by Preuss (2015) in relation to Malafaia. The prophetism is striking in several of his preaching, and one thing that draws attention was the use of the term during his deputy election campaign in 2014. When Feliciano decided to ask for assistance in the divulgation of his candidacy, he decided to call his leaflets “*profetinhas*” (little prophets) instead of the usual “*santinho*” (little saint), obviously linked the term to his image:

You, who lives in the state of Sao Paulo, and would like to assist me and be my volunteer [...] Why volunteer, pastor? Because I do not have a single cent to pay you, to get you to help me spread my leaflets, but you are a volunteer, who believes in family, who believes in my fight [...] I need you to log into the Internet [...] you can send an email with my address and I will send you a kit. In this kit, my *profetinhas* (little prophets) will be delivered [...] I don’t use *santinhos* (little saints), those little political papers are called *santinhos*, for me, there is only one saint, God, and so, I will send you some *profetinhas* [sic.]⁵.

Still on the matter of prophetism, it is important to note that the words of the prophet are loaded with magic power in theology, and this power can promote a certain level of obedience in the followers. Weber (2010) states that, in reality, obedience is determined by strong motives which are somewhere between fear and hope, where the idea that the holder of this power will take his vengeance on those who do not follow or assist them. On the other hand, there is hope in the prospects of a reward in this world or in the next, when the

⁵ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6pMi7UrqJ8>. Accessed on: 8 jun. 2017.

follower obeys the advice of the prophet. Preuss (2015) highlights certain phrases used by Malafaia, which we can consider as a clear attempt of a prophecy:

He uses expressions like: “no one will restrain our citizenship”, “I know what I am talking about”, “I have no fear” and even reaches the point where he says: “I am here, declaring that they will fall. Those who oppose the church of Jesus will fall. They will fall, in the name of Jesus, they will fall” (PREUSS, 20165, p.114 – Our translation).

Preuss (2015) highlights the use of other terms used by Malafaia, some of these were: “*esquerdopatas* (the libtards)”, “*os facínoras* (the thugs)”, those that use a “persecution worse than the one performed by the Nazis”, “the gay activism”, the believers who are “morons that make the atheist’s games”, the “corrupt” pastors, who accept the bribes of “criminal” politicians, the politicians who are “corrupt”, “dishonest”, “thieves”, the professionals in politics who are “tricksters” and “atheists”. Similarly, Maranhão (2015) and Nascimento (2013) highlighted how these words are used in a violent manner, particularly when Malafaia says, “*I love homosexuals like I love criminals*”⁶, connecting homosexuality to criminality and abomination. This word game, dislocated from their reality, promotes a bad understanding about these issues and a systematic intolerance from his followers.

As previously mentioned, religious movements and neofundamentalist conservationists united their speeches against the candidates of *PT*, mainly against the president Dilma Rousseff, prior to 2014’s elections. From this reorientation, the political actors that have been selected in our research, Silas Malafaia and Marcos Feliciano aligned their spoken strategies in the attempt to reduce the amount of votes to *PT* by the evangelical portion of the population. The tone of the speeches is worked to be an alert, once again, regaining the essence of prophetism.

Silas Malafaia and Marco Feliciano against Dilma

The first speech presented here was broadcast in the channel of the deputy Marco Feliciano (*PSC*) that alerted Christians about how dangerous was *PT*’s public policies:

Hello guys! I am Marco Feliciano, federal deputy for the state of *São Paulo* and candidate for reelection now, in 2014, as federal deputy for the State of *São Paulo* also [...]. I’m here today to make a complaint. The denunciation is about what the government has done to bring evangelic closer to President Dilma. It came out a few days ago in the press that *PT* created an evangelical committee to approach the great evangelic leaders to President Dilma. I wanted to say here, so that you will not be deceived again, they did the

⁶ “*I love homossexual as I love bandits: the religious thought of Silas Malafaia*” (NASCIMENTO, 2013).

same thing in 2010, I, Marco Feliciano was one of those [...] who ended up falling into the vicar's story, in this case, in the tale of the president and *PT*. I lent my picture to them in 2010. I went up on the podium asking for votes for President Dilma, because, at that moment, she had signed a document saying that **abortion** would not be approved during her term. She lied, **abortion** was approved through the prophylaxis project in pregnancy. And a few days ago the Ministry of Health lowered the 415 doorway where the **abortion** would be paid, that is, all hospitals would receive four hundred *Reais* (Brazilian currency) for the **abortion** to be performed. Thanks to the evangelic bench, a collective action taken inside the chamber of deputies, we were able to make the ministry of health take it back. However, the project called *Cavalo de Tróia* (Trojan Horse), which is the prophylaxis project in pregnancy, has been sanctioned by the president and is already in force. The evangelic, who are supporting President Dilma, are the same group that led against me when I took over the Human Rights Commission. They are evangelic called **progressive evangelic**. They have a leadership that only Jesus can explain and deal with. I know these people, they do not share our thoughts. They think that people who excel at **the family**, people who are against the release of **drugs**, people who are against **abortion**, they call them **backsliding**. It is not the government, not the people of the government, who call them backsliding, these **evangelic leftists** ... I appeal not only to evangelic, but to all good Christians and even people who, even though they are not Christians, are **family people**, we need to change and the change is **not voting for President Dilma, not to vote for PT**. Many thanks to all, may God bless you in the name of Jesus [sic.] (Our Gryphon).

We see a strong emphasis on issues that are sensitive to religion - issues about abortion and drug use - and references to leftist movements as part of the tenebrous scenario for the evangelic religion. This is, mainly, because the interpretation of these elements is based, exclusively, on religious dogmas or what Croatto (2010) called the ultimate reality, which is the axiomatization of any historical behavior and context within its own eternal truth, operating an opposition between what is holy and what is profane.

Our second example is the transcript of a speech by Pastor Silas Malafaia, initially released on his YouTube channel. Malafaia uses Dilma Rouseff's speech at the UN to warn his public about another type of danger: terrorism.

Hello, my people! First, I want to say that this video has shocking scenes. Please do not allow children to watch it, because they are very strong scenes. And I want, I want, here, to make some considerations that can decide our election for president of Brazil. Pay attention to what I'm going to say. In 2012, President Dilma was at the opening of the UN [...] and on occasion, she gives

a word saying that in the world there is Islamophobia. Pay attention to Dilma's word [sic.]⁷.

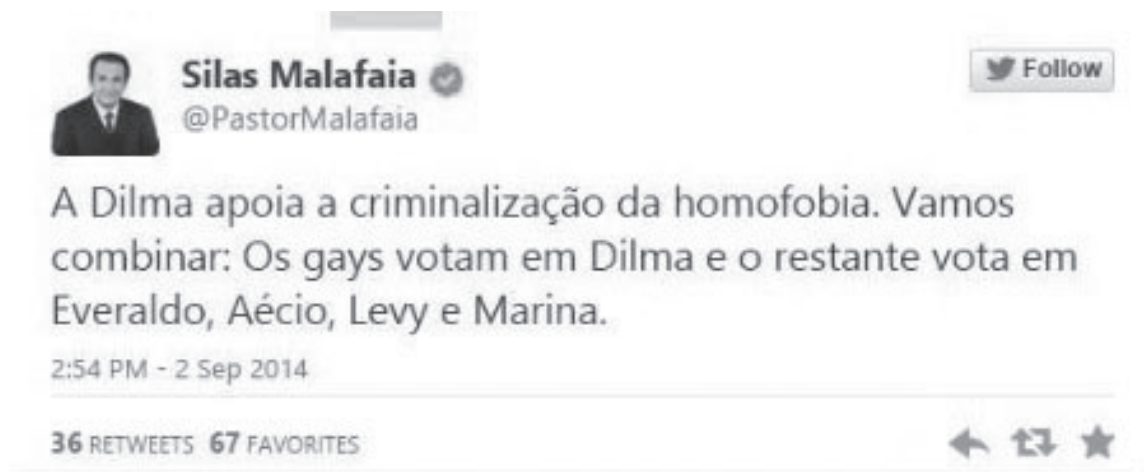
Following the warning, an excerpt from Dilma's speech, which criticized Western military intervention and Islamophobia, was added after the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States. Following the testimony of the president, Malafaia resumes the scene with the following arguments:

I showed it to you. In 2012, Dilma speaks and defends the followers of the Islamic faith. In 2014, there is not a word to speak of Christophobia, which is real and true in the world ... I regret the omission of President Dilma's speech, with the mass murders of Christians in 2013, who died 115 thousand and now a militant terrorist group that is committing massacres, the president says that there must be dialogue. Prepare your stomach, do not let your child watch it. You're going to see the murderous terrorists of Christians, okay ... killing women, teenagers, men, children, crucifying villages. You will see their wickedness against Christians. Those scenes that you are going to see now are the murder of a Christian. Pay attention, pay close attention. Look at this; to these people the president wants dialogue [sic.].

After that, violent scenes of murders, supposedly committed by the terrorist group Islamic State, are transmitted. However, there is no source that guarantees the legitimacy of the images and the authorship of the deaths. In any case, in the face of so cruel and shocking images, little remains of interpretation to the faithful spectator, since the speech of a pastor often does not require great concrete or scientific arguments.

Malafaia, in a Twitter statement, also takes up the issue of "gay activism," as called the LGBT movement by the neo-centrist.

⁷ Available at: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Malafaia+Estado+Islamico. Accessed on: 10 nov. 2016.

Figure 2 – Twitter from Silas Malafaia Oficial

Source: <https://twitter.com/pastormalafaia/status/506827578356019200>. Accessed on: 9 jun. 2017.

In this sense, according to Maranhão (2015), the pastor's statements put the LGBT movement in a discriminatory position, as well as the *PT* electorate. For this reason, the game of terror images combined with the rhetoric of the pastor and his performance in social networks is a true spectacle that can promote fear and hatred, with political objectives, which, in this case, would be to reduce votes in the *PT* party.

Silas Malafaia supporting Pastor Everaldo and Aécio Neves – both adversaries from Dilma

In 2014, Silas Malafaia publicly declared his support to Pastor Everaldo Dias, president of Social Christian Party (PSC), as a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic. Since the candidate had no great voting intentions, the pastor stresses the need to, at least, “presence” through an expressive amount of evangelic votes addressed to Pastor Everaldo.

I want to say to you here, I think that the human being is an intelligent being regardless one's religiosity. God made man as an intelligent being. I want you to analyze what I'm going to say here, why I'm going to vote for president in Pastor Everaldo, number 20. I'm going to give some explanations here [...] Now I want you to understand, because a lot of people don't. In the first round of elections, you vote to score a position. The second round is just a plebiscitary, that is, either you vote for one or vote for another, you have no way out. So, we are very important, right! Be evangelic, be Catholic, good people, make a stand. There are hundreds of projects at the federal congress to detonate the

family, detonate the good customs of society. We have to mark a firm position, okay! So that Everaldo, if he does not go to the second round, could have a large number of votes, where we will decide the second round. Then, we're going to sit down, call the candidate's attention, and say: Here, dear, do you want our support? You're going to sign a document here, that you do not vote for this or that, you're going to have to be in favor of this or that. This is a political game, people! There is no angel going down from heaven to do this, my people. Therefore, you who are evangelic, I have known Everaldo for more than 30 years ... I am giving you a word here, I respect your contrary opinion, you are a citizen, you are free to vote for who you want, but I want you to you think what I'm talking about and analyze. And let's go, let's put 20 for president of the republic[sic.]⁸.

Again, the speech touches on the question about the concept of family. The phrase “There are hundreds of projects in the federal congress to detonate the family, detonate the good customs of society” has two characteristic elements in the pastor's speech, the exaggeration in numbers⁹ (“hundreds of projects”) and the appeal that generates fear “to detonate of the family”.

During the second round of the 2014's presidential election, Silas Malafaia declared his support for Aécio Neves on social networks. It is important to inform that during our research, in June 2017, it was no longer possible to find videos to support the candidate in the official channel of the pastor. We also recall that, during this period, accusations against the candidate appeared. Therefore, in the official channel of Pastor Silas Malafaia, there are only justifications about the pastor's relationship with the candidate. However, in other channels, it was possible to retrieve some of the pastor's speeches that were linked to his program on his YouTube channel *Vitoria en Cristo*.

In one of his speeches, Silas Malafaia lists five reasons for his viewer to vote for Aécio: “As the Brazilians say, in a popular saying: it is time for the jaguar to drink water. I'm going to give you five reasons why you should vote for Aécio instead of Dilma”¹⁰:

1. Alternating power;
2. The non-condemnation of those involved in corruption nor their expulsion from the party (*PT*);
3. Corruption in Petrobras, deepened by the *PT*;

⁸ Available at: <http://ultimosegundo.ig.com.br/politica/2014-07-24/malafaia-divulga-video-de-apoio-ao-pastor-everaldo.html>. Accessed on: 9 jul. 2017.

⁹ In another public speech, Silas Malafaia comments that his TV program is dubbed in English and broadcast to more than 200 nations, officialy, around the world, we have 194 soberan countries and, in most of them, English is not spoken. The exaggerations of the pastor are a wy of scaring his followers of legitimate his sayings. Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxiQJFW1GmQ>. Accessed on: 10 jun. 2017.

¹⁰ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCgzwFCF11A>. Accessed on: 11 jun. 2017.

4. Dilma's addressed speech to the UN against military interventions in the Middle East; and
 5. *PT* was against the *Plano Real* (a plan to change the currency in Brazil) in 1994.
- The fourth motive presented by the pastor, the UN discourse, already analyzed, appears again, under the same argument: linking the image of Dilma to the Islamic State. Finally, the pastor closes with his speech: "Enough of *PT*, for president Aécio 45, God bless Brazil"¹¹.

In an interview granted to the newspaper *O Globo*, Silas Malafaia cites the production of this same video highlighting that "I am for Aécio since a little child":

I've been for Aécio since I was a child. I recorded a video with five reasons not to vote for Dilma. Reason one: the alternation of power, important for the democratic state. Lula said bad things in the social programs of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. They (*the PT*) do not know one thing: who gave economic stability to this country was the PSDB party¹².

Silas Malafaia also declared his support to Aécio in several tweets, on October 16, 2014, during the electoral debate promoted by *SBT*. Well-tuned in social networks, the pastor launches the hashtags *#dilmavaiperderaecio45vencer* (Dilma is going to lose and Aécio 45 wins) which came to be the third most used one at the time of the debate.

¹¹ As above.

¹² Available at: <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/pastor-silas-malafaia-diz-estar-com-tucano-desde-criancinha-14177439>. Acesso em: 11 jun. 2017.

Figure 3 – *Trending topics* on October 16, 2014, at 07h45pm

Source: Twitter Advanced Search. Accessed on: 8 jun. 2017.

In one of his tweets, he mocks Dilma, linking a biblical text, “The Devil is the father of lies,” to the figure of the president, associating it with her mother. The suggestion of the marriage between Dilma and the Devil is part of the process of demonizing the other, committed by neo-fundamentalism. In addition, there is a disqualification of Dilma in front of sexist statements:

Figura 4 - Twitter Silas Malafaia Oficial

Source: <https://twitter.com/PastorMalafaia>. Accessed on: 8 jun. 2017.

Through the App hashtagify, we have been able to trace the hashtag relation used by the pastor with the other hashtags used together by other followers, among which we highlight: # Aecio45; #Out Dilma; #ForaPT; #DebatenoSBT.

The hashtags have an important speech resource, they bring the facts that emerge in the public sphere from the logic of storytelling, that is, of a narrative with a news aspect with a pre-established meaning and potentially shared character since other agents can not only participate in this great conversational mural (MALINI; ANTOUN, 2013) as they are encouraged to do.

The correlation between Silas Malafaia and Eduardo Cunha

Eduardo Cunha attended the churches *Sara Nossa Terra* and *Assembléia de Deus*, and his electoral discourse in the evangelic environment addresses the same themes of the neofundamentalist movement. In a presentation at the church *Santa Cruz Areia Branca*, on August 11, 2014, he states that: “There are more than 800 projects that attempt against life, against the family, try to legalize drugs, civil union of the same sex¹³”. His speech is concluded with the phrase “our people deserve respect”.

As much as his support for Congressman Eduardo Cunha is denied by Pastor Silas, we find several videos available on YouTube from Malafaia and Cunha. The videos are not available on the pastor’s official channel, but are available in other accounts, and the video of the *Marcha para Jesus* (March for Jesus), quoted in this text, is available on the official channel of Deputy Eduardo Cunha¹⁴.

13 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nxDRe9L6a8>. Accessed on: 11 jun. 2017.

14 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtAXZSfs365AME4j1-YlJqw>. Accessed on: 10 jun. 2017.

As there is really no explicit support from the pastor, we will present the articulations in Malafaia's political speech that implies his approach to Cunha from the year 2013 to the year 2017, the year the deputy was arrested. To our study on political campaigning, describing its trajectory is important to demonstrate that, in the evangelical religious environment, political engagement campaigns are not restricted to the pre-election period.

In *Marcha para Jesus* of 2013, after many performances from evangelical artists, the pastor Silas Malafaia assumes the front of the event inviting the audience to pray in favor to Brazilian nation. At the same stage, the candidates from 2014, were together: Pastor Everaldo and Eduardo Cunha. In Silas's speech, there are no appeal to votes or indications, mainly, because it is to electoral moment. However, the presence of future candidates in the stage and a prayer directed to political issues leads to a future electoral campaign of these characters. Under a round of applause of the audience, the speech begins as follows:

Give me your hand, my son. This prayer makes Hell shake people. Repeat with me: Lord Jesus, we are the church, and your word says, if what we bind on earth will be bound in heaven. In addition, we bind, with your blessing on all the authorities, whether evangelicals or not evangelicals, president of the republic, governors, mayors, deputies, council members, the executive, the judiciary, the legislature. We bless the authorities represented here. Moreover, we declare a Brazil of peace and prosperity. Jesus Christ is the lord of Brazil, amen¹⁵.

Certainly, there is no greater symbolic fear for a Christian than Hell itself, being this the place of God's absence (BOLLINI, 2007), which plastically makes an extreme counterpoint to Heaven, because if, on the one hand, Hell is frustration and eternal damnation, on the other hand, Heaven is the full blossoming of the human being (SOARES, 2006). By initiating a prayer, where it can make Hell tremble, the pastor conveys to the audience the feeling that this prayer has the ability to ward off Hell and, consequently, reassure the faithful who place their hopes in heaven and future politicians in the country. It is a game between the duality of Heaven and Hell or fear and hope.

In 2015, after the election of Eduardo Cunha as mayor, Silas Malafaia congratulates him on his Twitter account with more than 1 million followers¹⁶.

15 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9A1AURJbks>. Accessed on: 9 jun. 2017.

16 Number of followers extracted on June 10.2017. Real amount: 1,330,910 users.

Figure 5 – Silas Malafaia Oficial Twitter

Font: <https://twitter.com/PastorMalafaia>. Accessed on: 6 jul. 2017.

The approach between the pastor and Eduardo Cunha remains until the following years. In the *Marcha para Jesus* of 2016, we have, again, the presence of Silas Malafaia, Pastor Everaldo and Eduardo Cunha. Silas presents the elected deputy emphasizing his importance in the political hierarchy: “For the first time, in the history of our country, in republican history, the third largest authority of the country, the mayor of the Chamber of Deputies is our brother. “I’m going to ask you to give greetings to Deputy Eduardo Cunha”.¹⁷

The deputy makes a brief speech, which we could not recover in its entirety, but we highlight the phrases used by him: “God put me there” and “our people deserve respect”¹⁸. In this frame, we notice a feeling of hope and confidence, we point out, incidentally, that the word Hell was not mentioned.

Deputy Eduardo Cunha was arrested in 2017 and charged with three crimes in the *Lava a Jato*¹⁹. operation (a Federal operation against Corruption). After this episode, Silas tried to detach himself from the image of Eduardo Cunha through several videos in his channel.

Marco Feliciano in Campaign

There are several speeches promoted by Feliciano in social networks during the electoral period. However, we will highlight some points of his campaign that we believe

17 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQSWyIjeUGY>. Accessed on 10 jun. 2017.

18 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQSWyIjeUGY>. Accessed on 10 jun. 2017.

19 Available at: <http://g1.globo.com/pr/parana/noticia/eduardo-cunha-e-condenador-a-15-anos-de-reclusao-por-tres-crimes-na-lava-jato.ghtml>. Accessed on: 10 jun. 2017.

are more appropriate to the scope of our work. First, we present Pastor Marco Feliciano's address on his official YouTube channel, where he seeks the support of believers in publicizing his candidacy:

You know me from my struggles, from my battles, not just as a parliamentarian, but as a pastor too. Always the chase seems to have been the fuel that puts me on my feet and makes me walk. However, today I am here to make a heartfelt request, because I am in a struggle, I need the support, not only of the Christian evangelic family, but all the families that cherish the family as it is in the state of São Paulo. I need your vote and I'm humbly here to ask this from you and your family. Moreover, as I am a deputy who fought a lot against the people who wanted to destroy the family in its base, that is, the government that is there, I was marked by the government. The government; when it marks a person for evil, they try to destroy the image of the person so that he/she will not be reelected anymore ... I have an electoral account, I do not have a penny in this account, because no company wants to bet on me as a federal deputy, because they are afraid of involving the name of the company with my name: Feliciano and then suffering retaliation from both the government and activists. [...] Brazil needs to know that in the state of São Paulo, there are many conservative families who do not want to see the end of the traditional family [sic]²⁰.

The speech begins with the process of victimization and with the insinuation of the end of the traditional family. In the collective evangelic imagery, the phrase "I fought a lot against people who wanted to destroy the family at their base" can have a very negative charge and generate a sense of persecution for those who are in favor of the traditional family nucleus. Clearly, the discourse disqualifies the federal government in a symbolic way, because it does not use concrete data of the political-economic reality of the country, but uses symbolic phrases like "I was marked by the government", "The government when it marks a person for the evil," "Tries to destroy the image of the person".

In this sense, the deputy puts his hope in the voluntary service of the faithful, because, according to the candidate, there was no money to pay for his campaign. In order to verify this data, which can be considered as the only concrete information of the speech, we go to the Superior Electoral Court (*TSE*) website and find that the deputy received the amount of R\$ 144,222.35²¹ for his campaign. This amount is composed by donations of companies, individuals and by the Single Financial Committee of PSC-SP, and some deposits were made before the release of this video.

20 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6pMi7UrqJ8>. Accessed on: 8 jun. 2017.

21 Available at TSE site: <http://inter01.tse.jus.br/spceweb.consulta.receitasdespesas2014/abrirTelaReceitasCandidato.action>. Accessed on: June 10. 2017. Control Number: 020100600000SP0012045, delivered on 19 nov. 2014.

We also retrieved, through the site Elections *UOL*, a leaflet, or a “prophet” as it was called by Feliciano, distributed through the Post Office as a personal letter. This is a letter from Feliciano addressed to his possible voter. In it, his image is linked to the candidates Geraldo Alckmin, from the São Paulo government, to Senator Jose Serra and to State Representative Gilson Gomes.

Figure 6 – Campaign Material distributed by the Post Office



Font: UOL ELEIÇÕES²².

The content, with seriousness, alerts the faithful followers of the dangers that the church can face if nothing is done to alter the political reality of the country. As in the other examples already mentioned, this letter also mobilizes a process of victimization: “The churches I pastured were plundered, my family persecuted, but I broke in faith because I fought for the family.” On the fact of the depredated churches, we did not find any information that validates this verification, even after several searches in social networks, through the Netlytic applications, searches in Google and YouTube.

²² Available at: <https://eleicoes.uol.com.br/2014/noticias/2014/10/04/feliciano-usa-foto-de-serra-e-alkmin-em-panfleto-de-teor-homofobico.html>. Accessed on: 10 jun. 2017.

In the letter there is also a quotation of the *PSIU LAW*²³ in the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, which, according to Feliciano, has already closed more than 300 evangelic churches in these municipalities. In addition, he appeals to the voter to vote for Feliciano so that other projects, aimed at ending the church and family, won't be approved. Among these projects, Feliciano cites *PL 122*, which criminalizes homophobia. In the words of the pastor: “the most serious law passed by Congress to *PL 122*, the law against homophobia. Law that, if approved, will force religious leaders to marry people of the same sex, at the risk of being arrested. “Although the law bears no relation to the obligation of same-sex religious marriage, the emphasis on “on the risk of arrestment” and “The churches that shepherding has been plundered” may foster a sense of fear and persecution of the country's evangelic followers.

The press services of Geraldo Alckmin and Marco Feliciano were questioned by the report of UOL. Alckmin's adviser said he is unaware of the material and the adviser of Marco Feliciano said that it is a personal letter signed by Marco Feliciano in which were included photos of Alckmin and Serra just because they are from the same coalition.

Through the analysis of these materials we find that Marco Feliciano's campaign was based on a symbolic game supported by a theological discourse that promotes fear without any concrete explanation of the scenario about Brazilian politics or public policy projects.

Electoral Results of the evangelic candidates

In spite of having as empirical subsidies the Salvationist and messianic discourses of two media pastors such as Silas Malafaia and Marco Feliciano, we bring an analysis of the capacity of influence that the instrumentalization of this discourse may have in the political sphere.

Thus, Pastor Everaldo won 780,299 votes, with the concentration of votes in the states of São Paulo with (142,793) and Rio de Janeiro (136,143), both states with a large evangelic presence. It was the 5th most voted among the 11 candidates for the republic presidency. Nowadays, his role in the electoral debate promoted by the Globo TV network is being questioned, because after Odebrecht's deportations in 2017, it was revealed that Everaldo received undeclared values for his campaign, as well as recommendations by Odebrecht to help Aécio Neves in the debate. The case in court remains open until now²⁴.

Marco Feliciano was elected with 398,087 votes, being the third more voted candidate in the State of São Paulo. According to our research, through the TSE data, we highlight the electoral zones that had more than three thousand votes; they were: São Mateus / São Paulo (3,619), Franco da Rocha (3,392), Itaim Paulista / São Paulo 3,401), Orlândia (3,359),

23 The law imposes a fee or closing the religious establishment that goes over the sound limit established after a certain night time pre-established as well. This law is applied to all establishments that produces sounds.

24 Available at: <http://g1.globo.com/jornal-nacional/noticia/2017/04/odebrecht-pediu-pastor-everaldo-para-ajudar-aecio-em-debate-de-201.html>. Accessed on: 11 jun. 2017.

Brasilândia / São Paulo (3,277), Parelheiros / São Paulo (3,144) and São Sebastião (3,045). Crossing these data with the IBGE census (2010), we noticed, in some cities, a relationship between the presence of Evangelic from the church *Assembléia de Deus* and the number of votes for Feliciano. São Paulo is the city with the largest number of Assemblies with 533,362 residents. In addition to the electoral zones in the city of São Paulo, Feliciano obtained a total of 90,982 votes, equivalent to 22% of the total votes cast. In the city of Orlandia, which scored 3,359 votes, is located the church *Catedral do Avivamento*, a church presided over by Marco Feliciano and also part of *Assembléia de Deus* association. The cities of Franco da Rocha and São Sebastião also stood out in the number of votes. Although these cities do not have a numerical expressiveness in the number of evangelic believers, other factors such as local alliances or church-based co-voting may have contributed to the pastor's prominence. However, the relationship between votes and religion is evident in the other cities we analyze.

Eduardo Cunha was elected with 232,708 votes, and the municipalities in which he received the most votes were: Rio de Janeiro with 60,380, Belford Roxo with 23,776, and Itaboraí with 19,054 votes. In order to verify the relation between religion and vote, again we use the data of the IBGE (2010). From this, we find that in Belford Roxo, the evangelic population surpasses the Catholic population, since in 2010 there were 174,250 evangelic followers and 152,503 Catholics. The city of Itaboraí, which has 85,147 evangelic and 72,914 Catholics, data from 2010. The city of Rio de Janeiro, where Cunha was the most voted, concentrates the largest number of evangelic followers in the state (1,477,021)²⁵, but this does not make the evangelic a majority in the municipality, as it happens in the municipalities of Belford Roxo and Itaboraí. The city of Rio de Janeiro has a Catholic majority, with 3,229,192 residents.

Final remarks

There are walls that separate nations, there are walls that separate the poor from the rich, but there is no wall in the world that separate the ones who fear and those who do not²⁶.

Fear was used through history as a strategy for political groups to seize and maintain control. In Brazil, the relationship between the religious leaderships, the media and politics are becoming more intertwined and, in the period relating to the election campaigns, they appear as an example and an important object for investigation, allowing the evangelic to see a statement of hate and the use of countless patterns of the manipulation of fear.

²⁵ From 1,477,021 evangelic residentes in Rio de Janeiro; 432,138 are from Assembleia de Deus.

²⁶ Mia Couto's speech at the Conferências do Estoril 2011. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jACccaTogxE>. Accessed on: 15 nov. 2016.

However, we note that the religious presence in the political sphere is not restricted to the elections period, but is placed in situations of constant political dispute, for it to press on the political system for it to compromise certain values that they defend, for a broader analysis through the creation of an imaginary collective which antagonizes the possibilities of plurality of democracy, resulting in a conservatism in latency as part of a project that intends to be hegemonic.

The plurality and the diversity contained in the progressive speeches end up pressuring the conservative speeches as they are diametrically opposed, constituting a dialectic relationship between them (BOBBIO, 1994). Social networking sites are perceived as a way to represent reality and the structure of the symbolic fields. Evangelic expose the fragility of the Brazilian democracy when they use these sites to spread the hate speeches.

It is not in vain that the main sources hate speeches base themselves in salvationalist speeches, creating a cross between traditional faith and the political messianism (GIRARDET, 1987) in the prophet subject (PREUSS, 2015) charismatic and demagogic, capable of offering paths, as this political messiah can restore the autonomy that was lost and conclude the hopes of the people (WEBER, 1991; PEREIRA DE QUEIRÓZ, 1976).

The political messiahs (prophets), referred in our research, operate a manicheistic speech in the duplicities of heaven and hell, good and evil, hope and fear, which have no metaphysical form, but set a subject as a common enemy – for example, the destroyers of the family – and by doing this, it can even lead to the loss of its humanity as an element that can create empathy.

Conservatism as an action and public value potentially uses the production of the fear speech as a strategy to obtain power, to attain the obedience and control of its loyal followers through the symbolic elements contained the Orwellian axiom “war is peace”, in which violent speeches are instrumentalized by one hand, but the affection that a pastor-messiah-prophet elicits in his/her followers on the other. This can result in an expertise of politics and religion, which Debord (1997) called the hypnotic behavior, where reality is invaded by the contemplation of a surreal spectacle.

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